NO SHORTCUT TO VOTING

THE LIMITED INFLUENCE OF PARTIES' LEFT-RIGHT POSITIONS ON VOTING BEHAVIOR.

Inauguraldissertation

zur

Erlangung des Doktorgrades

der

Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät

der

Universität zu Köln

2017

vorgelegt

von

Master of Arts Kathrin Barbara Busch

aus Leverkusen

Referent: Prof. Dr. André Kaiser

Koreferent: Prof. Dr. Ingo Rohlfing

Tag der Promotion: 25. Juni 2018

CONTENTS

---

[1] This chapter was already published as a Journal article with Electoral Studies 41, 159-178.

INTRODUCTION

In democracies, citizens' political sophistication is a normative requirement that most scholars would agree on. It is important for their active participation and the achievement of important normative principles. First, representativeness can only be satisfied if citizens vote for parties and candidates who have at least similar political preferences. Second, accountability is more likely to be achieved if citizens can understand political outcomes and can electorally punish parties and candidates if these do not meet their needs or do not keep their promises. Accordingly, citizens need to be cognitively aware and interested in following politics, to have own political preferences and to compare these preferences to what their representatives, parties and political candidates propose or enact. Also other, less conventional kinds of political participation, such as taking part in demonstrations or signing a petition presuppose that citizens are informed. At the very least they need to know about their civic and political rights and have information about the issues at stake.

Therefore, political information and cognitive abilities are necessary for an active citizenry. However, political sophistication is especially important for their ability to rationally vote as expected particularly in models of spatial voting. Spatial voting theories rely on the assumption that voters base their vote choice on parties' positional locations in (policy) space. This is the case for both the "proximity model" of voting (Downs 1957) that expects voters to choose the party that is closest to them, and the "directional model", that assumes that apart from the parties' and their own position(s), voters also take account of the status quo of (governmental) position(s). Voters then choose the party of which they would expect to change this status quo in a preferred direction (e.g., Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989; Rabinowitz et al. 1991). For both models, it is essential that voters know candidates' or parties' positions in political space – being it one- or multi-dimensional. If voters do not know any positions or perceive all to be the same, they cannot decide about their party preferences due to spatial considerations. Knowledge of party positions (or their ideology) and voters' rational choice according to positions are hence two important, common assumptions of spatial models. However, while theoretical concepts of voting have largely concentrated on

modeling the way how voters get from positions to vote choice (e.g., Merill and Grofman 1999, Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1991), the knowledge assumption is mostly implicit. Voters are simply expected to know the candidates' or parties' positions that are salient to them – or parties' ideological locations that may work as a shortcut (Downs 1957) to bundles of issues. In reality, rational choice assumptions about voters are idealistic as we know that not all voters have such levels of sophistication, and thus this calls into question some of the basic premises underlying an ideal rational choice. Empirical studies show that it is unlikely that even a single voter will meet all criteria to vote in this idealized way: users of Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) often confuse party positions (Schultze 2014); retrospective voters often do not even know the current cabinet composition (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013).

For one thing, if the rational choice model applied to all, it is possible that few people would vote at all, given that it assumes a rational voter should only cast a ballot if their ballot will be pivotal, an unrealistic assumption in electorates totaling millions. Otherwise, the costs of voting would be too high, and the rational voter should abstain (Downs 1957)[2]. However, as we know, many, and indeed most people do vote in elections, despite the original model positing that it is irrational to do so. Having made it to the ballot box, citizens often do not choose rationally. They do not necessarily vote for the party that they should expect most *utility* from, even if this utility measure includes a multitude of aspects like partisanship and spatial positions (Lau and Redlawsk 1997; Lau et al. 2014).

The second problem of spatial voting models is that they are not very dynamic. They expect parties to take equilibria positions, "i.e., sets of platforms that, once adopted, will remain more or less the same because no candidate (or party) believes that she can improve her vote share by shifting her proposed issue position as long as the other candidates/parties do not change theirs" (Merill and Grofman 1999, 164). They hence do not answer what happens to voters' rationality if parties shift their positions. Deducing from the theoretical premises, this may still happen if parties have *not yet*

---

[2] This so-called "paradox of voting" was the topic for a substantial scientific debate and has inspired many to change the original model of voting or its interpretation. Examples are Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) inclusion of a "feeling of duty" and Aldrich's (1993) explanation that elections evoke a low-cost-low-benefit situation. However, the "feeling of duty" and other selective incentives to turnout contrast the logic of "rational choice" (Aldrich 1993).

adopted their optimal platform – for example relatively new parties and if older parties react to these new party platforms or compete for "issue ownership" (Meguid, 2008).

My dissertation seeks to fill this research gap: it examines whether the implicit assumption holds that voters have *objectively correct* perceptions that lead to rational voting behavior. In particular, I strive to answer what happens if parties shift their left-right positions. I investigate in three successive chapters, how parties' position shifts determine voters' perceptions of parties' left-right positions (chapter 2), which kinds of political sophistication – factual knowledge, the differentiation between parties' left-right positions and the precision of perceptions – determine citizens' electoral participation (chapter 3), and if the precision of left-right perceptions increases rational reactions to parties' position' shifts (chapter 4). The overarching contribution of the dissertation is to show the role of positional perceptions vis-à-vis other kinds of political knowledge.

The focus on perceptions of left-right positions and not of single issues allows me to test the assumption that voters use these as a heuristic for voting, following Downs (1957). If left-right positions informed about underlying position bundles, they should facilitate vote decisions and rational reactions to parties' changed proximity to the voter in cases of shifting positions. In my view, party competition on issues that consistently match their left-right position, and voters' orientation towards these left-right "clusters" is normatively preferable to focusing on only single issues that may or may not match to the left-right logic. Being consistent with left-right positions would allow citizens to have a clearer and more stable long-term view of how well a candidate or party would represent them *by the mean* and not only on the one, maybe only temporarily important issue. Therefore, the dissertation focusses on left-right positions although it is acknowledged that party systems can differ in how parties usually cluster left and right positions on the economic sub-dimension with left and right positions on the cultural sub-dimension (Kitschelt 1995, Markowski 1997, Marks et al. 2006). However, in European democracies, most political issues seem to be consistent with the left-right dimension as left-right issue congruence is still high (Dalton 2017, Kroh 2009) and voters can meaningfully refer to this heuristic, even also in Eastern Europe (Rudi,

2010)[3]. Still, for single voters – or specific groups of voters – perception problems might lead to misinterpretations, and finally to the feeling of not being represented.

The topic of how voters' positional perceptions' determine voting behavior connects several strands of research. From psycho-social research it is already known that voters' perceptions of party locations can become flawed: voters' sympathies (and antipathies), their party support or their partisanship often lead to misperceptions of a party's position (Dahlberg 2009; 2013; Drummond 2010; Granberg 1983, Granberg and Holmberg, 1988; Merill et al. 2001). Moreover, the precision of voters' perceptions is dependent on positional clarity due to the distinctiveness of party positions (Dahlberg 2013) and due to system differences like the effective number of parties (Drummond 2010; Gordon and Segura 1997). Third, vote decisions are not only driven by rational considerations, but party identification is also a strong direct predictor of turnout and vote choice in various settings (Berglund et al. 2005). Although party identification can change over time (Clarke and McCutcheon 2009), following Campbell et al. (1960), its inherent logic on vote choice is that identification predetermines attitudes on current political issues[4]. In that vein, vote choice due to party identification is contrary to spatial voting, that relies on the idea of voters' *rational choice* of the party or candidate that takes the objectively best position. Both party identification and party ideology are shortcuts to voting, but with different premises.

For spatial voting, it is essential that voters perceive parties' ideological positions correctly and follow the rational decision-making processes on a central route of information processing. If voters have social preferences, irrational expectations, and limited information processing, they cannot rationally choose their party preference. In this context, the dissertation focusses on individual perceptions – first as the dependent variable, then as an independent determinant in analyses of electoral participation and vote choice. Subjective perceptions on the individual level can be a key to the question why groups of voters on aggregate level do not vote, or why party supporters do not

---

[3] Moreover, the problem of the differences between countries regarding distinct clustering of the left and right cultural with left and right economic issues will be addressed in the analyses by the use of a left-right index (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006), that takes these country-specific differences what left and right means, into account.

[4] I acknowledge that the revisionists' view on party identification is different, as they expect current evaluations to influence party identity like a "running tally" (Fiorina, 1981). Hence, the socio-psychological model of party identification is more contrary to spatial voting assumptions, because it emphasizes the affective side of party support.

seem to react rationally to "their" parties' shifts, as found by Adams et al. (2011; 2014). If congruence between citizen perceptions and party positions is only measured with the median, the issue of voters' misperceptions may probably not be detected. However, on the individual level, the misunderstanding of positions may lead to the feeling of not being represented by parties or the government. It is hence important to understand the relationship between positional perceptions and voting behavior. In the terminology of the methodological individualism, i.e., "Coleman's boat" (Coleman 1994), the bridge hypotheses of subjective perceptions of positions and shifts, and the extent of rational decision making are observed and analyzed.

Although the functionality of rational models of voting is dependent on correct perceptions, these are sometimes not modeled by spatial research that analyzes voter reactions (Adams 2011; 2014; Adams, Ezrow and Leiter 2012). This is also true for the traditional research on political knowledge (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Popkin and Dimock 1999). The ability to differentiate between parties and to cognitively integrate these differences in a meaningful concept is an integrative part of some constructs of political sophistication (Neuman 1981, 1986). However, different dimensions or sub-types of political knowledge were often not tested separately as dependent variables or for their impact on voting behavior. Observing and analyzing separately multiple kinds of political sophistication is a rather new trend (Barabas et al. 2014, Gilens 2001, Johann 2011, Marquis 2010, Weisberg and Nawara 2010).

The dissertation speaks to the four mentioned broad strands of research: 1.) political knowledge, especially knowledge of positions within a multidimensional concept; 2.) ideology as a possible shortcut to information (Downs 1957) contrasted with the role of 3.) party identification (Campbell 1963) and other affective party bindings and 4.) voters' reactions to parties' positions and shifts.

A BRIEF NOTE ON DATA AND METHODS

Methodologically, the dissertation makes use of quantitative analyses of comparative survey data. For reasons of consistency and comparability of measures, all chapters use the same data sources: the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and data on parties' left-right positions (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006; 2016) which is based on raw

data from the Party Manifesto Project (CMP)[5] (Volkens 2013). These data ensure high quality regarding their representativeness and validity[6]. All pieces of research make use of multilevel models of analyses, that allow modeling effects on the individual-, party- and system-level and show details of what affects voters' perceptions and their behavior. For example, it is assumed that voters' perceptions of current positions are not only dependent on individual characteristics but are also strongly related to party behavior and to the question which messages get highlighted during campaigns. Different kinds of multilevel models are used throughout the research chapters. These allow the calculation of the hypothesized individual and context-level effects simultaneously.

The remaining introduction will now relate more thoroughly to the wider research frame of political sophistication, briefly discuss the conceptual differences between party identification and ideology as heuristics, spatial assumptions about parties' position shifts and relate to current research that analyzes voters' reactions to shifts. Finally, the introduction will return to political sophistication and give a review on how it has been measured over time and on its effects on political behavior. After a discussion of my contribution and suggestions for future research, I will briefly summarize the empirical results of the chapters 2-4, one-by-one. The introduction closes with a table of an overview of the analytical chapters.

STATE OF THE ART

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND VOTING BEHAVIOR – WHY KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT AND HOW MUCH OF IT

While a well-informed and cognitively active citizenry is a normative demand of Western democracies, the level of political sophistication that is needed is less clear. Continuing evidence in empirical studies, which starting from the 1950s revealed that the American mass public was less politically sophisticated than expected, were alarming to some scientists (e.g., Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al. 1960, Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Somin 2004). Others were less worried and either adjusted their

---

[5] The survey waves of these data sources that are used are specified in the respective chapters.
[6] Further reasons why I chose these data sources are due to the specific research questions and will be discussed more thoroughly in the analytical chapters.

expectations to the empirical findings, or their theory about what citizens *need* to know: Defenders of the rational choice model argued that it is *rational* to know just as much as needed (Downs, 1957). Precise information retrieval takes time and hence increases the *costs* of voting (Matsusaka 1995). At least for elections, it was assumed, that it can be good enough to use heuristics or vote cues as information *shortcuts*. In that vein, the finding, that citizens use cues instead of being broadly informed about specific policies gave the debate about how much knowledge citizens need a new twist. If the citizenry is not that well informed, and democracy can survive with citizens using cues, maybe they do not need that much information about specific policies to be "good citizens." Gordon and Segura (1997, 129) argued that political knowledge is not only about peoples' capabilities but that people even "*choose* to be uninformed if that information is expensive and difficult to accumulate, or if the use of that information is of limited utility." The forefathers of the "political culture" analyses, Almond and Verba (1963), argued from the societal point of view that it would be even better if not every citizen were politically active. Their ideal of the civic culture included the idea that citizens would show different levels of political interest and participation.

If not all citizens in democracies are well informed, the question arises about how they make decisions on whom to vote? Left-right ideology was one of the multiple shortcuts which entered the scientific debate and research. Voters can use these shortcuts to get informed, evaluate, and store or recall their memory about parties, candidates, and issues (Popkin 1995). Information can be efficiently gained by listening to elites and "news junkies" (Berelson et al. 1954, Neuman 1989; cf. Popkin 1995). Ideology can serve as an *information shortcut* in the view of Downs (1957). By contrast, party ID as a socio-psychological identification can serve to frame and evaluate new information (Campbell et al. 1960). Lastly, Fiorina's (1981) "running-tally", party ID is a shortcut to efficiently store and recall information about the parties' accomplishments and to engage in *retrospective voting*. It is already a shorter or simpler way to evaluate parties via evaluating governmental outputs instead of party propositions (e.g., Downs 1957; Campbell et al. 1960; Fiorina 1981).

Moreover, there are shortcuts to infer competence from personal characteristics such as candidates' race, gender, and occupation (e.g., McDermott 1998; McDermott 2005). While useful for the evaluation of actors, competence would, however not be a sufficient alternative to information about political contents or performance. Personal

competencies would not compensate for policies that counteract the voter's political needs. In the following, I will give a short overview of various shortcuts, but concentrate on those, which relate to ideology and party identification because they link most to the analytical chapters of the dissertation.

SHORTCUTS AND THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY

In the first study on the 1940 American presidential campaign researchers of the Columbia University (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet 1948) found that *partisan loyalties* were important for vote choice due to "entrenched voting habits" (Popkin 1995, 22). Moreover, they found that partisanship leads to selective media exposure which would, in turn, increase the habituated voting. The use of specific media and paying attention to "activists and news junkies" who "sound the alarm" (Neuman 1989 cf. Popkin 1995) if something is going wrong were two ways to reduce the amount of information which a voter would need to get informed about the parties and electoral candidates.

Campbell et al. (1960) took the idea of partisan loyalties further. In their socio-psychological model, party identification is defined as a strong and rather persistent link between voters and parties. Not only can party attachments lead to different information exposure, but according to the Michigan School it is also placed in the middle of the "funnel of causality". In this model of voting, party identification is strongly influenced by ones' parents as if "inherited"[7]. However, it then frames the formation of attitudes and ultimately the vote decision. In other words, Campbell and his colleagues already thought that party identification *predetermines* voters' perceptions and evaluations of political actors and positions. Contrary to first doubts on its applicability in the European multiparty context (Shively 1979) this traditional model of party identification has proven its validity in most European countries, with Italy and the Netherlands being exceptions, where the revisionists' version[8] applies better (see Schultze 2016, 51).

Campbell et al.'s idea that the voter links to ideology via party identification stands in contrast to the rational view of party ideology being merely a label, a shortcut to more

---

[7] Indeed, the relationship between parental and child voting choice can be strong (e.g. Marsh 2008).
[8] These are scholars following e.g. Fiorina (1981), who think that voters' party identification is constantly updated by party performance.

specific information (Downs 1957). Popkin (1989, 24) explains it as "a *loosely integrated set of views(…)about what parties stand for (…)We may think of this as a 'default' value view of both party identification and party ideologies".* Voters would fall back on this "default value" if they lacked information about the governmental performance or were uncertain in their evaluation of current policies. For Downs (1957), ideology does hence not represent the anchor to a voter's socio-psychological attachment via a more or less solid and persistent identification, but it is rather a summarizing evaluation to which the voter has come several times before and hence does not want to – or even does not "rationally" need to – consider again in each election. Downs makes two implicit assumptions as Ferejohn (1995, 112 f.) points out. The first one is that every single position that candidates or parties take can be assigned a position on a one-dimensional left-right scale; the second one is that these political positions are relatively stable. If these two assumptions would not hold, party ideologies could not be "reliable (or informative) predictors of their actions in office" (Ferejohn 1995, 113). In Downs view, parties are reliable because they want to get re-elected. Voters (and parties) relate to a one-dimensional space because this is more rationally efficient than paying attention to multiple issues in potentially multiple issue spaces. Later research finds the political space to be more complex than Downs' assumptions have us believe. On the one hand, there are differences between countries (and parties) how the sub-dimensions of the left-right space, the cultural and the economic dimension combine (Kitschelt 1995, Markowski 1997, Marks et al. 2006). On the other hand, issue voting theories following Stokes (1963) emphasize the saliencies of issues (e.g., Budge and Farlie 1983; Meguid 2008).

SHIFTS IN POLICY POSITIONS AND IDEOLOGY – DOWNS' PREMISES

Strictly following Downs' ideas, rational voting could not be an answer to the social-psychological model of voting (Campbell et al. 1960), that would explain short-term party and voter orientations much better – at least not with regard to shifts in parties' propositions. For example, Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) concept that citizens vote for the party of which they expect to lead to the most differential benefit does not include voters' reactions to shifts of policy positions. One reason might be that their rational voting concept's focus is on retrospective voting. Second, strong shifts of political positions are beyond the model's expectations of parties' strategic positioning behavior.

If ideology would serve as a shortcut to policy positions, either policy positions needed to be very stable, or shifts would at least lead to the more or less same net-positions on the ideological scale. Kaiser (2007) points out that in the Downsian model position shifts at least do not lead to parties "leap-frogging". For example, a party A, that is on the left ideological side of a party B, should not shift its policy positions so strongly that it would relocate to a position to the right of party B. If party A leapfrogged party B, voters would become uncertain, and the party might discredit itself completely.

Consequently, in the two-party system parties strive to *persuade* the voters to move towards the parties instead of moving towards the (median) voter (Downs 1957, 87; cf. Kaiser 2007, 626). By contrast, multiparty-systems are not unimodal with the median voter being close to the center of the left-right, but the distribution of voters on the left-right scale will show multiple peaks (Kaiser 2007). As a consequence, parties need to take more distinct positions, and voters need to differentiate between parties' positions more precisely. It is not enough to know which party is on the left and which is on the right, but each party takes a rather specific position relative to the other parties.

Following the Downsian understanding of left-right ideology to function as a shortcut, parties would hence be expected to stay within the party specific spacial boundaries. In that vein, new policies would need to fit well to a party's previous ones. Downs argues that parties would try to stay consistent with their ideology because this would then ensure that it would appeal to the same (social) group of voters that it had previously calculated to get most votes from potentially. Ideologically consistent policies would "automatically please" these (Downs 1957, 101).

Empirical research finds some of these predictions to be correct as parties are under constraints on shifting their positions. However, these constraints are not the same everywhere and for each party, as they largely depend on party organization, the party system, the voters at large and the party's sub-electorate (Meyer 2013). For example, the number of effective parties in a party system decreases the magnitude of party position shifts. – Party shifts in "crowded" systems are less strong than in those with a low number of parties. On the other hand do positive leader ratings regarding their competences and sympathy increase the magnitude of shifts (Meyer 2013). There might also be differences due to political cultures and party system institutionalization. In the elder Western democracies parties' positions tend to stay rather stable over time.

(Budge 1994; Budge and Klingemann 2001) Some leapfrogging occurs, but mostly with contiguous parties and within party families (Adams 2001; Budge 1994).

However, the question of how voters perceive the shifts that happen, and how they react is still open. In the younger democracies of Eastern Europe, that are less institutionalized, stronger positional shifts are also more common as research with party manifestos revealed (Klingemann et al. 2006). The critical question is not if parties shift, but rather how strongly, and if voters can still keep track of parties' left-right positions or not. Hence the dissertations' empirical analyses follow the idea to take a closer look at how precisely voters know parties' left-right positions, how this is affected by the magnitude of parties' shifts and how the perception of positions affects voting behavior. In that vein, the dissertation tests if we can assume voters' perceptions of parties' left-right positions to work as shortcuts. If perceptions are incorrect at large, these perceived ideological positions should not lead to rational voting.

Empirically, researchers have rarely analyzed voters' knowledge of ideological positions. Instead, models of political knowledge mostly relate to factual political knowledge. Only in recent years, and largely unconnected to the topic of "political knowledge", researchers also started to test for voters' positional perceptions. Before moving on to the contribution of the dissertation and the most important results of my empirical analysis, I will now give a brief summary on previous empirical research about political knowledge in general, the parallel research about voters' perceptions of party positions and of the newer research that increasingly starts to focus on reactions to shifts .

RESEARCH ON POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE –WHAT IS USUALLY MEASURED?

Political knowledge questions were already present in American Gallup surveys on political behavior in the 1940s and 50s (c.f. Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991). They were also included in the famous studies about media campaign effects on the 1948 presidential election by proponents of the "sociological model of voting" (Berelson et al. 1954). The questions represented a range of different topics, including questions about single political Acts. The finding that the majority of American respondents could not answer half of the knowledge questions correctly, later inspired research that was more specifically dedicated to political knowledge as a subject of political science in its own

right (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991, 1996; Iyengar 1986, Neuman, 1981; 1986, Zaller 1986).

Researchers assumed that citizens in democracies should have a general, good understanding of their political institutions and about what was politically going on. The focus of research on political knowledge was hence very broad at first and not specifically related to electoral behavior. Researchers first concentrated on the question how to validly measure political sophistication (Iyengar 1986, Zaller, 1986) and what kind of political sophistication citizens normatively *should have* in their everyday lives (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991; 1996; Neumann 1981; 1986). To ensure construct-validity in the measurement of political sophistication, researchers then developed indexes of political sophistication which included a variety of different knowledge variables building on qualitative (Neumann 1981; 1986) and quantitative surveys (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991; 1996). The idea was first to see how politically knowledgeable citizens were and then to investigate how different levels of political sophistication would correlate with – or causally lead to – different political attitudes and behavior[9]. Early analyses which used the first ANES data and its pilot (Iyengar 1986, Zaller 1986) did not find a consistent answer if political knowledge would be measured more validly with a general measure of political knowledge, or with policy-domain specific ones. Iyengar found two of his four domain-specific information items to affect evaluations of president Reagan less strongly than a general measure and one specific information item to affect evaluations stronger. The fourth domain-specific scale was too broad in his view. He concluded that the utility of domain-specific information measures of the ANES would depend on the issue area. Zaller (1986) found that domain-specific scales outperformed a general measure of information slightly, but he did not differentiate between their validity. He then suggested using the general index. The later studies by Neuman (1986), and Delli Carpini and Keeter (1991; 1996) also measured "political

---

[9] Indeed, some of the early studies carefully create an index of political knowledge, but then mostly only present how it *correlates* with attitudes, preferences, and behavior. This does not diminish the early scientist's conceptual work and thorough descriptions of political knowledge – given that the development of computing machines and software were still in its infancy, doing the calculations for simple regressions was much more demanding than it is today. Neumann (1986) started with qualitative investigations of political knowledge, which he only then combined with survey data. Some of his samples might not have been big enough for statistical more sophisticated methods. However, looking back at early results one should be cautious to deduce causal relationships from graphs and figures in which often only descriptive evidence is presented.

sophistication" with just one index of multiple correlating sub-components (Neuman, 1986). The single knowledge questions related mostly to political facts (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1991; 1996; Popkin and Dimmock 1999). In general, these researchers found that (factual) political knowledge increases citizens' likeability to turnout.

Not tested in all these early studies and their follow-ups were citizens' ability to use left-right ideology as a heuristic. Among Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996, 306) five suggested variables that they used to construct a more parsimonious political knowledge index than was done before[10], there was one variable about the ideological placement of parties: respondents were asked which party was more conservative than the other. Given that researchers tested questions about political knowledge first in the USA, with its two-party system, it would not have made sense to include more parties in this question about ideology.

Their factorial analyses led to the assumption that one index would cover political knowledge as a latent variable well enough. They found that political sophistication, measured with the factual knowledge index led to an increased consistency between left-right orientations and issue positions (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992). Researchers then thought that those who are factually well-informed are also the ones who use "partisan and issue cues as shortcuts to evaluate performance" (Popkin and Dimmock 1999, 127)[11] and that it is political sophistication, which makes them able to "deduce specific policy preferences from abstract principles" (Goren 2004, 462). However, they did not empirically test if knowledge about facts also increased the relation between ideological placement and knowledge about single policy positions. For example, Delli Carpini's and Keeter's index included knowledge about single policy positions, left-right positions and about static political facts like the name of the vice president (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 302-305). A more rigorous test which kind of knowledge relates to the perception of left-right positions would have hence been possible.

However, the theoretical concepts of what a measure of political sophistication *should* contain were often more detailed and distinctive than what the single index

---

[10] At that time, the original data from the ANES included a set of 18 knowledge questions.

[11] Popkin and Dimmock (1999) did not test this empirically. They found that less factually informed persons cared more about politicians' personal character than the more informed.

would later reflect. This is also true for Neuman's (1981; 1986) concept of political sophistication, that links very well to spatial voting. It includes knowledge about issues and knowledge about abstract constructs such as ideology. The concept contains three dimensions of political sophistication, of which *political conceptualization* relates most to assumptions from spatial theory. To have a precise conceptual understanding of the political sphere, voters first need to *differentiate* between actors, political issues and events, and second, they need to *conceptually integrate* these into an "abstract or ideological construct" (Neuman 1981, 1237). Apart from *political conceptualization* Neuman's index then additionally adds a measure of *factual (political) knowledge[12]* and a measure of *salience* – a voters' interest and attentiveness to politics. The inclusion of the salience measure can be regarded as problematic because it should rather represent voters' motivation and would hence not measure their cognition or level of information (Lambert et al., 1988). The bigger problem, however, is the lack of differentiation between different kinds of political knowledge due to the construction of knowledge indexes.

To sum, even though the abstract concepts of political sophistication often differentiated between specific dimensions, these theoretical assumptions were not tested separately. In effect, the mixing of several different dimensions into indexes of political sophistication mostly led to different kinds of descriptions of voters' factual knowledge over-time and inspired analyzes which mostly focussed on the *determinants* of voters' political sophistication.

It is a more recent development of research on political sophistication to not only theoretically *understand* it as a multidimensional construct (Barabas et al. 2014), but to also test different sub-dimensions separately for their impact on political behavior and voting. In general, recent research finds different types of political sophistication to have specific effects, depending on the kind of political behavior. There are also findings of the knowledge of policy positions or ideology and how this affects citizens' participation in comparison to the previously often used "factual political knowledge". For example, Marquis (2010) tests how political knowledge increases Swiss' voters propensity to vote for the ideologically closest party. He finds that knowledge of candidates' positions has a

---

[12] Neuman calls this just "political knowledge" but because this is not very precise and could be confused with general political sophistication, I refer to it as factual (political) knowledge.

stronger effect than factual knowledge. Similarly, Gilens 2001 finds knowledge about policy to be a stronger determinant of political judgments than general political knowledge.

Furthermore, an analysis of German voters finds that knowledge about political actors is a more important predictor for turnout than knowledge about democratic rules. To the contrary, knowledge about democratic rules determines less conventional kinds of political participation to a greater extent (Johann 2011). All of these studies are single country studies. The difficulty to find measures of sophistication which would be valid across countries might be a reason why in comparative research this strand of research has often been neglected. Knowledge about single policy-issues is hardly comparable in multinational settings.

CONTRIBUTION

The present research finds a solution to the mentioned problem of a comparative measure of political knowledge. Instead of using knowledge questions about policy, I evaluate how precisely citizens *perceive* left-right positions. Throughout the dissertation, I take different perspectives to observe and analyze voters' perceptions of party positions and how these determine participation and vote choice. The framing of the topic is political knowledge: I have argued that correct perceptions of parties' current left-right positions are key to spatial voting in the Downsian sense. It is a core requirement of rational voting that citizens can understand the beneficial differences between parties (Riker and Ordeshook 1968). They need to be informed about political positions. If voting decisions are not influenced by parties' left-right positions or if voters misperceive these at large, spatial voting will not function via the logic of ideology as a shortcut to information.

Unlike the bulk of previous research, I do not combine different types of political sophistication in one index (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Neumann 1986) nor do I try to measure voting utilities through one measure which accumulates spatial utilities and party identification (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997; Lau et al, 2014). Instead, my contributions use *different kinds of political sophistication* measures such as factual knowledge and positional perceptions as independent variables. I further control for the influence of other important determinants like levels of general education and emotional linkages and determinants on party and system level. Thereby, the

dissertation disentangles how ratio-related and socio-psychological cues, parties' position-taking and the clarity due to system characteristics affect knowledge about party positions; and how these, in turn, affect voter participation and reactions to parties' position shifts.

Contrary to expectations of spatial voting, I find that voters' knowledge of current left-right positions is very limited, tends to decrease in precision if parties shift positions, and therefore, cannot work well as a "shortcut" or heuristic to "rational voting". Voting and electoral choice are still mostly dependent on partisanship. Regarding voter mobilization, it is enough to *differentiate* between parties left-right positions. Precise knowledge about positions does not seem to be necessary. Left-right perceptions are distorted, do not matter much for turnout and if voters do not perceive positions correctly, they rather stay loyal to parties, even if these have shifted their positions away from them.

Parties' position shifts and voters' affections to parties are two conditions that play a dominant role in the three research chapters. The focus on shifts enables me to measure how well voters are updated on positions (chapter 2). If voters do not perceive nor react to shifts, their use of spatial positions to inform their voting behavior can only be weak. Furthermore, the measurement of shifts away from the individual voter overcomes some of the hen-and-egg problems of aggregate research. Even if the median voter had shifted positions before a respective party, most of the individual voters are not exactly in the median position. Hence there should be at least some reactions to position shifts if parties move away from the voters' positions. I show that position shifts between elections affect both the precision with which voters estimate parties (chapter 2) and their likelihood to switch to another party if the voter perceives positions precisely (chapter 4).

The second important condition that is analyzed in all three research chapters is voters' affectional party ties. While in chapter 2, I show that strong party sympathies and antipathies decrease voters' precision with which they perceive the respective party's current position, in chapter 3 and 4, party ID serves as a control variable for the emotional part of individuals' mobilization and vote choices. Voters' affections to parties are not only confirmed as a strong determinant of voting behavior, but they also hamper voters' spatial, rational reactions to parties' shifts. Despite all prophecies of doom regarding decreasing levels of party-voter ties (Dalton 1984, Dalton 2000), I find that

where these party-voter ties still exist, they have a strong direct effect on voters' loyalty to the previously voted party. Furthermore, due to their decreasing effect on precise perceptions (chapter 2), they additionally indirectly decrease voters' reactions to the party's position shift in the other direction. While offering stability to party systems, there is hence also a negative side to (strong) party affections.

Via combining determinants of spatial, rational voting with the socio-psychological cues, the dissertation enables to get a more holistic view of how political knowledge and emotional linkage affect individuals' vote decisions. The overarching contribution of the thesis is hence to show the importance of voters' cognitive *perceptions* of party positions and *the limits of rational spatial voting* due to party ID and other emotional party ties. Putting the focus on the precision with which voters perceive *current left-right positions*, the dissertation sheds light on the question of how well "objective" positions are perceived. It further shows how this ratio-spatial dimension of evaluations affects reactions or non-reactions vis-à-vis emotions and group-identities. Both of these aspects are contrary to the majority of previous research which has often added different kinds of political knowledge into one index, did not measure voters' perceptions via objective party locations, and did not analyze how emotional linkages and a voter's party ID intervene on clear perceptions and spatial voting behavior.

The use of multilevel analyses enables the calculation of effects for predictors on the micro-, meso- and macro-level. However, due to data limitations, only in the analysis of voters' perceptions (chapter 2) the party level could be taken into account. In the other two chapters, only determinants on the individual and system level were included. For the precision with which voters estimate a party's position, some determinants of the party- and the system-level are very important. For example, a party's positional divergence from other parties and a country's multiparty system increase voters' positional perceptions (chapter 2) – probably due to enhanced attention and clearer position taking of the parties, respectively. In the analysis of citizens' electoral participation (chapter 3), the difference between proportional and majoritarian systems do however not lead to a significant result. The enhanced perception of positions of voters in proportional (multiparty) systems might hence be a reason. To the contrary, a shorter democratic history and belonging to the group of Eastern European countries had a negative effect on the precision of voters' positional estimations (chapter 2) and their likelihood to turnout (chapter 3), respectively. A drawback of these specific "Age of

democracy"/"Eastern Europe" variables is, however, that they could not be specified more precisely due to not having enough countries in the data. These results hence enable to see the difference between the Eastern, post-communist or younger democracies and others, but leave open some further questions. In future research it might be fruitful to focus more on the specific differences also within the Eastern European countries, to allow analyses which lead to more precise insights why it is harder for voters in these countries to get precise perceptions of party positions.

A BRIEF NOTE ON MEASUREMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL MEASURES

For the measurement of party positions and the fit of voters' estimations, I decided to use a left-right index (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006; 2016) that relies on Comparative Party Manifesto (CMP) (Volkens et al. 2016). Using this index has several advantages but also some limitations. For the question of how relevant party's left-right positions are, it is especially interesting to use data that is connected to the current, accurate differences between the parties. This is the case with the index based on party manifesto contents. The manifesto data are used as reference points for the comparison of voters' estimations of positions. They hence enable to see how well voters' estimations are updated to the current propositions. The drawback of using manifesto data is that this also gives the research a specific notion due to deriving the left-right positions from parties' salience of propositions only. Propositions probably do not reflect every statement that a party official might take on left-right positions. However, during and shortly after election campaigns, it can be expected that the propositional contents of party communication are close to the manifesto contents. The severest flaw of left-right positions, that were derived with manifestos, however, might relate to the question what is left out of the manifesto. For example, thinking of radical parties, some statements from its personnel could lead to a generally more radical impression of the party's left-right position than if one only considers its manifesto. The more philosophical question would then be which of the positions would be the "true" position, the one that takes statements into account or the one that calculates a position from a manifesto that is a collective product of party elites and party membership. However, this problem is also present in left-right positions that are derived from other sources: whether an expert considers different kinds of information or researchers use

voters' mean perception: none of these sources of left-right reference points can be perfect, because perceptions are due to cognitive framing and not everyone will use the same sources to come to their left-right estimation.

Experts' placement data are further problematic for two other reasons: first, experts tend to persistently estimate parties on the same left-right positions over time as they probably refer more to the long-standing core party principles than to saliencies of current issues (McDonald et al. 2007). This is problematic in research questions about reactions to current shifts. Second, the number of successive years of party positions, that expert data covers so far, is still quite limited[13]. Using these data would have drastically reduced the number of studies that would have corresponded to the same collection years of the individual surveys that were available. Due to the requirement of a higher number of upper-level data, the multilevel design of my analytical models would probably not have been feasible with these lower numbers of expert estimation data. I chose Franzmann and Kaiser's (2006; 2016) index of left-right positions because unlike other indexes which process CMP raw data (e.g., Laver and Budge 1992, Gabel and Huber 2000) it reflects differences across left-right issue spaces and over time very well (Franzmann 2015)[14]. This was important specifically due to the comparative approach of my research and the inclusion of Eastern European countries.

