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Jonathan Polk and Johannes Karreth

Centre for European Research (CERGU)
University of Gothenburg
Box 711, SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG
November 2017

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Jonathan Polk[1] and Johannes Karreth[2]

[1]Department of Political Science and Centre for European Research, University of Gothenburg
Email: jonathan.polk@gu.se
[2]Department of Politics and International Relations, Ursinus College, USA
Email: jkarreth@ursinus.edu

This version: November 2017. Please contact the authors for the most recent version.

Abstract

To what extent does moderation in ideological positioning by mainstream parties affect their short and long-term electoral fortunes? Do electorates treat the major parties of the center-left and center-right differently when these types of parties move to the middle? Previous research suggests that social democratic parties received an influx of centrist voters post-moderation, but that these new centrist voters were less attached to the party and left in later elections, as did left-leaning social democrats frustrated by moderation strategies. This paper further probes whether there is a link between moderation and individual voters' shifts to and from mainstream parties at a later point. We examine individual-level data on voting behavior combined with information on mainstream parties' ideological shifts in 72 elections in 16 countries over several decades. The findings clearly show that (a) moderation can have detrimental consequences in the longer term; (b) the consequences of moderation differ across major left and right parties; and (c) core and fickle voters respond differently to moderation strategies, with additional differences across the left-right and social dimensions of electoral competition.

*Equal authorship implied. We are grateful to Thomas Däubler and Kenneth Benoit for sharing their data with us. Julian Dederke and Charmaine Willis provided helpful research assistance. We gratefully acknowledge financial support from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, grant number P13-1090:1, Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), grant number 2016-01810.

Introduction

In the late 1990s social democrats governed 12 of the then 15 European Union states, and their electoral successes often correlated with Third Way-style ideological moderation to the center (Blair and Schröder 2000; Keman 2011). By 2010, however, social democrats were again in opposition in most European countries. During the first decade of the 21st century, several conservative parties also received a surge in electoral support after shifting to more centrist left-right positions, for example Nya Moderaterna in Sweden. The center-right coalition led by the "New Moderates" is now out of government, but other centrist center-right parties such as Germany's CDU have not yet been punished at the polls for moderation. At the same time, the electoral decline that was expected to follow leftist Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party in Great Britain did not materialize in the 2017 general election. To what extent does moderation in ideological positioning by mainstream parties affect their short and long-term electoral fortunes? Does the electorate treat the major parties of the center-left and center-right differently when these types of parties moderate their positions?

The ability of citizens to express their preferences by voting for parties with the most congruent policy positions is a fundamental feature of representation (Sartori 1968; Dahl 1989; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Budge, McDonald, Keman, and Pennings 2012; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012) and the foundation for the spatial theory of voting (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). Studying if and how citizens respond to the ideological moderation of mainstream center-left and center-right parties helps clarify if and when party leaders are capable of shaping public opinion, and whether citizens approve of or otherwise react to the positional changes of major political parties. It therefore directly addresses the contemporary connection between parties and voters, a cornerstone of representative democracy.

In their analysis of the British electorate between 1983-2010, Evans and Tilley (2012*a*, 974) find that "[l]eft-right ideology matters to voters' party choices, but it matters a lot less when parties are offering policy options that do not differ ideologically from one another." We extend this supply-side explanation to other party systems of Western Europe to address the fact that "[a]lthough extensive research analyzes the factors that motivate European parties to shift their policy positions, there is little cross-national research that analyzes how voters respond to parties' policy shifts" (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011, 370). In this paper we therefore test competing and complementary ideas about the electoral effects of ideological moderation using a broad spectrum of mainstream parties over a long time span with individual level data. Our paper also addresses the rise of non-economic competition and the impact of mainstream party policy positions on minor (or previously minor) party successes and failures in elections across Europe (Meguid 2005; 2008; van der Brug and van Spanje 2009; Pardos-Prado 2015). If supporters of

center-right and center-left parties respond to moderation in a similar fashion, a common theoretical framework could help us understand whether the ideological repositioning by major political parties facilitates challenger party successes and increased party competition over non-economic issues (de Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Spoon and Klüver 2016).

We make three inter-related contributions to knowledge in these areas: First, the paper suggests that citizens do respond to changes in the policy positions of the largest political parties, but that this varies between major parties of the left and major parties of the right. Our analysis shows that moderation on the left-right ideological dimension, both short and long-term, produces substantial benefits for major right-wing parties. This is not the case for social democratic parties, where short-term gains from moderation disappear and turn into losses in the long-term. Second, we illustrate that supplementing aggregate-level analysis with individual-level data is crucial to capturing the dynamic relationship between a party's shift to the center and electoral support. Our compilation and use of individual-level data to carefully track citizen responses to party policy shifts allows us to show that left-right moderation decreases the probability that a major left party voter will continue to vote for that party in the electoral cycle subsequent to moderation. It also decreases the propensity for highly partisan – what we call "core" major left voters – to select the same major left party over multiple elections. In contrast, left-right moderation increases the propensity of "fickle" right party voters to select the same major right-wing party and does not negatively affect these parties core voters. Further, left-right moderation does not lead to more defection or abstention from major right parties. These differences would not be observable in aggregate analysis. Finally, our multidimensional perspective allows us to report additional differences across the economic and social/cultural dimensions of electoral competition. While economic moderation appears to be a winning strategy for major right-wing parties but not major left parties, the effects of moderation on the social dimension are less clearly associated with electoral benefits for both major left and major right parties.

Explaining how voters respond to shifts in party party positions

There is strong empirical evidence that parties update and adjust their positions in response to shifts in citizen preferences, presumably in an attempt to enhance their electoral prospects (Adams, Clark, Ezrow, and Glasgow 2006; Ezrow, de Vries, Steenbergen, and Edwards 2011; Lehrer 2012; Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013; Abou-Chadi and Orlowski 2016).[1] However, the relatively few cross-national studies that examine if citizens systematically react to parties' policy shifts in real-world multiparty electoral competition provide less consistent evidence (see, e.g. Adams

[1] For a competing view see Meyer (2013); Dalton and McAllister (2015).

2012; Meyer 2013). A particularly influential and provocative study found little to no responsiveness from voters to shifts in party policy statements (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011). Re-specifying some key components of this research, others report that election platforms and campaigns produce at least small changes in voter perceptions of party positions (Fernandez-Vazquez 2014). Still others found that while voters do not respond to shifts as captured in party manifestos, they are responsive to coalition participation as a heuristic for ideological changes (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013; Fortunato and Adams 2015; Adams, Ezrow, and Wlezien 2016), or respond to other highly visible real-world changes from parties (Seeberg, Slothuus, and Stubager 2017).[2] For the purposes of this paper, the lack of consensus about voter responsiveness to the policy shifts of parties as reported in election manifestos is the key takeaway from this debate.

Despite the ongoing discussion about whether or not voters are attentive to and affected by party policy shifts, there is surprisingly more agreement that ideological moderation enhances a party's vote share, at least initially. Yet much of the empirical evidence suggests that this effect is rather small substantively. The results of Ezrow (2005) indicate that the vote shares of Western European political parties increase the closer they are to the middle of the voter distribution on the left-right dimension. Policy moderation as a strategy to expand parties' vote share is grounded in the spatial voting model (Downs 1957; Lin, Enelow, and Dorussen 1999). Assuming that the electorate can be aligned along a single dimension and that the distribution of voters on this dimension peaks in the center (see Ezrow (2005) for cross-country support of the latter proposition),[3] the optimal strategy of non-extremist parties is to move to the middle, where most voters are located.

Although the expected convergence on the median voter position is based in models of two party competition, Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) show that the Downsian model anticipates party gains from moderation even in elections with four or more competitors, increasing its applicability to Western European democracies. Beyond vote-seeking centripetal forces, office-seeking parties (Strøm and Müller 1999) in democracies where coalitions are the norm have additional reasons to take more moderate positions. A party that positions itself near the central tendency of the electorate could increase its flexibility in the formation of government coalitions or its attractiveness to other government formateurs (Ezrow 2008; Lehrer 2012). Taken together, the implication is that parties can successfully focus on the political center while maintaining a core base. Kirchheimer (1966) famously expected that center-right and center-left parties would moderate their policy positions in pursuit of the median voter; we follow his terminology here and refer to this as

[2] A separate but clearly related body of experimental research from political psychology reports that citizens often take on the position of their preferred party (Cohen 2003; Kam 2005; Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009; Bullock 2011; Broockman and Butler 2017) and that this response to party cues is driven at least in part by motivated reasoning (Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Mullinix 2016).

[3] The distributions of the left-right and social dimensions in the individual level data we present below are also normally distributed with a peak around the midpoint.

the catchall argument.

Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) extend on the finding of Ezrow (2005) with evidence of a lagged policy moderation benefit for parties in postwar democracies. Aggregate voter support at the current election increased (again by rather small amounts) when left-wing parties moved right or when right-wing parties moved left in the previous election. These authors draw on studies of issue evolution and macropartisanship from the United States (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002) to make the case that their can be a substantial time lag between when a party elite's behavior changes, e.g. positional changes, and when voters fully pick up on and respond to these changes.

In contrast to those that find short or long-term electoral benefits from moderation, others argue that focusing on the center exposes parties to attacks from smaller, more ideologically extreme parties, particularly in proportional electoral systems (Allen 2009; Arndt 2014*b*). This research emphasizes a different aspect of the catchall thesis, namely the loss of distinctiveness in mainstream party ideologies and longer term damage this may cause for party brands.[4] This approach is also consistent with the argument that parties cannot suddenly and costlessly move from point to point in the policy space, but are also constrained by activists, organizations, and ideological histories (see, e.g. Meyer 2013; Kitschelt and Rehm 2015).

In prior work, we attempted to combine these competing perspectives in an analysis of social democratic electoral performance during the 1980s-2000s in three countries with institutional differences structuring party competition (Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013). After adopting more centrist stances social democrats in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom received an anticipated increase in support from centrist voters. These same parties, however, went on to lose voters from the center and the left in elections that took place more than one electoral cycle after moderation. The moderating moves of social democrats in the 1990s, "while initially successful, contributed to their losing power by the early to mid-2000s" (Allen 2009, 636). We argued that the influx of centrist support receded because this voting bloc was less attached to social democrats and just as willing to vote for other parties or abstain. Over time, programmatic moderation also alienated left-leaning, former supporters as well. In this paper, we continue to refer to this as the catch-and-release argument.

A surge and decline in post-moderation electoral support could result from a combination of political-economic, electoral, and organizational dilemmas faced by most contemporary social democratic parties (Kitschelt 1994; 1999; Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen 2002). The growth and diversification of the service sector encourageed social democrats to appeal to more

[4]We borrow the party brand terminology from Noam Lupu's studies of ideological distinctiveness and political parties in Latin America (Lupu 2013; 2014; 2016), but this idea can also be found in the work of Downs (1957) and Aldrich (1995).

professional workers at the expense of the working class (Gingrich and Häusermann 2015).[5] More market-oriented economic stances and increasingly liberal positions on socio-cultural issues were advocated and adopted as a means of appealing to these voters (Kitschelt 1994; Giddens 1998; Blair and Schröder 2000). However the shifts to culturally liberal but market-oriented policy stances that attracted emerging post-material voting groups may have simultaneously alienated the rank-and-file electoral base of social democratic parties (Rennwald and Evans 2014). Many core social democrat supporters expect protection of the welfare state and job creation rather than economic moderation and spending cuts; when confronted with austerity policies from social democratic governments, these supporters could abstain or defect to competitor leftist parties (Kitschelt 1999, 324). It therefore remains an open question how the repositioning of social democratic parties on the economic and social dimensions of politics has affected electoral outcomes for these parties.

There may not be a direct analogue to the dilemmas facing the social democrats in the relationship between center-right parties and their voters. Historically, the electoral support of conservative governments did not fluctuate as much when they implemented austerity policies as it has for social democrats (Kitschelt 1994, 109-110). Yet there are also reasons to expect that the electoral effects of moderation will be relevant to both the center-left and center-right (Arndt 2014*a*). For example, Gidron (2016) argues that contemporary European center-right parties also face a strategic dilemma in attempting to attract market cosmopolitan and welfare chauvinist voter groups. Further, when party politics scholars draw theoretical distinctions between mainstream and niche/challenger parties such as the radical right or greens, they often stress the similarities among the former (Meguid 2005; 2008; Ezrow et al. 2011; Spoon 2011; Wagner 2012; Van de Wardt, De Vries, and Hobolt 2014; Hobolt and de Vries 2015). As mentioned above, the empirical evidence suggests that both left and right parties benefit somewhat from moderation in the subsequent electoral cycle. Studies of the Netherlands and Great Britain also find that mainstream parties of the left and right depolarized substantially on left-right politics during the 1980s and 1990s, as did portions of the electorate (Adams, Ezrow, and Leiter 2012; Adams, Green, and Milazzo 2012), and suggest that ideological moderation from the two major parties facilitates third party success and increased salience of non-economic political competition (Adams, De Vries, and Leiter 2012; Green 2015).

These studies highlight similar patterns for mainstream parties and their supporters across many of the countries we focus on in this paper. Our paper complements this research by answering calls for cross-national explorations of the electoral effects of policy shifts (Tavits 2007; Adams 2012), and by including the full range of mainstream parties in a long-term analysis. Studies on the long-

[5] Although the difficulty of simultaneously pursuing working and middle-class votes is particularly pronounced for contemporary European social democratic parties, Przeworski and Sprague (1986) illustrate that it has been a perennial concern for social democracy.

term consequences of moderation have focused on social democrats and the political-economic dilemma they face. Recent debate about the 'conservative soul' of the German CDU/CSU and dissent among the Conservatives in the Great Britain, raise the possibility that center-right parties could experience unstable majorities as a consequence of centrist catch-all strategies as well.

Up to this point, we have focused on the following interrelated questions: (1) do voters perceive and respond to shifts in party positions, (2) are mainstream parties electorally rewarded or punished for ideological moderation, and (3) do the electoral effects of ideological moderation apply equally to major center-left and center-right parties? Implicit within this discussion has been the additional complicating factor that party competition in Western Europe is increasingly multidimensional. The importance of a second, socio-cultural dimension to contemporary European party politics has been extensively documented by a range of scholars and research teams (see, e.g. Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschier, and Frey 2008; Hooghe and Marks 2009; van der Brug and van Spanje 2009; Bornschier 2010; Beramendi, Häusermann, Kitschelt, and Kriesi 2015).[6]

As mentioned above, changes to the political economies of European democracies pushed many social democratic parties to more socially liberal policies in the latter part of the 20th century. At the same time or just slightly later, the anti-immigration positions of the radical right presented a challenge on the social dimension for the parties of both the mainstream center-right (Bale 2003; 2008; De Lange 2012; Pardos-Prado 2015) and center-left (Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, and Sitter 2010; Hinnfors, Spehar, and Bucken-Knapp 2012). Throughout Europe mainstream center-left and center-right parties face incentives to respond to environmental and/or immigration politics in ways that alter their policy positions on the social dimension (Spoon, Hobolt, and de Vries 2014; Abou-Chadi 2016). Most recently, Wagner and Meyer (2017) report evidence of an authoritarian shift on the social dimension for mainstream left and right parties across the party systems of Europe. On the whole, this brief review suggests substantial positional changes on the social dimension for the major left and right parties of Europe, but we know much less about voter responsiveness to shifts on this dimension (but see Plescia and Staniek (2017) for related research). In the analyses below, we therefore test our arguments on both the economic and cultural dimensions of party competition.

[6]This second, though not necessarily subordinate, dimension is also referred to by different names depending on the authors. For some, a single additional dimension is inadequate to capture variation in questions of polity membership and governance (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). While we acknowledge the importance of these discussions, in an attempt to simplify our initial analyses that follow we restrict ourselves to one economic and one social dimension, referring to the latter exclusively as 'social' for brevity.

Hypotheses

Drawing on arguments highlighting the benefits of catchall strategies as well as our prior work on the more nuanced catch-and-release pattern, we derive the following hypotheses.

Immediate benefits of moderation. The catchall and the catch-and-release arguments both suggest that voters respond positively to major parties' moderation. Therefore, *voters are more likely to vote for parties that have moved toward the center since the prior election than for parties that have moved away from the center, all else equal* (H1).

Longer-term impact of moderation. The catchall argument can be extended to suggest that voters reward moderation beyond the immediate pre-election period (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009). Therefore, *voters are more likely to vote for major parties in consecutive elections if these parties have moderated in the previous election cycle, compared to major parties that have moved away from the center in the previous election cycle* (H2a). A counterargument, outlined in Karreth, Polk, and Allen (2013), suggests the opposite: *voters are more likely to vote for major parties that moderated in the election immediately following moderation* (akin to H1), *but less likely to vote for the same major party again in the subsequent election* (H2b).

The differential impact of moderation. Following Karreth, Polk, and Allen (2013), we hypothesize that the impact of moderation on voting behavior is not identical for all voters; it should affect "core" and "fickle" voters differently. This modifies the previous hypotheses: *"fickle" voters and "core" voters respond differently to major parties' moderation strategies* (H3). This implies that the effect of moderation before a prior election on current vote choice differs for fickle and for core voters.