Using the mean or median voters' estimation as a benchmark can also lead to flaws, even though this might be the most used approach that researchers used so far (Dahlberg 2009; 2013, Drummond 2010; Gordon and Segura 1997, Granberg 1983, Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Merill et al. 2001). Using these average values would have been easier than matching and stacking voter perceptions with external data. However, for two reasons, I think that this approach would have been less useful for the analysis. The first one is that of the biased voter perceptions due to party sympathy, support or identification, that were already discussed and that were found by the same authors. The problem with these biases is that they cannot be expected to cancel out in the mean or median perception, because they are not randomly distributed among the

---

[13] The most comprehensive longitudinal expert survey - to my best knowledge - the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) trend file (Bakker et al 2015) so far contains five waves collected between 1999 and 2014.
[14] While the suitability and validity of different kinds of left-right indexes is an interesting topic of survey methodology, a full discussion of the pros and cons would be beyond the scope of this introductory chapter. The choice of the Franzmann-Kaiser index is more thoroughly discussed in the research pieces, specifically in chapter 2.

parties. To the contrary, the strength of biases, that are invoked by emotional ties to specific parties will be dependent on how many voters favor the party and how its left-right position relates to that of the voters. By comparing a voter's position estimation to that of the mean or median, it is hence only possible to show how well their estimation matches the "perceptually agreed" position (Dahlberg 2009; 2013).

When analyzing voters' perceptions of position shifts, the problem of potential bias in the mean gets even more severe. Unless an analysis controlled for many sources of bias, it would have been unclear if changes in perceptions are due to changed biases (i.e., changed aggregate support), or truly due to shifts in party positions. Perceptions of positions as reactions to shifts should hence not be measured with the same data as the shifts.

Using the left-right measure (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006), that is exogenous to the voters' estimations; the following research chapters distinguish more clearly between the rational (cognitive) effect on voter-party proximities due to positions and effects of emotional ties. The latter does not already bias the perception measure, but effects are calculated with separate control variables such as the individual's party sympathy and party identification. In that way, the analyses can distinguish between ratio-cognitive and affective-emotional effects on perceptions and reactions to shifts.

A topic that the dissertation cannot address thoroughly is how strongly single salient political issues determine voters' perceptions and behavior. This drawback is mainly due to the lack of this data in comparative research, probably caused by problems to structure respondents' answers meaningfully and comparatively across countries[15]. The exception in this dissertation is chapter two, in which I could at least use variables that contain experts' answers to the question what had been the five most salient factors that affected the outcome of the election. I found that unexpectedly, salient issues of leader- or party-politics did not have a negative effect on how precisely voters perceived the parties' left-right positions. Unfortunately, due to the data

---

[15] For example, in two of its survey waves, (Module 2 and 3), the CSES asked the open question, which was the most important issue, but the answers to this open category are hardly comparative over countries. Furthermore, the follow-up questions are not the same between these survey waves. In one survey, the respondents are asked which party or presidential candidate would probably deal best with the issue, in the other survey, the question relates to the present government.

restrictions, this result could not be broken down to the parties and how voters understand this.

For future research, it would be interesting to analyze if voters' emphasis on one salient issue – and the party-specific saliency of the issue - change the voters' left-right perception of the respective party. For example, it is likely that supporters of the AfD and the Greens in Germany, which probably detest the other party most strongly, will have a more biased perception of the respective other party's general left-right position due to "their" parties' contrasting stances on immigration. Using data which include specific issue variables would hence add to answering the question if it is (other) salient issues that keep voters from reacting to left-right shifts. While this dissertation sheds light on the relationship between voters' left-right perceptions and reactions to shifts, data with parties' and voters' issue saliencies might hence help to get a better understanding if and how these interact with voters' perceptions of left-right positions. Moreover, it would be interesting to see how perceptions develop over time. With the dissertation's results it becomes clear that without left-right perceptions, citizens do not vote spatially. The problem that arises will be a group-specific one. While party identifiers should still feel represented at large, for non-identifiers, representation problems might arise if they are less cognitively able to understand positions. Spatial voting and the magnitude with which voters rely on left-right ideology as a heuristic are limited to the precision of their perceptions. However, it remains unclear if this also has a temporal dynamic. Future research should hence investigate if this phenomenon of misperceptions is rather persistently connected to persons, or if it has an additional, maybe moderating temporal dynamic, for example, due to fluctuations of salient single issues.

The specific questions, that the following analytical chapters answer, are how party shifts influence voters' perceptions of positions (chapter 2), if citizens' left-right projections are important for their voter mobilization in comparison to factual knowledge and party ID (chapter 3) and how their positional estimations relate to their vote choice after a party has shifted to the opposite direction (chapter 3). I will now conclude the introduction with the short summaries of the analytical chapters and a table that gives an overview of the three cumulative analyses.

Chapter 2 Estimating parties' left-right positions – Determinants of voters' perception proximity to ideological party positions.

The research chapter advances on the question if voters' perceptions of party ideology are affected by parties' ideological shifts between elections and the saliency of non-ideological issues in the election campaign. It builds on the theoretical premise that voters need knowledge about party positions or at least need to have a good sense about parties' *ideological positions.* Only then, ideology can function as a cue to vote choice in a Downsian sense. Since party positions and party organization on the left-right scale may vary over time, voters should be informed before elections. It is thus interesting how strongly voters take the current party platforms into account when they think about the parties' left-right positions.

Contrary to previous research in voters' ideological perceptions (e.g., Dahlberg 2013; Gordon and Segura 1997), I make use of a left-right index of party positions that are based on party manifesto (CMP) data. Individual voters' estimations of parties on the left-right scale from 25 election studies of the CSES are compared to the index values of the same parties and election years to derive at respondents' *estimation proximity* to *current* positions.

The use of CSES and CMP data enables me to explore comparatively how single and multiple parties' shifts between elections affect respondents' estimation proximity. While the positional change of a single party does not have a significant effect, voters' estimation proximity is negatively influenced by multiple parties' positional change within the party system. Respondents seem to get confused if too much change is going on regarding party positions. Another new finding is that the saliency of non-ideological valence issues within the election campaign like party or leader politics' issues does not lead voters to be less informed about left-right party positions. To the contrary, saliency on the leader- and party-politics both affect voters' ideological estimation proximity positively.

Chapter 3 How much do voters know? Or do they need to? The importance of citizens' conceptual differentiation of the left-*right policy space*

The research chapter explores the impact of political knowledge on electoral participation. Following Neuman's distinction between (factual) political knowledge, the

differentiation between positions and their conceptual integration into the theoretic construct of "left-right" ideology, I test how strongly voters need these different kinds of political knowledge to participate in elections.

I base my hypotheses on the theoretical assumptions of the rational voter model (Riker and Ordeshook 1968) and voters' use of party ideology as a shortcut to vote choice (Downs 1957). These assume that voters need to understand the differential benefits of choosing one party over the other. Under the assumption that most voters make sincere party choices, knowing current party positions precisely would be vital for their decision to take part in the election. Moreover, as previous research shows, uncertainty about parties or candidates can lead voters to abstain from elections (Wattenberg et al. 2000). However, other research leads to doubts about how well voters know positions really, as they do not seem to react to position shifts (Adams et al. 2011; 2014). Although a high number of researchers has studied political knowledge, most have not analyzed how different kinds of knowledge could determine voting behavior. To the contrary, most research focusses on determinants of political knowledge and not on its consequences. How much and what kind of knowledge citizens need for voting is hence unknown.

To investigate this gap of research, I run a two-level logistic model of analysis on pooled data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), which I have linked to party position data (CMP) based on party manifestos. Individual voters' estimations of parties on the left-right scale – from 26 election studies are compared to the index values of the same parties and election years (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006) to derive respondents' *estimation proximity* to *current* positions.

The analysis leads to the conclusion that factual political knowledge and voters' differentiation between parties' left-right positions are very important for participation in elections. However, the precision with which they estimate parties' current left-right positions does not improve their odds of voting. The findings are robust to the inclusion of strong control variables like party ID and the level of respondents' education.

The outcome of my research has important implications for the question of how citizens vote. The effect of differentiation between left-right positions shows that thinking about positions on this cleavage is important. However, the insignificant effect of voters' estimation precision leads to doubts about voters' ability to rationally choose the most beneficial party. It is rather likely that other vote cues and single-issue

saliencies are more important or distort voters' estimations. While for voter mobilization it is good news if citizens vote, no matter if they have a well and inclusive understanding of parties' positions, for the representation function of democracies, this might have a bad impact on the long run. At the same time, the importance of voters' differentiation between left-right positions should signal to parties that they should seek to communicate also their traditional positions well and not only jump onto the next "hot topic" in election campaigns.

Chapter 4 Voters' Reactions to parties' positions' shifts: Switching Parties means Acknowledgment

The research chapter aims to contribute to answering a puzzle. In previous research, empirical analyses often did not find voters to react to parties' policy shifts. After a shift in left-right positions or policy shifts on European integration, party supporters neither changed their position nor voted for another party (Adams et al. 2011; 2014). By showing no reactions or inconsistent ones at best, voters do not act according to theoretical assumptions of the "spatial theory of voting" (Downs 1957). If the majority of citizens were rational, i.e., if prospective and expressive voters always chose the party that was closest to them, party shifts would be followed by some vote switching, exiting or the adjustment of voters' positions.

To counter this logic, I argue that voters often do not have enough updated knowledge of party positions. They hence do not show a non-reaction to a position shift, but they simply do not acknowledge the shift in the first place. Part of my reasoning is that voting is of course *not* a purely rational activity. Voters' emotional attachments to parties lead them to have biased perceptions (e.g., Dahlberg 2013; Merrill et al. 2001). They might also stay loyal to "their party" due to their feelings of party identification, similar to staying loyal to a failing football club. These voters, in other words, do not take spatial differences as their primary cue to vote choice.

The question that I pursue with my analysis is how voters react to current, unfavorable position shifts depending on their party attachments and their knowledge of party positions in the left-right space. In contrast to previous research on this subject, which did not find voter reactions, I focus on individual determinants of voting. I pool data from modules 2-4 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and combine them with data of party positions (Franzmann and Kaiser 2016). Taking country differences into account, I run a two-level multinomial model to test for the

question under which determinants voters rather stay loyal to the party previously voted for, switch to another party or exit the election.

I find that different cues for voting can lead to differences in voters' reactions: voters' attachment to the party previously voted for is most important for the decision of whether to vote loyally. It is, however, insignificant for the question as to whether to exit the election or switch to another party. Voters' reaction – or non-reaction – to a party's position shift depends on their sensitivity to position shifts and the strength of the latter.

Disregarding the "perception problem" on the side of the voters might hence be a reason why researchers did not find voters' reactions to parties' policy shifts in past research. As I show, voters do react by switching or exiting if they perceive positions precisely. Party ID and individual perceptions hence matter strongly for voting behavior.

Table I.1: Overview of the three studies in chapters 2-4[16]

	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Title	Estimating parties' left-right positions: Determinants of voters' perceptions' proximity to party ideology	How much do voters know? Or do they need to? The importance of citizens' conceptual differentiation of the left-right policy space	Voters' Reactions to parties' positions' shifts: Switching Parties means Acknowledgment
Research Questions	In what way are voters' perceptions of parties' left-right positions affected by a) party position shifts and b) the election campaign's turn to non-left-right politics issues?	Which kinds of political sophistication effect citizens' electoral participation?	When do voters react to parties' position shifts with staying loyal, vote switching or exiting the election?
Dependent Variable	Voters' estimation proximity (voter-party dyads)	Citizens' participation in the current election	Voting loyally, switching or exiting an election
Data sources	CSES Module 1 and 2 CMP (RILE), 2006 Franzmann and Kaiser (2006)	CSES Modules 1-4 Franzmann and Kaiser index data (update 2016)	CSES Modules 2-4 Franzmann and Kaiser index data (update 2016)
Main Method of Analysis	3-Level Hierarchical Linear Mixed Model	2-Level Logistic Regression	2-Level Multinomial Logistic Regression
Publication Status	Published 2016 in Electoral Studies 41, 159-178.	Submitted to the Journal of Elections Public Opinion and Parties	Submitted to Political Behavior

---

[16] The three research chapters 2-4 are single authored papers.

REFERENCES

Adams S, J. 2001. Party competition and responsible party government: a theory of spatial competition based upon insights from behavioral voting research. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Adams, J. 2012. Causes and Electoral Consequences of Party Policy Shifts in Multiparty Elections: Theoretical Results and Empirical Evidence. Annual Review of Political Science 15, 401-419.

Adams, J., De Vries, C. E., Leiter, D. 2011. Subconstituency Reactions to Elite Depolarization in the Netherlands: An Analysis of the Dutch Public's Policy Beliefs and Partisan Loyalties, 1986-98. British Journal of Political Science 42, 81-105.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Leiter, D. 2012. Partisan Sorting and Niche Parties in Europe. West European Politics 35, 1272-1294.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Somer-Topcu, Z. 2011. Is Anybody Listening? Evidence That Voters Do Not Respond to European Parties' Policy Statements During Elections. American Journal of Political Science 55, 370-382.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Somer-Topcu, Z. 2014. Do Voters Respond to Party Manifestos or to a Wider Information Environment? An Analysis of Mass-Elite Linkages on European Integration. American Journal of Political Science 58, 967-978.

Aldrich, J.H. 1993. Rational Choice and Turnout. American Journal of Political Science 37, 246-278.

Almond, G. A., Verba, S. 1963. The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Bakker, R. et al. 2015. 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey. [Data] Version 2015.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Barabas, J., Jerit, J. Pollock, W. and Carlisle Rainey, 2014. The Question(s) of Political Knowledge. American Political Science Review 108, 840-855.

Berelson, B.R., Lazarsfeld, P.F.; McPhee, W.N. 1954. Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in the Presidential Campaign. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Berglund, F., Holmberg, S., Schmitt, H., Thomassen, J. 2005. Party Identification and Party Choice. In: Thomassen, J. (ed) The European Voter. A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 105-395.

Budge, I. 1994. A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally. British Journal of Political Science, 24(4), 443-467.

Budge, I., Farlie, D. 1983. "Party Competition – SelectiveEmphasis or Direct Confrontation?" In Daalder H., Mair, P. (eds.) Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change. London: Sage, 267–306.

Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D. 2001. Finally! Comparative over-time mapping of party policy movement. In: Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J., Tanenbaum, E. (eds.)

Mapping Policy Preferences. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 19–50.

Busch, K. 2016. Estimating parties' left-right positions: Determinants of voters' perceptions' proximity to party ideology. Electoral Studies 41, 159-178.

Campbell, A., Converse, P.E., Miller, W. E., Stokes, D.E. 1960. The American Voter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Caplan, B. 2007. The Myth of the Rational Voter. Why Democracies choose bad Policies. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Clarke, H.D., McCutcheon, A.L. 2009. The Dynamics of Party Identification Reconsidered. Public Opinion Quarterly 73, 704–728.

Coleman, J.S. 1994. Foundations of Social Theory. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Converse, P. 1990. The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" In Ferejohn, J., Kuklinski, J. (eds.) Information and Democratic Processes. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 369-388.

Dahlberg, S. 2009. Political parties and perceptual agreement: The influence of party related factors on voters' perceptions in proportional systems. Electoral Studies 28, 270-278.

Dahlberg, S. 2013. Does context matter - The impact of electoral systems, political parties and the individual characteristics on voters' perceptions of party positions. *Electoral Studies, 32*, 670–683.

Dalton, R. J. 1984. Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan Dealignment in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Journal of Politics 46, 264-284.

Dalton, R. J. 2000. The Decline of Party Identifications. In Dalton, R. J., & Wattenberg, M. P. (Ed.) Parties Without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 19-36.

Dalton, R.J. 2017. Party representation across multiple issue dimensions. Party Politics 23, 609-622.

Delli Carpini, M. X., Keeter, S. 1991. Stability and Change in the U.S. Public's Knowledge of Politics. Public Opinion Quarterly, 55, 583-612.

Delli Carpini, M. X., Keeter, S. 1996. What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters. New Haven: Yale University Press,

Downs, A. 1957. An economic theory of democracy. Harper and Row, New York.

Drummond, A., 2010. Assimilation, contrast and voter projections of parties in left-right space: Does the electoral system matter? Party Politics 17, 711-743.

Ferejohn, J. 1995. The Spatial Model and Elections. In Grofman, B. (ed.). Information, Participation and Choice. An Economic Theory of Democracy in Perspective. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 107-124.

Fiorina, M.P. 1981. Retrospective Voting in American National Elections. Yale: Yale University Press

Fortunato, D., Stevenson, R. T. 2013b. Performance voting and knowledge of cabinet composition. Electoral Studies 32, 517-523.

Franzmann, S.T. 2015. Towards a real comparison of left-right indices: A comment to Jahn. Party Politics 21, 821-828.

Franzmann, S. T., Kaiser, A. 2006. Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data. Party Politics 163, 163–188.

Franzmann, S. T., Kaiser, A. 2016. Locating Political Parties in Policy Space - Data update July 1, 2016, http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/forschung/datenbanken/party-locations/ (accessed 2016/09/30).

Gabel, M., & Huber, J. 2000. Putting Parties in Their Place: Inferring Party Left-Right Ideological Positions from Party Manifestos Data. American Journal of Political Science, 44, 94-103.

Gilens, M. 2001. Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences. American Political Science Review 95, 379–96.

Goren, P. 2004. Political Sophistication and Policy Reasoning. A Reconsideration. American Journal of Political Science 48, 462-478.

Gordon, S.B., Segura, G.M. 1997. Cross-National Variation in the Political Sophistication of Individuals: Capability or Choice? The Journal of Politics, 59, 126-147.

Granberg, D. 1983. Preference, Expectations, and Placement Judgments: Some Evidence from Sweden, Social Psychology Quarterly 46, 363–368.

Granberg, D., Holmberg, S. 1988. The political system matters. Social psychology and voting behavior in Sweden and the United States. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Iyengar, S. 1986. Whither Political Information. Report to the National Election Studies Board of overseers, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

Johann, D. 2011. Spielregeln und AkteurInnen: Politisches Wissen als Ressource verschiedener Formen politischer Partizipation. Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 40, 377-394.

Kaiser, A. 2007. Anthony Downs, Ökonomische Theorie der Demokratie. In Brocker, M. (ed.) Geschichte des politischen Denkens. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 619-634.

Kitschelt, H. 1995 Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions, Party Politics, 1, 447-472.

Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J., Budge, I. McDonald, M.D. 2006. Mapping Policy Preferences II. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments in Eastern Europe, European Union, and OECD 1990-2003. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kroh M 2009. The ease of ideological voting. In: Klingemann H-D (ed.) The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lambert, R. D., Curtis, J. D.; Kay, B. D., Brown, S.D. 1988. The Social Sources of Political Knowledge. Canadian Journal of Political Science 21, 359–74.

Lau, R.R., Fahmy, D.F., Kaufman, R.R. 2014. Correct Voting Across Thirty-Three Democracies: A Preliminary Analysis. British Journal of Political Science 44, 239-259.

Laver M., Budge, I. 1992. Measuring policy distances and modeling coalition formation. In: Laver M and Budge I (eds.) Party Policy and Government Coalitions. New York: St. Martin's Press,15–40.

Lau, R.R., Redlawsk, D.P. 1997. Voting Correctly American Political Science Review 91, 585-598.

Lazarsfeld, P.F., Berelson, B., Gaudet, H. 1948. The People's Choice. How the Voter makes up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign. New York, Columbia University Press.

Markowski, R. 1997. Political parties and ideological spaces in East Central Europe. Communist and Post-Communist Studies 30, 221-254.

Marks, G., Hooghe, L., Nelson, M., Edwards, E. 2006. Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West: Different Structure, Same Causality. Comparative Political Studies 39, 155–175.

Marquis, L. 2010. Understanding Political Knowledge and its Influence on Voting Preferences in the 2007 Federal Election. Swiss Political Science Review, 16, 425–456.

Matsusaka, J.G. 1995. Explaining voter turnout patterns: An information theory. Public Choice, 84, 91-117.

McDermott, M. L. 1998. Race and Gender Cues in Low-Information Elections. Political Research Quarterly 51, 895-918.

McDermott, M. L. 2005. Candidate Occupations and Voter Information Shortcuts. Journal of Politics, 67, 201–219.

McDonald, M.D., Mendes, S.M., Kim, M. 2007. Cross-temporal and cross-national comparisons of party left-right positions. Electoral Studies 26, 62-75.

Meguid, B. M. 2008. Party Competition between Unequals: Strategies and Electoral Fortunes in Western Europe. New York: Cambridge University Press

Merrill, S., Grofman, B., 1999. A unified theory of voting: Directional and proximity spatial models. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, New York.

Merrill, S., Grofman, B., Adams, J., 2001. Assimilation and contrast effects in voter projections of party locations: Evidence from Norway, France, and the USA. Eur J Political Res 40, 199–221.

Meyer, T.M. 2013. Constraints on party policy change. ECPR Press, Colchester.

Neuman, R.W. 1981. Differentiation and Integration: Two Dimensions of Political Thinking. American Journal of Sociology 86, 1236–1268.

Neuman, R.W. 1986. The paradox of mass politics: Knowledge and opinion in the American electorate. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

Popkin, S.L. 1995. Information Shortcuts and the Reasoning Voter. In Grofman, B. (Ed.). Information, Participation and Choice. An Economic Theory of Democracy in Perspective. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 17-35.

Popkin, S. L.;Dimock, M. A. 1999. Political Knowledge and Citizen Competence. In Elkin, S. L.; Soltan, K. E. (Ed.). Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions.). Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 117-146.

Rabinowitz, G., MacDonald, S.E. 1989: A Directional Theory of Issue Voting. American Political Science Review 83, 93-121.

Rabinowitz, G., MacDonald, S.E., Listhaug, O. 1991 New Players in an Old Game: Party Strategy in Multiparty Systems. Comparative Political Studies 24, 147-185.

Riker, W.H.; Ordeshook, P.C. 1968. A theory of the calculus of voting. American Political Science Review 62, 25-42.

Rudi, T., 2010. Die Links-Rechts-Dimension in Mittel- und Osteuropa: „Super-Issue" oder bedeutungslos? In: Faas, T., Arzheimer, K., Roßteutscher, S. (Eds.) Information – Wahrnehmung – Emotion. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 169-189.

Schultze, M. 2014. Effects of Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) on Political Knowledge About Party Positions. Policy and Internet 6, 46-68.

Schultze, M. 2016. Wahlverhalten und Waehlerheterogenitaet. Theorie und Empirie auf der Grundlage des Michigan-Modells. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Seeberg, H. B., Slothuus, R., and Stubager, R. 2017. Do voters learn? Evidence that voters respond accurately to changes in political parties' policy positions. West European Politics 40, 336-356.

Shively, W. 1979. The Development of Party Identification among Adults: Exploration of a Functional Model. American Political Science Review 73, 1039-1054.

Somin, I. 2004. When Ignorance Isn't Bliss. How Political Ignorance Threatens Democracy. Policy Analysis 525, Cato Institute.

Stokes, D.E. 1963. Spatial Models of Party Competition. American Political Science Review 57, 368-377.

Volkens, A. et al. (Eds.) 2013. Mapping Policy Preferences from Texts. Statistical Solutions for Manifesto Analysts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Volkens, A., Lehmann, P., Matthieß, T., Merz, N., Regel, S. 2016. The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2016a. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).

Wattenberg, M.P., McAllister, I., Salvanto, A. 2000. How Voting is Like Taking a Sat Test: An Analysis of American Voter Rolloff. American Politics Research 28, 234-250.

Weisberg, H.F., Nawara, S.P. 2010. How Sophistication Affected The 2000 Presidential Vote: Traditional Sophistication Measures Versus Conceptualization. Political Behavior 32, 547-565.

Zaller, J. 1986. Analysis of Information Items on the 1985 NES Pilot Study. Report to the Board of Overseers for the National Election Studies.

Zaller, J. R. 1992. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. New York: Cambridge University Press.

CHAPTER 2

ESTIMATING PARTIES' LEFT-RIGHT POSITIONS: DETERMINANTS OF VOTERS' PERCEPTIONS' PROXIMITY TO PARTY IDEOLOGY[17]

Kathrin Barbara Busch, GESIS - Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences, Köln.

Abstract

The article aims to explore whether the accuracy of voters' perceptions of party ideology are affected by party position shifts and by the media's turn to non-left-right issues, such as political leadership, during election campaigns. Using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and a country-specific left-right index based on data by the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), multilevel analyses reveal that emphasizing leadership issues can lead voters to reflect left-right positions more accurately. A party's left-right position shift between elections does not lead to a significant difference in voters' perceptions, while a shift on the economic sub-dimension of left-right ideology can even lead voters to more position clarity. However, multiple parties' shifting their positions seems to overburden respondents' cognitive capacity.

Keywords: ideology; issue saliency; party manifesto; party perception; position shift

Highlights

- A multilevel analysis of voters' perceptions of party ideology in Western democracies and Eastern European EU member states
- Multiple parties' position shifts between elections decrease voters' estimation accuracy
- A single party's position shift on the economic sub-dimension leads to more accurate estimations
- Saliency on valence issues like leader personality evaluation increase voters' estimation proximity to parties' ideological positions

---

[17] This chapter represents an article that was published 2016 with Electoral Studies 41, 159-178. (Busch 2016)

1. Introduction

Theories of electoral decision making suggest that citizens should vote for the parties with which they identify, which have policies that represent the citizens' own interests best, or which are likely to change policies in their preferred direction (for example Merrill and Grofman, 1999). This decision requires voters to compare their own political stances with those of the parties. Voters must either acquire the relevant information about important political issues or at least have a sense of the parties' ideologies, which can serve as a 'cue to vote choice' (Downs, 1957). Ideological locations must then function as a type of umbrella for a broad range of single issues, which the voter does not necessarily need to study separately.

In election campaigns, party manifestos are the most important documents to determine the parties' ideological positions. According to interviews with party elites, politicians strive to base all of their campaign communications on these party manifestos (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011, 372). Hence, voters can inform themselves about policy stances directly by reading manifestos or by simply following the election campaign. If the campaign is successful for a party, it communicates the most important messages from the manifestos to the voter and thereby transports party ideology. If a party undergoes an ideological change from one election to the next, a well-informed public should realize this fact. However, recent research has suggested that the mean voter does not perceive changes in party ideologies through party manifestos (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu, 2011; 2014). It is not yet clear what determines how well the *individual* voter perceives these changes.

The aim of this research is to analyse the determinants that foster or undermine the links between current party locations and voters' perception of these positions. Specifically, it tests determinants related to changes in party positions over time and the saliency of political issues prior to elections to determine how strongly voters' ideological pictures of parties are influenced by current developments in the electoral campaign. Via multilevel analysis, the influence of system and party level characteristics are weighted against individual voter level influence on perceptual accuracy. The basic theoretical argument that inspired this research is that voters' knowledge of parties' current ideological locations is important for their voting decisions. Shifts in party manifesto positions or the emergence of new parties can affect the left-right locations of parties and even the organization of the important parties within the party system.

Voters thus must pay some attention to changes to have a clear view of party ideology. If important messages are not communicated to voters, they might base their pictures of parties' ideologies on outdated information and perhaps vote for parties that do not represent them best (anymore).

The research question can be located within the wider body of research on 'political knowledge' or 'political sophistication' (Gordon and Segura, 1997; Granberg and Holmberg; 1988, Neuman, 1981, 1986), for which knowledge of party positions is a central aspect of citizens' education. The innovative aspect of this investigation is the linking of voter estimations to *current* manifesto information, as well as the question of how strongly party position changes and issue saliency influence voters' perceptions. Apart from individual level determinants, it thus also tests for the influence of party behaviour and the structure of the party and electoral system to communicate manifesto information. It is the first study to use left-right values from the '12-step index' of manifesto data (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006) as the basis for the calculation accuracy of individual level perception[18].

Only if the salient issues within party manifestos form broadly consistent ideological pictures do voters have the opportunity to estimate precisely the parties' locations in this one-dimensional concept of political space, and only then can they choose the party that best reflects their own ideological standpoints. Apart from putting Downs to the test, the research question has several implications.

Firstly, a vast amount of empirical research has connected the *ideological congruence* of voters' preferences with their political representatives (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Budge and McDonald, 2007; Golder and Stramski, 2010; Huber and Powell, 1994; Klingeman et al., 2006; McDonald et al., 2004; Powell and Vanberg, 2000; Warwick 2010). This research assumes that voters are able to integrate information about policy

---

[18] Adams et al (2011; 2014) used the RILE index, which is included in the CMP data, and they did not measure perceptions of party position changes on the individual level, but they compared respondents' perceptions in one year to that of another year. Research that has not examined individual political knowledge has used measurement of voters' party-specific mean estimates (Dahlberg, 2013; Gordon and Segura, 1997; Granberg and Holmberg, 1988), to which single voter's estimates have been compared. However, only the CMP data, to my knowledge, contain information about current and previous party positions. Thus, they are the best starting point to explore how well knowledge about current manifesto positions is conveyed to voters, as well as whether voters notice ideological shifts over time.

into a consistent view of party ideology that is broadly shared by voters and parties.[19] If voters did not understand left-right positions, a comparison between parties and voters' ideological stands would be a mere comparison of *labels* and not of ideological *content*.

Secondly, some researchers have argued that the policy-based party-voter linkage is normatively preferable to other political ties (Kitschelt 1995). In an ideal world, well-informed voters could compare their own self-interests with those of qualified political candidates (Gastil, 2000: 32.) or parties. If voters cannot arrive at consistent pictures of party ideologies, they might depend more heavily on other cues to make choices regarding voting, such as party leaders' charisma or clientelist ties. Such choices could be problematic because elections won purely on the basis of charisma or clientelist ties 'invoke the centrality of the electoral process of interest aggregation for the distribution of group and societal benefits' (Kitschelt, 1995: 450).

However, considering leadership evaluations in elections is not necessarily problematic if it occurs in addition to issue consideration[20]. My analysis suggests that it can even draw attention to left-right positions. In general, voters' mean estimations of parties on the left-right scale correspond well with the left-right positions of the parties. On the individual level, the precision of a voter's party estimation is best if the voter's own left-right position is close to that of the party but is not flawed by extremely positive affection. The strength of a single party's change on the left-right axis does not significantly lead voters to estimate a party less precisely. If only changes in economic political issues – the economic sub-dimension of the left-right scale – are analysed, a party's position shift even has a slightly increasing effect on proximity of voters' estimations to the party's manifesto positions. Contrarily, the stronger that multiple parties change their positions on the left-right scale, the less accurately do voters

---

[19] It should be noted that the understanding of left and right can also vary between countries, but this source of bias will be addressed by using country-specific indices of the CMP data. This process will be explained in greater detail below.

[20] Electoral research has also found that some democratic elections have been won mostly due to valence issues, such as which party will manage 'the economy' best or which party 'performs best' (Whiteley et al., 2005; Clarke et al., 2011). However, even so-called valence issues can have relationships with political positions. For example, a respondent might believe that a specific party would handle an economic crisis best, which could be categorized as a 'valence' issue, but this 'best handling' might also be cognitively related to the respondent's knowledge of *how* the specific party would manage the crisis, i.e., through specific economic policies.

estimate the parties' positions. It is hence the position shifts of the many that clearly decrease position clarity.

In the next section, I will elaborate further on the links to previous research on political knowledge and the precision of voters' party estimations. I will then advance my argument that party positioning behaviour and party system properties, such as the number of parties, account for much of the difference between voters' cognitions about parties' ideological locations. Using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES, Module 1 and 2, Full Releases) and the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Klingemann et al., 2006), the multilevel analyses with hierarchical linear models (HLM) in Section 6 will evaluate and compare the determinants of estimation proximity on the individual, party and system levels. This analysis includes 150642 respondents' party projections in 25 post-election studies of parliamentary elections, located in a variety of older Western and younger Eastern European democracies[21]. In the final section, I discuss the findings and their implications for future research.

2. Research on Political Knowledge and Voter Perceptions

Knowledge about party ideology is a type of political sophistication[22] with a very practical value (Neuman 1981; Gordon and Segura, 1997). It is a prerequisite for issue voting because only if voters have knowledge of party positions[23], they are able to vote for the parties that represent their own interests best. To test for this knowledge, respondents in election surveys are often asked to estimate parties' positions, most commonly along the political left-right dimension. Researchers into political knowledge draw on these data. They operationalize the precision of the individual voter's estimation by subtracting the voter's estimate of a party's ideological location from the mean of all voters' estimates of the same party's location (Gordon and Segura, 1997; Granberg and Holmberg, 1988; Neuman 1981, 1986). Because not even party experts can know precisely what the 'true' ideological party position is, this approach is legitimate because it uses the 'perceptually agreed position' (Dahlberg, 2013) as a valid

---

[21] The full list of countries and parties in the sample can be found in Appendix 1.
[22] In the following, the terms 'political sophistication' and 'political knowledge' denote the same concept, and I will use them interchangeably.
[23] This knowledge is meant generally, both regarding the acknowledgement of single party positions that are important to voters and regarding ideological vote choices as a specific type of 'issue voting', in contrast with a mere party ID vote.

point of reference[24]. Other research, which is also linked to the present study, has analysed whether the mean of the voters indicates perception of ideological change or whether party supporters react to party position changes by adopting positions or changing their party support (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu, 2014; Adams, Ezrow, and Leiter, 2012) While this study has a slightly different focus – it seeks determinants that increase or decrease the link between voters' estimations of party ideology and the parties' *current* self-expressed ideology – it can nevertheless draw on some of these findings from the research on political sophistication and voter reactions to party changes.

2.1 Individual ability, psychological and system effects

Neuman's (1981) ground-breaking study of political knowledge identified two intertwined dimensions of cognitive organization: 'conceptual differentiation' (the 'ability to identify and discriminate among the various political issues, actors, and events') and 'conceptual integration' (the 'explicit organization of ideas and information in terms of abstract or ideological constructs') (Neuman, 1981: 1237). Analysing these cognitive abilities only in relation to socio-demographic determinants, he found that education is most strongly linked to conceptual integration (Neuman, 1981, 1986). Later quantitative studies concentrated specifically on the psychological determinants of individual voters' political knowledge (Granberg and Holmberg, 1988; Merrill et al., 2001; Drummond, 2010). Granberg and Holmberg (1988) found, in their analyses of voters in Sweden and the USA that emotional predispositions towards parties could lead to strong misperceptions. If voters like a party, they tend to exaggerate the party's similarity to their own positions; if they dislike it, they exaggerate the differences and place the party further away from their own political standpoints. These 'assimilation' and 'contrast' effects are found across a variety of political systems (Merrill et al., 2001). However, while contrast effects are stronger in majoritarian systems, assimilation effects are similarly strong under both majoritarian and proportional electoral rules (Drummond, 2010).

---

[24] A problem with expert data is also that they are usually limited to one point in time and hence do not capture changes in party positions between elections.

Gordon and Segura (1997) showed that system-level impacts influence voters' estimation abilities more strongly than individual voter characteristics. Their explanation was that electoral systems offer more or fewer incentives for voters to perceive information about parties. For example, voters in single-party contexts perceive less political information than voters in multiparty contexts (Gordon and Segura, 1997). The assumption is that, in multiparty systems, more parties have realistic chances of achieving leadership in government. A greater number of parties makes the vote decision more complex and provides an incentive for voters to inform themselves more thoroughly. It should also lead the media to distribute information about a greater number of parties. Further, because the presence of more relevant parties in multiparty systems leads to a potentially greater number of confrontational issues (Sartori, 1976), information about parties' positions should be more detailed as well. In two-party systems, in contrast, voters only need to know whether they roughly incline towards party A or party B to make rational vote decisions. They do not need to consider as many parties as voters in multiparty systems, nor must they know as many position details.

Dahlberg (2013) employed a three-level analysis to determine the level of estimators that is most important for voters' 'estimation precision'. Examining the perceptions of multiple parties within each party system, he found that, on average, party characteristics are more important determinants of voters' party projections than system determinants. In his model, the strongest effect is the result of the divergence of a party's position, compared to all of the positions of other parties in the same country.

The accumulation of previous findings shows that multiple determinants can influence voters' knowledge about party positions. This study follows Gordon and Segura (1997) and Dahlberg (2013) by emphasizing system-level and party characteristics, but it also controls for the known individual level effects on the political perception. The main contribution of this paper is to test whether party position changes over time, individual or aggregated within party systems, confuse voters, and if voters' estimation proximity to the current party ideology is lower if the saliency before the election is not related to left-right issues.

3. Putting the Spotlight on Party Behaviour and Party System Structure

This study builds on Gordon and Segura's instrumental-rational view of voters' knowledge and on Sartori's (1976) insights into party competition structures. Parties

are the crucial actors because, if they do not manage to communicate their most important information or if they stay deliberately ambiguous during election campaigns, voters cannot make correct issue-based voting decisions. As Dahlberg (2013) found, it can be advantageous for voters' left-right perceptions if parties take distinctive positions: the more divergent that the party's position is to all other parties'[25], the higher the voters' perceptual agreement is to a party's left-right position. Despite this potential advantage of parties to be acknowledged for their concerns with specific issues, taking a very divergent position does not generally conform to parties' strategies to win votes. Rather the opposite is the case: usually, parties profit electorally from 'broad appeal' strategies (Somer-Topcu, 2014). Parties then address a broad range of topics, and they sometimes even show inter-party or intra-party personnel differences regarding the same issues. As a result, issues appeal to a broader range of the electorate, and voters' left-right estimations of these parties can also vary more. In the same vein, Dahlberg (2013) argued that it is easier for voters to locate electorally weaker parties than very strong parties: the broader appeal of the latter leads to less clear issue domination than smaller parties usually exhibit.[26]

Apart from the parties' internal consistency regarding left-right positions, the consistency over time of the political issues that the parties present to the electorate should also be important for voters' perceptions. If voters generally do not perceive parties' ideology changes in party manifestos (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu, 2011; 2014), these changes will lead to misperceptions. Voters' perceptions can be the results of their cognitive capacities, but they can also be dependent on the media's attention to the parties and the saliency of the issues which undergo changes. Further, parties can be more or less effective in the issue domination of the election campaign.[27] In the following, hypotheses are mainly drawn regarding party position consistency over time and regarding campaign effects. I go on to explain further which party system characteristics should be important, and then I discuss the specific situation of the

---

[25] It should be noted here that the divergence measurement that Dahlberg employed is the mean sum of its distances to all other parties weighted by their respective electoral sizes. The distance to an electorally successful party is thus weighted more strongly than the distance to an electorally less successful party.
[26] For Dahlberg, this is a confirmation of Kirchheimer's (1966) 'catch-all' hypothesis (Dahlberg 2013).
[27] Researchers into political communication see the media as a powerful actor in 'priming', i.e., the weighting of specific political issues (see Gidengil et al., 2002: 76-77), so parties might only have an indirect influence on this process.

younger, post-communist Eastern European democracies. To determine whether voters' abilities, parties' behaviour or party system characteristics determine voters' perceptions of current programmatic information, each of these channels of influence is tested within multilvel linear models.

3.1 Position consistency over time

Research into party manifesto data has suggested that parties have quite long-lasting ideological positions (Budge and Klingemann, 2001; Adams, 2001). While they constantly make small movements, major changes are quite rare, at least in the long-established systems of Western Europe.[28] Their shifts on the left-right scale are usually undertaken within limited areas of the left-right scale, in a type of zigzagging course.

On average, voters' perceptions of ideological changes in party manifestos is low: if a party changes its left-right position in terms of its manifesto, the mean of respondents does not position the party significantly more to the left or right than the mean of respondents in the previous election (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2014).[29] If voters do not follow the position change of a party, their perceptions of the party's left-right position will be worse, and the stronger the party's position becomes. It is hence hypothesized that

(H1): the more the position of a party shifts over time, the lower the voter's estimation proximity is to the party's ideological position.

Over time, change sometimes results in party positions overlapping or in parties 'leapfrogging' each other, but by and large, such leapfrogging only occurs between parties that are ideologically close to one another (Budge and Klingemann, 2001). The reason that parties only seldom cross each other's left-right positions seems to be that

---

[28] This statement must be tempered somewhat, because Klingemann et al (2006) showed that, in Portugal in the first decade after its regime change, parties' left-right positions were also very unstable, similar to the 1990 situation of parties in the new democracies of Eastern Europe.

[29] It should be noted that Adams and his colleagues' research was undertaken using longitudinal cross-sectional data and not panel data. The comparison of the party placement of the mean respondents is hence based on different samples. Moreover, the researchers calculated the differences between the means of party placement between years and not with regard to a specific question about party position changes. While the mean placement of a specific party should indeed be different if a party has changed its position over time, this type of measurement is slightly error-prone. For example, sampling problems and outliers can render the mean placements of different samples less reliable than if the same persons were asked about changes in party positions.

they frequently adapt their policies in the same direction as – and in response to – rival parties from the same party family (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009) and to which they are ideologically very closely positioned (Williams, 2015)[30] However, even if parties do not leapfrog each other, multiple party changes might make the estimating of party positions precisely a more difficult task for respondents. A single party's change within a pattern of parties changing in the same direction might be less obvious. It should not be forgotten here that the task of estimating the left-right position of a party is very abstract, while parties' movement on the left-right scale in terms of their manifesto stances might be simply evoked by a specific new left or right issue added to their agendas. Voters of course will not calculate this change; they can only have an approximate picture of parties' left-right positions. Voters might even estimate party positions mainly by comparing one party to the neighbouring parties or by first thinking about which party is in the centre of the scale and then ordering the others around it, as research has suggested (Best, 2013). If multiple parties change in the same direction regarding one or a few issues, and this includes the one which the respondent estimates, voters must ignore that all of these parties are taking more left (more right) positions now and will thus have 'moved' to the left (right) of the scale. However, in this situation, the specific party to estimate does not take a more left (right) position relative to the other parties than before. Its movement will be more difficult to notice and estimate than if its shift were the only shift that occurred. But also in a situation in which multiple parties have moved into multiple directions, the task of estimating a single party's position within that system of manifold party shifts is also likely to be more difficult than within a party system in which there are not many position changes over time. The second hypothesis is thus:

(H2): in a comparison between countries, the stronger the total of all of the parties' positions shifts are except for the estimated[31], the lower the voters' estimation proximity is to the parties' ideological positions.

---

[30] There is also evidence that niche party behaviour, in terms of position change, is different than mainstream party behaviour, with niche parties responding less to public opinion shifts (Adams et al., 2006) and therefore being more stable position keepers. However, because the focus of my analysis is on position change, this research will not further distinguish between mainstream and niche parties.
[31] It is important to note here that, to differentiate later between the effects of the change in the estimated party itself as hypothesized in H1 and H1b and the effects of all other parties, the total of the parties'

3.2 Priming of topics in the election campaign

Apart from the hypothesized confusion of voters due to programmatic inconsistency, it is also likely that a large portion of current information does not reach voters at all because most voters do not inform themselves about programmatic positions directly but use the media as an *intermediate* actor. Because the media usually only cover a sample of current programmatic party issues, those that are 'primed' (Gidengil et al., 2002), this communication means will already create differences between issues in party manifestos and voter perceptions. Further, 'priming' not only leads to an incomplete picture of current party topics but also to an intraparty variation in how much information is presented. This effect does not always depend on the importance or popularity of this specific party, i.e., the 'party logic'. It can also depend on the 'media logic', according to the media's perceived salience of political issues (Hopmann et al., 2011; Mazzoleni, 1987; van Aelst et al., 2008). In any case, the priming of issues means that information about parties' current issue positions is not communicated to voters equitably.

In addition, in most election campaigns, it is more likely that leadership, rather than issues, is primed (Gidengil et al., 2002). According to Norris et al. (1999), the priming of issues within an election campaign only occurs if a very new issue becomes salient. If the political debate revolves around well-known policies, the media focus on political leaders. The question is whether this media concentration on political personalities decreases voters' information about parties' current ideological positions. Although empirical studies have shown that, in neither German (Kaase, 1994; Schoenbach, 1996) nor American elections (Hayes, 2008), 'personalized' voting occurs at the expense of 'issue voting', this type of issue voting could nevertheless be based on insufficient, inaccurate or even outdated information. In other words, the personalization of an election campaign might lead to less accurate or less updated information about current policy positions. The less absolute hypothesis made here is that:

---

change effect in H2 does not include the party change of the specific party, which is estimated in one party-voter dyad. Because both variables will be integrated into the later analysis, the single party change variable controls for this single party's part of the effect within the mean party change variable. In other words, due to the control of the single party's effect, an effect of H2 will be purely the result of the other parties, rather than being the result of the voter's specific party estimation.

(H3): the more a campaign is personalized (i.e., focused on party leaders and personalities), the lower voters' estimation proximity is to current manifesto positions.

Apart from the personalization of politics, other frequent valence issues within election campaigns are parties' speculations about possible governmental coalitions and party performance. These speculations might interfere with the expected negative impact of personalistic topics in an election campaign because discussion of possible political partners and past performance can enhance the clarity of parties' positional similarities and differences. Hence, a control variable will be added that accounts for these party-politics-related topics.

3.3 Age of the political regime as a proxy for party system institutionalization

Party systems in Eastern Europe are very unstable, as indicated by strong party fragmentation, high rates of electoral and legislative volatility and low party anchorage within societies (Rose and Munro, 2009). Some of these characteristics should be interrelated with the hypotheses stated above about potentially stronger party position shifts and the possibly stronger priming of political leaders. Other characteristics, such as assumed greater party knowledge in multiparty systems and potentially more polarized competition in systems with greater numbers of effective parties, will be accounted for with control variables. However, there are specific characteristics of *young party systems* that might add to voters' confusion. These characteristics roughly all relate to party-voter linkages, which have been found to be rather weak (Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006). For example, frequent changes on the party supply side in the early years after the democratic transition were a cause for, rather than a consequence of, high volatility rates (Tavits, 2008). Similarly, these changes might demotivate disappointed voters for electorally unsuccessful parties from paying attention to elections and party campaigns. Furthermore, in the first years after regime change, Eastern European parties in office often either did not fulfil pre-election promises or, vice versa, did not mention important policy changes before they were elected (Roberts, 2010; Tóka, 1997). Apart from the possible increase in disappointment or distrust in party positions to which such behaviour could lead, unexpected policies from left (or right) parties might also have added to confusion. An example is that, between 1989 and

2004, leftist party governments in 13 post-communist countries decreased social spending more than rightist party governments (Tavits and Letki, 2009).[32] Hence, although voters have general knowledge about the left-right party heuristic (Rudi, 2010b), there are causes for distrust or confusion. While party behaviour differences are diverse and should also be related to differences in systems and societies within Eastern Europe, their unifying aspect still seems to be that they are all related to less experienced parties within less experienced systems of parties, with loser party-voter ties and loser inter-party relationships. When party systems become more stable over time in terms of their competing actors (Rudi, 2010a), interparty competition around political issues and interparty relationships in coalition building (Warwick, 1996), party-voter linkages and position knowledge should increase as well. Because aspects of parties within party systems are too diverse to be modelled completely in this analysis, two control variables, which measure the party age and the age of the democracy, will serve as proxies for specific party characteristics in young democracies.

Further control variables are those that have shown to be important in studies of political knowledge (Gordon and Segura, 1997; Dahlberg 2013). Following these studies, it is expected that multiparty competition leads to clearer party competition lines and hence to more exact voter estimations, while an even greater number of effective political parties (ENPPs) can also lead to less clarity due to 'polarized pluralism' in the party competition structure and cross-cutting of party competition lines (Sartori, 1976). In contrast, the polarization of the party system, the party's mean left-right divergence from all other parties weighted by their vote shares (Dahlberg 2013) and its affiliation with one of the left-right party families should increase voters' accurate perceptions due to enhancing clarity of left-right differences between parties. The previous vote share of the estimated party in the previous election is used as a proxy for its popularity, and the party's previous participation in government, expressed by the dummy variable 'in government t-1', should decrease voters' ability to estimate accurately due to the expected decreases in position focus and clarity. At the individual level, the analysis will control for both the more objective ideological distance and the 'felt' affective closeness

---

[32] They explain this phenomenon by the leftist parties' more compelling need to demonstrate their belief in democracy and a capitalist market economy, while the rightist parties need to demonstrate responsiveness to the electorate, which suffered hardship due to the economic transition.

to parties, and for sociodemographic characteristics that affect political interest or voting behaviour, such as education status, age (Franklin et al., 2004; Gallego, 2008; Milner, 2002) and gender (Bennett and Bennett, 1989, Inglehart and Norris, 2000).[33]

4. Data Sources, Methodology and Operationalization

The analysis combines data from eligible persons[34] in 25 post-legislative election studies from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES Modules 1 and 2, Full Releases) with the left-right party positions of the '12-step index' of parties' left-right positions (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006)[35], which are based on the raw values of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Klingemann et al., 2006). Using data from the CSES guarantees a timeframe that is as close as possible to the time of the election, the prior election campaigns and media coverage of the most important political issues and manifesto stances. To ensure comparability in terms of democratic institutions, the data are restricted to election studies from Western and Eastern European democracies[36] that were at that time rated 'free' (Freedom House, 2014). Because changes in party positions are of particular interest as an independent variable, the data are further restricted to parties that were also voted into the previous legislature[37]. The variables are distributed on three analytical levels with a nested data structure: 150642 individual respondents' estimates are linked to 113 political parties, which in turn are nested within 25 national countries' election(s) (studies) with specific cultural and electoral system characteristics. Due to this data structure on three levels, the analysis employs a hierarchical linear mixed model, which enables the breaking down of the variation in

---

[33] The construction of the control variables is presented in Appendix 2.

[34] The term 'eligible persons' is more precise than 'voters', because not only persons who cast a ballot are included in the analysis. In the following, when using the term 'voters', I nevertheless refer to this group of 'potential' voters, regardless of whether they actually make use of that right.

[35] The 12-step data are available for download from the webpage of the University of Potsdam, http://www.uni-potsdam.de/db/ls_regierungssystem_brd/index.php?article_id=498&clang=0, (accessed July 1,2015).

[36] These election studies have sometimes been divided into different parts of one country for historical reasons (East and West Germany) or because parties are organized along an ethnic division (as in Belgium). Data from the USA, Japan and Belgian Wallonia were excluded because they did not contain some of the important variables in this study. Other Asian and Latin American countries' data were excluded due to data restrictions regarding the index data used (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006). The full list of election studies and parties included in the analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

[37] The restriction to parliamentary parties is due to the CMP data, which mostly covers only the manifestos of legislative parties, but it also ensures that only parties with a chance of being known by the bulk of voters are considered.

individual respondents' estimates into 'within- and between- (party and system-) components' (see e.g., Bryk and Raudenbush, 1992). In other words, it assesses simultaneously how strongly individual, party and system determinants account for the variation in estimation proximity.

4.1 The dependent variable

The dependent variable, 'estimation proximity', measures the space between a voter's subjective estimation of a party's left-right position and its position based on party manifesto data. To connect all of the party values per country to the respective voters' estimations, the data are arranged with party-voter dyads: for each respondent, it includes as many party estimates as a respective country's respondents' are asked about and for which data are available in the CSES and the 12-step index database. This approach is similar to Dahlberg's (2013) approach, but in contrast with this and other previous research, the left-right '12-step-index' (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006) is used here as the reference point for the current left-right manifesto location. This '12-step-index' is based on the 'raw' data of single issue saliencies in party manifestos (Klingemann et al., 2006). The use of these manifesto data is important for my research question because it seeks determinants of how strongly voters' concepts of parties are linked to the *current* party manifestos. Moreover, to examine whether voters' ideological estimates are influenced by parties' previous changes in position, I need data containing not only the present party positions but also the previous positions.[38] Before demonstrating the operationalization of the dependent variable in greater detail, I will discuss the appropriateness of CMP data in general and, more specifically, the use of the '12-step index' more thoroughly.

---

[38] To my knowledge, there are no survey data that contains voters' placements of both the current and the previous left-right positions of parties. According to Meyer (2013), even political experts' party placement questions on election surveys are often not time-specific, either asking vaguely about 'political parties today' (Huber and Inglehart, 1995) or not mentioning any time dimension (Benoit and Laver, 2007; Castles and Mair, 1984). The estimations thus reflect the experts' expectations about a party's position in a general sense. This lack of exactness is also indicated by the stability of expert judgements in longitudinal comparison (Meyer 2013: 92).

4.1.1 Seeking parties' objective left-right positions: which index is best?

To answer the empirical question of how well a person estimates a party's ideological position, it is first necessary to find a valid measurement of the party's *true*, *objective* left-right location, which is a point of scientific debate. It strongly depends on a valid definition of what is meant by left and right. Although different theories are referred to, and used as a base for the construction of left- right indices, for example Marx (Budge et al., 2001) and Bobbio (Jahn, 2011)[39], it can be doubted that these theoretic sources are valid across geographical space and time. It is well known that the sub-dimensions of the left-right space, the economic and the non-economic value dimensions, do not cluster everywhere in the same manner (Kitschelt, 1995; Marks et al., 2006). In Western Europe, most parties connect liberal market values with traditional, conservative 'freedoms and rights' values and 'left' economic values with liberal 'freedoms and rights'. However, most Eastern European parties connect those political sub-dimensions conversely (Holländer, 2003; Kitschelt, 1995; Markowski, 1997; Marks et al., 2006). Also the emphasis on each of the sub-dimensions varies internationally (Rovny and Edwards, 2012): while, in most countries, the economic dimension is dominant, in Austria, Spain, Poland and Slovenia, the 'freedoms and rights' dimension is the more important one. It is hence useful to employ a measurement of ideology that considers the culture-specific meaning of left and right as much as possible.

The CMP raw data are a good starting point because they simply represent the proportion of different political issues that a party mentions in its manifesto, and unlike other databases, they contain position data for a long period of time. It is hence possible to show how positions change. The CMP was confronted with the critique that the data might be prone to procedural errors[40] (Benoit et al., 2009). However, other left-right codes of parties' data, such as those compiled by experts, can also have errors, and the coding of left-right positions is then often less transparent than the CMP proceedings. Moreover, the CMP shows that its means for addressing potential coding problems are

---

[39] Also, see Franzmann (2011).
[40] Sentences in the manifestos are hand-coded into 114 single issue categories. The relative frequency with which an issue is mentioned is deemed to indicate how salient the party believe that the issue is (Budge and Klingemann, 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006).

sufficient[41] to produce data that are at least free from systematic, over-time or cross-national bias and that show high validity scores (Klingemann et al, 2006, 103).

What might be of more concern than the reliability of the raw CMP measurements is the question of how best to calculate an index from the data. Researchers have found several methods to accomplish this goal (Budge, 1987; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Gabel and Huber, 2000; Jahn, 2011; Klingemann, 1995; Laver and Budge, 1992). In essence, the approaches are different in terms of how researchers sample the single issues that are important for left-right cleavage. For most indices, researchers rely on a specific theoretical perspective of the left-right dimension and the single issues that belong to each side of the spectrum. Factorial analyses are then run with a different number of left and right 'marker' items, with variations in how many issues are sampled (Budge, 1987; Laver and Budge, 1992; Klingemann, 1995; Gabel and Huber, 2000).[42]

Most approaches arrive at an index based on the whole country sample that they use. Only the '12-step approach' (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006) produces country-specific indices. Briefly, Franzmann and Kaiser first distinguished between valence and position issues by country, and they also differentiated between different time spans if the issue structure changed. Using only those position issues for which parties within a party system were really different from one another, they ran regression analyses of party positions on overall party system mean issue positions. This analysis was performed issue by issue, to determine which of the position issues were left and which were right in comparison to a reference party. Only then did they calculate the specific left-right party positions by subtracting the individual party's saliency value from the lowest saliency value of the party system ('base value'). The 'raw values' arrived at were smoothed using the means of the raw values of three election years (the mean raw scores of the previous election with the current election and the next election (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Franzmann, 2013). The choice of single issues for the country-specific indices is hence very pragmatically dependent on the empirically observable left-right dichotomy around which country-specific policy debates revolve. This culturally sensitive approach to ideology makes it most suitable for my endeavours.

---

[41] Potential inter-coder problems are addressed in the training of coders, as well as during the production of the data phase (Lacewell and Werner, 2013).

[42] For a more comprehensive comparison, see Dinas and Gemenis (2010).

In the CSES data, respondents' left-right party estimates are captured by the request to rate each party on an 11-point scale. The '12-step index' and the CSES scale run from 0 (leftmost position) to 10 (rightmost position). To calculate how well respondents estimate a party in comparison to the position data, I subtract the respondent's left-right estimates of a party (originated in the CSES data) from the respective party's index value (12-step data). If a respondent's estimated values are the same for all parties, the answers are recoded as missing. All non-response answers – 'don't know', 'refused', etc. – are also coded as missing and are excluded from analysis[43]. Negative values are recoded into natural (positive) values because I am interested in the proximity measurement and not in whether someone estimated a party to be further to the left or to the right of its index position. The resulting variable has a skewed kurtosis and is thus logarithmized[44]. Because the values so far represent the difference between estimated and manifesto position values, the scale is then inverted. In the resulting variables, higher values hence indicate greater proximity, and lower values indicate lower proximity of the voter's estimate to the index party position.

4.2 Independent variables

The most important independent variables relative to the hypotheses above are individual *party change*, the *mean parties' change* and the *priming of leaders within the election campaign.* Party change is calculated by subtracting a party's previous position from its present position. Because only the strength of change is important here and not its direction, negative values are recoded as positive values. The *mean parties' change* is measured as the mean of all parties' position shifts from the previous to the current manifesto's left-right positions. The variable *personalization of the election campaign* is based on a CSES variable that captures national political experts' open answers to the question '[…] what are the five most salient factors that affected the outcome of the election (e.g., major scandals; economic events; the presence of an independent actor; specific issues)?' For the construction of the variable, the number of personalistic issues mentioned by the national political expert is counted. 'Personalistic' issues are defined

---

[43] The imputation of values for 'don't know' answers was not a viable alternative to the pairwise exclusion of all missing values, because the data of most of my sample countries only used the 'missing' code for this question, rather than differentiating among 'don't know', 'refused' and 'missing'.
[44] The range of the party-voter means of the original (positive) gap values can be found in Appendix 3.

here as those issues that refer either to specific politicians without connection to their policies or to more general mentions of leadership[45]. The variable represents the number of these personalistic campaign issues out of the five possible mentions by political experts. All of these issues are considered to be 'valence' issues because they do not relate to any confrontational political dimension but only to an evaluation of political personalities, which are grounded in shared norms such as 'trustworthiness' or 'being a good leader' in a more general sense.[46]

5. Estimating Parties' Ideological Positions: Some Descriptive Statistics

As an initial overview of how voters' estimations generally fit the party index values, the mean correlations between parties and voter estimations are shown (Table II.1). For comparative reasons, the correlation test is performed with both the 12-step index (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006) and the RILE index (Budge and Klingemann, 2001). Using the values from the '12-step-approach', the correlation value is 0.73 with a 0.05 level of significance. The RILE index values are equally significant, but they correlate according to a lower value of 0.64 with the mean party estimates, lending some support to the view that the '12-step-approach' seems more appropriate[47].

Table II.1: Mean correlations of party estimations with party manifesto indices

Index	Mean	
12-step index	0.73*	
RILE index	0.64*	*α=0.05

In general, there is evidence that party changes on the left-right scale lead to less precise estimations, as Figure II.1 shows.

---

[45] For the present sample, these are 'Personality of Jacques Chirac' and 'Right-Extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen's success at the [preceding, K.B.B.] presidential election' (both France), 'Resignation of the Prime Minister' (Portugal), 'Promises/Trust of leadership' (mentioned in Britain, Hungary, New Zealand, Sweden), 'Leadership' or 'Personalization of the election campaign' (mentioned in Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland), and 'Images of party leaders' (Finland).

[46] For the construction of the control variables, see Appendix 2.

[47] Due to limitations of space and the word count, a more comprehensive overview of the proximity and the raw 'gap' had to be moved to the appendix; see Appendix 3.

Figure II.1: Mean parties' left-right changes and estimation proximity
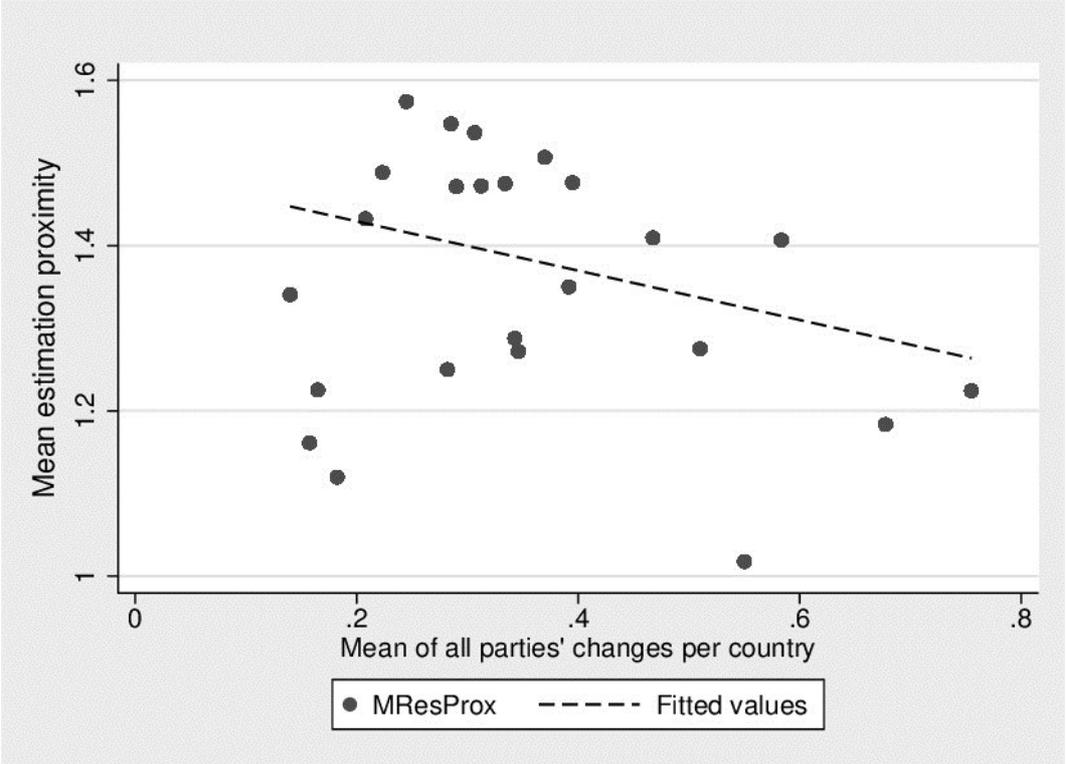
With a greater mean party change within a country, voters' estimation proximity to parties' left-right ideological positions is lower. Figure II.2 graphs the bivariate relationship between parties' mean changes per country and voters' estimation

Figure II.2: Mean parties' left-right change and estimation proximity by young
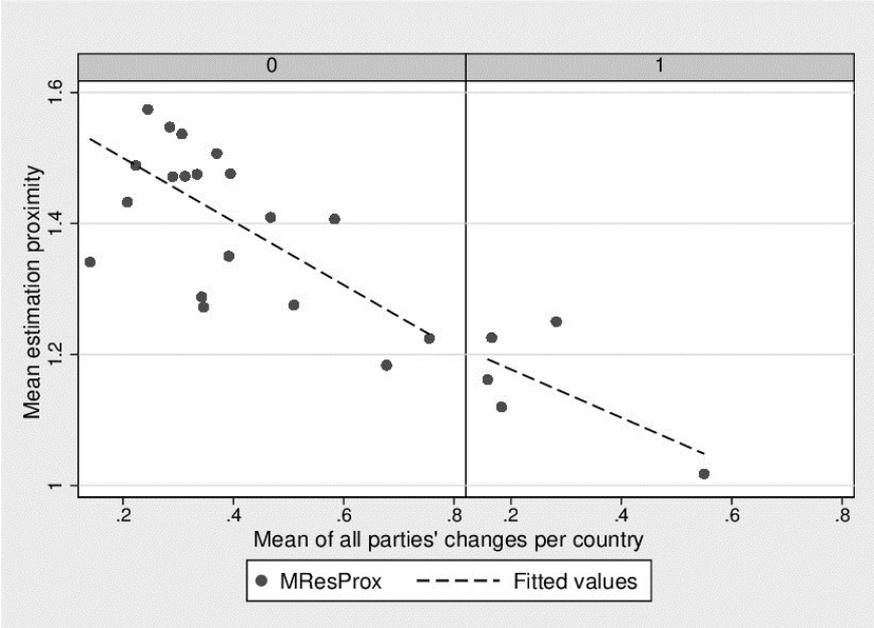
proximity for the younger and older democracies separately. It shows that in general, the mean proximity of voter estimations to party positions is lower in the younger democracies. Moreover, the impact of mean party change on misplacement is not as strong as in the old systems, as indicated by the less steep slope (Figure II.2). This first overview of the data leaves the impression that party and system characteristics can be important determinants of voters' estimation proximity to party positions. To arrive at a reliable answer to why individual voters' estimates are more or less manifesto-oriented, it is, however, necessary to run a systematic analysis that considers all levels of analysis simultaneously.

6. Regression Analyses

6.1 Position changes of parties on the left-right scale and issue domination in the election campaign as determinants of estimation proximity

In the following, two three-level hierarchical linear models are run, which contain the individual, party and system level impact factors. Model 1 employs the party left-right position change on the party level and the corresponding mean of all parties' changes on the system level, while model 2 employs the variables for single and mean party changes on the economic sub-dimension of left-right ideology (Table II.2). The calculation is meant as a robustness check for model 1, but it also sheds additional light on the way in which position changes can lead to voters' confusion about parties' left-right positions. For means of comparison between the strength of the coefficients within the model, the first model is also run with z-standardized variables[48].

Model 1 confirms Drummond's (2010) finding that respondents who have strong emotions towards a party, as expressed by the dummy variables 'Like Strongly' and 'Don't Like', estimate the party less accurately than those whose emotions fall within the normal range. The unstandardized-coefficients reveal that respondents with strong antipathy towards a party estimate it 0.17 points or approximately 15.5 percentage points[49] less accurately than persons with no extraordinary emotions.

---

[48] The coefficients of the one- and two-level models are not presented here because they do not add much information to the results. They can, however, be found in Appendix 6.
[49] 0.17 points here equals approximately 15.5 % due to the 11 point left-right scale

Table II.2: Determinants of respondents' estimation proximity to left-right party positions

Fixed part	Model 1 ß coefficients (standardized)	Model 1 Beta coefficients (unstandardized)	Model 2 Beta coefficients (unstandardized)
Intercept 3	-0.045	1.509***	1.384***
Don't Like	-0.129***	-0.167***	-0.167***
Like Strongly	-0.087***	-0.099***	-0.099***
Ideological Distance	-0.127***	-0.037***	-0.037***
Education*	0.056***	0.016***	0.016***
Age*	-0.014***	-0.000***	-0.000***
Female	-0.037***	-0.037***	-0.037***
Party's Change	0.020	0.033	
Party's EcoChange			0.078+
Previous Vote Share	-0.050	-0.002	-0.004*
Party Age	0.075*	0.001*	0.001*
Left-Right Family	0.013	0.015	0.024
Party Divergence	-0.090**	-0.140**	-0.128**
In Government t-1	-0.045	-0.046	-0.027
Issue: Party Politics	0.130***	0.092***	0.052#
Issue: Leader Politics	0.093**	0.069**	0.090**
Mean Party Change	-0.146***	-0.544***	
Mean Party EcoChange			-0.345**
Party System Polar.	0.050+	0.027+	0.021
Multiparty System	0.093*	0.119*	0.100+
ENPP	-0.113*	-0.044*	-0.018
Age of Democracy	0.160***	0.003***	0.003***

Random effects	*Model 1* Var. comp.	df	χ^2	p-value	*Model 2* Var. comp.	df	χ^2	p-value
Interc. 1, r_0	0.164	79	4633.088	<0.001	0.026	79	4558.296	<0.001
Ideo. Dist. Slope, r_2	0.028	85	1227.037	<0.001	0.001	85	1226.923	<0.001
Level 3, Interc. 1/2 u_{00}	0.021	17	23.387	0.137	0.002	17	31.658	0.017
Ideo.Dist., Interc. 2, u_{20}	0.011	24	40.378	0.019	0.000	24	40.059	0.021

	Model 1	Model 2
Log Likelihood	-887628400.000	-887661700.000
N (individual - party dyads)	194351	150642
N parties	113	113
N systems	25	25

***p<.001, two sided, **p<.01, two sided, *p<.05 two-sided, +p<.05 one-sided. Because the number of level 3 units was too small, the fixed effects were calculated with non-robust standard errors. The differences in estimation of fixed effects with robust standard errors were negligible. All of the effects were fixed except for 'Ideological Distance' on both the party and system levels. Education and Age are group mean centred. The random effects part displayed here is calculated with the unstandardized analysis. The chi-square statistics reported above are based on only 110 of 113 level 2 units, which had sufficient data for computation. Fixed effects and variance components are based on all of the data.

However, the strongest effect on estimation proximity on the individual level yields the objective ideological distance to the party (Model 1, ß-coefficients). Those respondents who place themselves farther away from the party thus also have more difficulty in positioning it accurately in this case not due to emotions but probably due only to lower levels of electoral interest in it. This outcome and the finding of a negative effect of 'ideological distance' confirm Dahlberg's (2013) analysis of 'perceptual agreement'. It is easier for voters to estimate the left-right positions of parties to the ideologies that they objectively share. In contrast, the exact policy positions of parties, with which voters do not share common ideological ground, are less familiar. In general, a respondent should be best able to estimate a party's position if he or she occupies a close ideological position to it but is not compromised by strong feelings. The psychological 'assimilation' and 'contrast' effects are the results of overstating the similarities (or differences) of a liked (or disliked) party to one's own positions (Drummond, 2010).

All control variables on the individual level show significant but only moderately strong to almost negligible effects. They reveal that better-than-average educated men estimate party positions more accurately than others. On the party level of analysis in model 1, only the party's age and its positional divergence from other parties in the party system are significant.

The moderately strong negative effect of party divergence on the estimation indicates that, contrary to Dahlberg (2013), parties that occupy more divergent positions than all other parties are estimated less accurately. The reason for this finding might be the same as for the negative effect of respondents' individual distance from the party: more divergent parties' positions might simply be known less accurately due to fewer voters paying attention to them.[50] Additionally, older parties are estimated more accurately. These parties might be known to more voters or might be considered more reliable than younger ones. An increase of 10 years in age only leads to an increase of approximately one percentage point in estimation proximity, but moving from the youngest to the oldest party in the sample, the difference leads to a more than 13 percent increase.