Empirical strategy

This paper makes three main contributions; the research design reflects each. First, following studies exploring the impact of Downsian moderation strategies at the aggregate level of vote shares (see, e.g. Ezrow 2005; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009), we focus on the individual level of analysis and explore the impact of movements in parties' positions on individual vote choice, following cues from prior studies (e.g., Tavits 2007, 161). Second, distinct from most studies in this area as well and continuing an idea outlined in Karreth, Polk, and Allen (2013), we broaden our focus from immediate movements (directly prior to an election) to movements one period before the election in order to capture possible mid-to longer-term effects of moderation and test whether voters respond differently to these than to more recent party position movements. Finally, reflecting

the growing importance of multidimensional political competition in European democracies, we track party moderation on both the economic left-right and socio-cultural dimensions.

The unit of analysis for this study is the individual voter. We obtain information on these individuals from a number of election studies. These studies cover elections in up to 16 countries during the years from 1981 to 2015, with varying coverage by country. Table 1 lists all elections covered in the analyses following below. Sources for the individual-level data include four waves of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems 2015*a*;*b*;*c*; 2017) as well as national election studies from Denmark (Stubager, Møller Hansen, Callesen, Leed, and Enevoldsen 2016), Germany (Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung 1995), Great Britain (Various authors 2015*a*), the Netherlands (Todosijević, Aarts, and van der Kaap 2010), Norway (Aardal 2016), Sweden (Various authors 2015*b*), and Switzerland (Selects 2013).[7] We then match information on party positions and their movements to survey respondents' vote choices. This information comes from the Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens, Lehmann, Matthieß, Merz, and Regel 2016).[8]

Key variables

Vote choice with regard to major parties is the main variable of interest in this study. We distinguish between three types of voting behavior: voting for a major (left or right) party, voting for a minor (left or right) party, or abstention. These choices are coded for the current election (at time t, the election on which the respective election study is focusing) and, where available, for the previous election (at time $t-1$). Each choice is coded from vote choice recall questions in the election studies mentioned above. As major left-right parties, we define political parties that have been the major (formateur) party in non-caretaker governments at least once before they enter our analysis. We use this criterion to ensure that all parties considered major parties have at least once held primary governing responsibility. To identify left and right, we use the party family classification from the Manifesto Project Dataset (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, and Tanenbaum 2001; Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, Budge, and McDonald 2006; Volkens et al. 2016). To be included in this list, we require parties to have competed in at least three elections. The full classification scheme is available in Table A1 in the appendix.

Changes in party positions drive vote choice in the arguments explored in this study. We obtain measurements of party positions from the Comparative Manifesto project (Volkens et al. 2016; Lowe, Benoit, Mikhaylov, and Laver 2012) and focus on the two main dimensions of political con-

[7] All election studies were provided by the respective producer/distributor as cited. The original collectors, providers, and distributors of these data do not bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations in this manuscript.

[8] All code necessary to compile the individual-level data from original sources, to calculate party movements, and to combine individual-level and party-election-level data is documented and available from the authors.

Table 1: Elections covered in the analyses (72 elections total).

Australia 2004	Ireland 2002	Spain 2000
Australia 2013	Ireland 2007	Spain 2004
Austria 2008	Ireland 2011	Spain 2008
Canada 2004	Netherlands 1981	Sweden 1982
Denmark 1990	Netherlands 1982	Sweden 1985
Denmark 1998	Netherlands 1986	Sweden 1988
Denmark 2001	Netherlands 1994	Sweden 1991
Denmark 2005	Netherlands 1998	Sweden 1994
Denmark 2007	Netherlands 2002	Sweden 1998
Denmark 2011	Netherlands 2006	Sweden 2002
Finland 2003	Netherlands 2010	Sweden 2006
Finland 2007	Netherlands 2012	Switzerland 1987
Germany 1983	New Zealand 2002	Switzerland 1999
Germany 1987	New Zealand 2008	Switzerland 2003
Germany 1994	New Zealand 2011	Switzerland 2007
Germany 1998	Norway 1981	Switzerland 2011
Germany 2002	Norway 1985	Great Britain 1983
Germany 2005	Norway 1997	Great Britain 1987
Germany 2009	Norway 2001	Great Britain 1992
Germany 2013	Norway 2005	Great Britain 1997
Iceland 1999	Portugal 2002	Great Britain 2001
Iceland 2007	Portugal 2005	Great Britain 2005
Iceland 2009	Portugal 2009	Great Britain 2010
Iceland 2013	Spain 1996	Great Britain 2015

testation: the economic left-right dimension and the social liberal-conservative dimension. For each party, we calculate movements over time on each dimension for the following time points: between the previous election and the current election ($t-1$ to t), where the current election is the election in the focus of each election study. That is, for examining the vote choice of a respondent in the 1997 British general election, this variable measures the movement of each party between the 1992 election and the party's manifesto for the 1997 election. We also calculate each party's movement for the previous period, $t-2$ to $t-1$ (in the British example, from 1987 to 1992). These movements are measured in the logit scale discussed in Lowe, Benoit, Mikhaylov, and Laver (2011). Movements are centered around 0 and range from about negative 3 to 3 (economic left-right scale) and negative 5 to 5 (social liberal-conservative scale), as illustrated in Figure 1. For the analyses below, we standardize these movement indicators into a measure of Moderation, so that a movement of 1 is equivalent to moving to the center (i.e. to the right for Left parties, and to the left for Right parties) by one standard deviation. To identify how these movements relate to vote choice, we map each respondent's choice (in current and prior elections) to that party's movement in the relevant time period on the respective dimension. For an alternative measure of party positions and movements, we use IRT estimates from Däubler and Benoit (2017), also based on items from the Comparative Manifesto Project, and equivalent procedures to convert these measures into

an indicator for Moderation.

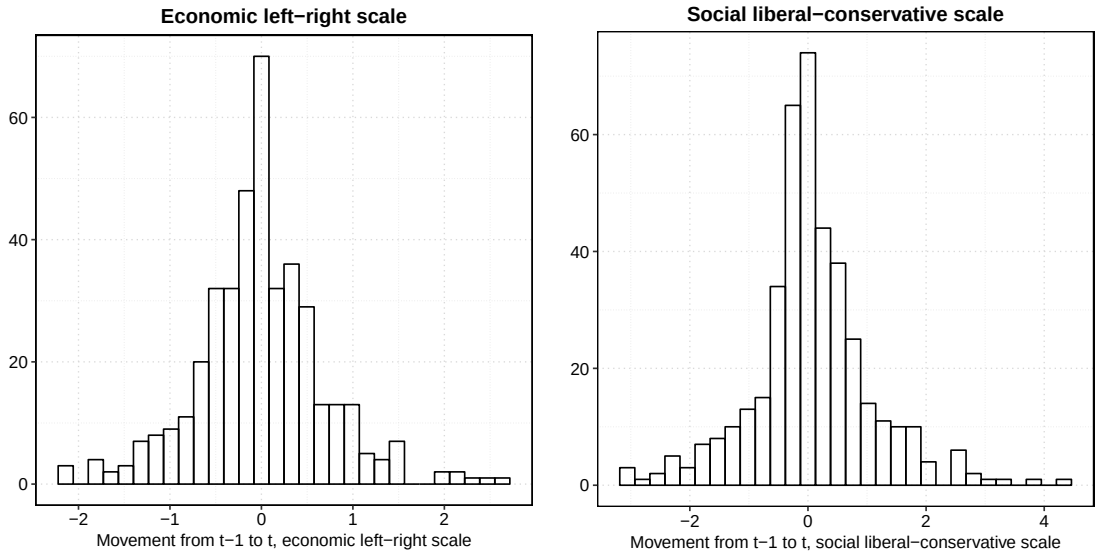

Figure 1: Distribution of movements between prior and current election, all parties in the data.

For hypothesis 3, we distinguish between **core and fickle** voters. The relevant argument suggests that voters respond differently to parties' programmatic moderation depending on whether voters are more or less vested in a party's position. We use survey respondents' self-reported party attachment as a proxy for this distinction. The relevant items ask respondents first about whether they feel attached to a particular party, and then ask respondents to rate the degree of attachment on a multi-point scale from low to high. Because we use different surveys that rely on slightly different attachment measures, we rescale these values to fit onto a 0–1 scale. As core respondents, we identify those voters expressing the highest degree of party attachment in the available scale; as fickle voters, we identify those placing themselves at lower levels. Across all surveys in the data we analyze, we classify about one-quarter of respondents as core voters with high attachment. Voters who did not respond to the party attachment questions are removed from the data.