---

[50] In an earlier version of the analysis, in which the divergence variable was not included, the previous vote share showed a negative effect, which was significant at level p<.001.

A party's change in its left-right position does not lead to a significant effect on voters' estimation proximity. Hence, Hypothesis 1 cannot be confirmed here. In contrast, a party's change on the economic sub-dimension is *positively* related to estimation proximity (model 2). It increases voters' ability to estimate the party precisely. The difference from model 1 could indicate that, from the voter's perspective, the economic sub-dimension is linked more strongly to the concept of left-right ideology, whereas the non-economic, value-oriented sub-dimension's relationship to left-right ideology is less clear.

This assumption is also supported by a closer examination of the individual situations in which a party's strong shift of the left-right position is not connected to a low estimation proximity, or party misplacement, but rather to more precise estimations[51]. In these cases mostly 'mainstream parties' like the German SPD, the Portuguese CDU, Iceland's Progressive Party or the Swiss FDP are involved, i.e. electorally favoured, well-known parties whose issue domains are connected rather strongly to the economic left-right dimension[52]. All of these parties came in the first four places in the parliamentary elections, in multi-party systems. Their political stances and electoral campaigns should have been mostly well observed both by the media and the electorate. The fact that these parties' shifts on the left-right scale did not produce negative effects in terms of voters' left-right estimations, but rather the opposite, might mean that in these cases, left-right shifting on the economic sub-dimension even drew voters' attentions to the respective political positions, probably due to the parties' popularity, their usual strength on the (economic) left-right issue domain and the saliency of the left-right cleavage in the respective party systems.[53] The point to take

---

[51] The mean party shift to the left or right equals .34 and the standard deviation from this is .27. If a shift to the left or right equals or exceeds this mean plus one standard deviation, i.e. the value equals or is bigger than .61, I call this a 'strong shift'. The mean estimation proximity equals 1.39 and the standard deviation isv.5. If the estimation proximity is lower than 1.39 minus half of the standard deviation, i.e. lower than 1.14, I call this a 'low estimation proximity' or 'bad estimation'. Also see appendix 5 with the full list of parties' left-right change values, mean party proximity values and the qualitative evaluation of these, based on the above mentioned thresholds for strong shifts and low proximity values.

[52] Other parties which shifted quite strongly were estimated with about mean precision or only a bit less precise; (within the range of up to the mean plus or minus a half standard deviation). These are Australia's LP, Belgium's CVP, the French UDF, and RPR, Great Britain's Conservatives, Hungary's MSzP, Fidesz-MPP and FKgP, and the Swiss SVP.

[53] There are also a few parties whose positions were estimated very imprecisely, even though the respective parties did *not* change their positions very strongly. These are the Belgium FB, the Bulgarian UDF, the Canadian Reform Party, the Czech ODS, the Finish Green League, Iceland's FSF, the Romanian

away, here, is that the effect of party position shifts on voters' estimation precision can really be either positive or negative, most probably depending on the voters' general acknowledgement of the specific party's (economic) issue domination. Position shifts leading to more precise estimations should be rather the exception – and seems to be strongly dependent on the party which shifts.

Turning to the system level determinants of the analysis, the variable for the *mean total system* change is negatively connected to estimation proximity, confirming Hypothesis 2. It is significant in both models 1 and 2, although the mean parties' total change effect in model 2 is slightly less pronounced than that of mean total change on the left-right scale in model 1. The stronger the mean change is of parties on the left-right axis (model 1) or on the economic sub-dimension of the left-right scale (model 2), the less accurate the respondents' estimations are, or at least the less closely oriented to the manifesto positions they are. While a single party's change does not necessarily lead to confusion of left-right positions or even increase voters' estimation proximity (as in model 2), a system of at least two or more parties' changes adding up seem to be problematic for the voters' estimation capacity[54]. In all countries, in which the mean of all parties' position shifts are strong, the reason was medium to strong party positions shifts of at least two or more parties[55]. The analysis confirms the hypothesis that in at least some cases, the overall turmoil of party positions within *party systems* can lead to less precise estimations even of parties which do not shift strongly.

Comparing models 1 and 2, the other variables on the system level all show the same direction of influence, although the coefficients' strength and levels of significance

---

PDSR, and UDMR, and the Slovenian SD and SKD. The reasons why these parties were not estimated well seem to be more dispersed than in the aforementioned group. Lower levels of popularity and/or non-left-right issue dominated stances might be reasons for less precise estimations for some of them, like the Canadian Reform Party, the Finish Green League, and the Hungarian UDMR. Another reason might be a previous membership in an electoral alliances and/or previous governmental coalitions (the Slovenian Parties, the Finish Green League). More research into individual party characteristics and behavior would be needed here, to fully explain the voters' misplacements of these parties in a more differentiated way.

[54] It should be remembered here that the total party system change is calculated as the sum of all parties' changes within the system. The specifically estimated single party's change is, however, controlled for with the party change variable, because the dependent variable expresses the estimation proximity for specific party-voter dyads on the individual level and not a mean for each voter. A one-party change can hence not be the cause of the effect of total party change decreasing estimation proximity, but it must be a pattern of at least two or more parties changing, leading to voter confusion.

[55] See appendix 5. 'Strong' means that the mean of all party position shifts within a country equalled or was stronger than the mean plus half of the standard deviation (>=.4). The exception for this accumulation of at least two parties' position shifts leading to strong mean values is Iceland, where only the Progressive Party shifted strongly.

change to some extent. The variable 'age of democracy' controls for possible systematic bias due to the lower level experience of most parties and voters in the younger party systems. Adding to the party age impact, it confirms that, apart from the age of the specific party, the age of the system in which it operates is also important. Where party systems are less institutionalized, as indicated by ever changing coalitions, weaker party-voter ties, and lower levels of political trust, party positions are more obscure or might in general even seem arbitrary and interchangeable to voters. Lower levels of attention or more disbelief in party promises and political disenchantment could be causes for less accurate party position estimating in the younger party systems. In that vein, the effect for age of democracy is rather connected to the institutionalization of party positional domination or *issue saliency* over time. The older the democratic regime is, and the more clear-cut and repeated the positions are, the more voters pay attention to them and acknowledge them.

Similarly, both the debate about possible governmental coalitions and the priming of political leaders seem to increase attention to the left-right positions of the manifestos. On the one hand, this outcome is surprising because the priming of personalities means that there are fewer left-right issues that are highly salient before the election. On the other hand, the finding fits well with the earlier cited studies, which showed that personalized voting does not decrease issue voting (Kaase, 1994; Schoenbach, 1996; Hayes, 2008). The analysis here even shows that leader politics can increase correct ideological placing – likely due to an increased level of attention. If political leadership is primed by the media during election campaigns, increased attention to these is not automatically bad for peoples' awareness of political issues. It is not a zero-sum game. This result can be at least deduced from the analyses here, which control for position change or the parties' change on the economic sub-dimension. In other words, when nothing particularly interesting occurs on the side of parties' left-right positions, and the media then concentrates on leader characteristics, this focus cannot harm existing political (position) knowledge. In contrast, the public's attention might be raised, and knowledge about positions is refreshed.

Turning to the control variables on the system level, in model 1, they are all significant and in the expected directions. Both models show that, in multiparty systems, voters estimate parties more precisely – probably due to the enhanced 'incentive structure' (Gordon and Segura, 1997) to inform oneself if more parties have a chance of

61

entering government. The difference between party systems of less to more than 2.5 parties is a 10 percentage point increase for the larger systems, as the Beta coefficients (model 1), divided by 0.11 indicate. However, an increase in the number of parliamentary parties beyond that multiparty threshold is either negatively connected to estimation proximity, as was expected, or is not significant (model 2). Drummond's (2010) hypothesis that, in multiparty systems, a greater number of parties reduces partisan error due to more 'crowding' on the left-right scale is thus too simplistic because it neglects the nonlinearity of the effect: within multiparty systems, if more parties enter a race, the voters' estimation proximity rather decreases again. The reason for this outcome might be the greater probability of ideological division lines cross-cutting each other and thereby leading to a situation of a 'polarized pluralistic' competition structure (Sartori, 1976) – or even the overload of information, leading voters to lower cognition of single ideological positions.

Although the number of parties and the multiparty dummy variable yield quite strong effects, in model 1, 'Polarization of the party system' still has a small but one-sided impact on estimation proximity to the manifesto values; in model 2, the effect is no longer significant. Ideological Distance, the difference between a respondent's self-position estimation and that of a party, has a varying influence on voters' estimation proximity, both on the party level and on the system level. The strength of the effect on estimation proximity thus depends slightly on the party and also on the country. In some party or country contexts, voters' ideological distance from the parties has a greater effect on estimation proximity than in other contexts. However, the variation is only very small, as the variance components in Table 2 show. In the next section, the question of why single party change does not lead to confusion but rather increases voters' estimation accuracy is addressed again. This third analytical model will advance on differences between more and less consolidated democracies.

6.2 Party change on the economic scale in established and less established party systems

Building on the finding that change in the economic left-right sub-dimension is related differently to voters' estimation positions depending on the age of the democratic system (Figure II.2), a third model of analysis is run, which differentiates between the older, well-institutionalized party systems and the younger, less experienced ones

(Table II.3). With all else being equal as in model 2, it advances with a dummy variable 'young' for differentiating between young and old party systems and an interaction variable of 'young' times the mean position change on the economic sub-dimension, to determine whether change really has a different effect in the younger systems.

As it turns out, voters' position estimations are significantly worse in the younger party systems. The direction of influence of the two change variables is the same as in model 2: a single party's change in economic position leads to a slight increase in voter estimations, while the aggregate change of party positions on that same economic scale leads to voter confusion. The interaction effect of 'young democracy' * Overall (mean) Eco change is, however, positive, indicating that, in the young systems, the negative effect of mean change on position estimations is much less pronounced than in the older Western democracies. This *moderating* effect is only found in the model with the change in economic sub-dimension variables. It is not significant in a model that adds the same type of interaction term to the model with the overall left-right change variables[56]. The effect of parties' mean change in left-right positions thus depends on the question of the types of issues that change. If only the mean change on the economic sub-dimension is tested for, this does not confuse voters in Eastern Europe as much as it does in the older, more established party systems. In contrast, if the full left-right position change is considered additionally, which also consists of the non-economic values dimension, it is in general even more difficult for voters to estimate party positions accurately. This difficulty provides an important insight into the understanding of how the left and right sub-dimensions – the economic and the non-economic values' dimensions – are understood to constitute left-right ideology. To build on Neuman's terminology, to Eastern Europeans, the *conceptual integration* of the non-economic values' dimension into the ideology paradigm is less clear than the economic values' dimension.

It is interesting that, in situations in which parties are still very much in the process of institutionalization, movements of parties on the economic dimension do not decrease position estimation proximity as strongly as in Western societies. Perhaps in the West, parties' positions are expected to be rather fixed, and voters rely more on their

---

[56] Due to space restrictions, a table is not displayed here with this model. It can be found in Appendix 6.

long-term experience. It should also be considered that, in the older systems, the level of party position estimation is better to begin with than in most of the young democracies.

Table II.3: Respondents' estimation proximity to left-right party positions with position changes on the economic sub-dimension and interaction effects

			Model 3	
Fixed part				Beta coefficients, (unstandardized)
Intercept 3				1.549***
Don't Like				-0.167***
Like Strongly				-0.099***
Ideological Distance				-0.037***
Education*				0.016***
Age*				-0.000***
Female				-0.037***
Party's Ecochange				0.073+
Previous Vote Share				-0.003*
Party Age				0.001*
Left-Right Family				0.018
Party Divergence				-0.107*
In Government t-1				-0.021
Issue: Party Politics				0.038
Issue: Leader Politics				0.079*
Overall/ Total Eco Change				-0.459**
Multiparty System				0.064
ENPP				-0.000
Age of Democracy				0.002
Young				-0.230+
Young*Overall Eco Change				0.357+
Random effects	*Variance comp.*	*Df*	*χ^2*	*p-value*
Intercept 1, r_0	0.026	79	4575.933	<0.001
Ideological Distance Slope, r_2	0.00	85	1226.915	<0.001
Level 3, Intercept1/2 u_{00}	0.001	16	27.115	0.040
Ideological Distance, Intercept 2, u_{20}	0.011	24	40.171	0.020
Log Likelihood				-88764960000.00
N (individual/party dyads)				194351
N parties				113
N systems				25

***p<.001, two sided, **p<.01, two sided, *p<.05 two-sided, +p<.05 one-sided. Because the number of level 3 units was too small, the fixed effects were calculated with non-robust standard errors. The differences in estimation of fixed effects with robust standard errors were negligible. All of the effects were fixed except for 'Ideological Distance' on both the party and system levels. Education and Age are group mean centred. The random effects part displayed here is calculated with the unstandardized analysis. The chi-square statistics reported above are based on only 110 of 113 level 2 units, which had sufficient data for computation. Fixed effects and variance components are based on all of the data.

The percentage of voters who pay attention to politics is limited or perhaps even almost saturated in the older democracies. If two or more parties deviate from what voters are used to, estimations then can only worsen. In Eastern Europe, in which the overall estimation of positions is less precise, change still provides the opportunity for parties to differentiate themselves more and to set the demarcation line clearer than before. Voters who do attend to politics are then enabled to differentiate the parties better. In summary, the effects of parties' position changes on voters' estimations are not very clear cut. There are differences between established party systems and those in institutionalization stages.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The piece of research has analysed several determinants of voters' perception proximity to parties' left-right positions. From the three-level- analyses, it can be concluded that individual, party, and system level characteristics make a difference in voters' perceptions. One of the most important findings is that much of voters' confusion of party positions is due to the strength of multiple parties changing their left-right positions. To some part, stronger aggregate party position shifts between elections can explain less exact knowledge of party positions in the young, less institutionalized party systems in Eastern Europe.

The individual voter's objective estimation is mostly increased if he or she shares a close political position with the party, but it is strongly harmed by extreme emotional involvement. Voters should not like parties too strongly if they want a realistic view of a party's left-right position. Rose-coloured glasses seem to blur the perception of issues that do not fit the beloved picture. Similarly, it does not help if voters do not like a party at all. These psychological effects of both positive and negative affection on estimation proximity, as found in earlier studies of political sophistication (Drummond, 2010), are thus confirmed.

On the party level, it was shown that older parties are known better, but parties that take more divergent positions on the left-right scale are estimated less accurately. Why this party divergence effect does not point in the same direction as in previous research (Dahlberg 2013) remains unclear. It was assumed that voters do not observe the more divergent parties' positions as well as the more 'mainstream' ones. This assumption also fitted to the observation that in cases in which voters estimated parties precisely despite

comparatively strong position shifts, only popular parties who are dominant on the left-right economic subdimension were involved.

System and aggregate characteristics are very important determinants of how well voters perceive parties' left-right positions. There are two reasons for this fact: if voters want to make informed voting decisions, the precise differentiation between parties might be more *necessary and useful* under specific conditions, such as the multiparty setting. This finding confirms Gordon and Segura's (1997) view that voters seem to adapt to the party system context. Furthermore, the estimation of parties is *easier* if the party positions are more polarized and if the party competition is clearer due to there being fewer effective parliamentary parties.

The new findings of this study confirm the influence of party behaviour and issue priming within election campaigns. An individual party's position change does not necessarily lead to less estimation proximity to its current ideological position, and change on the economic sub-dimension can lead to even more precise estimations. The reasons for this effect not being very strong and pointing in a different direction should be multifold: It was assumed that the party popularity, the issue domain of the party, and the number of changes which happen simultaneously within the party system should be relevant. Voters' awareness of single party shifts seems to be higher for the more popular parties with traditionally strong economic issue domination.

Contrary to the finding that these single parties' left-right shifts on the economic sub-dimension could even enhance estimation precision, aggregated major change in left-right positions did confuse voters. It had a strong negative effect on voters' perceptions. This finding confirms that of Adams and colleagues' (agregate data) analyses (2011, 2014), that voters often do not perceive change. If only the change on the economic sub-dimension is considered, it is, however, necessary to also differentiate between the older and younger democratic systems. In the younger party systems, position change on the economic sub-dimension does not decrease voter estimation proximity as strongly as in the older systems, likely due to the mostly, but not always, rightful expectation of voters in the West that the positions are rather fixed. Change on the overall left-right position, however, does not affect voters in the younger systems significantly differently than in the older systems. It was concluded that for voters in the younger democracies of Eastern Europe it is comparatively easier to see how the economic sub-dimension is related to the concept of left-right: When they are asked to

place parties on the left-right dimension, they seem to refer stronger to this sub-dimension than to the non-economic one. More in-depth research into data covering a longer time-span would be needed to confirm these interpretations. How individual voters integrate specific single political issues into their understanding of parties' left-right ideologies might also require more in-depth analyses of *qualitative* data.

Contrary to expectations was the present finding that parties are estimated more closely to their issue positions if a leadership issue is primed before the election. This insight adds to the research on 'issue voting', which has shown that personalized election campaigns do not result in less 'issue voting' (Kaase, 1994; Schoenbach, 1996; Hayes, 2008). Voters know parties' positions even if the media concentrate more on political leaders and on other valence issues. It is not a zero-sum game that decreases voters' knowledge about current party ideology. In light of the other effects in the analytical model, which considers change on the left-right axis and findings about issue priming (Norris et al 1999), this result can be interpreted in such a fashion that, if not much change on left-right issues occurs, and the media concentrate on political personalities, voters keep left-right positions in mind. Their knowledge about left-right positions is even advanced, likely due to an overall greater level of attention if leadership is in question. To obtain a deeper understanding and to validate this possible causal chain, more research into the influences of party behaviour and communication is needed.

The present analysis started with some strong claims. Political theory, following Downs (1957), expects voters to know party positions at least roughly to make the best suited voting decisions. While this expectation is very plausible, it is also a strong generalization and a normative claim. A great part of the responsibility is in the hands of the parties who need to take care of strategic position taking which advances on their political scope. Further, it is not yet clear how voters who know party positions less precisely truly behave in the voting booth. More determinants than issue voting cues should be considered. While this paper investigated position knowledge, it remains for future analyses to examine in greater detail how more or less knowledge affects voting behaviour and how factors other than issue vote cues leads voters to different – or even similar – voting decisions.

Acknowledgements

Data sources

Beck, Thorsten et al (2001): "New tools in comparative political economy: The Database of Political Institutions."15:1, 165-176 (September), *World Bank Economic Review.* The 2012 Version, (updated January 2014), report number WPS2283 can be found at http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/0„contentMDK:20649465~pagePK:64214825~piPK:64214943~theSitePK:469382,00.html (July 7, 2015).

Freedom House (2014): Freedom in the World. Country Ratings and status by region, FIW 1973-2015 (EXCEL) http://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world (July 7, 2015).

Franzmann, S. and Kaiser, A. (2006), Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data. Party Politics 163 (12), 163–188. The data can be downloaded from http://www.uni-potsdam.de/db/ls_regierungssystem_brd/index.php?article_id=498&clang=0 (July 7, 2015)

Gallagher, Michael (2013): Election Indices Dataset. http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/index.php, (July 7, 2015).

Klingemann, Hans-Dieter et al (2006): Mapping Policy Preferences II. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments in Eastern Europe, the European Union and the OECD, 1990-2003. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Data on CD).

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 1 FULL RELEASE [dataset]. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor]. August 4, 2003 version. doi:10.7804/cses.module1.2003-08-04
The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 2 FULL RELEASE [dataset]. June 27, 2007 version. doi:10.7804/cses.module2.2007-06-27

REFERENCES

Adams, J. 2001. A Theory of Spatial Competition with Biased Voters: Party Policies Viewed Temporally and Comparatively. British Journal of Political Science 31, 121–158.

Adams, J., Clark, M., Ezrow, L., Glasgow, G. 2004. Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do Parties Respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results? British Journal of Political Science 34, 589-610.

Adams, J., Clark, M., Ezrow, L., Glasgow, G. 2006. Are niche parties fundamentally different from mainstream parties? The causes and the electoral consequences of Western European parties' policy shifts, 1976–1998. American Journal of Political Science 50, 513–529.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Leiter, D. 2012. Partisan Sorting and Niche Parties in Europe. West European Politics 35, 1272-1294.

Adams, J., Somer-Topcu, Z. 2009. Policy adjustment by parties in response to rival parties' policy shifts: Spatial theory and the dynamics of party competition in twenty-five post-war democracies. British Journal of Political Science 39, 825–846.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Somer-Topcu, Z. 2011. Is Anybody Listening? Evidence That Voters Do Not Respond to European Parties' Policy Statements During Elections. American Journal of Political Science 55, 370-382.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Somer-Topcu, Z. 2014. Do Voters Respond to Party Manifestos or to a Wider Information Environment? An Analysis of Mass-Elite Linkages on European Integration. American Journal of Political Science 58, 967-978.

Bennett, L.L., Bennett, S.E. 1989. Enduring Gender Differences in Political Interest: The Impact of Socialization and Political Dispositions. American Politics Research 17, 105–122.

Benoit, K., Laver, M. 2007. Estimating party policy positions: Comparing expert surveys and hand-coded content analysis. Electoral Studies 26, 90–107.

Benoit, K. et al. 2009. Treating Words as Data with Error: Uncertainty in Text Statements of Policy Positions', American Journal of Political Science 53, 495-513.

Bértoa, F.C. 2014. Party systems and cleavage structures revisited: A sociological explanation of party system institutionalization in East Central Europe. Party Politics 20, 16–36.

Best, R. 2013. Using the Manifesto Estimates to Correct Systematic 'Centring' Error in Expert and Electoral Positioning of Parties, In: Volkens, A. et al (Eds.) Mapping Policy Preferences from Texts. Statistical Solutions for Manifesto Analysts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 33-48.

Blais, A., Bodet, M.A. 2006. Does Proportional Representation Foster closer Congruence between Citizens and Policy Makers? Comparative Political Studies 39, 1243–1262.

Bobbio, N. 1996. Left and right: The significance of a political distinction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bryk, A.S., Raudenbush, S. W. 1992. Hierarchical Linear Models: Applications and Data Analysis Methods. London: Sage Publications.

Budge, I. 1987. The Internal Analysis of Election Programmes, In: Budge, I., et al (Eds.) Ideology, Strategy and Party Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 15-38.

Budge, I. 2001. Theory and measurement of party policy positions, In: Budge, I., et al (Eds.) Mapping Policy Preferences. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 75-90.

Budge, I., et al (Eds.) 2001. Mapping Policy Preferences. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D. 2001. Finally! Comparative over-time mapping of party policy movement. In: Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J., Tanenbaum, E. (Eds.) Mapping Policy Preferences. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 19–50.

Budge, I., Mcdonald, M.D. 2007. Election and party system effects on policy representation: Bringing time into a comparative perspective. Electoral Studies 26 (1), 168–179.

Carmines, E.G., Kuklinski, J.H. 1990. Incentives, Opportunities, and the Logic of Public Opinion in American Political Representation. In Ferejohn, J.A., Kuklinski, J.H. (Eds.) Information and Democratic Processes. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Castles, F., Mair, P. 1984. Left-right political scales: some expert judgements. European Journal of Political Research 12, 73–88.

Clarke, H., Sanders, D., Stewart, M., Whiteley, P. 2011. Valence Politics and Electoral Choice in Britain, 2010. Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties 21, 237-253.

Dahlberg, S. 2013. Does context matter - The impact of electoral systems, political parties and the individual characteristics on voters' perceptions of party positions. Electoral Studies 32, 670–683.

Dalton, R. J. 2008. The Quantity and Quality of Party Systems: Party System Polarization, Its Measurement, and Its Consequences. Comparative Political Studies 41, 899-920.

Dinas Elias, Gemenis, K. 2010. Measuring parties' ideological positions with manifesto data: a critical evaluation of the competing methods. Party Politics, 427–450.

Downs, A. 1957. An economic theory of democracy. Harper and Row, New York.

Drummond, A. 2010. Assimilation, contrast and voter projections of parties in left-right space: Does the electoral system matter? Party Politics 17, 711-743.

Evans, G., Whitefield, S. 1993. Identifying the bases of party competition in Eastern Europe. British Journal of Political Science 23, 521-548.

Farrell, D.M., Schmitt-Beck, R. (Eds.) 2002. Do political campaigns matter? Campaign effects in elections and referendums. London, New York: Routledge.

Franklin, M.N., Lyons, P., Marsh, M. 2004. Generational Basis of Turnout Decline in Established Democracies. Acta Politica 39, 115–151.

Franzmann, S. T., 2013. Towards a real comparison of left-right indices: A comment to Jahn. Party Politics 21, 821-828.

Franzmann, S. T., Kaiser, A. 2006. Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data. Party Politics 163, 163–188.

Gabel, M., Huber, J.D. 2000. Putting Parties in their Place. American Journal of Political Science 44, 94–103.

Gallego, A. 2009. Where Else Does Turnout Decline Come From? Education, Age, Generation and Period Effects in Three European Countries. Scandinavian Political Studies 32, 23–44.

Gastil, J. 2000. By Popular Demand: Revitalizing Representative Democracy Through Deliberative Elections. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Geddes, B. 1995. A Comparative perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe. Comparative Political Studies 28, 239–274.

Gidengil, E., Blais, A., Nevitte, N., Nadeau, R. 2002. Priming and campaign context: Evidence from recent Canadian elections. In: Farrell, D.M., Schmitt-Beck, R. (Eds.) Do political campaigns matter? Campaign effects in elections and referendums. London, New York: Routledge, 76–91.

Golder, M., Stramski, J. 2010. Ideological Congruence and Electoral Institutions. American Journal of Political Science 54, 90–106.

Gordon, S.B., Segura, G.M. 1997. Cross-National Variation in the Political Sophistication of Individuals: Capability or Choice? The Journal of Politics 59, 126-146.

Granberg, D., Holmberg, S. 1988. The political system matters. Social psychology and voting behavior in Sweden and the United States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hardarson, O. T., Kristinsson, G. H. 2001. The 1999 Parliamentary Election in Iceland. Electoral Studies 20, 325-331.

Hayes, D., 2008. Has Television Personalized Voting Behavior? Political Behavior 31, 231–260.

Holländer, M. 2003. Konfliktlinien und Konfigurationen der Parteiensysteme in Ostmitteleuropa 1988-2002. Dissertation Tübingen 2003. Norderstedt: Books on Demand.

Hopmann, D.N., van Aelst, P., Legnante, G. 2011. Political balance in the news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. Journalism 13, 240–257.

Huber, J.D., Inglehart, R. 1995. Expert interpretations of party space and party locations in 42 societies. Party Politics, 73–111.

Huber, J.D., Powell, G.B. 1994. Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracy. World Pol. 46, 291–326.

Inglehart, R., Norris, P. 2000. The Developmental Theory of the Gender Gap: Women's and Men's Voting Behavior in Global Perspective. International Political Science Review 21, 441–463.

Jahn, D. 2011. Conceptualizing Left and Right in Comparative Politics: Towards a Deductive Approach. Party Politics 17, 745-765.

Kaase, M. 1994. Is There Personalization in Politics? Candidates and Voting Behavior in Germany. International Political Science Review 15, 211–230.

Kirchheimer, O. 1966. The Transformation of West European Party Systems. In: La Palombara, J., Weiner, M. (Eds.), Political Parties and Political Development. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 177–200.

Kitschelt, H. 1995. Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies. Party Politics 1, 447–472.

Klingemann, H.-D. 1995. Party Positions and Voter Orientations. In: Klingemann, H.-D., Fuchs D. (Eds.) Citizens and the State. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 183-206.

Klingemann, H.-D., et al. (Eds.) 2006. Mapping policy preferences II: Estimates for parties, electors, and governments in Eastern Europe, European Union, and OECD 1990-2003. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Laakso, M., Taagepera, R. 1979. "Effective" Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe. Comparative Political Studies 12, 3–27.

Lacewell, O., Werner, A. 2013. Coder Training: Key to Enhancing Reliability and Validity. In: Volkens, et al. (Eds.) Mapping Policy Preferences from Texts. Statistical Solutions for Manifesto Analysts. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 169-194.

Laver, M., Budge, I. 1992. Party policy and government coalitions, 1st ed. Macmillan [u.a.], Basingstoke, XXII, 448.

Lijphart, A. 1999. Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Luskin, R. 1987. Measuring Political Sophistication. American Journal of Political Science 31, 856-99.

Mainwaring, S., Torcal, M. 2006. Party system institutionalization and party system theory after the third wave of Democratization, In: Katz, R. S., Crotty, W. (Eds.), Handbook of Party Politics. London: Sage,.204-227.

Markowski, R. 1997. Political parties and ideological spaces in East Central Europe. Communist and Post-Communist Studies 30, 221–254.

Marks, G., Hooghe, L., Nelson, M., Edwards, E. 2006. Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West: Different Structure, Same Causality. Comparative Political Studies 39, 155–175.

Marsh, M., Sinnott, R. Garry, J., Kennedy, F. The Irish voter: The nature of competition in the Republic of Ireland. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mazzoleni, G. 1987. Media Logic and Party Logic in Campaign Coverage: The Italian General Election of 1983. European Journal of Communication 2, 81–103.

McDonald, M.D., Mendes, S.M., Budge, I. 2004. What Are Elections For? Conferring the Median Mandate. Brit. J. Polit. Sci. 34, 1-26.

Merrill, S., Grofman, B. 1999. A unified theory of voting: Directional and proximity spatial models. Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Merrill, S., Grofman, B., Adams, J. 2001. Assimilation and contrast effects in voter projections of party locations: Evidence from Norway, France, and the USA. Eur J Political Res 40, 199–221.

Meyer, T.M. 2013. Constraints on party policy change. ECPR Press, Essex.

Milner, H. 2002. Civic literacy: How informed citizens make democracy work. Hanover, NH, University Press of New England.

Neuman, R.W. 1981. Differentiation and Integration: Two Dimensions of Political Thinking. American Journal of Sociology 86, 1236–1268.

Neuman, R.W. 1986. The paradox of mass politics: Knowledge and opinion in the American electorate. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Norris, P. 1999 et al. On message: Communicating the campaign. London: Sage, 218.

Popkin, S.L. 1991. The Reasoning Voter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Powell, G.B., Vanberg, G.S. 2000. Election Laws, Disproportionality and median correspondence: implications for two visions of democracy. British Journal of Political Science 30, 383–411.

Roberts, A. 2010. The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe. Public Preferences and Policy Reforms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, R., Munro, N. (Eds.) 2009. Parties and elections in new European democracies. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Rovny, J., Edwards, E.E. 2012. Struggle over Dimensionality: Party Competition in Western and Eastern Europe. East European Politics and Societies 26, 56–74.

Rudi, T. 2010a. Wahlentscheidungen in postsozialistischen Demokratien in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Rudi, T. 2010b. Die Links-Rechts-Dimension in Mittel- und Osteuropa: „Super-Issue" oder bedeutungslos? In: Faas, T., Arzheimer, K., Roßteutscher, S. (Eds.), Information – Wahrnehmung – Emotion. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 169-189.

Sartori, G., 1976. Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schoenbach, K. 1996. The "Americanization" of German Election Campaigns: Any Impact on the Voters? In: Swanson, D.L., Mancini, P. (Eds.), Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy. An International Study of Innovations in Electoral Campaigning and Their Consequences. Westport: Praeger Publishers , 91–105.

Somer-Topcu, Z. 2014. Everything to Everyone: The Electoral Consequences of the Broad-Appeal Strategy in Europe. American Journal of Political Science, Online Publication Version.

Sullivan, J.L., Piereson, J. E., Marcus, G.E. 1978. Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings. American Journal of Political Science 22, 233–249.

Tavits, M., Letki, N. 2009. When Left Is Right: Party Ideology and Policy in Post-Communist Europe. Am Polit Sci Rev 103 (04), 555. 10.1017/S0003055409990220.

Tóka, G. 1997. Political parties and democratic consolidation in East Central Europe. In: Diamond, L.J., et al (Eds.), Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 93–134.

Van Aelst, P., et al. 2008. Politicians in the News: Media or Party Logic? Media Attention and Electoral Success in the Belgian Election Campaign of 2003. European Journal of Communication 23, 193–210.

Volkens, A. et al (Eds.) 2013. Mapping Policy Preferences from Texts. Statistical Solutions for Manifesto Analysts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Warwick, P.V., 1996. Coalition government membership in West European parliamentary democracies. British Journal of Political Science 26, 471-499.

Warwick, P.V. 2010. Bilateralism or the median mandate? An examination of rival perspectives on democratic governance. European Journal of Political Research 49, 1–24.

Whiteley, P., Stewart, Marianne C., Sanders, David, Clarke, H.D. 2005. The Issue Agenda and Voting in 2005. Parliamentary Affairs 58, 802–817.

Williams, L. K. 2015. It's all relative: Spatial positioning of parties and ideological shifts. European Journal of Political Research 54, 141-159.

Appendix 1: List of election studies and parties which are integrated into the analyses

Australia 1996: ALP Australian Labour Party, LPA Liberal Party of Australia, The National Party of Australia[57]

Belgium Flanders 1999: Agalev (Green), CVP Christian People's Party, SP Socialist Party, VB Flemish Bloc, VLD Flemish Liberals

Bulgaria 2001: DPS Movement for Rights and Freedom, ODS United Democratic Forces,

Canada 1997: BQ Quebecan Bloc, LP Liberal Party of Canada, NDP New Democratic Party, PC Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, R Reform Party,

Czech Republic 1996: Association for the Republic, CSSD Czech Social Democratic Party, ODA Civic Democratic Alliance, ODS Civic Democratic Party, KDU-CSL Christian Democratic Union,

Denmark 1998: CD Centre Democrats, KF Conservative People's Party, SD Social Democratic Party, SF Socialist People's Party, V Liberals

Finland 2003: Green League, KESK Centre Party, KD Christian Democrats, KOK National Coalition Party, Left Alliance, SDP Finnish Social Democratic Party, SFP/RKP Swedish People's Party of Finland

France 2002: FN National Front, LV Greens, PCF Communists, PS Socialist Party, RPR/UMP Rally for the Republic, UDF Union for French Democracy

Germany West 1998: Alliance '90/Greens, FDP Free Democratic Party, PDS Party of Democratic Socialism, SPD Social Democratic Party

Germany East 1998: Alliance '90/Greens, FDP Free Democratic Party, PDS Party of Democratic Socialism, SPD Social Democratic Party

Great Britain[58] 1997: Conservative Party, Labour Party, LDP Liberal Democrats, SNP Scottish National Party[59]

Hungary 1998: FIDESZ-MPP Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party, FKgP Independent Smallholders' Party, MSzP Hungarian Socialist Party, SzDSz Alliance of Free Democrats

Iceland 1999: FSF Progressive Party, Sj Independence Party

Ireland 2002: Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Green Party, LP Labour Party, PD Progressive Democrats, Sinn Fein[40]

Israel 1996: Ha'avoda (Labour), Likud, Mafdal, Meretz, Shas

Netherlands 1998: CDA Christian Democratic Appeal, D'66 Democrats 66, GL Green Left, PvdA Labour Party, SP Socialist Party, VVD People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

---

[57] For these parties some of the variables were not available, but due to their importance in their respective party systems, and the hypothesized effect of party shifts on voter estimations, their left-right shifts went into the mean calculation of party shifts.
[58] Great Britain without Northern Ireland
[59] Only Scottish respondents evaluated the Scottish National Party.

New Zealand 1996: LP Labour Party, Alliance, NP National Party, NZFP New Zealand First Party

Norway 1997: DNA Labour Party, FrP Progress Party, H Conservative Party, KrF Christian Democratic Party, SP Centre Party, SV Socialist Left Party

Poland 1997: PSL Polish People's Party, SLD Democratic Left Alliance, UP Union of Labour

Portugal 2002: CDU Unified Democratic Coalition, PP Popular Party, PS Socialist Party, PSD Social Democratic Party

Romania 1996: PDSR Party of Social Democracy in Romania, PUNR Party of Romanian

National Unity, UDMR Hungarian Democratic Alliance

Slovenia 1996: LDS Liberal Democracy, SD Social Democratic Party, SKD Slovene Christian Democrats, SLS People's Party

Spain 1996: Convergence and Unity CiU, EAJ-PNV Basque Nationalist Party, PP Popular Party, PSOE Socialist Workers' Party, IU United Left

Sweden 1998: CP Centre Party, FP Liberal People's Party, KD Christian Democrats, MS Moderate Coalition Party (The Alliance Manifest), VP Left Party, SAP Social Democratic Labour Party

Switzerland 1999: CVP/PDC Christian Democrats, FDP/PLR Freethinking Democrats, GLP/PVL Green Party, SPS/PSS Social Democrats, SVP/UDC Swiss People's Party

Appendix 2: Operationalization of the control variables

Note that if no other source is mentioned, the below variables origin from or are based on CSES data.

"Don't Like", Like Strongly":	two dummy variables, coded 'one' if the respondent has a strong positive (negative) affection towards the party. The variable, from which the dummies are calculated, is an 11-point metric scale question. It ranges from zero for 'strongly disliking' to ten for 'strongly liking' the party. Respondents were asked to place every one of the five most important parties from the current election on the scale. An extraordinary negative (positive) affection is represented by values of 'x' which are below (above) the range of the country specific mean minus (plus) one (country specific) standard deviation
"Education":	measured with an eight-point scale from "no schooling" to "university undergraduate degree completed" (CSES)
"Age":	a metric variable from 18 (eligibility age) onwards
"Female":	A dummy variable coded one if the person is female
"Previous Vote share":	The party's vote share in the last election
"Party Age":	a metric variable representing the age of the party in the current year of election.
"Left-Right	a dummy variable which builds on the information of party

Family":	families in the CSES. It is coded one if the party's party-family is one of the core left-right ones.
"Exgovernmental":	a dummy variable which is coded one if the party was in the current election's preceding government. The information on this was collected from parline.
"Issue: Party Politics":	represents the number of party politics issues within the five most important salient issues of the election campaign, mentioned by national political experts (CSES data). These concern either pre-election discussions about 'Party Alliances, Dynamics, Re-Alignment' (Belgium Flanders, Czech Rep., Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland) or valence issues such as the evaluation of 'Party Performance' (Australia, Belgium Flanders, Canada, Germany, Great Britain), or 'Party Scandals' (e.g. Norway)
"Party System Polarization":	from Dalton (2008). For Flanders I calculated the value, using Dalton's formula.
"Multiparty System":	a dummy variable coded one if there are more than 2.5 parties within the party system.
"ENPP":	the effective number of parliamentary parties, as calculated by Gallagher (2013)
"Age of Democracy":	the origin of this is a variable called "system tenure" in the "Political Institutions dataset (Beck et al., 2001). It represents the age of the current political regime.
"young":	a dummy variable with the value one, if the party system is one of the young Eastern European ones of the sample. East Germany is coded as zero, here, since the party system was inherited to a large part from the West

Appendix 3: The distribution of voters' proximities to parties within countries and summary statistics for the original variable "Estimation gaps" between parties and manifesto positions

Figure II.3: Proximity of respondents' estimations to Left-Right positions
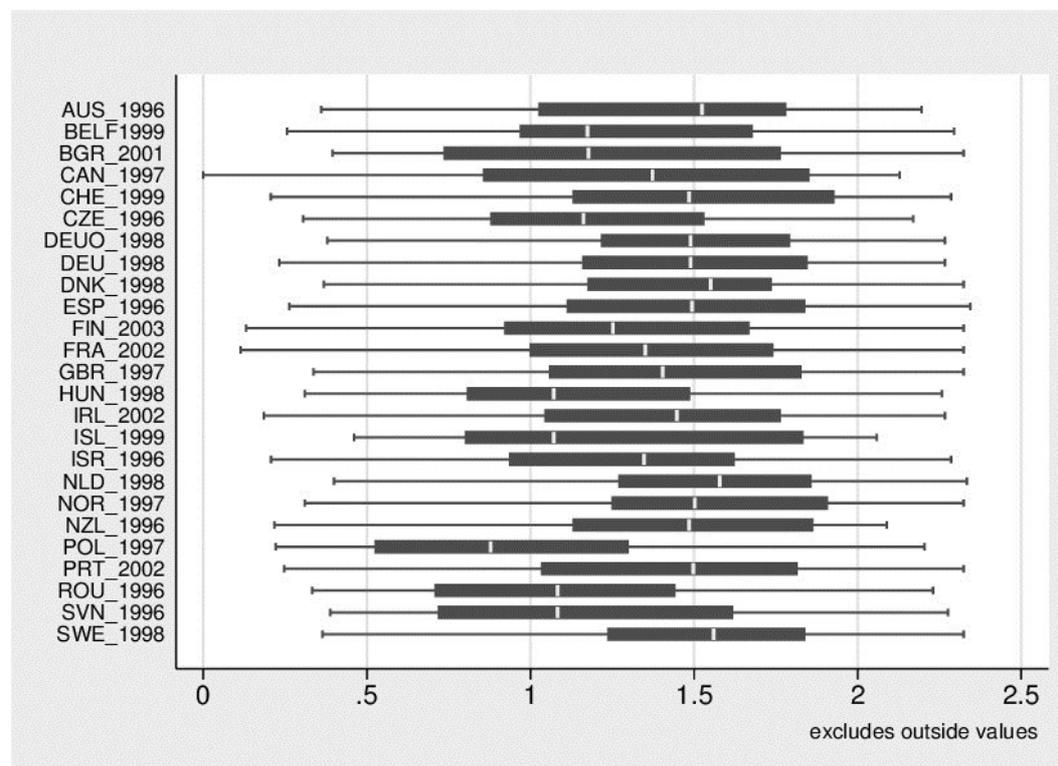
Legend: The boxplot shows the distribution of voters' proximities to parties within countries[60]. Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands are the countries with the highest median proximity – voters tend to estimate parties more accurately than in other countries. All of these are Western European countries with a long democratic history and the Netherlands can be even seen as a prototype of a 'consociational democracy', characterized by very proportional elections and strong party ties with civil society (Lijphart, 1999). Poland sticks out with the lowest median voters' estimation proximity, followed by Romania, Slovenia, Hungary and Iceland. Apparently, four of these countries are young communist successor countries, which in the early years after their regime changes had particularly volatile party systems (Rudi, 2010a) and a strong "non-economic or cultural, new-politics dimension" (Evans and Whitefield, 1993: 157). The way how strongly respondents also think of these issues when they have to place parties on the left-right scale might vary. The outstandingly poor Polish median proximity seems to be mostly due to the very big estimation gap of voters' estimations of the Polish Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), a communist successor party. In that case the party's left-right position might have been specifically hard to estimate. Also in Iceland in 1999, the low median proximity of voters' estimations to party positions is mainly due to voters' misplacements of one party, the Progressive party. A possible reason might be that voters missed the centrist Progressive Party's position change to the left because of other, more spectacular position takings on the left and right taking place at the same time, due to the formation of a new right and a new left party, the 'Liberal Party', and the 'Left-greens' and a new party union, the 'Left Alliance' (see Hardarson and Kristinsson, 2001).

---

[60] A table with the mean and the minimum to maximum mean ranges of the original 'gaps' between persons' estimations and party positions can be found below.

Mean *estimation gaps* per country, and min. + max. mean gaps of parties within countries

Election Study	Party with min and max difference (btw. voters' estimations and party position)	Country ranges	s.e.	Mean of all parties in country
Australia 1996	ALP Labour Party	1.92 (Min value)	.11	2.06
	NPA National Party	2.17 (Max value)		
Belgium Fla. 1999	VLD Flemish Liberals	1.91 (Min value)	.58	2.29
	VB Flemish Bloc	3.43 (Max value)		
Bulgaria 2001	DPS Movement for Rights and Freedom	1.55 (Min value)	.88	2.43
	ODS United Democratic Party	3.31 (Max value)		
Canada 1997	LP Liberal Party of Canada	1.66 (Min value)	.86	2.48
	Reform Party	3.64 (Max value)		
Czech Republic	KDU-CSL Christian Democratic Union	1.57 (Min value)	.67	2.33
	ODS: Civic Democratic Party	3.27 (Max value)		
Denmark 1998	SF Socialist People's Party	1.68 (Min value)	.29	2.13
	Centre Democrats (CD)	2.13 (Max value)		
Finland 2003	The Left Alliance	1.38 (Min value)	.45	2.23
	The Greens of Finland	2.99 (Max value)		
France 2002	Union for French Democracy	1.69 (Min value)	.33	1.99
	FN National Front	2.63 (Max value)		
Germany W. 1998	FDP Free Democratic Party	1.53 (Min value)	.43	1.81
	PDS Left Party	2.56 (Max value)		
Germany E. 1998	FDP Free Democratic Party	1.52 (Min value)	.12	1.65
	Alliance '90/Greens	1.79 (Max value)		
Great Britain 1997	LDP Liberal Democrats	1.23 (Min value)	.40	1.89
	Conservative Party	2.33 (Max value)		
Hungary 1998	FIDESZ MPP: Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Party	1.82 (Min value)	.43	2.46
	MSzP Hungarian Socialist Party	3.00 (Max value)		
Iceland 1999	F Progressive Party	1.56 (Min value)	.84	2.42
	Sj Independence Party	3.27 (Max value)		
Ireland 2002	LP Labour Party	1.54 (Min value)	.42	2.05
	Fianna Fail	2.54 (Max value)		
Israel 1996	LIKUD	1.49 (Min value)	.41	2.05
	AVODA (Labour)	2.65 (Max value)		
Netherlands 1998	GL Green Left	1.18 (Min value)	.13	1.39
	VVD People's Party for Freedom and Dem.	1.55 (Max value)		
New Zealand 1996	NZFP New Zealand First	1.44 (Min value)	.20	1.67
	NP National Party	2.00 (Max value)		
Norway 1997	SV Socialist Left Party	1.12 (Min value)	.37	1.54
	DNA Labour Party	2.21 (Max value)		
Poland 1997	UP Union of Labor	2.09 (Min value)	.82	3.25
	SLD Democratic Left Alliance	3.88 (Max value)		
Portugal 2002	PS Socialist Party	1.21 (Min value)	.45	1.68
	PP Popular Party	2.42 (Max value)		
Romania 1996	Party of National Unity	2.71 (Min value)	.11	2.82
	UDMR Hungarian Democratic Party	2.97 (Max value)		
Slovenia 1996	LDS Liberal Democracy	2.18 (Min value)	.53	2.7
	Christian Democrats	3.52 (Max value)		
Spain 1996	Convergence and Unity	1.60 (Min value)	.30	2.01
	PSOE Socialist Worker	2.99 (Max value)		
Sweden 1998	CP Centre Party	0.92 (Min value)	.33	1.44
	KdS Christian Democratic Party	2.03 (Max value)		
Switzerland 1999	CVP-PDC Christian Democrats	1.26 (Min value)	.24	1.6
	Swiss People's Party	1.97 (Max value)		
All Parties	Minimum:	0.92 (Min value)	.34	1.52
	Mean:			2.00
	Maximum:	3.88 (Max value)	.63	2.58

Appendix 4: Variable summary statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Estimation Proximity	150642	1.39	0.51	-0.00	2.34
Don't Like	194351	0.18	0.39	0.00	1.00
Like Strongly	194351	0.27	0.44	0.00	1.00
Ideological Distance	165183	2.29	1.74	0.00	9.42
Education	192324	4.89	1.72	1.00	8.00
Age	193651	46.07	16.84	18.00	101.00
Female	194208	0.52	0.50	0.00	1.00
Party's Change	113	0.33	0.27	0.00	1.32
Party's Ecochange	113	0.40	0.39	0.01	2.40
Previous Vote Share	113	16.26	12.68	0.00	52.24
Party Age	113	49.04	42.26	3.00	156.00
Left-Right Family	113	0.73	0.44	0.00	1.00
Party Divergence	113	0.82	0.33	0.21	1.83
In Government t-1	113	0.38	0.49	0.00	1.00
Age of Democracy	25	47.20	26.73	4.00	73.00
Party System Polar.	25	3.40	1.03	1.83	5.44
Overall/Total PS	25	0.35	0.16	0.14	0.76
Overall/Total Eco	25	0.40	0.19	0.05	0.78
Young	25	0.14	0.35	0.00	1.00
ENPP	25	3.81	1.23	2.16	6.61
Issue: Party Politics	25	0.80	0.65	0.00	2.00
Multiparty System	25	0.80	0.41	0.00	1.00

Appendix 5: Evaluation of Parties' Left-Right Shifts and Voters' Mean Proximity

Country	Party	LR-Shift	Prox.	Evaluation				Mean LR-Shifts
		Mean: 0.34; Std: .27	Mean: 1.39; Std: 0.5	Strong Shift (>=.61) – around average/ good estimation (Proximity >=1.14)	Low to medium Shift, (<.61), bad estimation (Proximity <1.14)	Rather strong to strong shift (>=.61) bad estimation (Proximity <1.14)	Low to medium shift (<.61), average to good estimation (Proximity >=1.14)	Mean of parties' LR-Shifts: 0.34
Australia (1996)	LPA	0.66	1.40	X				0.58
	ALP	0.50	1.32				X	
	NPA	0.59	1.48				X	
Belgium Flanders (1999)	VLD	0.39	1.40				X	0.51
	CVP	1.00	1.32	X				
	SP	0.23	1.37				X	
	VB	0.49	0.93		X			
	Agalev	0.44	1.34				X	
Bulgaria (2001)	ODS	0.06	0.95		X			0.17
	DPS	0.27	1.50				X	
Canada (1997)	LP	0.31	1.48				X	0.35
	R	0.02	1.06		X			
	PC	0.43	1.38				X	
	BQ	0.69	0.98			X		
Czech	ODS	0.01	0.94		X			0.28

Country	Party							
Republic (1996)	CSSD	0.27	1.45				X	
	KDU-CSL	0.07	1.50				X	
	Association for the Rep.	1.01	1.08			X		
	ODA	0.05	1.26				X	
Denmark (1998)	SD	0.60	1.39				X	0.33
	V	0.05	1.57				X	
	KF	0.44	1.55				X	
	SF	0.37	1.62				X	
	CD	0.21	1.33				X	
Finland (2003)	KESK	0.47	1.23				X	0.34
	SDP	0.43	1.37				X	
	KOK	0.53	1.22				X	
	Left Alliance	0.07	1.59				X	
	Green League	0.09	1.04		X			
	KD	0.59	1.32				X	
	SFP/RKP	0.22	1.24				X	
France (2002)	RPR/UMP	0.87	1.29	X				0.39
	FN	0.14	1.18				X	
	PS	0.10	1.40				X	
	UDF	0.79	1.47	X				
	LV	0.08	1.33				X	
	PCF	0.37	1.42				X	
Germany East (1998)	SPD	0.81	1.52	X				0.29
	AllianceGreens	0.05	1.45				X	
	FDP	0.24	1.53				X	
	PDS	0.06	1.45				X	
Germany West (1998)	SPD	0.81	1.54	X				0.29
	AllianceGreens	0.05	1.51				X	
	FDP	0.24	1.52				X	
	PDS	0.06	1.24				X	
Great Britain (1997)	Labour	0.56	1.35				X	0.47
	Conservative	1.07	1.24	X				
	LDP	0.20	1.63				X	
	SNP	0.02	1.41				X	
Hungary (1998)	MSzP	0.69	1.23	X				0.68
	FIDESZ-MPP	0.68	1.30	X				
	FKgP	0.67	1.15	X				
	SzDSz	0.67	1.06			X		
Iceland (1999)	SJ	0.19	0.96		X			0.76
	FSF	1.32	1.49	X				
Ireland (2002)	Fianna Fail	0.11	1.46				X	0.21
	Fine	0.46	1.47				X	

	Gael Labour	0.10	1.53					X	
	Sinn Fein	0.13	1.46					X	
	Green	0.24	1.25					X	
Israel (1999)	Ha'avoda	0.44	1.16					X	0.14
	Likud	0.08	1.55					X	
	Shas	0.00	1.29					X	
	Mafdal	0.18	1.45					X	
	Meretz	0.00	1.24					X	
Netherlands (1998)	PvdA	0.14	1.58					X	0.25
	VVD	0.18	1.48					X	
	CDA	0.09	1.62					X	
	D' 66	0.29	1.54					X	
	GL	0.59	1.71					X	
	SP	0.18	1.52					X	
New Zealand (1996)	NP	0.46	1.35					X	0.31
	LP	0.16	1.49					X	
	NZFP	0.17	1.57					X	
	Alliance	0.46	1.48					X	
Norway (1997)	DNA	0.19	1.31					X	0.31
	FrP	0.05	1.52					X	
	H	0.56	1.53					X	
	KrF	0.35	1.62					X	
	SP	0.35	1.58					X	
	SV	0.32	1.66					X	
Poland (1997)	SLD	0.54	1.64					X	0.55
	PSL	0.69	.87				X		
	UP	0.42	1.35						
Portugal (2002)	PSD	0.03	1.50					X	0.40
	PS	0.57	1.70					X	
	PP	0.11	1.21					X	
	CDU	0.87	1.50	X					
Romania (1996)	PDSR	0.45	1.12			X			0.18
	UDMR	0.04	1.08			X			
	PUNR	0.14	1.15					X	
Spain (1996)	PP	0.29	1.38					X	0.22
	PSOE	0.15	1.50					X	
	IU	0.24	1.56					X	
	CiU	0.43	1.54					X	
	EAJ-PNV	0.06	1.47					X	
Slovenia (1996)	LDS	0.22	1.31					X	0.16
	SLS	0.26	1.26					X	
	SD	0.14	1.13			X			
	SKD	0.01	.95		X				
Sweden (1998)	SAP	0.24	1.55					X	0.28
	MS	0.02	1.53					X	
	VP	0.55	1.51					X	
	KD	0.29	1.33					X	
	CP	0.16	1.78					X	
	FP	0.45	1.57					X	
Switzerla	SVP/U	0.78	1.35	X					0.37

nd (1999)	DC SPS/PSS	0.03	1.46			X
	FDP/PLR	0.81	1.54	X		
	CVP/PDC	0.47	1.67			X
	GLP/PVL	0.11	1.51			X

The list of party abbreviations can be found in appendix 1.

Appendix 6: Modell 1 with separate introduction of levels 1-3.

	1-Level Model	2-Level Model	3-Level Model
Fixed part	ß coefficients, unstandardized		
	Fixed effects (with robust std. errors)		Fixed effects (with non- robust std. errors)#
Intercept 3	1.514***	1.624***	1.509***
Don't Like	-0.167***	-0.167***	-0.167***
Like Strongly	-0.105***	-0.099***	-0.099***
Ideological Distance	-0.032***	-0.037***	-0.037***
Education	0.016***	0.016***	0.016***
Age	-0.000*	-0.000*	-0.000***
Female	-0.037***	-0.037***	-0.037***
Party's Change		-0.001	0.033
Previous Vote Share		-0.003*	-0.002
Party Age		0.001**	0.001*
Left-Right Family		0.020	0.015
Party Divergence		-0.139**	-0.140**
In Government t-1		-0.052	-0.046
Issue: Party Politics			0.092***
Issue: Leader Politics			0.069**
Overall/Total PS Change			-0.544***
Party System Polar.			0.027+
Multiparty System			0.119*
ENPP			-0.044*
Age of Democracy			0.003***

Random effects Variance Components (V.C.) and degrees of freedom (d.f.)	V.C.	d.f.	V.C	d.f.	V.C.	d.f.
Intercept 1 r_0	0.023***	85	0.028***	79	0.027***	79
Ideological Distance Slope, r_1			0.001***	109	0.001***	85
Level 3, Intercept 1/2 u_{00}	0.116***	24	0.010***	24	0.000	17
Ideological Distance, Intercept 2 u_{20}				-	0.000*	24
Log likelihood	-89470470000		-88782150000		-88766170000	
N (individual/party dyads)	1150642		150642		150642	
N parties	113		113		113	
N systems	25		25		25	

***p<.001, two sided, **p<.01, two sided, *p<.05 two-sided, +p<.05 one-sided. #The fixed effects were calculated with non-robust standard errors because the number of level 3 units was too small. Differences to the estimation of fixed effects with robust standard errors were negligible. All effects fixed except for 'Ideological Distance' for which random variance is calculated on party and system level. Education and Age are group mean centred. The random effects part displayed, here, is calculated with the unstan-dardized analysis. The chi-square statistics reported above are based on only 110 of 113 level 2 units, which had sufficient data for computation. Fixed effects and variance components are based on all the data.

Appendix 7: Respondents' estimation proximity to left–right party positions with left-right position change and an Interaction effect of young party systems x change

Fixed part	Beta coefficients, (unstandardized)
Intercept 3	1.673***
Don't Like	-0.167***
Like Strongly	-0.099***
Ideological Distance	-0.037***
Education*	0.016***
Age*	-0.000***
Female	-0.037***
Party's Change	0.032
PrVote Share	-0.003+
Party Age	0.001*
Left-Right Family	0.017
Party Divergence	-0.120**
In Government t-1	-0.037
Issue: Party Politics	0.079**
Issue: Leader Politics	0.071*
Overall/Total L-R Change	-0.543***
Multiparty System	0.086
ENPP	-0.030
Age of Democracy	0.002
Young	-0.133
Young*Overall Change	0.091

Random effects	Variance Comp.	df	χ^2		p-value
Intercept 1, r_0	0.026	79	4602.649		<0.001
Ideological Distance Slope, r_2	0.001	85	1227.106		<0.001
Level 3, Intercept1/2 u_{00}	0.000	16	20.097		0.215
Ideological Distance, Intercept 2, u_{20}	0.000	24	40.314		0.020

Log likelihood	-88763350000.00
N (individual/party dyads)	194351
N parties	113
N systems	25

***$p<.001$, two sided, **$p<.01$, two sided, *$p<.05$ two-sided, +$p<.05$ one-sided Because the number of level 3 units was too small, the fixed effects were calculated with non-robust standard errors. The differences to the estimation of fixed effects with robust standard errors were negligible. All effects fixed except for 'Ideological Distance', for which random variance is calculated on party and system level Education and Age are group mean centred. The random effects part displayed, here, is calculated with the unstandardized analysis. The chi-square statistics reported above are based on only 110 of 113 level 2 units, which had sufficient data for computation. Fixed effects and variance components are based on all the data.

CHAPTER 3

HOW MUCH DO VOTERS KNOW? OR DO THEY NEED TO?

THE IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENS' CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENTIATION

OF PARTIES' POLICY SPACE.

Kathrin Barbara Busch, GESIS - Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences, Köln.

Abstract

Rational voting theory emanates from the assumption that citizens vote for the party that represents them best. For spatial models, this means that voters need to know where parties position themselves. However, empirical evidence does not lead to the expectation that voters know left-right positions well. While knowledge of political facts has been tested widely in models of electoral participation, this is not the case for knowledge about ideological positions. It is still unclear how precise citizens' knowledge regarding positions needs to be or whether it is sufficient that they know how to vote. Following Neuman's "conceptualization," several aspects of political sophistication are tested with a comparative multilevel logistic analysis for their importance to voter participation. I find that while factual knowledge and voters' differentiation between party positions on the left-right scale is important, the precision of voters' position estimations has no significant effect on voting. Citizens' party identification and other cues of voting lead voters to the ballot, irrespective of their level of positional knowledge. While this is good news for voter mobilization, not having a good overall picture of parties' positions might have a negative impact on representative democracies.

Keywords: political sophistication; conceptualization; turnout

Introduction

Knowledge of party positions is a central aspect of citizens' political sophistication. It is important for their understanding and evaluation of current political decision-making processes, and especially for the *prospective* choice of parties. The more voters know about parties' current political positions, the easier it is for them to compare these to their positions and make informed, policy-driven vote choices. In this sense, political information about parties' positions can be thought of as a necessary, even if insufficient condition for electoral participation. It is insufficient because voters also need to approve of the underlying policies when they choose a party or candidate. Furthermore, to address the chances that the most-liked party or candidate will be successful in the election, voters will also need other, more general information related to the voting rules and about parties' prospects of success in their voting district. Finally, party identification as an affective and rather stable cue to vote choice can also be important and is likely to diminish the importance of knowledge of party positions.

The idea that voters need to have party- and candidate-specific knowledge about political positions has a long tradition and relates back to Down's (1957) seminal economic voting model. The later refinement of the idea that voters need to know not only policy positions, or parties' ideology as a shortcut (Downs 1957, 98), but also political facts and rules was followed by research on electoral participation, which tests voter mobilization mostly in dependence to factual knowledge only (e.g., de Vreese and Boomgarden 2006; Fisher et al. 2008; Kroh 2006; Popkin and Dimmock 1999) or makes use of indexes which mix both kinds of knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996) Another strand of research investigates respondents' knowledge of party positions or party ideology by comparing voters' left-right party estimations with some benchmark, such as voters' mean or experts' estimations. However, in these studies, political sophistication[61] is usually the dependent variable (Dahlberg 2013; Drummond 2010; Gordon and Segura 1997; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Neuman 1981).

Although strong theoretical reasoning, it is still empirically unclear how voter *mobilization* is related to knowledge about *ideological positions*. After a number of

---

[61] Some authors refer to "political sophistication", others to "political knowledge" if they denote the whole construct. I will use "political sophistication" for the construct that encompasses multiple dimensions and measures and distinguish this from factual (political) knowledge as a sub-dimension.

scientists showed that citizens' ability to recall concrete information about political candidates and political issues was low (e.g. Campbell et al 1960) and that citizens rather only keep "online-processed" summary evaluations (Lodge, Steenbergen and Brau, 1995; Rahn, Aldrich and Borgida 1994), researchers argued that knowledge about *specific policies* should not be tested as a determinant for voting behavior (Popkin and Dimmock 1999). However, they did not test knowledge about ideological positions either, even though these are seen as "shortcuts" to politicy. We still do not know whether voters need very precise information about political parties' standpoints or whether factual political knowledge such as being aware of the voting rules and some basic facts is enough for voter mobilization. Normatively, it should be important to know party positions well, because this enables voters to consider which party fits one's preferences best (Downs 1957) and to evaluate previous performances in that regard. However, research about *vote choice* leads to the assumption that voters do not necessarily know positions very well. They often do not react to parties' position shifts (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011; 2014), and there is considerable between-country variance in the percentage of respondents who vote "correctly" (Lau et al. 2014, 253)[62]. This evidence raises doubts about how knowledgeable citizens are – or need to be – when they cast their vote.

What kind(s) of political knowledge do citizens need to turn into voters? To answer this question of research, I rigorously test the effect of three measures of political knowledge on the individual turnout decision, while controlling for party ID, education, and determinants of voting, which have often been found to be effective on the country level. Making use of comparative evaluations of parties' left-right positions (of the CSES), I create two measures of political knowledge that should be more strongly related to voting than factual knowledge. These are measures of conceptualization as suggested by Neuman (1981, 1986): the ability to *differentiate between political positions* and the ability to *conceptually integrate* these into a meaningful frame (e.g., left-right dichotomy) to make an electoral choice.

---

[62] Lau et al.'s (2014) measure of "correct voting" is not fully consistent with the idea of voters' spatial considerations because it also takes account of voter's party identity and performance evaluations. However, spatial self-placement and identity make up the majority of the variables used to create their utility measure. Due to the mixing of positions and party identity in their utility measure, it is unsuitable for determining how strongly voters care about or know policy positions.

My comparative analysis of 26,285 individuals within 26 countries shows that factual knowledge and the ability to differentiate between parties' left-right positions are important for citizens' vote decision. Citizens who do not see any differences between at least two of the six most important parties regarding their left-right positions have significantly lower odds of voting. However, the precision with which citizens estimate these positions by the mean does not add to their odds of turnout. General information and understanding the differences between parties seem to be sufficient for voter mobilization. Although somewhat surprising, this finding is enlightening, as it relates well to research that has found that voters often do not react to parties' ideological shifts (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011, 2014). However, since factual knowledge, conceptual differentiation and general education are important determinants for voting, we can safely assume that we are not observing "dull voters." It is rather likely that some vote cues – be it strong party ties or retrospective economic evaluations – do not incentivise voters to acquire details about current policy propositions.

2. Why should precise knowledge be important?

2.1 Rational Voters

According to Downs (1957) citizens vote for the party which is closest to their position. This idea is also present in Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) rational choice (RC) model of voting,

$$R=(BP)-C + D, \qquad\qquad (1).$$

It assumes that citizens vote for the party for which they feel most rewarded. The reward R is highest if the *differential benefit B* that they would gain from the choice of one party (or candidate) over its opponent(s) multiplied by the *probability P* that their election will be effective is highest; their voting costs C are low and they have a feeling of duty (D) to participate. The crucial point is the differential benefit that voters are assumed to know according to the model. In the most orthodox interpretation of RC, restrictions on information or cognitive capacity are not accounted for, even if it is acknowledged that comparisons will be easier in two-party than multiparty systems. Given that most voters will hardly ever know all parties' exact policy positions, this is an unrealistic assumption. However, in the logic of spatial voting in the Downsian sense, voters can use ideology as the shortcut and hence to not need to know the single positions.

In that vein, knowledge about ideological positions should be important. Information costs before the election are higher for the less-informed and cognitively less capable. For people starting with more political knowledge, not only are the information costs prior to the election (the C term in the model) reduced, but the benefit (term B) is also strengthened. The more parties and their chances of success a person is informed about, the more certain they should feel about their choice. They will perceive more benefit from the voting act as a means of expressing their support of one option over the other(s), making them more likely to vote. This is backed by research finding that uncertainty about candidates is a reason for citizens to abstain from specific types of elections of which they have less information (Wattenberg et al. 2000).

2.2 From information and RC theory to empirical research. How should political information be measured?

Despite the theoretical importance of knowing policy positions for spatial voting models, the traditional empirical research on political knowledge did not consider positional knowledge as a separate dimension. On theoretical level, they differentiated between a general or factual type of knowledge, of which electoral rules are a part, and a policy-related dimension, in which voters are expected to know political actors and some of their policy positions or their ideology (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Popkin and Dimmock 1999; Neuman 1996). Positional knowledge was still left out from *empirical analyses* (Popkin and Dimmock 1999), or just included in a general political knowledge index, together with a range of factual knowledge variables(e.g., Bennett 1988, 1989; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992).

Neumann (1981, 1986) offers one of the most structured theoretical concepts of political knowledge that also links well to rational choice. He differentiates three components: 1. "salience," the "predisposition to acquire knowledge," which relates to a person's political interest and attentiveness; 2. the "more commonly used textbookish political knowledge" (Neumann 1981, 1236); and 3. "conceptualization," which he defines as the "propensity of an individual to use facts and abstract constructs in evaluating things political" (Neumann 1986, 57). Conceptualization is most related to "knowledge-in-use" (Neumann 1981, 1237). It is also the most complex of the three components because it consists of two sub-components. These are "conceptual differentiation," the "ability to identify and discriminate among the various political

issues, actors, and events," and "conceptual integration," "the explicit organization of political ideas and issues regarding abstract or ideological constructs" (Neuman 1981, 1237). "Political knowledge" would hence be useful for voters' background information, which is necessary for the voting process in itself, such as the voting rules and the political role of the elected representatives – facts that seldom change. Conceptualization would be the more time-specific knowledge about actors, their political attitudes, and ideological orientations. In the RC model, this latter kind of knowledge would be voters' prerequisite to seeing the *differential benefits* of preferring one party over another. Hence, Neuman's "political knowledge" and "conceptual knowledge" with its two sub-components would be meaningful for voting[63]. In contrast, "salience" is not as easily integrated, because it is rather a measure of motivation than a cognitive capability or knowledge (Lambert et al. 1988, 362). It is also likely that salience prerequisites fact knowledge and conceptual knowledge because if voters lack this interest and attention, it is unlikely that they become politically sophisticated. Therefore, "salience" will not be used in my test of different kinds of political sophistication on voting.

2.3 Previous research about factual and conceptual knowledge and hypotheses

There are so far only a few studies that empirically model political sophistication as multidimensional. Lambert et al. (1988) also followed Neuman and distinguished between factual and conceptual political knowledge. However, they did not test their measures as *determinants* of political participation. This is done in three more recent single-country studies that use data from the USA, Switzerland or Germany, respectively (Gilens 2001; Johann 2011; Marquis 2010).These studies confirm that there are indeed differences in how factual political knowledge and policy-related knowledge determine attitudes and behavior. They found that for political judgments or the propensity to vote for the closest party, policy knowledge or knowledge about parties' ideology are more important than general political knowledge (Gilens 2011; Marquis 2010) and that knowledge about political actors is more strongly related to electoral participation than knowledge about democratic rules (Johann 2011). The commonality of these studies is

---

[63] Note, that Neuman's "political knowledge" is hereafter denoted by the more precise "factual (political) knowledge", but the same type of knowledge is meant.

that policy and actor-related knowledge is different from factual knowledge and has a distinguishable impact on political behavior. It can also be assumed that different kinds of political sophistication do not relate equally to voter turnout. Due to the theoretical model of rational voting and the political sophistication research, I expect that "factual knowledge" and "conceptual knowledge," with its two sub-components "differentiation" and "conceptual integration," should be relevant for the *rational* voting decision and thus also enable voting. In a common model of voting, I expect the following:

(1) The higher a person's factual political knowledge, the higher their odds of voting.

If factual knowledge is different from conceptual knowledge, it will have an independent positive effect on voting when both measures are tested simultaneously. Factual knowledge should deliver the most-basic information; conceptual knowledge should enable persons to assess the beneficial difference between parties or actors. However, following Neuman's (1981, 1986) distinction, two steps might be necessary to find the beneficial differences for vote choice: firstly, seeing that there are differences in a specific political dimension, and secondly, cognitively integrating parties to compare potential benefits. In that vein, the following can be expected:

(2) Persons who see differences between the positions of political actors have higher odds of voting than persons who do not see differences.

Due to the necessity of being precisely informed in order to assess the differential benefits of a party and which party matches one's political positions best, and following the RC model of voting, we can further expect the following:

(3) The better voters can conceptually integrate parties via placing them correctly on the left-right scale, the higher their odds of voting.

The hierarchical logic of first differentiating among parties and then integrating their positions into a concept leads to expectations that the differentiation should be more important. If voters do not differentiate, they cannot proceed to the second step of integration. I expect that

(4) Acknowledging positional differences between positions (i.e., conceptual

differentiation) is more important for a person's odds of voting than knowing positions

precisely.

While differentiation between at least two parties is a precondition for *choice*, the precision of a person's logical integration could be of comparatively less importance. Policy or spatial considerations are only a few of many different cues upon which persons rely when making their vote choice.