In the regression analyses further below, we use use a basic set of **control variables** at the individual level: respondents' self-placement on the left-right scale, and their age (coded in four categories: 29 or below, 30 to 44 as the baseline category, 45 to 64, and 65 or older). We limit control variables to these in order to maximize the sample of respondents across elections. Using these control variables allows us to recover the equivalent to an average causal effect of party position movements, where control variables remove the other most prominent determinants of vote choice as potential confounders of the effect of party position movements.[9] In other words,

[9]See Angrist and Pischke (2008, section 3.2) and Aronow and Samii (2016) for a discussion of regression in this

this specification aims to simulate a panel study that allows us to estimate the effect of party positions on otherwise identical respondents (voters) at different time points.

Statistical method

The evidence in this paper is based on regression analyses of the vote choice variables discussed above. These analyses yield an average effect of moderation on individual vote choice. To further avoid any undue influence of country-specific or election-specific factors on our estimates of the effect of moderation, we fit multilevel probit regression models with varying intercepts for countries and election years. In general terms, these models take the following (simplified) form:

$$\Pr(\text{Vote Choice})_{i[j,t]} = \Phi\left(\alpha + \beta \text{Moderation}_k + \gamma \mathbf{X} + \delta_{j[i]} + \eta_{t[i]}\right)$$

where i is an index for countries, t is an index for years, $\mathbf{X}$ is a matrix of control variables, $\delta_{j[i]}$ is a varying intercept (random effect) for countries, and $\eta_{t[i]}$ is a varying intercept for years. Moderation measures the change in the position of the party of interest in each analysis.

Previewing a benchmark for effect estimates for moderation, it is important to note that vote switching is not a frequent observation in the survey data used in this study. About 3 percent of respondents switched from a major right to a minor right party; and about 3 percent of respondents switched from a major left to a minor left party. Therefore, even a one-percentage point change in one individual's propensity to switch to a minor party or abstain (or stay with a major party) is a meaningful quantity. For these comparisons, we assume that shifts in respondents' vote propensities translate into changes in vote shares and, more generally, that respondent i's predicted probability of voting for a party k translates into party k's vote share by the following formula:

$$\widehat{\text{Vote Share}}_k = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \Pr(\text{Vote}_k)_i}{n}$$

Movements of party positions: descriptive information

Before discussing possible effects of moderation and presenting empirical results, we describe trends in moderation of major parties on the left and right in the countries analyzed in this study. This description clarifies which parties have moderated their position (or moved away from the center). It also shows that parties' moderation strategies are not always executed on both (economic left-right and social liberal-conservative) dimensions in parallel.

Most major parties in the 16 countries in this study have moved their party positions, as measured based on their manifestos, substantially between elections. Some major parties on the left

context.

(Figure 2) moved to the right considerably in the 1990s. Here, social democratic parties in Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands form a noticeable cluster, consistent with the conventional wisdom about the "Third Way" narrative's influence on other social democratic parties at the time. Others moved toward the left in the early 2000s. Movements on the social liberal-conservative scale have been slightly more centered around the middle, but are noticeable as well (Figure 3). Major parties on the right also have moved around the ideological space between elections a considerable amount. Overall, this shows considerable variation in major parties' moderation strategies, our key explanatory variable.

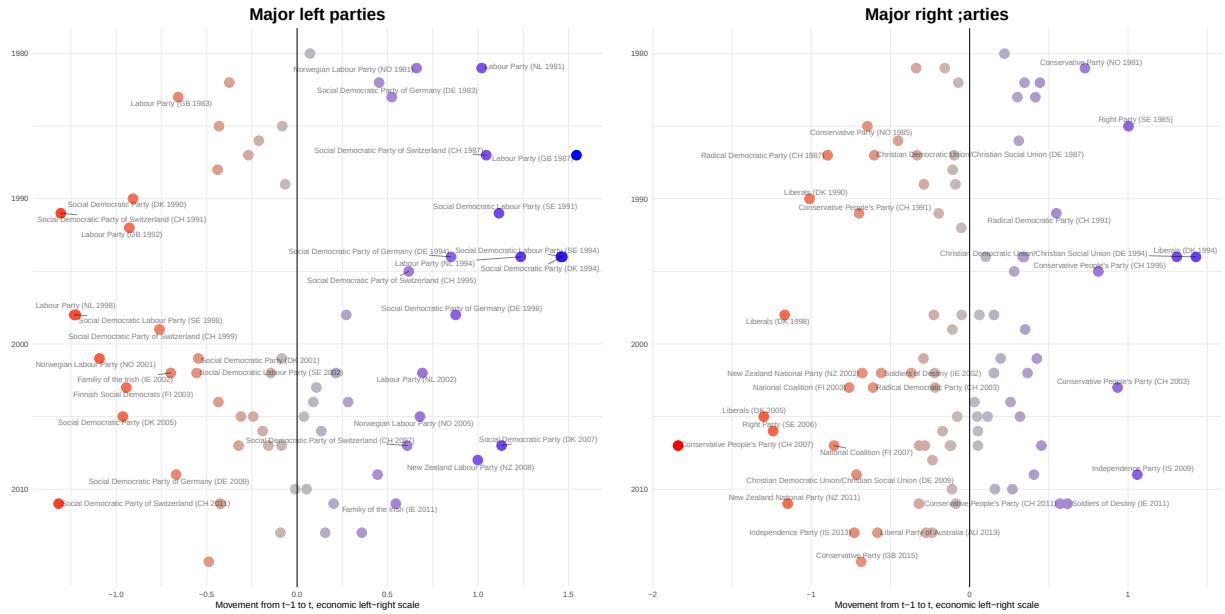

Figure 2: Major left and right parties over time: Movement from $t-1$ to t, economic left-right scale based on the Comparative Manifesto Project (using raw scores). Only parties moving by more than 0.5 points are labeled. Years in parentheses refer to the election at time t, i.e. the election before which the party changed its position.

Because it is difficult to discern from Figures 2 and 3, we show separately that major parties did not move in parallel on the economic left-right and social liberal-conservative scale. Among major parties on the left, several moderated on the economic scale, but moved further away from the center on the social scale. Similarly, some parties moved away from the center on the economic dimension, but moderated on the social dimension. The correlation between these movements is too low to warrant conflating both dimensions (Figure 4, left panel).

For major parties on the right, the distinction between movements on the economic and social dimensions is similarly clear. In the right panel of Figure 4, a good number of party movements are in the off-diagonal quadrants (top left and bottom right). These are parties that moderated on the economic dimension, but moved further to the right on the social dimension (top left quadrant).

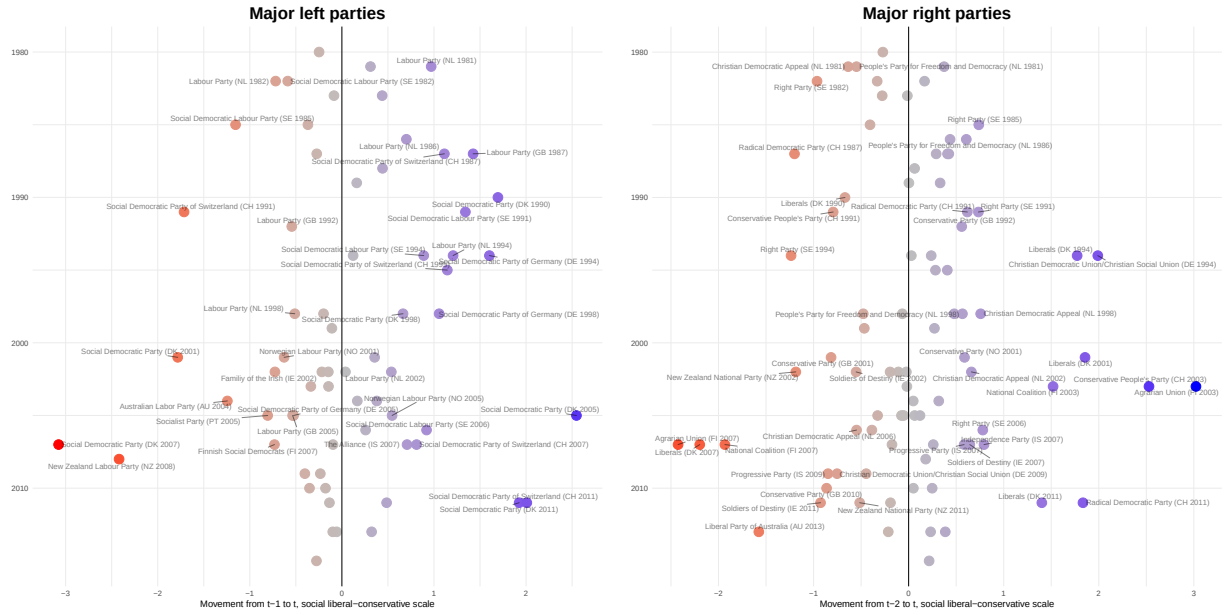

Figure 3: Major left and right parties over time: Movement from $t-1$ to t, social liberal-conservative scale based on the Comparative Manifesto Project (using raw scores). Only parties moving by more than 0.5 points are labeled.