Apart from the determinants discussed so far, further individual characteristics, which in most studies have been found to determine voter mobilization (Smets, van Ham 2013), will be added to the analysis as control variables. Of these, party ID should be the strongest control variable. It has been shown to predict vote choice in a variety of political settings even if its predictive power has somewhat declined (Berglund et al. 2005). Since a person's party ID is only partly a product of their socialization and their ideological standpoints, it should also have an impact on voting that is independent of political sophistication. Further control variables that will be added are respondents' level of education, their household income, age and marital status. Respondents' level of education will mainly serve for proving that political sophistication has an effect that is seperate from general schooling. Higher-educated persons are better pre-informed and will have less pre-election information costs. The reasons for citizens' increased voting with higher incomes are that they have more resources (e.g., Brady et al. 1995; Gallego 2010) and that they have more interest in voting and influencing politics due to stronger (potential) tax exposure (Kasara and Suryanarayan 2015). Lastly, the logic for older persons' and couples' higher odds of voting is a stronger feeling of civic duty (Denver 2008) or additionally, for the latter, a "contagion effect" (Straits 1990).

Furthermore, some *system differences* that also affect voting will be added to the analysis. The most obvious one is that in some countries, voting is compulsory. This always results in higher turnout rates, even if this also depends on how fiercely this obligation is sanctioned. Another important between-country difference depends on how votes are transferred into parliamentary seats. Empirical research finds that aggregate turnout is usually higher in proportional systems (e.g., Franklin 1996). Banducci and Karp (2009) explain this phenomenon by the stronger vote efficacy that citizens feel in more-proportional systems.

Two further aspects that the analysis will control are the "closeness of the race," which leads to comparatively higher turnout (see Geys 2006, 647), and whether a country is Eastern European. Eastern Europeans' experiences with autocracy and personal disappointments in times of political and economic transitions might be partially responsible for their higher levels of distrust in parties, lower percentages of party-bound voters, and stronger rates of volatility[64].

3. Data and Operationalization

The empirical analysis will test the abovementioned three components of political sophistication that were identified to be important in theories of voting behavior in a unified model of individuals' electoral participation. To test these measures of political sophistication for their effects on voting, I run comparative analyses on data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), Modules 1-4, that I pooled. The CSES data have the advantage that they are derived from post-election interviews that usually take place within three months after the election. For questions about voting behavior, post-elections studies are preferable because before elections, people tend to be undecided and will hence be unable to report their true behavior. By contrast, in post-election interviews, people usually know whether they recently voted or not. Social desirability effects might be present, but not more than in pre-election surveys. Memory effects can be expected to be rather small in the CSES because of the short time-lag between election and interview. Vote recall only becomes modestly less exact over time (Elsas et al. 2014).

The second data source used is parties' left-right positions (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006, data update 2016). These data enable me to show how precisely voters locate parties on the left-right scale and, hence, whether they are able to differentiate and to conceptually integrate. Even though the meaning of left and right can differ among countries, the scale is still the most surveyed scale in comparative studies. For this study, the scale is more useful for the measurement of political sophistication than knowledge about specific policies, which is more dependent on respondents' varying

---

[64] This is not to dismiss that volatility is due to voters' lack of support, but volatility is also largely due to frequent changes in the party supply, as Tavits (2008) finds.

level of interest in specific political domains (Gilens 2001) and is hence a less reliable measure for "political sophistication".

Franzmann and Kaiser's left-right index is based on the CMP raw values for single political issues (Volkens et al. 2016). It is the only left-right index based on CMP data that circumvents the problem of potential variance in country-specific meanings of left and right. Its trick is an elaborate calculation procedure that starts with country-by-country regression analyses to find the country- and time-specific issue spaces (Franzmann 2013). This makes it most suitable for comparative analyses. To increase comparability further, only data from Western democratic countries are included in the sample. I merge the position data over parties within election years with the pooled CSES data.

I will now discuss and explain how my main variables were created. The operationalization of the remaining variables is presented in an online appendix. As outlined above, three variables of political sophistication will be tested simultaneously: voters' "factual knowledge" and two variables related to conceptualization, namely, voters' ability to differentiate and to cognitively integrate parties in a meaningful political concept. The calculation of "Factual knowledge" follows Fisher et al.'s (2008) procedure. I calculated the number of correct answers to three knowledge questions per respondent and then standardized the value by dividing it by the country's mean number of correct answers. The resulting decimal value reflects how much better or worse the respondent answered the questions relative to their country fellows.

For the measurement of *"conceptual differentiation*," I first examined on the individual level how respondents estimated each of the six most important parties on the left-right scale[65]. The crucial question is whether respondents differentiated parties regarding their left-right ideology – no matter how well they estimated them – or whether they did not see differences between at least two of the six parties' left-right ideology. I calculated a dummy "No Differentiation," which is coded one for respondents

---

[65] "Importance" means electoral importance due to a party's percentage of votes in the current election. By default, the CSES asks party-related questions about the seven most important parties and two additional parties if the election study chooses so. However, the number of parties estimated by respondents throughout the pooled data was only six, due to a lower number of estimated parties in Module 1.

who did not see any differences between the parties they estimated[66]. It is coded zero for respondents who did not rate all parties equally and for those who estimated just two or more parties on the same position but assigned another position to at least one or more other parties. To control for respondents who did not see a difference between parties but did not find this problematic, I built a variable, called "balance." Different from persons who do not differentiate between parties but are of a different left-right position, it is likely that people in the "balanced" group are either satisfied with these estimated party similarities or do not care. They are hence not expected to vote with a lower likelihood than others.

The fit of respondents' conceptual integration is operationalized with the variable "Estimation Proximity." This variable is based on the individual's estimation of parties' positions on the left-right scale and the left-right index values of the same parties and election years (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006). Both the individual estimation and the index range from zero (left) to ten (right). For the variable "Estimation Proximity," I calculated the absolute difference between the respondent's party estimation and the party's index value. In a second step, I inverted the range of the variable so that higher values reflect greater estimation precision. As the last step, the mean of these proximity values was calculated for each voter to reflect their average estimation precision.

4. Case Selection and Methods

The analysis employs individual and macro data of the four published CSES modules, which could be matched with Franzmann's and Kaiser's data (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006, updated 2016). To avoid different economic bias on voting due to the global financial crisis, I chose only data from elections that either took place before the beginning of the crisis or clearly after its peak years. Furthermore, only data from legislative elections of "free" democracies (Freedom House 2014) were pooled for

---

[66] Since there was variation in the number of parties that voters' assigned a left-right value, and because the real party polarization within party systems varies greatly, the threshold for "No Differentiation" was set high: only persons who rated every party they estimated with the same position, while not assigning any valid codes to others, and only those respondents who answered for each party "don't know" "refused", or missed out completely on all of these questions, were coded one. In some countries, "don't know" and "refused" answers were not coded which led to the impossibility to differentiate between persons who completely missed out and those who answered "don't know" or "refused". However, a test with an alternative version of the variable and with only those countries, in which voters who said "don't know", "refused" or missed out on every party estimation were not assigned code one, did not substantively change the analytical results.

analysis in order to ensure data comparability regarding countries' democratic standards of electoral processes and rules. After applying these restrictions, the data sample contains 26,285 individuals in 26 election studies[67].

As explained above, the analysis will take into account mostly individual-level characteristics while controlling for some macro-level determinants, which have been shown to be important in previous research. Even if the main research interest is in the different kinds of individual political sophistication, it will be interesting to see whether and how specific differences among countries add to citizens' inclinations to vote. Due to the nested data structure, I chose to run a two-level model that simultaneously estimates the effects of individual and macro determinants (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). Arguably, the rather low number of election studies (26) might lead to a slight underestimation of the country-specific estimators (Bryan and Jenkins 2013). A fixed effects (FE) model would, however, be unsuitable to determine which country characteristics are important. Due to the outcome variable voting not being dichotomous, a generalized linear model with a logit link function will be used[68].

5. Analyses

To gain a first impression of how the three knowledge measures and education relate to each other, I correlated them (Table III.1). All correlations between the knowledge measures and education are significant and positive, but not strong. Among the knowledge variables, "Factual Knowledge" and "No Differentiation" correlate strongest, with r=-0.087, followed by the similarly strong correlation of "Factual Knowledge" with the "Mean Estimation Proximity" (r=0.084). It seems that persons who know more political facts are also more likely to differentiate between parties' left-right positions and to estimate these positions with more precision. "No Differentiation" and "Mean

---

[67] The number of election studies is not the same as the number of countries in my data because the German study is divided into East and West. The data on Asian and Latin American countries were excluded due to restrictions within the index data (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006), but they would also have been excluded because the left-right dichotomy is not as broadly understood as it is in Western democracies. Further election studies had to be excluded due to other missing variables within the CSES data. In particular, in Bulgaria, Denmark, Iceland and Slovenia, no factual knowledge questions were asked. The full list of election studies and parties included in the analysis can be found in an online appendix.

[68] As a robustness check, the analysis was additionally run as a pooled logit model with clustered standard errors. Because this analysis did not lead to noteworthy differences, I henceforward only report the results for the Generalized Logistic Model.

Estimation Proximity" correlate less strongly, with r=-0.076. Hence, being able to differentiate left-right positions does not necessarily mean that respondents estimate positions precisely.

Table III.1: Correlations among factual knowledge, differentiation and Voters' Estimation Proximity.

	No Differentiation	Mean Estimation Proximity	Education
Factual Knowledge	-0.087*	0.084*	0.215*
No Differentiation		-0.076*	-0.075*
Mean Estimation Prox.			0.144*

*p<=0.005

Considering education, "Factual Knowledge" correlates most strongly, with r=0.215. An explanation for this high correlation might be that the factual questions asked in the CSES are mostly about information that rarely changes over time. Knowledge about this might hence be rooted in school education, while party positions and differences among parties are more subject to change and are less teachable.

Still, even the "Mean Estimation Proximity" is comparatively strongly correlated with the level of education, with r=0.144. Given that the level of education can predict a person's ability to estimate parties' left-right positions at least to some extent (author, 2016), this is no surprise. Higher-educated persons are presumably more interested in and attentive to politics in general, or they actively update themselves more about policy. As the correlation shows, they are also better able to differentiate between left-right positions. Seeing differences between positions might involve not only cognitive abilities and information but also a belief in the saliency of the left-right political cleavage. The lower correlation of "Differentiation" with education and with the other political sophistication measures leads to the cautious expectation that its impact on voting will be independent of the other measures' effects. Up to this point, however, the given reasoning is only hypothetical. As a next step, the analytical model will shed more light on how the measures of political sophistication determine voter mobilization.

To examine how strongly voting is predicted by individual factors in comparison to system effects, the first causal analysis that is run is an empty model (see Table III.2).

Table III.2: The effect of political sophistication on the individual decision to participate in an election

	ANOVA	2-Level Model		
	Coefficient	Coefficient	Odds Ratio	p-value
Fixed part, Coefficients				
Individual Level				
Intercept	1.88***	-1.487	0.226	0.000
Factual Polknow[1]		0.500	1.649	0.000
Mean Estimation Proximity		-0.087	0.917	0.212
No Differentiation		-0.984	0.374	0.000
Balanced left-right		0.432	1.541	0.117
Self-efficaciousness		0.341	1.406	0.000
Party ID (y=1)		0.826	2.284	0.000
Married / partnership (y=1)		0.176	1.192	0.000
Education[1]		0.126	1.134	0.000
Age		0.025	1.026	0.000
Income		0.121	1.128	0.000
Country Level				
East		-0.782	0.457	0.004
Compulsory		0.441	1.555	0.003
Closeness of race		0.020	1.020	0.262
Proportional System y/n		0.295	1.343	0.260
Variance	0.73	0.345		
N individuals	26,285	26,285		
N systems	26	26		
ICC	0.181	0.095		
Wald Chi²	--	1942.25***		
Log-likelihood	-9182.55	-8054.56		

[1]Education and Factual Political Knowledge were group-mean-centered to make these variables more comparable across countries. All models were calculated using Stata 14.2. Values are rounded to the third place. Annotations: ICC= Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

The significant variance component of the ANOVA means that there is residual between-groups variance in the level-1 estimators. Approximately 18 percent of the total unexplained variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the country-level

differences, as the Interclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) shows. A model that also tests for level-two predictors is hence appropriate.

The two-level model of analysis (Table III.2) shows several factors contributing to making elections meaningful or beneficial enough for respondents to participate. Having factual political knowledge has a positive effect on participation, as was expected and hypothesized. The model further shows that not differentiating between parties regarding their left-right positions leads to much lower odds of voting in comparison to those who differentiate. Its importance besides factual knowledge shows the multidimensionality of "political sophistication."

The model confirms Neuman's (1981, 1986) distinction between factual knowledge and "conceptualization"[69]. Seeing the ideological differences between parties is important for the choice of parties and hence for voting as a means of choice. This also relates back to the RC prediction that citizens vote for the party from which they expect the most *differential benefit*. By contrast, the model also shows that voters' mean estimation proximity of parties' left-right positions does not have a significant effect on their decision to vote. In other words, it does not matter **how precisely** voters can "conceptually integrate" parties on the left-right scale, it only matters that they do differentiate between positions.

In Figure III.1, the effective margins of factual knowledge on a person's odds of voting are plotted[70]. The two graphs show the same effect but separately for those who do differentiate between parties' positions (top graph) and those who do not differentiate (bottom graph). To make the figure more illustrative, the effect of factual knowledge is split into four groups: below mean, mean, more, and much more than mean factual knowledge[71].

Following the graphs from left to right, the figure shows that the predictive probability of a person to vote in the election increases with their comparative factual knowledge. However, most importantly, the bottom line of respondents who do not differentiate between parties is always below one, except for those who have much

---

[69] Again, Neuman calls the former simply "political knowledge" but measures this with information about political facts. To make the differences more clear, I use the terms "factual knowledge" and "conceptualization".

[70] Other determinants are held constant at their mean.

[71] Furthermore, for the graph, the underlying equation was calculated only for respondents in countries with non-compulsory voting.

more factual knowledge. Again, this illustrates the specifically low odds of voting of respondents who do not differentiate between parties' positions.

Figure III.1: Predictive Margins of fact. knowledge with 95% CIs
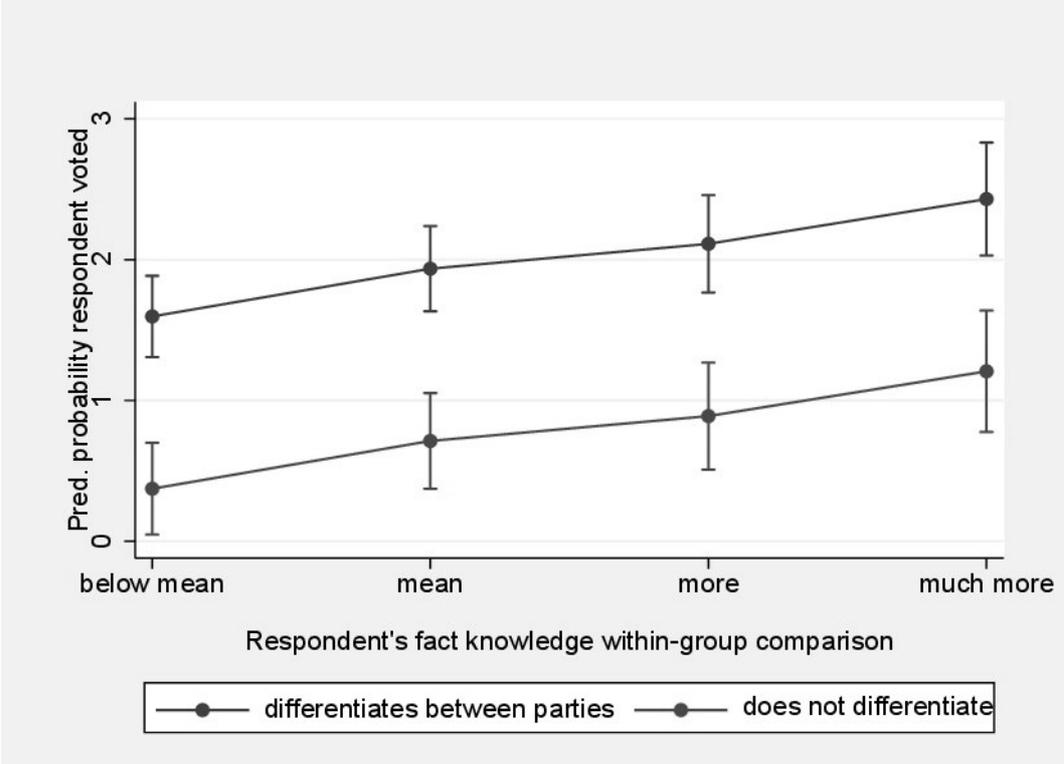
Given that the differentiation between parties is the prerequisite for figuring out what would be their differential benefit, this outcome fits to the RC model of voting. The rejection of the hypothesis that knowing these ideological positions more precisely leads to an additional increase, however, is contrary to the RC model's logic – at least if the kind of differential benefit is only due to parties' positions. Surely, benefits can also be due to valence issues, a party's performance or a party's capability to lead the country to economic momentum. However, this would put the concept of "rational" spatial voting – or at least voter mobilization due to spatial positions – somewhat into question. However, the outcome that both factual knowledge and differentiation determine citizens' odds of voting is very robust, as these determinants are significant and strong even if other strong predictors of voting, such as education, party ID, and self-efficaciousness, are controlled for.

On the country level, only "compulsory voting" and the "communist past" show significant effects, while the proportional electoral formula and the closeness of the race are not significant. The non-significance of the proportional formula might be due to its

effect on a person's knowledge about party positions (author 2016, Dahlberg 2013[72]). In that vein, it might have an indirect effect on citizens' electoral participation, which would buy out the direct effect of "proportional" elections.

Discussion

The paper set out to explore what kind of political sophistication citizens need for electoral participation. While rational choice theory lends support to the idea that voters need to know party positions precisely to see the differential benefits, there has so far been no empirical analysis testing how important positional knowledge is in comparison with factual knowledge. The analyses followed Neuman's (1981, 1986) theoretical distinctions of factual knowledge, differentiation and cognitive integration. I created a new measure of voters' ability to differentiate between party positions by inspecting whether they had estimated at least two of the six most important parties on different positions of the left-right dimension. Included in the comparative analyses were data from voters and parties in 26 election studies from Western democracies.

The dummy variable showed that knowing how to differentiate between parties determines citizens' mobilization quite strongly and independently from factual political knowledge. Voting is cognitively demanding, and political sophistication increases a person's odds of voting, due to at least two mechanisms. The contribution of this study was, hence, to empirically prove that both factual knowledge and differentiation between parties are important for voter mobilization. However, the precision with which voters estimate parties' current left-right positions does not seem to be relevant. The empirical analysis could hence only partly confirm the RC model of voting, which predicts that voters will vote for the party from which they expect the *most differential benefit*. The point to take away is that it is important for citizens to see and acknowledge spatial differences but that they do not need to know the benefit very precisely – at least not regarding parties' current left-right positions.

On the one hand, this outcome is surprising, given that there is a strong theoretical and normative expectation that voters should know which party or candidate would benefit them most. On the other hand, there are numerous models of vote choice, and

---

[72] Proportional systems lead to a higher number of effective parliamentary parties. Empirical evidence that this leads to less- or more-precise perceptions of party positions is mixed.

voters who take different cues than spatial ones might not pay that much attention to parties' current prospective goals and promises. The finding that knowing positions more precisely does not significantly lead to higher odds of voting should not lead to the conclusion that voters are "uninformed." It is rather likely that retrospective economic considerations, party identification and other voting cues simply do not provide the masses with incentives to gain detailed knowledge about *current* ideological positions. Some voters might care more about this information and be more cognitively able to see specific benefits due to positions, while for others this is irrelevant.

An explanation for the non-importance of precise estimations might be issue saliency. Depending on specific issues a voter cares most about, they might vote for a party even if they support only some of their political stances. In these cases, the expectation of differential benefits might still be met in the sense that voters *think* that they knew who would benefit them most, even though they do not see the whole picture of the party's left-right positions. The overestimation of one's knowledge is quite common according to behavioral economists' research (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Tversky and Kahneman 1992). This, of course, would not be *rational voting* in the sense of the RC model, which includes the assumption of citizens being fully informed about differences or left-right working as a short-cut (Downs 1957). However, reality does not match this assumption.

The finding that exact knowledge does not make a significant difference for voting is not necessarily bad for democracy. It rather informs about what kinds of citizens go out to vote and how much knowledge they need to get mobilized. Regarding the precision of voters' party estimations on the left-right scale, the answer given in this study is, hence: not much. However, this does not reject the hypotheses that political sophistication is important for voting. To the contrary, my research still proves the importance of factual political knowledge and the ability of at least *differentiating* between parties' left-right positions, and these findings are robust. Some spatial position-taking and cognition count for voter participation.

We need to acknowledge that most citizens vote regardless of whether they are informed precisely regarding ideological content. This can be good or bad news for democracy. For "rational," informed, prospective voting due to *current* positions, this finding is rather negative, while for voter mobilization, it is positive. How strongly voters tend to use other vote cues, relate to long-term political trends, or concentrate on single

issues could not be solved with the data and remains to be seen. As long as voters party-linkages and parties' long-term positions are relatively stable, and as long as voters base their voting decisions on them, the insignificant effect of *current* positional knowledge for voting should not be problematic. If, however, voters start to vote increasingly for parties due to single saliencies and disregard other issues, the principle of representation will fail.

The finding that left-right "differentiation" is still important for voter mobilization should, however, also send a signal to parties. Rather than jump on the next "hot topic" at hand or get carried away by one party's dominant issue in the election campaign, parties should seek to stay recognizable within their issue spaces and at least highlight some of their other traditionally important topics. If voters get the impression that parties depolarize by chasing the median supporter, it is likely that the voters' ability to differentiate between the party spaces will suffer in the long run, that they will become alienated and that they will abstain.

References

Adams S, J. 2001. Party competition and responsible party government: a theory of spatial competition based upon insights from behavioral voting research. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., and Z. Somer-Topcu. 2011. "Is Anybody Listening? Evidence that Voters do not respond to European Parties' Policy Statements During Elections." American Journal of Political Science 55: 370-382.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., and Z. Somer-Topcu. 2014. "Do Voters respond to party manifestos or to a wider Information Environment? An Analysis of mass-elite Linkages on European Integration." American Journal of Political Science (online first): 1-12.

Aldrich, J. H. 1993. "Rational Choice and Turnout." American Journal of Political Science 37: 246-278.

Rahn, W.; Aldrich, J. H., and E. Borgida. 1994. "Individual and Contextual Variations in Political Candidate Appraisal." American Political Science Review 88: 193-199.

Banducci, S. A., and J. A. Karp. 2009. "Electoral Systems, Efficacy, and Voter Turnout." In The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, edited by H.D. Klingemann 109-134. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barabas, J., Jerit, J., Pollock, W., and C. Rainey. 2014 "The Question(s) of Political Knowledge." American Political Science Review 108: 840-855.

Berglund, F., Holmberg, S., Schmitt, H., and J. Thomassen. 2005. "Party Identification and Party Choice." In The European Voter: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies, edited by J.A. Thomassen, 106-123. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blickle, P., Loos, A., Mohr, F., Speckmeier, J., Stahnke, J, Vernohr, S., and V. Völlinger, 2017. "Merkel-Enttäuschte und Nichtwähler machen die AfD stark. " Die Zeit, September 24. Accessed 22. October 2017. http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-09/wahlverhalten-bundestagswahl-wahlbeteiligung-waehlerwanderung

Brady, H.E., Verba, S., and K. Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond ses: A resource model of political participation." American Political Science Review 89: 271–294.

Bryan, M.L. and S.P. Jenkins. 2016. "Multilevel Modelling of Country Effects: A Cautionary Tale." European Sociological Review 32: 3-22.

Bryk, A.S., and S. W. Raudenbush.1992. Hierarchical Linear Models: Applications and Data Analysis Methods. London: Sage Publications.

Campbell, A., Converse, P.E., Miller, W. E., and D.E. Stokes. 1960. The American Voter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dahlberg, S. 2013. "Does context matter - The impact of electoral systems, political parties and the individual characteristics on voters' perceptions of party positions." Electoral Studies 32: 670–683.

De Vreese, C. H., and H. Boomgarden. 2006. "News, Political Knowledge and Participation: The Differential Effects of News Media Exposure on Political Knowledge and Participation." Acta Politica 41: 317-341.

Delli Carpini, M. X., and S. Keeter. 1991. "Stability and Change in the U.S. Public's Knowledge of Politics." Public Opinion Quarterly 55: 583-612.

Delli Carpini, M. X., and S. Keeter. 1996. What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters. New Haven: Yale University Press,

Denver, D. 2008. "Another Rason to Support Marriage? Turnout and the Decline of Marriage in Britain." British Journal of Politics 10: 666-680.

Downs, A. 1957. An economic theory of democracy. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Drummond, A. 2010. "Assimilation, contrast and voter projections of parties in left-right space: Does the electoral system matter?" Party Politics 17: 711-743.

Elsas, E.J., Lubbe, R. van der Meer, T. W. G., and W. van der Brug. 2014. "Vote Recall: A Panel Study on the Mechanisms That Explain Vote Recall Inconsistency." International Journal of Public Opinion Research 26: 18-40

Fisher, S.D., Lessard-Phillips, L. Hobolt, S. B., and J. Curtice. 2008. "Disengaging voters: Do plurality systems discourage the less knowledgeable from voting?" Electoral Studies 27: 89-104.

Franklin, M. 1996. "Electoral Participation." In Comparing Democracies: Elections and voting in Global Perspective, edited by LeDuc, L., Niemi, R. G., and P. Norris, 216-235. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Franzmann, S. T., 2013. "Towards a real comparison of left-right indices: A comment to Jahn." Party Politics 21: 821-828.

Franzmann, S. T., and A. Kaiser. 2006. "Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data. " Party Politics 12: 163–188.

Franzmann, S. T., and A. Kaiser. 2016. Data update July 1. (Accessed 2016/09/30). http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/forschung/datenbanken/party-locations/

Freedom House 2014. "Freedom in the World. Country Ratings and status by region, FIW 1973-2016" EXCEL, Dataset. (Accessed October 12). http://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world-2016

Gallego, A. 2010. "Understanding unequal turnout: education and voting in comparative perspective." Electoral Studies 29: 239–248.

Gallego, A., Rico, G., and E. Anduiza. 2012. "Disproportionality and voter turnout in new and old democracies." Electoral Studies 31: 159-169.

Gilens, M. (2001). "Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences." American Political Science Review 95: 379–96.

Gordon, S.B., and G.M. Segura 1997. "Cross-National Variation in the Political Sophistication of Individuals: Capability or Choice?" The Journal of Politics 59: 126-147.

Granberg, D., and S. Holmberg.1988. The political system matters: Social psychology and voting behavior in Sweden and the United States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Green, D.P., and I. Shapiro.1994. Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory. A Critique of Applications in Political Science. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Iyengar, S. 1986. Whither Political Information. Report to the national Election Studies Board of overseers, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan

Johann, D. 2011. "Spielregeln und AkteurInnen: Politisches Wissen als Ressource verschiedener Formen politischer Partizipation." Österreichische Zeitschrift fuer Politikwissenschaft 40: 377-394.

Kahneman, D. and A. Tversky. 1979. "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk." Econometrica 47: 263-291.

Kasara, K., and P. Suryanarayan. 2015. "When Do the Rich Vote Less Than the Poor and Why? Explaining Turnout Inequality across the World."American Journal of Political Science 59: 613-627.

Lambert, R. D., Curtis, J. D.; Kay, B. D., and S.D. Brown. 1988. "The Social Sources of Political Knowledge." Canadian Journal of Political Science 21: 359–74.

Lodge, M., Steenbergen, M.R., and S. Brau.1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." American Political Science Review 89: 390-426.

Marquis, L. 2010. "Understanding Political Knowledge and its Influence on Voting Preferences in the 2007 Federal Election." Swiss Political Science Review 16: 425-456.

Matsusaka, J.G. 1995. "Explaining voter turnout patterns: An information theory." Public Choice 84: 91-117.

Neuman, R.W. 1981. "Differentiation and Integration: Two Dimensions of Political Thinking." American Journal of Sociology 86: 1236-1268.

Neuman, R.W., 1986. The paradox of mass politics: Knowledge and opinion in the American electorate. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Popkin, S. L., and M.A. Dimock. 1999. "Political Knowledge and Citizen Competence." In Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions, edited by Elkin, S. L., and Soltan, K. E.,117-146. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Riker, W.H., and P.C. Ordeshook.1968. "A theory of the calculus of voting." American Political Science Review, 62: 25-42.

Straits, B. 1990. "The Social Context of Voter Turnout." Public Opinion Quarterly 54: 64-73.

Tavits, M. 2008. "On the linkage between electoral volatility and party system instability in Central and Eastern Europe." European Journal of Political Researc 47: 537-555.

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). (CSES Module 1, 2 and 3 Full releases, Module 4, Fourth Advance release [datasets]). doi: 10.7804/cses.module1.2015-12-15; doi:10.7804/cses.module2.2015-12-15; doi:10.7804/cses.module3.2015-12-15; doi:10.7804/cses.module4.2017-04-11.

http://www.cses.org

Tversky, A. and D. Kahneman. 1992. "Advances in Prospect Theory: Cumulative Representation of Uncertainty." Journal of Risk and Uncertainty 5:297-323.

Volkens, A., Lehmann, P., Matthieß, T., Merz, N., and S. Regel. 2016. The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2016a. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/.

Wattenberg, M.P., McAllister, I., and A. Salvanto. 2000. "How Voting is Like Taking an Sat Test: An Analysis of American Voter Rolloff." American Politics Research 28, 234-250.

Zaller, J. 1986. "Analysis of Information Items on the 1985 NES Pilot Study." Report to the Board of Overseers for the National Election Studies.

Operationalization of variables, not explained in the text

Individual Level:	
Voted (dependent variable, dummy)	equals one if the respondent voted and zero if not. Other answers were treated as missing. The percentage of "refused," "don't know" and "missing" answers in the original variables was low, with a sum of 1.3 percent by the mean. Treating "refused," and "don't know" as additional "did not vote-answers" was tested as an alternative, which did not lead to a different result.
Age	A metric variable of respondents' age; the sample range starts with 18 (age of eligibility).
Education	Measured with an eight-point scale from "no schooling" to "university undergraduate degree completed" (CSES); it is group mean-centered in the analyses.
Married	A dummy variable coded one if the respondent is married and zero otherwise.
Income (Quintiles)	Income of the household, measured in quintiles, i.e., in groups with approximately 20% of respondents in each. This is only a rough approximation because in some circumstances this coding did not work out in the CSES data. For more details, see the codebooks of the CSES
Internal Efficacy	Respondents' level of agreement with the sentence "whom people vote for makes a difference," with one meaning that it does not make a difference at all and five meaning that it makes a large difference.
Country Level:	
Compulsory	A dummy variable coded one if the election was compulsory.
East	A dummy variable coded one if the country is Eastern European
Proportional System (dummy)	coded one for proportional electoral systems, zero otherwise. Proportionality can be looked at in different ways, and it can be further differentiated into proportional versus mixed and versus majoritarian or plurality voting. I only differentiate between proportional and non-proportional. The "mixed" voting systems are all mixed proportional and are coded as proportional. Plurality and majoritarian systems are coded zero – "not proportional." In these data, elections with proportional rules occur in the following countries: Belgium Flanders, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden.

The above variables all originate from or are based on CSES data, Modules 1-4.

List of election studies and parties

Australia 2007: ALP Labour Party, LPA Liberal Party, NPA National Party, Greens

Belgium Flanders 1999: Flemish Liberals and Democrats, Christian People's Party(CVP), Socialist Party (SP) Flemish Block (VB), Flemish Green Party (Agalev)

Canada 1997: Liberal Party (LP), Reform Party, Progressive Conservative (LP), New Democratic Party (NDP), Bloc Quebecois (BC)

The Czech Republic 2006: ODS Civic Democratic Party, CSSD Czech Social Democratic Party, KSCM Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, KDU-CSL Christian Democratic Union, Czechoslovak Peoples' Party, SZ Green Party

Denmark 2007: Left, Liberal Party (V), Social Democrats (S), Danish People's Party (DF), Socialist People's Party (SF) Conservative People's Party (KF), Radical Left, Social Liberal Party (RV)

Estonia 2011: Estonian Reform Party, Estonian Centre Party, Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, Social Democratic Party, Estonian People's Party, Estonian Greens

Finland 2007: Centre Party (KESK), National Coalition Party (KOK), Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), Left Alliance (Vas), Green League (Vihr), Swedish People's Party (RKP)

France 2007: Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), Parti Socialiste (PS), Mouvement Democrate (MoDem), Front National, Parti Communiste, Les Verts

Germany East 2013: SPD Social Democratic Party, Left Party, Alliance '90 / The Greens, FDP Free Democratic Party

Germany West 2013: SPD Social Democratic Party, Left Party, Alliance '90 / The Greens, FDP Free Democratic Party

Great Britain 2005: Labour (Lab), Conservative (Con), Liberal Democrats (LD)

Hungary 2002: Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP), Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)

Iceland 2007: Independence Party (IP), Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), Left-Green Movement (LGM), Progressive Party (PP), Liberal Party

Ireland 2007: Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Green Party, Sinn Fein, Progressive Democrats

Israel 1996: Ha'avoda (Labour), Likud, Shas, Mafdal, Meretz,

Italy 2006: Forward Italy (FI), National Alliance (AN), Union of Christian and Center Democrats (UDC), Communist Refoundation Party (PRC)

Netherlands 2006: Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labour Party (PvdA), Socialist Party (SP), People's Party for Freedom and Democracy(VVD), People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Green Left (GL)

New Zealand 2011: National Party (NAT), Labour Party (Lab), Green Party (GP), New Zealand First Party (NZF), Maori Party (MAOR)

Norway 2005: Labour Party, Progress Party, Conservative Party, Socialist Party, Christian People's Party, Center Party

Poland 2011: Civic Platform (PO), Law and Justice (PiS), Ruch Palikota (RP), Polish People's Party (PSL), Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), Poland Comes First (PJN)

Portugal 2005: Social Democratic Party (PS), Social Democratic Party (PSD), Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU), Popular Party (PP), Left Bloc (BE)

Romania 2004: Social Democratic Party (PSD), National Liberal Party (PNL), Democratic Party (PD), Greater Romania Party (PRM), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) Humanist Party of Romania (PUR)

Slovakia 2010: Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), Slovak Democratic And Christian Union – Democratic Party, Freedom And Solidarity, Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Most Hid, Slovak National Party (SNS)

Slovenia 2004: Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), United List of Social Democrats (ZLSD), New Slovenia – Christian People's Party (NSi), Slovenian People's Party (SLS), Slovenian National Party (SNS)

Spain 2004: Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), Popular Party (PP), United Left (IU), Convergence and Unity CiU

Sweden 2006: Social Democrats, Conservative Party, Center Party, People's Party Liberals, Christian Democrats, Left Party

CHAPTER 4

VOTERS' REACTIONS TO PARTIES' Positions' Shifts: Switching PARTIES MEANS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Kathrin Barbara Busch, GESIS - Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences, Köln.

Abstract

Spatial theory predicts that voters react to parties' position shifts with 'partisan sorting': either following the party's new position or voting for a different one. However, this 'partisan sorting' does not always occur. Citizens do not react consistently (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011; 2014). The research paper aims to solve this puzzle. I argue that pure spatial modeling cannot account for voters' reactions to policy change because voting is not an exclusively rational activity. On the one hand, voters do not know left-right positions precisely enough to get updated about shifts; on the other hand, voters' emotional attachments to parties lead to loyal voting behavior. Using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), and the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), I run a two-level multinomial model that analyzes voters' reactions to parties' *current* position shifts on the left-right axis. I find that the more precisely voters are informed about parties' current left-right positions, the higher their odds will be of switching to other parties. Increasing the party's distance to the voter does not necessarily lead to logical reactions regarding switching or exiting the vote. Reactions to parties' position shifts are dependent on voters' sensitivity to these.

Keywords: political sophistication, perceptions, vote switching, exiting

Introduction: spatial models of voting and voters' non-reaction to policy shifts

Following spatial models of voting, voters are expected to either vote for the party that is closest ('proximity voting') or the one that they expect to influence a favored policy change ('directional voting'). In both models, voters are thought to be able and willing to position themselves and parties in policy space and to draw conclusions for their vote choice. A more implicit expectation is that they also need to react to change between elections: if a favored party shifts its left-right position, voters will either follow, or if they do not like the new position, switch to another party, or abstain from voting. However, research finds that position shifts between elections do not consistently lead voters to shift their positions or to change their party support (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011; 2014; Adams 2012). These findings are surprising because they stand in contrast to a wider amount of research in political behavior that regularly shows that voters orient their vote choice on parties' left-right positions (e.g., Kroh 2009). Indeed, research on party-voter-congruence finds that voters usually link well to parties (e.g., Dalton 2017). They even react to positions of coalition governments (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013; Hobolt et al. 2010) and switch mostly between parties that are positional close to one another (Dassonneville and Dejaeghere 2014).

The present piece of research aims to solve this puzzle by analyzing *individual* voters' reactions to parties' position shifts. I argue that for two reasons, pure spatial models of voting cannot explain voters' reaction or (non-reaction) to policy shifts. Spatial models rely too heavily on the expectation of *rational voters*, who would base their vote choice on their *distances* to parties. However, voters are neither perfectly informed about policy nor do they consider only the policy space for their vote choice. Small policy shifts might be left unnoticed by most voters due to not having precise knowledge of positions or due to a lack of attention to current developments. Second, voters might stay put because of their party bindings. Partisanship is a very strong predictor of vote choice, and it is likely that it can "overrule" other cues of voting. Empirical evidence supports this. In contexts with a high percentage of partisans, voting is less determined by the economic situation and vice versa (Kayser and Wlezien 2010). Partisans and party supporters might also be more reluctant to react to a position shift of their preferred party.

The question that I will pursue with my analysis is how voters react to current, unfavorable position shifts, depending on their party attachments and their knowledge

of party positions in the left-right space. To the contrary of previous research on this subject, which did not find voter reactions, I focus on individual determinants of voting. I pool data from modules 2-4 of the CSES and combine them with data on party positions (Franzmann and Kaiser 2016). Taking country differences into account, I run a two-level multinomial model to test for the question under which determinants voters rather stay loyal to the party previously voted for, switch to another party or exit the election.

I show that different cues for voting can lead to differences in voters' reactions: voters' attachment to the party previously voted for is most important for the decision of whether to vote loyally. It is, however, insignificant for the question of whether to exit the election or switch to another party. Considerations about the parties' policy shift come second and are also only important for the decision between taking a loyal vote or not. The question of whether voters react to parties' position shifts at all – with either switching to another party or exiting from the election, depends on their sensitivity to position shifts and the strength of the latter. Not considering voters' ability to perceive current positions leads to inconsistent results. Disregarding the 'perception problem' on the side of the voters might hence be the reason why researchers did not find voters' reactions to parties' policy shifts in past research. As I show, voters do react with switching or exiting if they perceive positions precisely. Voters who react with party switching are mostly knowledgeable independents who perceive unfavorable party shifts, are sympathetic to multiple parties, and believe in the efficacy of voting. The ones who do not see alternatives or do not believe in the efficacy of the voting act in itself will rather exit from the election. With its two-level approach, this piece of research offers a good explanation why most voters (seemingly) do not show reactions to parties' current position shifts. To acknowledge that voters first take different cues for their voting behavior depending on their attachments and political knowledgeability has important implications for further research on voter volatility and party strategies to mobilize their followers and win over new voters.

The article will proceed as follows: in the next section, I will further explore research on voter-party linkages based on content and psychological attachments and how voters can have an *impact on* and *react to* parties' policy shifts. From there, hypotheses will be deduced for the question, how voters react to position shifts of the party for which they previously voted. A multinomial model on voting behavior will serve to understand how strongly the three different patterns of reactions, namely, loyal voting for the party, exiting from the vote and vote switching, are determined by individuals' attachments, their knowledge of current party positions and the strength of parties' policy shifts.

Party-voter linkages based on content

A minimal requirement for the empirical validity of the spatial voting theory is that voters and parties are linked by political positions – or by the "shortcut" of ideology (Downs 1957). The latter means that voters should at least be roughly able to locate parties on an ideological scale. Only then will they be able to compare parties' positions to their own ones and take conclusive (rational) decisions for their vote choice.

Although spatial theory considers voters' orientation toward parties, the link between parties' and voters' left-right positions or their underlying policy principles is not one-directional. Not only do voters react to parties but parties also respond to voters' issue priorities (Spoon and Klüver 2014). Furthermore, the link between voters' perceptions of how important policy issues are and their evaluations of parties is not one-directional as issue saliency and party attachments are reciprocal (Neundorf and Adams 2016). On the one hand, voters' party attachments can develop in agreement with their perceptions of political issues; on the other hand, voters' party attachments influence these perceptions.

Spatial models of voting often do not touch upon the link between individual's partisanship and perceptions because they usually measure and analyze voters' distance to parties and voting behavior on the aggregate level. Partisanship can then also only be measured for groups of voters and not be included as an individual determinant of voting. However, this can lead to wrong conclusions: Analyses that do not control for individuals' partisanship or other emotional links to parties might overestimate the effect of spatial positions. Spatial models of voting then do not find voters to react consistently to party policy change, which runs contrary to the logic of spatial models of voting. As a consequence, evidence for the question as to whether citizens react electorally to parties' position switches is rather mixed[73].

Party and Voter polarization and voters' reactions to shifts

Previous research on citizens' reactions to policy shifts comes to inconsistent conclusions: citizens in the Netherlands depolarized alongside the (two) most important parties in the 1980s and 1990s (Adams, De Vries and Leiter 2011). In contrast, the British public shifted only moderately to the center of the left-right scale when the

---

[73] For a summary, see, e.g., Adams (2012).

British party system depolarized between 1987 and 2011 (Adams, Green, and Milazzo 2012).

Further, it remains unclear how conscious voters are about policy shifts and whether they notice whether they are favorable or unfavorable to them. Some research has found *party supporters* not to perceive or react to parties' policy shifts with 'partisan sorting' (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu, 2011; Adams Ezrow and Somer-Topcu, 2014). In both of these studies, shifts of party policy were identified with the help of *manifesto data*. They did not find these to cause aggregate-level public shifts of ideological positions nor stronger volatility. The public did not seem to react to the shifting parties. However, there is also counter-evidence: Adams, Ezrow and Leiter (2012) found that party supporters changed their left-right positions as a lagged reaction to left-right niche parties' policy shifts (measured with experts' placements), even if not in response to mainstream parties' shifts. Additionally, in the abovementioned research, Adams et al. (2014) found that party supporters did react by shifting their positions in response to experts' shifts of party perceptions on European integration, albeit not in response to shifts measured with Euromanifestos. Dassonneville and Ferland (unpublished manuscript 2017) found voters to react to parties' shifts with party switching, but they do not measure voters' perceptions of party positions. Fortunato and Stevenson (2013) found citizens to perceive parties' left-right positions to be closer if these parties are partners in party coalition governments. In this case, voters correctly changed their perception of positions depending on the coalitions' party compositions. Related but in contrast, Seeberg et al. (2016) found Danish panel respondents to correctly perceive the (major) policy shift of a party without relying on, in that case, a misleading "coalition-heuristic."

The summary of these contradictory findings leads to the question of what are the differences between studies that find a significant change in perceptions or voting behavior and those that do not. Adams et al. (2011) assume that the crucial point is that party supporters would have reacted to *experts' shifted perceptions but not to shifts measured with manifestos.* They argue that voters and experts rather observe the wider election environment and ceteris paribus place parties not (only) according to positions that can be measured with manifesto data. The argument is very valid because respondents of electoral surveys are also usually not asked to (only) consider manifestos when they estimate parties' left-right positions. However, in election

campaigns, political elites usually try to keep to messages that strongly reflect manifesto content (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011: 372). If voters update on parties' left-right positions, the shifts measured over manifesto content should hence be detectable through other pieces of party rhetoric[74].

An alternative explanation of why in some studies voters seem to be able to notice parties' position shifts and do not in others is the more technical question as to at which level these perceptions are measured. In Adams' et al.'s analyses, the level of measurement of the dependent perception variable(s) is aggregated group means. The most individual this gets is the average of 'party supporters' perceptions (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011; Adams, Ezrow and Leiter 2012). In contrast, in those studies that found voters' perceptional or electoral reactions to party shifts (Dassonneville and Ferland unpublished manuscript 2017; Fortunato and Stevenson 2013; Seeberg et al. 2016), the measurement of perceptions and reactions are on the individual level or control for it. This difference could be very crucial.

The aggregation of 'mean' perceptions neglects the fact that political knowledge and cognitive abilities are strongly dependent on individual differences in education and voters' political positions (e.g., author 2016; Dahlberg 2013). Second, to focus on the group of party supporters might be specifically problematic because it is exactly this group of voters that presumably has a very stable, emotionally based relationship to their party. Therefore, party supporters might not pay as much attention to policy positions, as, e.g., independent, volatile voters would need to, who do not have a "default choice."

Furthermore, partisans and persons with strong emotions toward parties perceive positions less well (author 2016; Dahlberg 2013; Merrill et al. 2001). This might also be true for core "party supporters." The expected group to perceive parties more precisely would hence rather be well-informed independents. To sum, the measurement on the aggregate level and in particular, the omittance of partisanship as a probable important mitigating factor of perception are two probable reasons why in some models of voting behavior, only little reaction to parties' position shifts was found. Making use of pure

---

[74] Given that data from experts' left-right estimations usually cover only one or a few points in time, these data would also be no alternative for my analysis, in which parties' shifts over time and voter reactions to these are important. The data choice will be discussed more thoroughly below.

spatial models of voting that do not adhere to partisanship and individual-level determinants might lead to misspecification because there is enough reason to believe that it is party supporters who - like partisans - perceive party shifts less well than other active voters.

However, making use of a pure psycho-sociological model of electoral participation, following Campbell et al. (1960), will probably not help either. Even if these models usually take account of voters' partisanship and issue considerations (Schultze 2016), individuals' partisanship is always the main predictor, which stands at the beginning of the "funnel model." Partisanship then also predisposes voters' issue- and candidate-orientations. Given that trends of dealignment from parties have led to decreasing numbers of partisans in Western democracies (Dalton 2000), partisan models cannot account for complete electorates anymore. For partisans, the funnel of causality might lead to voters' party identity oriented perceptions of issues and voting; for persons without party ID, it will not. For the latter, spatial orientations might be of more importance.

The solution should be a combination of partisanship and voters' spatial considerations within one model of voting behavior. For the aggregate analysis of voting, models that make use of both party ID of respondents and spatial relationships to parties predict election outcomes and electoral behavior best (Merril and Grofman 1999). Party ID and spatial distances should also both be included in models of individual vote choice. In the following, an integrated individual-level model will hence be used to explain voters' reactions or "non-reactions" to party position switches. Depending on the question of whether they do have a party identity and depending on voters' knowledge of party ideology, spatial considerations are expected to count more or less, or not at all. For persons without party ID, spatial considerations will be more important; for those with a party identity, spatial or issue considerations are less important. A multinomial model will account for different types of reactions, vote switching, staying loyal to the party or exiting from the election. The analysis hence sheds light on the question of how voters react to position shifts depending on their spatial knowledge and partisanship.

Combining models of vote decision-making. Hypotheses

Campbell et al.'s idea that partisanship would work as 'a funnel' through which evaluations of issues and candidates are predisposed (1960: 24) might be no overestimation regarding its predictive strength *for those with a party identification*. It might also presuppose voters' perceptions; partisan voters tend to believe "their party" to be closer to them in policy space than it is in reality (assimilation effect). Likewise, it can lead them to perceive opposing parties to be in a position that is further away than it is in reality (contrast effect) (e.g., Drummond 2011). Apart from this distortion in the clarity of estimations, spatial considerations should also less important for partisans' vote decisions than for independents'. Recent research supports this as it was found that voters foremost either use their partisanship *or* spatial proximity as cues for voting (Boonen et al. 2017). Therefore, the first fundamental difference between citizens' voting behavior and their reaction or non-reaction to parties' policy shifts will be the question of whether they are partisans. Translated for the question, if in succeeding elections voters rather stay loyal to a party, exit from the election or switch to another party, I expect that

> H 1a: Partisanship for the party previously voted for makes it less likely for voters
> to switch to another party than to vote loyally for 'their' party.

> H1b: Partisanship for the party previously voted for makes it less likely to exit from
> an election than to vote loyally.

Due to their loyalty to a specific party, it also follows that if voters want to show current dissatisfaction with their party, and vote switching is compared to exiting from an election,

> H1c: Partisanship for the party previously voted for makes it more likely for voters
> to exit the election than to switch the vote.

In contrast to partisans, independents do not have a party identification cue to voting. They will hence (need to) take the current situation of party positions more strongly into account for their vote choice. The precision of their perceptions presupposes any reaction to spatial relationships. Only with the ability and interest to estimate parties

sufficiently precisely will voters perceive a real choice situation and consider switching. In contrast,

> H2a: The less precisely a voter perceives the party previously voted for, the lower
> the likelihood will be to switch to another party between elections than to stay
> loyal; and

> H2b: The less precisely a voter perceives the party previously voted for, the higher
> their likelihood will be to exit from the election than to switch to another party.

The rationale for H2b is that a cause for abandoning the party that someone previously voted is usually some disappointment. The difference between reacting with exiting or switching is then probably that vote switching needs more cognitive capacity and knowledge of party positions than just leaving. Only with enhanced knowledge of party positions will persons be enabled to compare the party for which they voted in the previous election to other ones. It can be understood as a necessary, even if insufficient condition for party switching, while for exiting, no precise position knowledge is necessary. Precise knowledge of positions will hence open up the options to vote for other parties, and this ability connects it to switching rather than to exiting behavior. For the comparison between exiting and staying loyal to a party, the knowledge precision is, however, not expected to influence voters because voters might exit an election for any disagreement with parties. Exiters do not need more information about party positions than others.

> H2c: The precision with which voters estimate a party will not affect their decision
> to exit the election in comparison to voting loyal.

Position Shifts

In the above review of empirical analyses, I argued for the use of both partisanship and parties' shifts in models of vote choice. As it was already assumed that partisans tend to vote loyally, they should also not care too much about position shifts. However, the model includes and hence controls for the assumed negative effect of partisanship on switching and exiting, so we can expect to see a general effect of parties' position shifts on voters.

To start with the most general idea, if a party changes its policy, some of its voters will like and some will dislike this. For the individual voter, the direction of the party either toward the voters' position or away from it should be important. However, the way voters decide within a spatial framework is relevant. Following the proximity model of voting, citizens vote for the party that is closest to them:

H3a: If a party shifts its left-right position in the opposite direction of the voter, this should increase the likelihood that the respective voter will switch to another party in comparison to staying loyal.

H3b: Likewise, a party's position shifting away from the voter should lead the voter to rather exit from the election than to stay loyal.

H3c: Party shifts should not make much difference on the likelihood to switch or to exit.

It should be noted that hypotheses 3a and 3b) follow the logic of proximity voting, which predicts that citizens will vote for the party closest to them. This expectation is somewhat one-sided because for "directional voters," a party shifting away might not lead to its rejection but may have the opposite effect. Second, if a shift is rather small – like party movements often are (Budge and Klingemann 2001) – it is likely that many voters would not notice these, at least not regarding a movement on the left-right scale, which is a kind of artificial construction. The tininess of shifts and voters' restricted capability to take note of party positions precisely might be a reason for voters not to react to ideological switches. However, if voters were very knowledgeable and sensitive to position switches, they might already react to small shifts. If they were less knowledgeable and hence less sensitive, the shift would need to be stronger until they would notice and might react. These considerations lead to the hypothesis of a multiplicative interaction between the precision of position knowledge and the strength of position switches:

H4a: Voters' likelihood to react to a previously voted party's shift by exiting instead of staying loyal increases with voters' sensitivity to shifts times the strength of these shifts, and

H4b: Voters' likelihood to react to a previously voted party's shift by switching parties instead of staying loyal increases with voters' sensitivity to shifts times the strength of these shifts.

Comparing switching and exiting behavior as possible reactions, I hypothesize that H4c: Voters' likelihood to react to the previously voted party's shift with switching instead of exiting increases with voters' sensitivity to shifts times the strength of these shifts.

The rationale for H4c is practically the same as that for H2b: to switch to another party is cognitively more demanding and has hence more presuppositions regarding how precisely persons need to be able to differentiate between parties. However, as the hypothesized effect is multiplicative, it also includes persons with less knowledge but for which the party might have shifted strongly. These respondents would not necessarily be expected to rather switch than to exit from the election. In sum, the hypothesized multiplicative effect should not be very strong.

In addition to the perception of parties' (unfavorable) policy movements, being an independent, and the strength of the party shifts, the open-mindedness of voters to considering another party choice could be crucial. The character trait of open-mindedness to new experience is important for vote switching (Bakker et al. 2016). The simple mechanism behind this could be that open-minded persons are more likely to have party sympathy for more than just the party they previously voted. The number of parties that someone likes might not result in less loyalty toward a favored party. However, this "liking" of several parties' should lead to a difference between a person's odds of exiting or switching. In moments of political dissatisfaction with the party previously voted for, persons who like several parties have wider choice options and would less likely exit the election. Furthermore, liking several parties should make persons more likely to vote strategically, which, in turn, also leads to potentially higher volatility. Hypothesis 5 only tackles the comparison between switching and exiting.

H5: The more parties someone likes, the more likely they will switch to another party in comparison to exiting from an election.

A couple of individual-level characteristics that have commonly been found to determine individuals' voting behavior (Smets and van Ham 2013) will be tested as control variables. I chose controls that are linked to voters' psychological and material resources and are hence similar to the main determinants of interest. These are voters' level of

119

"satisfaction with democracy," their feelings of internal efficacy, their income, and their education. Higher levels of satisfaction with democracy can be interpreted as a general and rather diffuse support of the political system (Easton 1975), which should foster the idea of a "civic duty" to vote. A person's internal efficacy rather represents the individual's belief that their voting will be efficacious. Both of these determinants are expected to increase voting loyal or switching in comparison to exiting, while there is no specific expectation for the comparison between switching and loyal voting.

Further, respondents' levels of "factual political knowledge" and "education" will be added as control variables. Factual political knowledge increases individuals' electoral mobilization (Author, unpublished manuscript) and can hence be expected to decrease the likelihood of exiting in comparison to switching and in comparison to staying loyal. However, I do not have a clear expectation of whether it also increases switching over staying loyal. Similarly, education and income are expected to have a decreasing effect on exiting since both variables are usually linked to higher turnout, also in aggregate models of voting. With the inclusion of the education variable, it is possible to differentiate between an expected general "sophistication effect" and the more specific expected effect of "estimation proximity."[75] Only the latter is expected to enable voters to see different options of choice and hence increase vote switching, as was outlined above.

On the system level of analysis, compulsory voting is connected to an increase in voter mobilization. For the difference between the three options of voting loyally, exiting, or switching, this translates to the expectation that in systems with compulsory elections, respondents will rather switch to another party or stay loyal than exit. The same can be expected from snap elections but for another reason: if elections are held earlier than usually terminated, media coverage and attention will rise. A situation in which voters are called to either show their confidence or "throw the incumbents out" should be more interesting to people than the regularly scheduled election. A mobilization effect due to snap elections is hence expected to make exiting less likely in comparison to switching or voting loyally.

---

[75] Another suitable control variable might have been respondents' political interest. However, interest is also a determinant of political knowledge. Including both knowledge and interest might hence have led to issues with multicollinearity. I cannot make but assumptions here because the CSES did not include an interest variable.

Data, Methods and Case Selection

For the dependent variable and most independent individual-level variables, which are needed to test the above hypotheses, I pool data from the CSES, modules 2-4. These data are most suitable for my endeavor because they include variables of the previous and current vote choice, the perception of parties' and respondents' ideological positions. Further, for the comparativeness of vote choice questions, the timing of when these questions were asked is particularly important. In the CSES, respondents are asked within a limited time frame past the national elections. Memory effects in respondents' answers will be hence kept at bay and are presumably comparative across election studies. The second source is Franzmann and Kaiser's (2006; updated 2016) index data of parties' left-right positions, which is based on the CMP (raw) data (Volkens et al. 2016). The left-right index data of the respective years of elections are used to inform about party's current left-right positions. For the calculation of party shifts between elections, the index data from the respective previous election are also used.

There are several reasons why manifesto data and, more specifically, Franzmann and Kaiser's index are most suitable for my research analysis. First, the research analysis corresponds to previous research that also used CMP or Euromanifesto data or experts' placements over time to measure party shifts (Adams et al. 2011; 2014). Not measured in these analyses was how well voters' perceptions compare to the "manifesto positions" but rather how voters compare to mean voter positions. The perception of these positions in comparison to what the manifestos implicitly communicate should, however, be insightful for this research and is more consistent than using a left-right position derivative from other data. Second, CMP data seems to be the most standardized non-computerized coding available, which should lead to more country-comparative and "objective" values than experts' estimations because CMP coders always use the same source of information. Finally, expert data do not yet cover many data points in time. This would have strongly reduced the number of country cases in the analysis.

Recent experimental research showed that persons' evaluations of policy statements on immigration can depend on party-specific expectations. Party names randomly assigned to statements led coders to evaluate a phrase more anti-immigration if it was labeled with a populist party's name and more pro-immigration if it was labeled with "the Greens." There was no effect for mainstream party's names (Ennser-Jedenastik

and Meyer 2017). Party-specific framing can hence lead coders to cognitively biased estimations. However, this problem will appear with any human coder of party positions. Due to party-specific biases that will accumulate more for the less-voted parties, voters' mean perceptions should be even less "objective" party estimations than expert ones. The mean or median perceptions should be suitable for research questions, which ask how well voters match to the general publics' left-right perceptions. However, this is a different topic. For research questions such as the current one, which asks how well voters update their perceptions on current position developments, it is preferable to use a measure that explicitly takes these current developments well into account and for which biases at least do not show party-specific accumulation. I would even argue that analyses that cannot control for these party-specific biases are better off not using mean or median voters' perceptions – at least not if the research question is about current, 'objective,' position shifts and not about 'perceptual agreement' in voters' estimations.

While the CMP raw data have good inter-coder reliability and seem to be very comparable over countries, it is a different question whether the left-right dichotomy (still) validly reflects political space across countries and time. As outlined above, the comparability of issues for which measures are taken from the manifestos is advantageous for comparison across countries. However, this also has a negative side because the CMP raw data can always reflect only political saliencies of topics that are incorporated within the range of the CMP raw data collection. Country-specific idiosyncratic political issues that fall outside of this predefined number of issues will hence not be measured with manifesto data. The decision to use the left-right political dichotomy (only) for this piece of research is mostly due to pragmatic considerations: the left-right dichotomy is still the most-common denominator in (Western) democracies and hence most comparable between countries and over time. Additionally, in comparative surveys, the left-right political dichotomy is the most frequently and most coherently asked about issue space. This makes it pragmatically useful even if in some countries other issues are important too or would even be of more importance.

To tackle potential problems of comparability, I first take a most-similar-design in the choice of country cases. I select only Western democracies in the sample, where the

left-right issue saliencies of the CMP are important[76]. These include Eastern European countries, where the left-right dichotomy has proven to be a meaningful heuristic, too (Rudi 2010). The case selection ensures that the range of the CMP raw values matches the political issue spaces comparatively well. Second, I use a left-right index that uses the CMP raw values to calculate country-specific and time-sensitive left-right ranges of issues for every country separately before calculating the left-right positions (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006)[77]. For any analysis that includes comparisons of parties' left-right positions with voters' estimations, this is very useful because voters' understanding of left-right will also be linked to the country-specific market of issue saliencies and cleavages. In a comparison to other indexes that use CMP data, the Franzmann and Kaiser (2006) index showed the best construct validity with expert survey data (Franzmann, 2013)[78]. It is hence likely that taking the country-specific left-right ranges into account makes voters' estimations and parties' positions better comparable than using other (CMP) indexes.

Apart from using only data from Western democracies, the data are further restricted. For reasons of comparativeness, only data from legislative elections are used as well as those on countries that were rated "free" in the Freedom House Index (2014). For each country, I selected elections that are in a comparable time-span but avoided the coverage of election years at the peak of or shortly after the global financial crisis between 2008 and 2009. Due to the comparison of voters' current to their previous election, the data were further restricted to respondents who reported a vote choice in the previous election. The resulting data have a nested data structure with 13,173 respondents in 21 countries.

---

[76] In fact, the CMP data are also restricted to these countries, it seems.

[77] When calculating their left-right index, Franzmann and Kaiser take only country-specifically selected 'positional issues' into account and exclude those issues on which parties do not differ from one another. They thereby derive at a left-right index that represents country-specific differences better than other indexes. For more details about how the index was created, see Franzmann and Kaiser (2006) and Franzmann (2013).

[78] Franzmann used experts' estimations (Benoit and Laver, 2006) to test the validity of the left-right positions from a range of countries that have a very high or low left-right core. For countries with a high left-right core, the validity of indexes is similar to that of Franzmann and Kaiser, and for those with a low left-right core, such as Ireland, the construct validity varies more. However, even for Ireland, Franzmann and Kaiser's index correlates well with experts' estimations (Benoit and Laver, 2006). Its correlation of 0.826 is also higher than those from other indexes (Franzmann, 2013: 6).

The multinomial model and the operationalization of the dependent variable

Given that the data have a nested structure with individual- and country-level information, a two-level model of analysis seems most appropriate (see Snijders and Bosker 1999). Voters' reactions to parties' position shifts between elections will be analyzed by comparing voters' previous to their current vote choice. To analyze which of the above hypothesized determinants trigger or mitigate voters' electoral reactions to parties' unfavorable position shifts, the model of analysis needs to be multinomial. All three possible types of reactions will be taken into account as categories of the dependent variable: staying loyal to the party previously voted for, switching to another party and exiting from the election[79].

For the construction of the dependent variable, I compare respondents' answers to the questions about their current and previous vote choice in the legislative election. The variable is coded with nominal values that differentiate between having voted loyally, having switched to another party or having exited from the election. In the multinomial model, a positive coefficient shows that the likelihood of one behavior increases over the other. For example, partisanship for the party that the voter previously voted for can have a positive effect on staying loyal versus exiting versus switching. Partisanship would then be likewise negative for exiting in comparison to staying loyal, or switching. For the comparison of determinants' effects on each outcome, the analysis includes two dependent variables. In the first dependent variable, "staying loyal" serves as the base category. Coefficients hence show effects on exiting in comparison to staying loyal and effects on switching in comparison to staying loyal. In the second version of the dependent variable, "switching" is the base category. Here, the analysis calculates determinants' effects on exiting in comparison to switching; and their effects on staying loyal in comparison to switching behavior. The latter is, of course, obsolete since it is already measured with the first version of the dependent variable but converts positive into negative effects and vice versa.

---

[79] A fourth option would be voters who did not vote in the preceding election. The main question of how voters react to position switches of a party that they were previously interested in cannot, however, be answered here due to the lack of longtime comparative panel data on voting. These re-mobilized voters will hence be excluded here. The same is true for first-time voters, for whom the research question does not apply well.

Construction of the main independent variables[80]

The precision with which respondents can locate the party for which they voted for in the previous election is called "Estimation Proximity." This variable is derived by first calculating the "Estimation Gap," as the absolute difference between a respondent's perceived left-right party position and the party's left-right position due to Franzmann and Kaiser's index of manifesto data for the same party and year of the election. This variable is then inverted for the sake of interpretation ease: in the resulting data, higher values of "Estimation Proximity" reflect a more precise estimation and lower ones a less precise one. Further, to overcome the variables otherwise skewed kurtosis, it is "normalized" by taking the log and adding a value of one.

Parties' shifts of their left-right positions are measured relative to the individual voter's position because voters' reactions to position shifts are only expected if the party has shifted its position away from the voter and not if the party shifted to a closer position or did not move at all. Unfortunately, there is no variable that measures the previous left-right position of voters. The strength of the previous voted for party's "Increased Distance" to the respondent is hence calculated as the increase of difference between the respondent's left-right position and that of the party, due to party shifts only. If the party has not moved its position or shifted closer to the voter, "Increased Distance" is set to zero. The hypothesized effect is that the stronger a party has shifted its position, the higher the likelihood of voters to reacting with party switching, or exiting from the election.

The same type of behavior was hypothesized to be dependent on the question of whether a voter likes more than just one party. The variable "Number of liked Parties" is based on a battery of variables in the CSES that represent how strongly a respondent likes a respective party on an eleven-point scale from zero to 10. For the "Number of liked Parties" variable, I counted the number of parties for which a respective respondent assigned a higher value than the 'neutral-liking' value five.

For the test of the hypothesized interaction effect between the increased position distance and a voter's estimation precision, I calculated the determinant "Perceived Increased Distance" by multiplying "Increased Distance" with "Estimation Proximity."

---

[80] The construction of the other variables is explained in the appendix.

The independent variable "Partisan" is a dummy variable that takes the value one if the respondent answers positively to the question if they are "close to the party," for which they previously voted. It is expected to increase staying loyal in comparison to switching and exiting and to increase exiting in comparison to switching.

Results

The dependent variable is based on data from 13,173 respondents who reported their vote choices in the previous election and current election[81] in 21 countries. Parties' names and election studies are listed in Appendix 2. Table IV.1 shows respondents' means of the multinomial dependent variable. As seen, with approximately 68 percent, the greatest percentage of the respondents in the sample is loyal voters. Approximately 26 percent of respondents switched to another party, and approximately 5.7 percent exited from the election.

Table IV.1: Percentages of Loyal Voters, Switchers and Exiters

Loyal Voters	Switchers	Exiters
68.42 %	25.89 %	5.69 %

Table IV.2 shows the mean, minimum and maximum values for the main predictor variables of analyses. Almost 60 percent of respondents in the sample are partisans. In addition, the mean number of parties that respondents like is quite high with approximately 2.8 parties. Given the often-cited alerting trends of citizens' dealignment from parties, both of these figures are surprising. However, one should bear in mind that we are only looking at a very specific group of respondents, namely, those who reported their vote choice for the previous election. Strongly dealigned persons, who might not participate anymore, are hence not included in this subsample.

The mean difference between respondents' estimations of party positions and the manifesto index positions, i.e., the Estimation Gap is 1.38. However, the standard deviation and variance are, rather large and differ by country as the boxplots in Figure 1 show.

---

[81] For the current election, choice was of course only reported if the respondent voted.

Table IV.2: Mean Values and Standard Deviations of the main independent variables

	Mean Value (s.d.)	Minimum	Maximum
Partisan (yes or no)	0.58 (0.49)	0	1
Number of Liked Parties	2.82 (1.45)	0	9
Estimation Proximity	1.38 (0.49)	0	2.31
Estimation Gap*	1.88 (1.45)	0.01	9.17
Increased Distance	0.18 (0.25)	0	1.88
Interaction: Increased Distance x Proximity	0.22 (0.32)	0	2.85
Factual Political Knowledge	1.16 (0.70)	0	3.53
Satisfaction with Democracy	3.63 (.99)	1	5
Internal efficacy	4.10 (1.04)	1	5
Household Income (5 Ranges)	3.18 (1.37)	1	5
Education (ISCED classification groups)	5.64 (1.72)	1	8
Snap Election	0.09 (0.29)	0	1
Compulsory Voting	0.04 (0.21)	0	1

*Note that "Estimation Gap" represents the absolute difference between a respondent's estimated value of a party's left-right position and the one represented in the left-right index for the same election (Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; 2016). The variable Estimation Proximity is based on this.

With mean gaps over the value 2, voters in the younger democracies of not only Eastern Europe but also those in Denmark and Finland tended to estimate parties less precisely than others. In addition, the variance with which voters misestimated is bigger in these countries.

Figure IV.1 Distribution of voters' mean left-right misperceptions of parties (left-right gaps) by countries
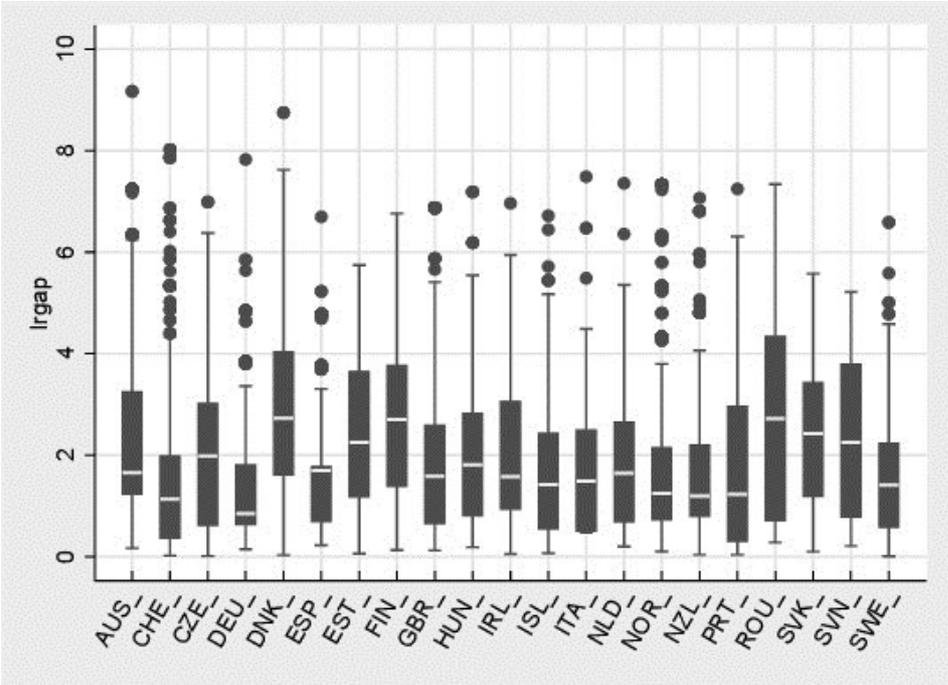

Figure IV.2 shows some exemplary country cases to illustrate that the variance for the strengths of the parties' shifts, as represented with the bar-charts, can vary strongly and are notably not necessarily related to an increase of previous voters' mean

127

misestimations (represented with the scatter points). For example, the Socialist party in Denmark made a comparatively strong positional shift but is estimated better by its mean previous electorate than the Social Democrats, who almost did not shift.