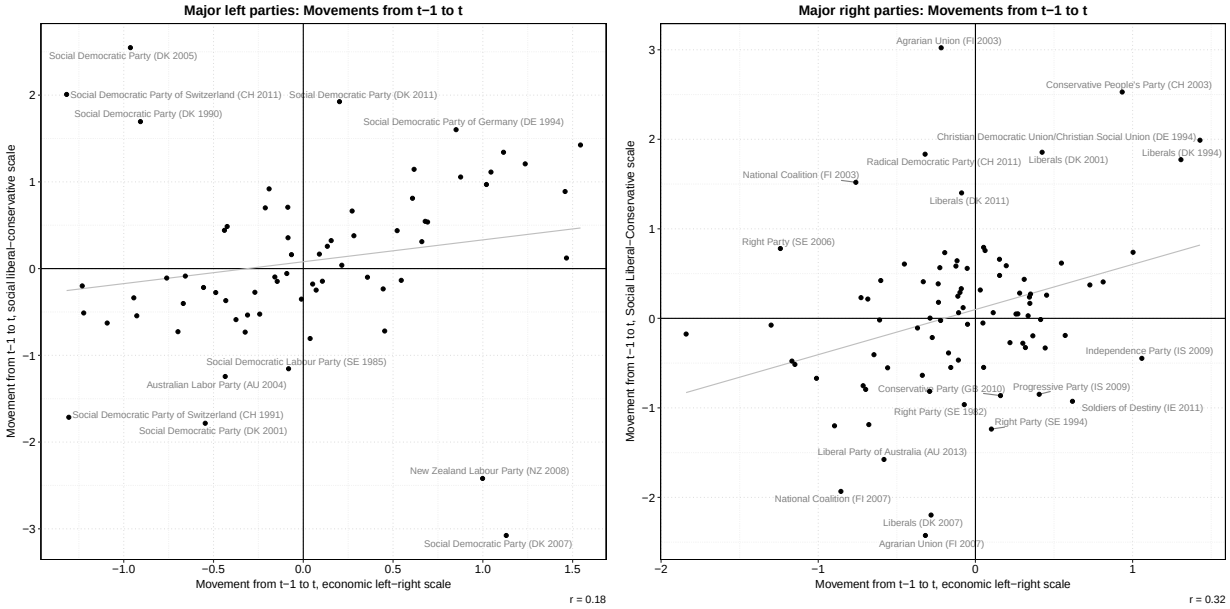

Figure 4: Major left and right parties: Comparing movements from t–1 to t, economic left-right and social liberal-conservative scales. Only parties with residuals higher than 1 are labeled. The correlation coefficient (r) between movements on the two dimensions is 0.18 for parties on the left and 0.3s for parties on the right, respectively.

Similarly, several parties moved further to the right on the economic dimension but moderated their social profile (bottom right quadrant). The correlation between movements on the two dimensions is just slightly higher than for major parties on the left.

Having demonstrated (a) variation in moderation strategies within and between major parties on the left and right, and (b) that movements on economic and social dimensions are different, we now turn to evaluating the evidence on the three sets of hypotheses.

Moderation and aggregate vote share

Before testing our argument at the individual level, we briefly probe the catch-all thesis that moderation yields an immediate increase in vote share (from $t-1$ to t). Aggregate data can offer some insights into this question, although they do not allow any inference about what type of voters parties gain from moderation. Regressions at the aggregate level provide some evidence in line with this argument. Table 2 suggests that moderation prior to an election is indeed associated with an increased vote share, although the estimate is noisy ($p = 0.14$). Using the Däubler-Benoit IRT-based measure of party positions, the uncertainty around the positive estimate is considerably smaller ($p = 0.01$; Table A2).

Table 2: Does movement to the center increase vote shares for major right and left parties? Outcome: Vote share. Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Moderation t-2 to t-1 (economic L/R)	0.31	
	(0.42)	
Moderation t-1 to t (economic L/R)	0.64	
	(0.43)	
Moderation t-2 to t-1 (social L/C)		0.24
		(0.31)
Moderation t-1 to t (social L/C)		0.01
		(0.32)
Vote share in in previous election	0.81*	0.81*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intercept	5.13*	5.13*
	(0.99)	(0.99)
R^2	0.66	0.66
Parties	374	374
RMSE	6.14	6.15

*$p < 0.05$

The catch-and-release argument is more difficult to evaluate at the aggregate level. Increased aggregate vote shares after moderation in the prior period (from $t-2$ to $t-1$) would be evidence against this argument. The aggregate analyses in Tables 2 and A2, however, show no strong association between earlier moderation on the economic left-right scale and changes in vote share ($p = 0.46$ using CMP data and $p = 0.23$ using the Däubler-Benoit measure). This can be due to

changes in the composition of voters—a dynamic suggested by the catch-and-release argument (H2b and H3). Our subsequent individual analyses of H2 and H3 probe this argument at the (appropriate) individual level of analysis.

The immediate impact of moderation

At the individual voter level, our first set of analyses compares all respondents' vote for major (left or right) parties to any other possible choice (voting for major parties on the other side, minor right or left parties, or abstaining). Estimates should thus be interpreted as comparisons between the choice for the party of interest (major left or major right, respectively) and the reference category of "all other" choices.

We find first that respondents voted at notably higher rates for parties that moderated on the economic left-right scale than for parties that did not. This is in line with a Downesian argument and findings from prior studies (Ezrow 2005; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009).[10] For major parties on the left, moving toward the center by one standard deviation on the logarithmic left-right scale yields an 3 percentage point increase in vote propensity for that party (Figure 5).[11]

For major parties on the right, moderating by moving toward the left by one standard deviation is associated with an increase in the average respondent's probability of voting for that major party as well (Figure 5), by over five percentage points.

On the other hand, moderation on the social liberal-conservative spectrum does not seem to pay off. For major left parties, a move toward the right on social issues was associated with a minuscule increase in respondents' probability of voting for that same major party: Moving rightward by one standard deviation would increase respondents' probability of voting for that party by about a half percentage point. For parties on the right, moderation on the social dimension is not associated with a significant change in respondents' probability to vote for that major right party.

Altogether, these findings are consistent with prior literature suggesting some benefits to major parties' moderation strategies. Examined at the individual level, these benefits are small. Projecting these changes to parties' vote shares by assuming that shifts in respondents' vote propensities translate into changes in vote shares, the effects are considerable. In the elections examined here, such gains materialize only for shifts on the economic left-right dimension, and not on the social liberal-conservative dimension.

[10] Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009), however, found only a lagged effect of moderation.

[11] These first differences are calculated by simulating a typical respondent (modal age group and moderate party attachment) in two contexts: with the relevant party keeping the same position (moderation = 0), and with the relevant party moderating by one standard deviation (moderation = 1). For each case, we use Monte Carlo simulation to generate 1,000 draws of a distribution of the predicted probability of the respective outcome, using the variance-covariance matrix of the regression estimates to inform the variance of the distribution. Then, for each draw, we subtract the predicted probabilities of each case (moderation minus no moderation) and use the resulting distribution of predicted changes to generate the mean and confidence intervals in the figure.