Figure IV.2 Strength of parties' shifts, (bar-charts) and previous voters' mean misperceptions of these parties
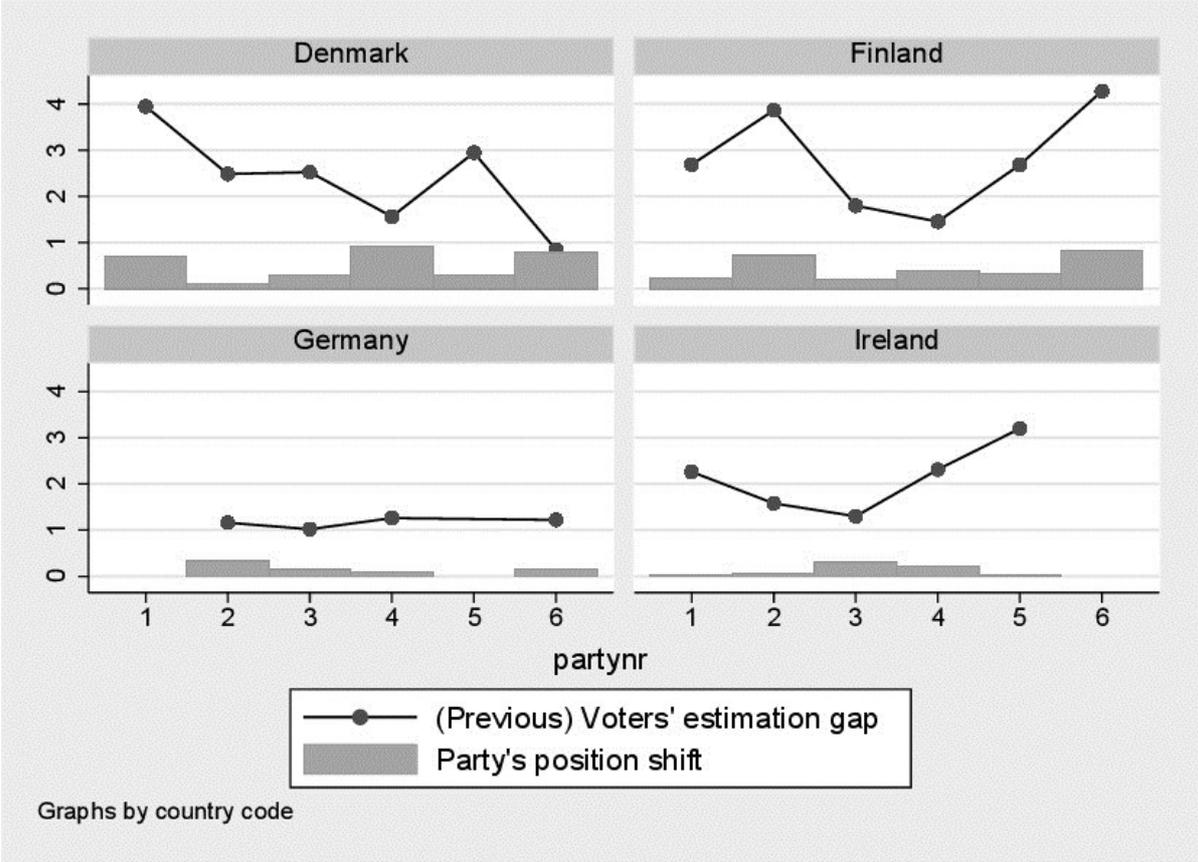

Fig. 2 Strength of parties' shifts, (bar-charts) and previous voters' mean misperceptions of these parties (scatters) (exemplary illustrations of four countries). Key to party names: Denmark (1) Left, Liberal Party, (2) Social Democrats, (3) Danish People's Party, (4) Socialist People's Party, (5) Conservative People's Party; Finland (1) Centre Party of Finland (KESK), (2) National Coalition Party (KOK), (3) Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), (4) Left Alliance (Vas), (5) Green League (Vihr), (6) Swedish People's Party in Finland (RKP); Germany (2) Social Democratic Party (SPD), (3) Left Party (4) The Greens (5) Free Democratic Party (FDP); Ireland (1) Fianna Fáil, (2) Fine Gael (3) Labour (4) Green Party, (5) Sinn Féin

In Finland, however, the two parties that shifted most, the National Coalition Party (KOK) and the Swedish People's Party (RKP,) are also those that were estimated the least precisely. In Ireland, the party that shifted its position most, Labour, was also estimated best. The precision with which voters estimated parties does not seem to be strongly related to the parties' shifts. This description would be consistent with previous research, which found that the precision with which voters estimated parties was more strongly determined by voters' sympathy and their current ideological distance to the party, than by the strength of its preceding left-right shifts (author 2016).

Multilevel Analyses

To estimate the within- and between variance of the data, I process an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The Intraclass-Correlation-Coefficient (ICC) denotes the appropriateness of running the multilevel model vs. making use of a simpler Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model. Since variance depends on the dependent categories in the multinomial model, I calculated the ICC for each comparison of outcomes (see Table 3). The ICCs show that for the empty "switching vs. staying loyal" model, the proportion of unexplained between variance is approximately 24 percent of the total variance; for the "exiting vs. staying loyal" model, it is approximately 30 percent of the total variance. For the empty "exiting vs. switching" model, the unexplained between variance is approximately 35 percent of the total variance. All three values hence indicate that it is worthwhile to take the level-two variance into account. In other words, the multilevel specification is a more appropriate specification than an OLS model[82].

The first set of multinomial models (Table IV.3) show both level-1 and level-2 determinants with control variables but without the level-one interaction "Perceived Increased Distance." Coefficients can be interpreted as increasing or decreasing the impact on one categorical behavior outcome versus the base category – comparing first switching, second exiting to the base category of loyal voting, and third exiting to switching. Independent variables in these first set of models are all unstandardized. Hypotheses H1a-H1c predicted a negative impact of partisanship on switching and exiting versus staying loyal and a positive impact on exiting vs. switching. As the coefficients show, these first two hypotheses are confirmed, but the last one is not: partisanship for the party for which a voter previously voted does not significantly lead to favoring exiting over switching behavior. While partisans hence clearly tend to be loyal to their party, this does not encompass a preference for exiting instead of switching or vice versa.

Voters' precise knowledge of the party's left-right position, their "Estimation proximity" increases their likelihood to switch to another party in comparison to staying loyal, and voters who know positions less precisely are less inclined to switch and more inclined to stay loyal,

---

[82] According to Heck et al. (2010: 6), a threshold level for the usefulness of a multilevel approach is 0.05.

as was hypothesized (H2a). Knowledge of parties' left-right positions is important for voters' choice between alternatives: if they know positions less precisely, they are less likely to switch.

Table IV.3. The effect of political perception and increased distance on voting

	Switching vs. Loyal (s.e.)		Exiting vs. Loyal (s.e.)		Exiting vs. Switching (s.e.)	
Intercept	-0.485 *	(0.205)	0.505	(0.250)	0.863 *	(0.270)
Partisan	-1.232 ***	(0.045)	-1.149 ***	(0.083)	0.081	(0.088)
Estimation Proximity	0.291 ***	(0.047)	0.034	(0.083)	-0.255 **	(0.088)
Factual Knowledge	-0.061 *	(0.031)	-0.502 ***	(0.065)	-0.441 ***	(0.067)
Number of liked parties	0.019	(0.019)	-0.087 **	(0.033)	-0.108 **	(0.034)
Increased Distance	-0.019	(0.094)	-0.169	(0.180)	-0.149	(0.189)
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.076 **	(0.023)	-0.131 **	(0.040)	-0.056	(0.043)
Internal Efficacy	-0.021	(0.021)	-0.262 ***	(0.033)	-0.241 ***	(0.035)
Education[1]	0.053 ***	(0.014)	-0.058 *	(0.028)	-0.111 ***	(0.029)
Household Income[1]	0.008	(0.017)	-0.125 ***	(0.031)	-0.134 ***	(0.033)
Snap Election	0.928 *	(0.375)	-1.659 ***	(0.335)	-1.659 ***	(0.335)
Compulsory Voting	0.928	(0.510)	-1.238 *	(0.425)	-1.238 **	(0.425)
Random part						
Intercept Var. Comp (s.d.)	0.396 ***	(0.630)	0.142 ***	(0.377)	0.223 ***	(0.472)
ICC	0.284		0.124		0.182	

Displayed are the unstandardized coefficients with non-robust standard errors. The model of analysis was calculated with HLM7; with a restricted maximum likelihood (PQL). [1] "Household Income" and "Education" were centered around the group mean. Levels of Significance: * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.

For the same reason, more precise estimations also lead to a higher likelihood of switching vs. exiting and lower estimation precisions to a higher likelihood of exiting. Switching to a party is a deliberate choice that presupposes knowledge of positions, while loyal voting and exiting do not presuppose precise knowledge of party positions. For the decision between exiting and staying loyal, "Estimation Precision" is hence not significant. Hypothesis 2a, 2b, and 2c are confirmed.

"Factual Knowledge" has a different impact on voting behavior than the knowledge of left-right positions. It shows a negative effect on exiting – both versus staying loyal and versus switching. This finding confirms previous research that showed that citizens who have more factual political knowledge are more likely to vote (author, unpublished), similar to sociodemographic variables such as income and education. A

difference to both education and voters' "Estimation Proximity" is that factual knowledge decreases the likelihood of switching vs. voting loyal – although with less certainty, as the level of significance is low. Still, this weak relationship indicates that voters who know the political facts are not necessarily the same ones who update well about party positions.

A party's increased distance to its previous voters neither affects the voter's likelihood to switch or to exit the election in comparison to voting loyally nor does it have a significant effect on exiting versus switching. While this latter non-effect follows expectations (H3c), the first two do not. At least for parties that shift strongly, it was expected that this might lead to an increased likelihood of voters to either exit the election or switch to another party. This is not the case.

**Table IV.4: The effect of perceived increased distance on voting behavior**

	Switching vs. Loyal (s.e.)		Exiting vs. Loyal (s.e.)		Exiting vs. Switching (s.e.)	
Intercept	-0.385	(0.209)	0.651 *	(0.258)	0.911	(0.279)
Partisan y	-1.226 ***	(0.045)	-1.142 ***	(0.083)	0.083	(0.106)
Estimation Proximity	0.214 ***	(0.057)	-0.085	(0.100)	-0.297 *	(0.106)
Factual Knowledge	-0.060	(0.031)	-0.502 ***	(0.065)	-0.441 ***	(0.067)
Number of liked parties	0.020	(0.019)	-0.085 **	(0.033)	-0.107 **	(0.034)
Increased Distance	-0.567 *	(0.255)	-1.090 *	(0.483)	-0.521	(0.513)
Interaction: Increased Distance x Estimation Prox.	0.427 *	(0.183)	0.733 *	(0.349)	0.305	(0.367)
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.075 ***	(0.023)	-0.130 **	(0.040)	-0.055	(0.043)
Internal Efficacy	-0.021	(0.021)	-0.262 ***	(0.033)	-0.241 ***	(0.035)
Education[1]	0.053 ***	(0.014)	-0.058 **	(0.028)	-0.111 ***	(0.029)
Household Income[1]	0.009	(0.017)	-0.125 ***	(0.031)	-0.134 ***	(0.033)
Early Election	0.914 *	(0.376)	-1.648 ***	(0.335)	-1.648 ***	(0.335)
Compulsory Election	0.914	(0.510)	-1.243 *	(0.425)	-1.243 *	(0.425)
Random part						
Interc. Var. Comp (s.d.)	0.390*** (0.625), (df 18)		0.140*** (0.374), (df 18)		0.224*** (0.473), (df 18)	
ICC	0.281		0.123		0.183	

Displayed are the unstandardized coefficients with non-robust standard errors. The model of analysis was calculated with HLM7; with a restricted maximum likelihood (PQL). [1] "Household Income" and "Education" were centered around the group mean. Levels of Significance: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

These zero-findings of H3a-H3c would corroborate Adams' and his colleagues' findings of party supporters' non-reactions after parties' position shifts. However, once the interaction of voters' "perceived increased distance" is included in the model, the situation looks different (see Table IV.4). First, the impact of the interacted determinant shows the expected direction for switching and exiting in comparison to voting loyally: the more sensitive voters are to a party's increased distance, the more likely they are to switch the party or to exit from the election. This confirms hypotheses 4a and 4b.

For switching versus exiting, the analysis does not show a significant effect. It can be concluded that voters do react to shifts in parties' policy propositions as long as they care enough for these. Which reaction voters take, either switching or exiting, is, however not clear. This might depend on the other parties' behaviors, which I could not control for in this model.

Taking a second glance at the other coefficients in the second set of multinomial models (Table IV.4), it becomes obvious that all coefficients stay very similar to the model in Table 3, except for "Increased Distance." The "Increased Distance" effect becomes significant for both switching and exiting to the loyal vote. However, the effects point in the opposite direction than expected. Once, voters' perception *and* their sensitivity to change are interacted in the model, "Increased Distance" rather leads voters to stay loyal to the party they had previously voted for.

Figure IV.3: Marginal effect of "Perceived Increased Distance" for different levels of Increased Distance; with and without party identification (PID)
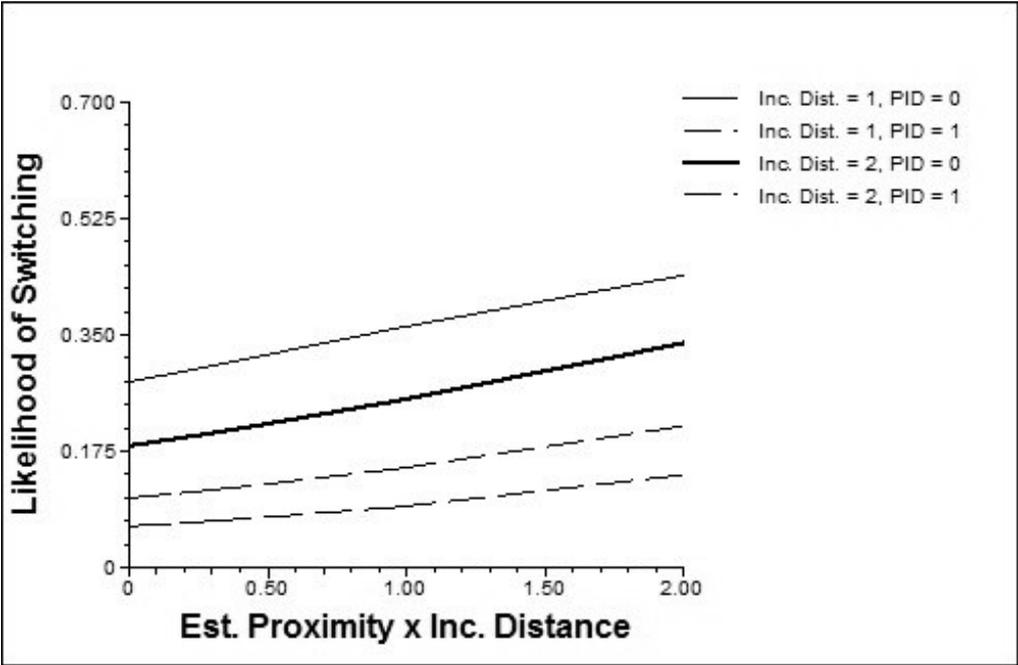
This finding might be an explanation why in some research, consistent, logical voters' reactions to parties' position shifts do not show up. As was earlier seen, the mean voters' estimation can miss the party's position quite strongly. For that reason, a party's increased distance to the voter will often be neglected. Only voters who care for parties' current policy positions and who are sensitive to shifts in these, show reactions in the expected direction. Figure IV.3 illustrates this better. It shows the marginal effect of the interaction "Perceived Increased Distance" (Estimation Proximity x Distance) and of the two main effects "Increased Distance" (Inc. Dist.) and "Party Identification" (PID).The interaction affects persons' likelihood to shift a party if they are sensitive to policy shifts or if the shift is strong. For partisans and for persons whose distance increased to the party, the interaction works in the same direction, but on lower levels. A distance increase alone hence decreases voters' likelihood to switch the party. Voters do not simply react with vote switching if a party has shifted its left-right position. The relationship is far more complex than "proximity voting" theory leads one to believe. Apart from taking partisanship into account, it would probably be necessary to inspect which issues are salient to the voter. If a party's left-right shift is due to an issue on which voters do not focus or on which they have shifted their position, too, they should not react with vote switching, but rather vote loyally.

The last hypothesis (H5) expected that the number of parties that a voter likes has a positive effect on switching versus exiting. This hypothesis is confirmed in both models (Table 3 and Table 4). The assumed causal relationship is that the more parties someone likes, the more alternatives they take into consideration when voting. This finding confirms the already mentioned research by Bakker et al. (2016) that open-mindedness toward parties makes switching a more likely behavior than exiting from an election. Interestingly, and not foreseen is the effect that liking more parties also makes voting loyally more likely than exiting from the election. However, this also bears some logic since in the reverse direction it makes sense that the fewer the number of parties someone likes, the higher the likelihood is to exit the election. If voters are strongly dealigned, and this also includes the party for which they previously voted, they should not vote at all.

Discussion and Conclusion

Parties' unfavorable policy shifts increase "partisan sorting," which can lead voters significantly to either switch to another party or to exit from the election. This finding stands in contrast to previous research, in which voters' reactions to party position switches were not significant (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu, 2011; 2014). These articles concentrated on aggregate analyses of spatial relationships between parties and voters.

For the findings of voter reactions, three aspects are presumably of importance: first, partisanship needs to be controlled for in any model of voters' reaction to party behavior. In this research, voters' party identification coherence with the last voted party was found to be the strongest decreasing impact on switching to another party and on exiting the succeeding election[83]. Partisanship is hence a delimiting factor for any notable reaction to parties' position switches between succeeding elections.

Second, it is very important to bear in mind (and to model) voters' (often deficient) perceptions of party positions. Naturally, voters can only react to position shifts that they notice. Both the strength of parties' shifts on the left-right axis and voters' estimation ability or sensitivity to left-right positions come into play, here. For the mean party, the cumulative and somewhat artificial measure of parties' left-right shifts through policy proposals in party manifestos did not reveal strong position changes between elections. This alone might be a reason for zero reaction on the side of the voters. The analysis did not reveal whether there was any threshold for the strength of party shifts from which onwards voters would have been more inclined to react in the hypothesized way: switching or exiting if the party would shift away from them. The main effect of voters' reaction to these shifts did not manifest significantly at all. However, the analysis of main effects confirmed the expectation that the precision with which voters estimate parties does increase the likelihood of switching or exiting. The effect was comparatively strong, although voters' precise estimations of party positions can only be one part of the story: they might be a necessary, yet insufficient condition of reacting with abandoning a party. A drawback in the analysis is that it is still hard to tell what causes what in that regard. It could be correct to interpret that voters who

---

[83] For the comparison of coefficients' strengths within models, see Appendix 3.

estimate parties more precisely are more sensitive to shifts and are hence also more likely to punish parties' previous behavior through switching or exiting from the election. However, the causal sequence could also start with voters who are dissatisfied in some way and hence pay more attention to the current election campaign and are then able to place parties more precisely. The reverse interpretation, however, makes good sense and fits the hypothesized direction of influence: the less precisely voters are informed, the less they are likely to perceive positions correctly and react to parties' new positions. While plain factual knowledge just enhances any voting against exiting, the precision with which voters estimate parties correctly in comparison to the current position shifts does make a difference for their reactions to shifts in positions due to political prospections.

The interaction effect also backs this hypothetic causal chain: combining the precise estimation with the strength of a parties' increased distance to a voter due to the party's position shift showed a comparatively strong positive effect on switching and even more so on exiting from the election. The significance of this multiplicative (interacted) coefficient hence followed the logic that as voters' likelihood to react to policy shifts increases, the stronger the product of voters' capability with parties' shifts will be. Taking note of both voters' individual capability to estimate parties' positions and the strength of parties' shifts was hence important, apart from acknowledging the importance of individuals' partisanship.

The fact that all of these aspects are characteristics of the *individual* voter yields to the third important difference between this model and some other approaches that failed to find significant effects of parties' policy shifts (measured with party manifesto data). These characteristics need to be measured on the individual level. Using aggregate-level analyses is a too rough approach for the complexity of dependencies in individuals' reactions. In that regard, pure spatial models of voting behavior are too simplistic to find significant effects of voter behavior due to party shifts.

REFERENCES

Adams, J., 2012. Causes and Electoral Consequences of Party Policy Shifts in Multiparty Elections: Theoretical Results and Empirical Evidence. Annual Review of Political Science 15, 401-419.

Adams, J., De Vries, C. E., Leiter, D., 2011. Subconstituency Reactions to Elite Depolarization in the Netherlands: An Analysis of the Dutch Public's Policy Beliefs and Partisan Loyalties, 1986-98. British Journal of Political Science 42, 81-105.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Leiter, D., 2012. Partisan Sorting and Niche Parties in Europe. West European Politics 35(6), 1272-1294.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., Somer-Topcu, Z., 2011. Is Anybody Listening? Evidence that Voters do not respond to European Parties' Policy Statements During Elections. American Journal of Political Science 55(2), 370-382.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L., and Somer-Topcu, Z., 2014. Do Voters respond to party manifestos or to a wider Information Environment? An Analysis of mass-elite Linkages on European Integration. American Journal of Political Science, online first, Pp. 1-12.

Adams, J., Green, J. and Milazzo, C., 2012. Has the British Public depolarized along with political Elites? An American Perspective on British Public Opinion. Comparative Political Studies 45, 507-530.

Benoit, K.; Laver, M., 2006. Party Politics in Modern Democracies. London: Routledge.

Bakker, R. et al., 2015. 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey. Version 2015.1. Available on chesdata.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Bakker, B.N., Klemmensen, R., Norgaard, A. S., Schumacher, G., 2016. Stay Loyal or Exit the Party? How Openness to Experience and Extroversion Explain Vote Switching. Political Psychology 37, 419-429

Boonen, J., Falk Pedersen, E. and Hooghe, M., 2017. The effect of political sophistication and party identification on voter–party congruence. A comparative analysis of 30 countries, Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, online first.

Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., 2001. Finally! Comparative over-time mapping of party policy movement. In: Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J., Tanenbaum, E. (Eds.), Mapping Policy Preferences. Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 19–50.

Busch, K., 2016. Estimating parties' left-right positions: Determinants of voters' perceptions' proximity to party ideology. Electoral Studies 41, 159-178.

Campbell, A., Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1960. The American Voter. New York: Wiley.

Dahlberg, S., 2013. Does context matter - the impact of electoral systems, political parties and the individual characteristics on voters' perceptions of party positions. Electoral Stud. 32 (4), 670e683.

Dalton, R. J., 2000. The Decline of Party Identifications. In Dalton, R. J., & Wattenberg, M. P. (Ed.), *Parties Without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. (pp. 19-36). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton R., 2017. Party representation across multiple issue dimensions. Party Politics 23, 609-612.

Dassonneville, R. and Dejaeghere, Y., 2014. Bridging the ideological space: A cross-national analysis of the distance of party switching. European Journal of Political Research 53: 580-599.

Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Drummond, A. J., 2011. Assimilation, contrast and voter projections of parties in left-right space: Does the electoral system matter? Party Politics 17: 711.

Easton, D., 1975. A re-assessment of the concept of political support. British Journal of Political Science, 5, 435-457.

Ennser-Jedenastik, L. and Meyer, T.M., 2017. The Impact of Party Cues on Manual Coding of Political Texts. Political Science Research and Methods. Online first, 1-9.

Fortunato, D. and Stevenson, R. T., 2013. Perception of Partisan Ideologies: The Effect of Coalition Participation. American Journal of Political Science 57, 459-477.

Franzmann, S. T., 2013. Towards a real comparison of left-right indices: A comment to Jahn. Party Politics. 10.1177/1354068813499865.

Franzmann, S. T., Kaiser, A., 2006. Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data. Party Politics 163 (12), 163–188.

Franzmann, S. T., Kaiser, A., 2016. Locating Political Parties in Policy Space - Data update from July 1, 2016 http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/forschung/datenbanken/party-locations/ (accessed 2016/09/30).

Freedom House, 2014. Freedom in the World. Country Ratings and Status by Region. FIW 1973-2015 (EXCEL). http://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world (Oktober 12, 2017).

Heck, R.H., Thomas, S.L. & Tabata, L.N.,(2010. Multilevel and Longitudinal Modeling with IBM SPSS. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Hobolt, S. B., Karp, J.A., et al, 2010. Voters and coalition governments. Electoral Studies 29, 299-307.

Kayser, M.A., and Wlezien, C., 2010. Performance pressure: Patterns of partisanship and the economic vote. European journal of Political Research 50: 365-394.

Kroh, M.,2009. The ease of ideological voting. In: Klingemann H-D (ed.) The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems.

Merrill, S., Grofman, B., Adams, J., 2001. Assimilation and contrast effects in voter projections of party locations: Evidence from Norway, France, and the USA. European Journal of Political Research 40 (2), 199–221. 10.1111/1475-6765.00594.

Neundorf, A. and Adams, J., 2016. The Micro-Foundations of Party Competition and Issue Ownership: The Reciprocal Effects of Citizens' Issue Salience and Party Attachments. British Journal of Political Science. Online First, 1-22.

Rudi, T., 2010. Die Links-Rechts-Dimension in Mittel- und Osteuropa: „Super-Issue" oder bedeutungslos? In: Faas, T., Arzheimer, K., Roßteutscher, S. (Eds.), Information - Wahrnehmung - Emotion. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 169-189.

Schultze, M., 2016 Wählerverhalten und Wählerheterogenität. Theorie und Empirie auf der Grundlage des Michigan-Modells. Springer VS, Wiesbaden.

Seeberg, H. B., Slothuus, R., and Stubager, R., 2016. Do voters learn? Evidence that voters respond accurately to changes in political parties' policy positions. West European Politics 40, 336-356.

Smets, K., van Ham, C., 2013. The embarrassment of riches? A meta-analysis of individual-level research on voter turnout. Electoral Studies 32, 344-359.

Snijders, T. and Bosker, R., 1999. Multilevel Analysis. An introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling. Sage, London.

Spoon, J.-J. and Klüver, H., 2014. Do parties respond? How electoral context influences party responsiveness. Electoral Studies 35, 48-60.

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES Module 2 and 3 Full releases, Module 4, Fourth Advance release [datasets]. doi:10.7804/cses.module2.2015-12-15; doi:10.7804/cses.module3.2015-12-15; doi:10.7804/cses.module4.2017-04-11.

Volkens, A., et al. (2016): The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2016a. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).

Appendix IV.1: Operationalization of control variables

Factual (political) knowledge	Uses up to three knowledge questions from the CSES. Knowledge questions had similar distributions of correct and incorrect answer percentages across countries. The original variables contained one easy, one medium and one difficult question, resulting in approximately two-third, one-half, and one-third of respondents' correct answers, respectively[84]. To advance on comparability, I summed the correct answers per respondent within country and divided the resulting values by the respective country's mean number of correct answers. The resulting decimal reflects how much more or less politically knowledgeable respondents are in comparison to others within their countries.
Education	Was measured with an eight-point scale from "no schooling" to "university undergraduate degree completed." It is group-mean centered in the analyses.
Household Income (Quintiles)	Was measured in quintiles, i.e., with approximately 20 % of respondents in five groups. The 20 % range is sometimes not matched well (see the codebooks of the CSES). Therefore, I group-mean centered the variable in the analysis.
Satisfaction with democracy	The original question for this variable was "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the

---

[84] Please find this information in the questionnaire of the study, e.g., in the questionnaire for module 3, http://www.cses.org/datacenter/module3/cses3_Questionnaire.pdf

	way democracy works in [country]?" For ease of interpretation, I reversed the range for the variable such that very satisfied' is coded with the highest value.
Internal Efficacy	Respondents' level of agreement with the sentence "whom people vote for makes a difference," with 1 meaning that it does not make a difference at all whom people vote for and 5 meaning that it makes a large difference.
Compulsory Voting	A dummy variable that is coded 1 if legislative elections in the respective country are compulsory, 0 if not.
Snap Election	A dummy variable that is coded 1 if the election was early, 0 otherwise.

The above variables all originate from or are based on, CSES data.

Appendix IV.2. List of parties, election studies and their origin in CSES modules

Country/Election Study – Party Number and Party Name[1]	Module
Australia 2007: (1) Australian Labor Party, (2) Liberal Party, (3) National Party, (4) Greens	Module 3
Czech Republic 2006: (1) Civic Democratic Party (ODS) / Obcanská demokratická strana, (2) Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) / Ceská strana sociálne demokratická, (3) Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia / Komunistická strana Cech a Moravy (KSCM)	Module 3
Denmark 2007: (1) Left, Liberal Party / Venstre - Liberale Parti (V), (2) Social Democrats / Socialdemokratiet (S), (3) Danish People's Party / Dansk Folkeparti (DF), (4) Socialist People's Party / Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF), (5) Conservative People's Party / Det Konservative Folkeparti (KF), (6) Radical Left, Social Liberal Party / Det Radikale Venstre (RV)	Module 3
Estonia 2011: (1) Estonian Reform Party / Reformierakond, (2) Estonian Centre Party / Keskerakond, (3) Pro Patria and Res Publica Union / Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit, (4) Social Democratic Party / Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond, (5) Estonian People's Union / Rahvaliit, (6) Estonian Greens / Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised	Module 3
Finland 2007: (1) Centre Party of Finland (KESK), (2) National Coalition Party (KOK), (3) Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), (4) Left Alliance (Vas), (5) Green League (Vihr), (6) Swedish People's Party in Finland (RKP)	Module 3
Germany 2013[2] (2) Social Democratic Party / Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), (3) Left Party / Die Linke (Linke), (4) Alliance 90; The Greens / Bündnis90/Die Grünen, (5) Free Democratic Party / Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)	Module 4
Great Britain 2005: (1) Labour (Lab), (2) Conservative (Con), (3) Liberal Democrats	Module 2
Hungary 2002: (1) Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), (3) Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), (6) Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)	Module 2
Iceland 2007: (1) Independence Party (IP) / Sjálfstæðisflokkur, (2) Social Democratic Alliance (SDA) / Samfylking, (3) Left Green Movement (LGM) / Vinstri hreyfingin grænt framboð, (4) Progressive Party (PP) / Framsóknarflokkur, (5) Liberal Party / Frjálslyndi flokkurinn	Module 3
Ireland 2007: (1) Fianna Fáil, (2) Fine Gael, (3) Labour, (4) Green Party, (5) Sinn Féin	Module 3

Italy 2006: (1) Forward Italy (FI), (3) National Alliance (AN), (6) Communist Refoundation Party (PRC)	Module 2
Netherlands 2006: (1) Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) / Christen Democratisch Appèl, (3) Socialist Party (SP) / Socialistische Partij, (4) People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) / Volkspartij, (6) Green Left / GroenLinks (GL)	Module 3
New Zealand 2011: (1) National Party (NAT), (2) Labour Party (Lab), (3) Green Party (GP)	Module 3
Norway 2005: (1) Labour Party / Det Norske Arbeiderparti, (2) Progress Party / Fremskrittspartiet, (3) Conservative Party / Høyre, (4) Socialist Left Party / Sosialistisk Venstreparti, (5) Christian Peoples Party / Kristelig Folkeparti, (6) Center Party / Senterpartiet	Module 3
Portugal 2005: (1) Socialist Party (PS) / Partido Socialista, (2) Social Democratic Party (PPD/PSD) / Partido Social Democrata, (3) Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU) / Coligacão Democrática Unitária, (4) Popular Party (CDS/PP) / Partido Popular, (5) Left Bloc (BE) / Bloco De Esquerda	Module 2
Romania 2004: (4) Greater Romania Party (PRM), (5) Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	Module 3
Slovakia 2010: (1) Direction - Social Democracy / SMER - Socialna Demokracia - SMER-SD, (2) Slovak Democratic And Christian Union – Democratic Party, (4) Christian Democratic Movement / Krestanskodemokraticke Hnutie – KDH, (6) Slovak National Party / Slovenska Narodna Strana – SNS	Module 3
Slovenia 2004: (2) Liberal Democracy of Slovenia / Liberalna demokracija Slovenije-LDS, (4) New Slovenia-Christian People's Party / Nova Slovenija-Krscanska ljudska stranka-NSi, (6) Slovenia National Party / Slovenska nacionalna stranka-SNS	Module 2
Spain 2004: (1) Spanish Socialist Party / Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), (2) Popular Party / Partido Popular – PP, (3) United Left / Izquierda Unida-IU, (4) Convergence and Union / Convergencia i Unió-CiU	Module 2
Sweden 2006: (1) Social Democrats / Socialdemokraterna, (2) Conservative Party / Moderata Samlingspartiet, (3) Centre Party / Centerpartiet, (4) People's Party Liberals / Folkpartiet Liberalerna, (5) Christians Democrats / Kristdemokraterna; (6) Left Party / Vänserpartiet	Module 3
Switzerland 2007: (1) People's Party (SVP/UDC), (2) Social Democratic Party (SP/PS), (3) Radical-Democratic Party (FDP/PRD), (4) Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP/PDC), (5) Swiss Green Party (GPS/PES), (6) Protestant People's Party (EVP/PEP)	Module 3

[1] Party Numbers 1-6 were assigned according to the party's or electoral coalitions' (descending) percentages in the current election, following the CSES alphabetical party coding scheme A-F. The previous parties' codes and the codes in Franzmann-Kaiser (data update 2016) were matched, accordingly. The electorally strongest party per country in the current election as assigned value 1, the second strongest value 2, etc. Numbers are retained for reference. [2]For Germany, parties CDU and CSU are not present, because the left-right index (Franzmann-Kaiser 2006; 2016) was provided for the CDU-CSU coalition, while in the CSES data, voters estimated party's position separately. Further data restrictions led to the exclusion of election studies in the pooled data: Austria 2008: no variable on the previous voted for party; 2013: not available in Franzmann-Kaiser data yet; Belgium 1999 (no party id variable), 2003 (no left-right placements); France 2012 (previous vote choice variable available for the presidential, not parliamentary election); Israel 1996 (no previous vote question), newer left-right data for Israel not available yet in Franzmann/Kaiser (update 2016); Turkey 2011 not rated "free" in Freedom House Index.

Appendix IV.3 The effect of perceived increased distance on voting behavior (standardized. Coefficients)

	Switching vs. Loyal (s.e.)	Exiting vs. Loyal (s.e.)	Exiting vs. Switching (s.e.)
Intercept	-0.983 *** (0.140)	-2.690 *** (0.099)	-1.664 *** (0.119)
Partisan y Estimation	-0.608 *** (0.022)	-0.567 *** (0.041)	0.041 (0.044)
Proximity	0.106 *** (0.028)	-0.042 (0.050)	-0.148 ** (0.053)
Factual Knowledge	-0.042 (0.021)	-0.351 (0.045)	-0.309 *** (0.047)
Number of liked parties	0.032 (0.030)	-0.139 ** (0.053)	-0.174 ** (0.056)
Increased Distance	-0.140 * (0.063)	-0.267 * (0.119)	-0.128 (0.126)
Interaction: Increased Distance x Estimation Prox.	0.141 * (0.061)	0.242 * (0.115)	0.100 (0.121)
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.077 ** (0.024)	-0.133 *** (0.041)	-0.056 (0.043)
Internal Efficacy	-0.023 (0.023)	-0.282 *** (0.035)	-0.259 *** (0.038)
Education[1]	0.092 *** (0.024)	-0.100 * (0.048)	-0.192 *** (0.050)
Household Income[1]	0.012 (0.023)	-0.173 *** (0.043)	-0.186 *** (0.045)
Snap Election	0.289 * (0.118)	-0.520 *** (0,106)	-0.520 *** (0.106)
Compulsory Election	0.243 (0.136)	-0.331 ** (0.113)	-0.331 *** (0.113)
Random part			
Intercept Var. Comp (s.d.)	0.390*** (0.625), df 18	0.140*** (0.374), df 18	0.224*** (0.473), df18

Displayed are the standardized coefficients with non-robust standard errors. [1]Household Income and Education were centered around the group mean. Levels of Significance: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.