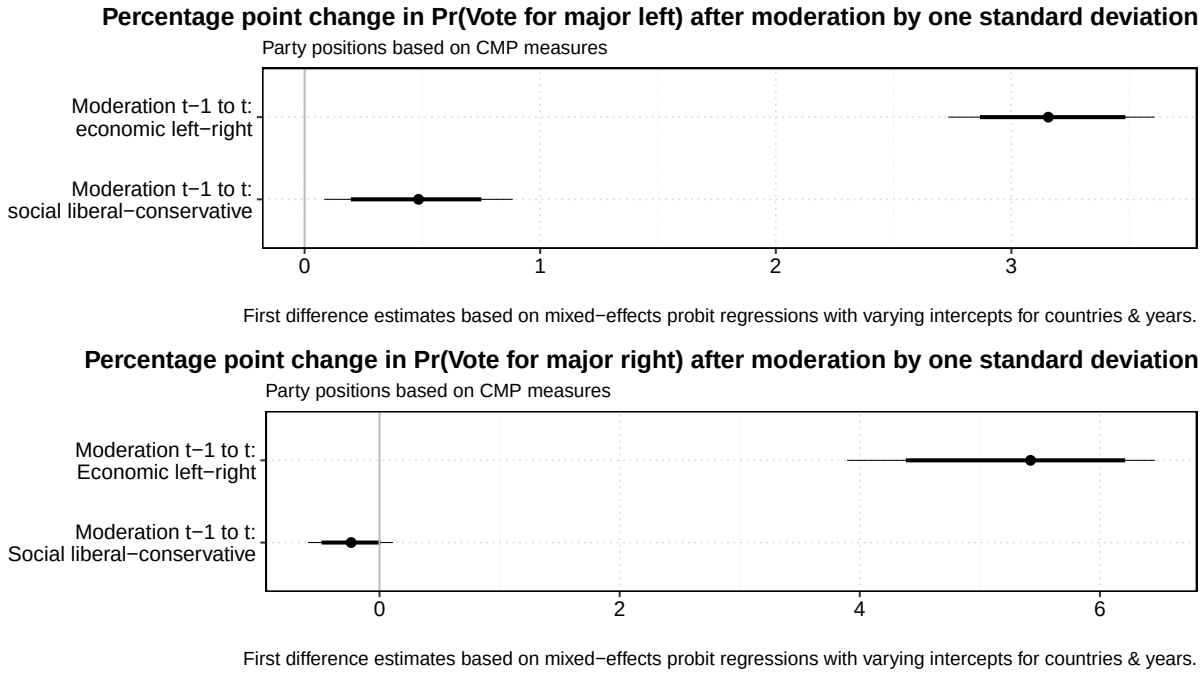

Figure 5: Voter responses to moderation from $t-1$ to t for Major Left and Major Right parties. Dots represent point estimates of the predicted change in vote choice; whiskers represent confidence intervals from simulations (thick lines mark 83%, thin lines 95% intervals). Full results printed in Tables A3 and A4.

The longer-term impact of moderation

We now move to a more differentiated look at the long-term impact of major parties' moderation. Here, this study brings new evidence to bear to adjudicate between two hypotheses about the impact of moderation: the catchall hypothesis, by which moderation helps parties in the short and long run, and the catch-and-release hypothesis, by which any gains will materialize in the election immediately following, but will dissolve or backfire in the next election.

To evaluate these hypotheses, we distinguish between party movements before the prior election (that is, a change in party position between $t-2$ and $t-1$) and before the current election (between $t-1$ and t, as used in the previous section). We match these movements to respondents' vote choice in the prior election and their choice in the current election so that we can evaluate whether a party's moderation at a prior time has any bearing on individuals' vote choice in the present. Vote choice here is again a binary variable that distinguishes between voting for the same (major) party twice, and all other vote choices (including voting for minor parties, major parties on the other side of the political spectrum, or abstention). The catchall hypothesis is consistent with a positive (or no) association between prior movement and current choice. The catch-and-release hypothesis would suggest that moderation at a prior point is negatively associated with voting for

the same party again in the present.

The individual-level evidence presented here is mixed, but it offers more support for the catch-and-release argument. Moderation before the prior election decreases the propensity of voters of that party to vote for the same party again—for left parties. It has no measurable impact on pushing voters toward voting for minor parties or abstaining. The results here are based on the same modeling approach as in the previous section, but the inclusion of party movements in the prior period ($t-2$ to $t-1$) reduces the sample size because not all respondents provided their vote choice at both t and $t-1$. As respondents "of interest" in these analyses, we code all voters who reported voting for the same major party twice, or those who reported voting for a major party first, and then voting for a minor party or abstaining. This makes the reference group all respondents who reported other choices, respectively.

Voting for the same major party twice

First, Figure 6 shows changes in respondents' propensity to vote for major left or right parties after those parties moderated one period before the current election. For major parties on the left, we find that after one election cycle, moderation on the economic left-right dimension drives voters away—the estimated change in voting propensity for that party is about 3 percentage points.

On the right, moderation before the prior ($t-2$ to $t-1$) election is associated with a slightly increased probability of voting for that same major right party again, although the estimated effect is small and noisy. That is, moderation at a prior point did not drive voters away.

On the social dimension of party positions, we find no real benefit, but also no significant harm, of moderation in the prior time period ($t-2$ to $t-1$) for major parties on the left. On the right, we find a small decrease in repeat voting (by about one percentage point) for voters of parties that moderated.

For all analyses in this section, control variables perform as one would expect. Older voters are more likely to vote for the same party twice in a row. And, voters with higher attachment to a party are considerably more likely to vote for that same party twice in a row.

Substantively, these results suggest a clear longer-term drawback to moderation, consistent with a catch-and-release argument.

Abandoning major parties for minor parties or abstention

We also evaluate one facet of the arguments discussed in Karreth, Polk, and Allen (2013), whether moderation in the prior period increases vote switching to minor parties or abstentions down the road. As mentioned above, such switches do occur in the data. We find in Figure 7 that switching is partly associated with moderation, although at different patterns for parties on the left and right,

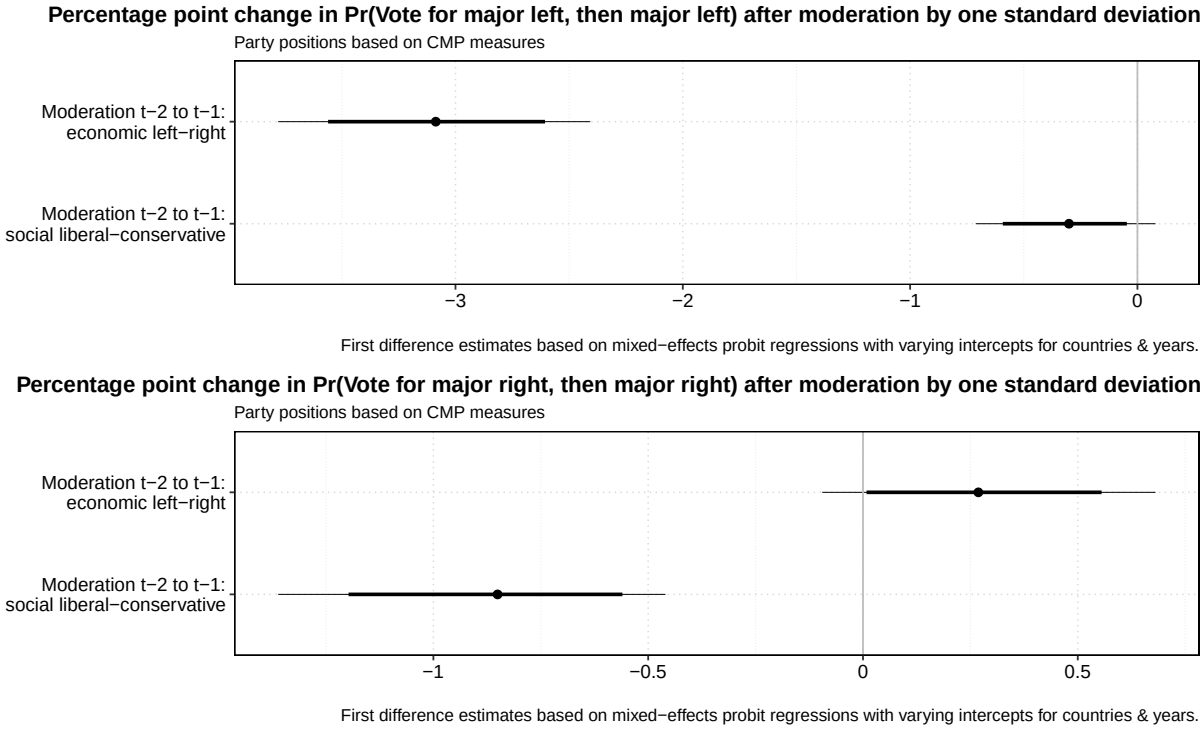

Figure 6: Repeat voting for major parties and moderation immediately one election prior. Dots represent point estimates of the predicted change in individuals' propensity to vote for the same major party repeatedly; whiskers represent confidence intervals from simulations (thick lines mark 83%, thin lines 95% intervals). Full results printed in Tables A5 and A6.

at different dimensions, and at smaller levels.

For voters of major parties on the left, moderation on the economic left-right dimension is not associated with switching. Moderation on the social liberal-conservative dimension in the period prior to the previous election is associated with a small decrease in the probability of switching, about one percentage point.

For voters of major parties on the right, we find the opposite change in estimated choice following moderation on the social dimension, but no impact of moderation on the economic left-right scale. Moderation increased the odds of prior voters to switch to minor parties or abstain by about one percentage point. For the predominant impact of social, not economic, moderation on voters of major right parties, we refer to the possible classification of minor (right) parties as niche parties, which differentiate themselves from mainstream competitors in part by the extremity of their positions on second dimension political issues (Meguid 2005; 2008; Wagner 2012). If a major right party voter were put off by moderation on the social dimension, these minor right parties would offer an attractive alternative for their vote.

We further find some evidence that younger voters are more likely to switch and, unsurpris-

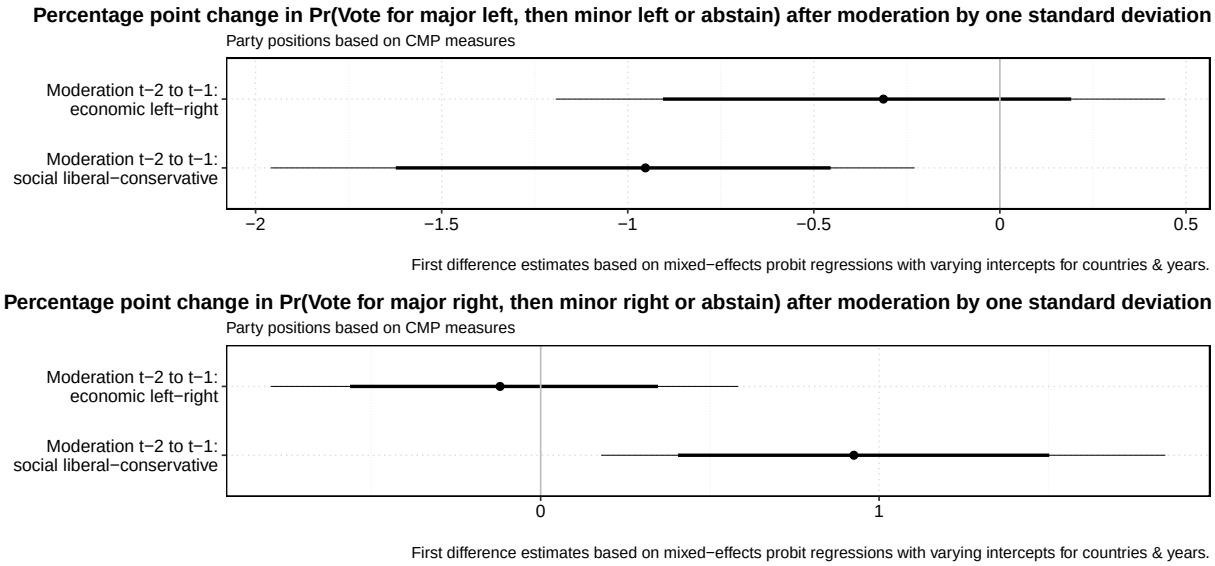

Figure 7: Vote switching and moderation one election prior. Dots represent point estimates of the predicted change in individuals' propensity to vote for a major party at $t-1$ and then a minor party or abstaining at t; whiskers represent confidence intervals from simulations (thick lines mark 83%, thin lines 95% intervals). Full results printed in Tables A7 and A8.

ingly, those with lower party attachment are also more likely to switch.

Do core and centrist voters respond differently to moderation?

Our third overall hypothesis suggests that "fickle" centrist voters and "core" voters respond differently to major parties' moderation strategies. The results so far analyze the payoff of moderation strategies, but they do so for voters across the board and do not allow to distinguish between core and fickle voters. As we argue earlier in this paper, it is plausible for researchers to look for average effects of moderation across all voters. But from the vantage point of examining the composition of a party's electorate and the role of different groups of voters, ranging from core supporters to voters who change their choices frequently, understanding the differential impact of moderation on different types of voters is crucial. This section sets out to achieve that.

For a first take on this inquiry, we distinguish between core and fickle voters based on respondents' self-reported party attachment. Working with this classification, we report results from regressions similar to those in the previous section, but we now allow the effect of prior moderation to be different for core and fickle voters. As before, we investigate parties on the left and right separately. The findings here vary more between parties than before, raising opportunities for further research.

Parties on the left

For parties on the left, we find that moderation yields differential effects for core and fickle voters, but only as far as moderation on the social liberal-conservative dimension is concerned (Figure 8). Low-attachment, "fickle" voters are slightly more likely to vote twice for a major left party if the party moderated before the prior election, compared to when the party did not moderate from $t-2$ to $t-1$. This suggests that moderation may have long-term benefits. However, at the same time, core voters (those with high attachment) are less likely to vote twice in a row for a party that moderated on the social dimension—consistent with a catch-and-release argument.

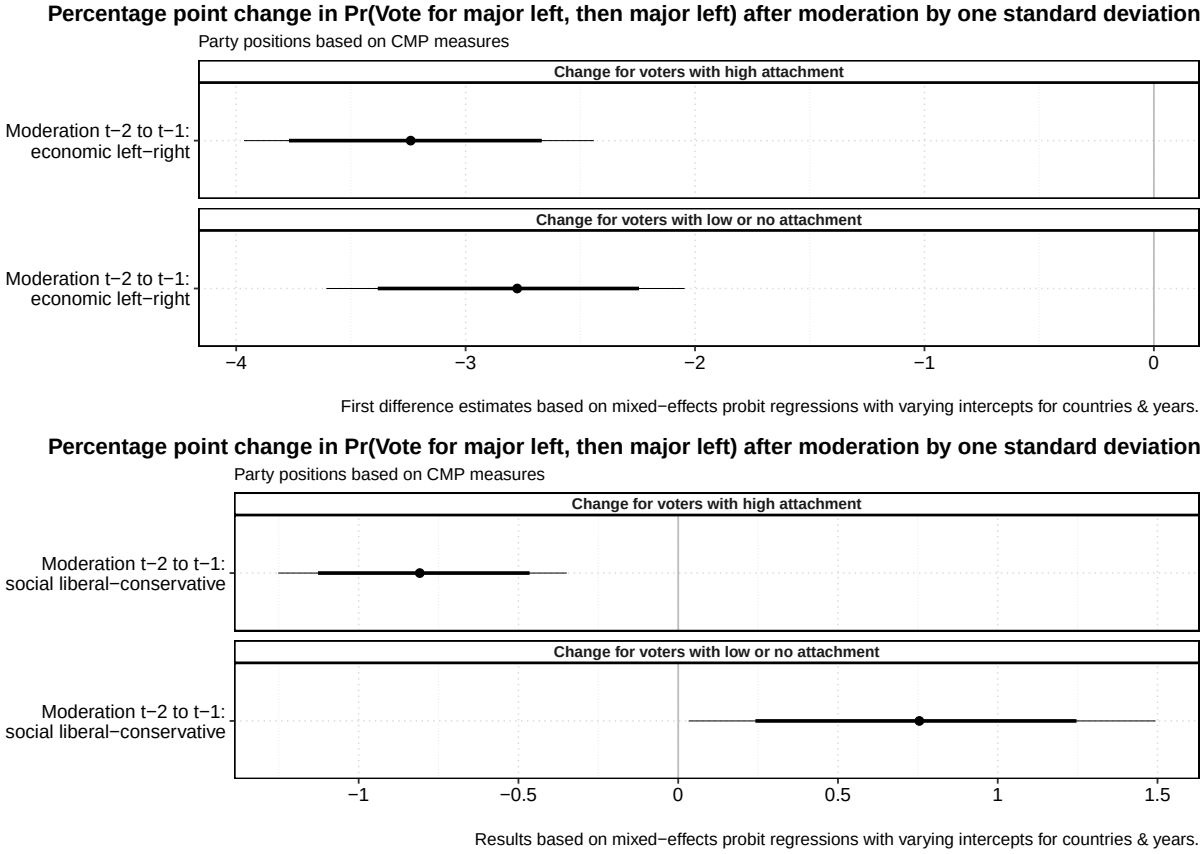

Figure 8: Repeat voting for major left parties and moderation, distinguishing between core and fickle voters. Dots represent point estimates of the predicted change in individuals' propensity to vote for the same major party repeatedly; whiskers represent confidence intervals from simulations (thick lines mark 83%, thin lines 95% intervals). Full results printed in Table A9.

In the elections analyzed here, economic moderation at the previous election had a similar impact on core and fickle voters on the left. Core voters of major left parties (those with high attachment) are, however, less likely to vote for a major left party twice in a row if that party mod-

erated previously between $t-2$ and $t-1$ on the economic left-right dimension. This is remarkable because these voters self-identify as highly attached to this party. Despite this attachment, they are less likely to vote for this party following moderation. This is, however, consistent with recent research that finds even a card-carrying party member is more likely to cast a defecting vote when the member disagrees with the ideological position of the party leadership (Polk and Kölln Forthcoming). The same applies to fickle voters, those with low or no attachment. Thus, we find no differential impact for moderation on the economic left-right scale between core and fickle voters—both are less likely to vote for the same major left party twice if the party moderated.

Parties on the right

The impact of moderation strategies on core and fickle voters differs for parties on the right. The top panel of Figure 9 shows a partly inverted pattern compared to the findings for major parties on the left. For parties on the right, moderation between $t-2$ and $t-1$ is associated with an increased probability that voters with low attachment vote for that party twice in a row—compared to major right parties that did not moderate. We do not find evidence that high-attachment voters leave major right parties one election cycle after those parties pursued a catchall strategy on the economic dimension of competition; there is no "release" effect of moderation on this dimension for the right.

On the social dimension, moderation decreases the probability that high-attachment voters vote twice in a row for a major right party that moderated; we find no such evidence for low-attachment voters.

Substantively, these results highlight at least two patterns that speak to the impact of moderation on voter behavior. First, there is some evidence that the impact of moderation differs between what we classified as "fickle" and "core" voters—but not across parties and all dimensions.

This is consistent with an interpretation that political competition for fickle and core voters operates differently for parties on the left compared to those on the right. In effect, the results in Figure 8 suggest that economic moderation may indeed have driven away some core (and fickle!) voters of major left, i.e. social democratic parties, as the catch-and-release argument suggests. The opposite is true for major right parties, where catchall strategies seem successful at least with regards to both low-attachment voters. For major parties on both sides, moderation on the social dimension yields no notable benefits, but some drawbacks at least as far as core voters are concerned.

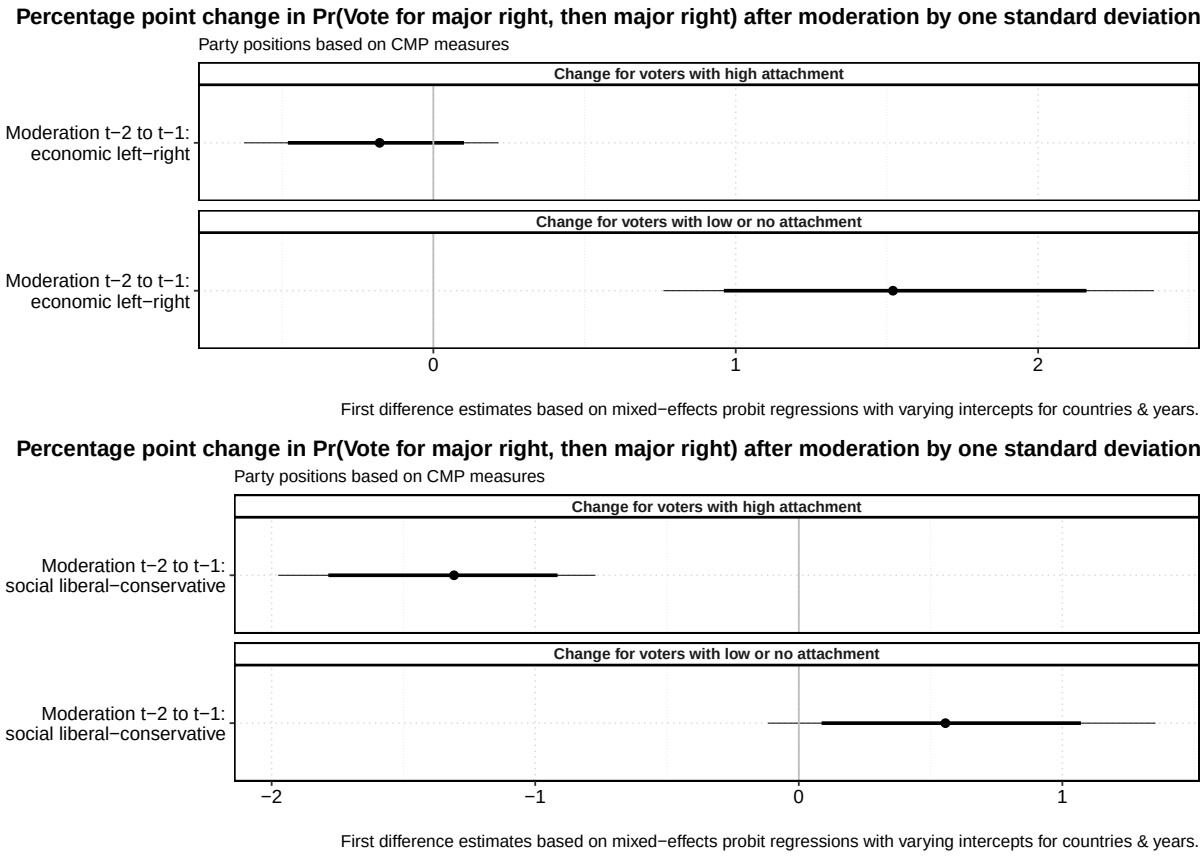

Figure 9: Repeat voting for major right parties and moderation, distinguishing between core and fickle voters. Dots represent point estimates of the predicted change in individuals' propensity to vote for the same major party repeatedly; whiskers represent confidence intervals from simulations (thick lines mark 83%, thin lines 95% intervals). Full results printed in Table A10.

Summary

The analyses reported in this paper provide some new, nuanced evidence about the effect of moderation strategies for major parties in Western European countries on the left and right in the past decades. We find the following:

- **There are some immediate benefits to moderation.** Moderation (moving to the political center) on the economic left-right dimension increased individuals' propensity to vote for major parties in the election immediately following the change in party position. This is consistent with H1. Moderation on the social dimension had a negative impact on individual voting propensity for these parties.
- **The longer-term impact of moderation differs for major left and right parties.** We find evidence mostly for H2b. Moderation reduces the propensity of former voters of major left

parties to stay with that party in the subsequent election (consistent with H2b). For major right parties, this pattern is similar but only for moderation on the social dimension.

- **Moderation can affect centrist and core voters differently, and also shows different effects across the two dimensions of political contestation.** This finding is partially consistent with H3. On the left, moderation on the economic left-right scale reduces all voters' propensity to vote repeatedly for major left parties; moderation on the social dimension has differential (but smaller) effects. On the right, moderation increases the propensity of fickle voters to vote for major right parties twice in a row, but social moderation drives away some core voters.

Limitations

To our knowledge, this study is one of the first to conduct analysis of how changes in party position affect individual vote choice while distinguishing between (a) parties on the left and right and (b) the economic and social dimensions of political contestation. The findings reported above contribute evidence to long-standing debates about benefits of moderation strategies and the importance of longer-term dynamics in studying voter behavior. At the same time, this version of our study is limited by a number of factors that offer a path forward for future research.

First, the findings reported here treat parties' moderation strategies fully in isolation from each other. In our empirical specification, a party's moderation directly influences whether voters choose this party. But party competition takes place in a relational environment, where voters evaluate one party's position as relative to other parties' position. Following research which finds that the relative ideological distinctiveness of rival parties affects vote choice (Green 2015), levels of class voting (Evans and Tilley 2012*a*;*b*; Jansen, Evans, and De Graaf 2013), and party attachments (Lupu 2013), other current studies, such as Spoon and Klüver (2016), focus on convergence of parties rather than individual party positions. Merging these two approaches—incorporating relational positions while still maintaining a focus on individual party strategies—would extend this research and offer more nuanced insights in the effects of moderation strategies.

Second, our analyses as reported do not incorporate other contextual factors at the level of partisan competition or at the country level. Such factors may include the structure of partisan competition (e.g., the effective number of electoral parties), the fluidity of the party system, parties' incumbency status, the electoral system, the strength of unions, international constraints on policy, or general economic factors that might influence vote choice.

Third, vote choice in our analyses is structured as a binary choice between voting for major parties and all "other" choices. Recent electoral trends, though, support the notion that party systems are more fluid than our rigid distinction between major and minor parties allows.

Discussion and outlook

This paper is motivated by the observation that social democratic parties suffered at the polls following catchall moderation strategies in the 1990s even though research in political science suggests that moderation is a beneficial strategy for major parties. Our goal was to evaluate whether an approach that is more sensitive to temporal dynamics and individual voting behavior could reconcile this perceived trend with conventional wisdom about party competition. The findings suggest that voters—as captured by election studies—sometimes punish major parties for moderation in the second election after parties moderated, and that the electoral affects of moderation for social democratic parties, in particular, follow the catch-and-release dynamic of short-term gains followed by more substantial losses. Moderation can elicit different changes in voting behavior in core voters compared to fickle, centrist voters. Major parties on the left and on the right experience varying versions of this difference. The payoff of moderation is not always the same among core and centrist voters.

This insight should serve as a starting point for future research investigating how voters respond to changes in party positions *over time*, and whether these changes create long-term adjustments in perception and, subsequently, behavior in (potential) voters. A key challenge for such research is a lack of data on how the same individuals view and respond to parties at different points in time, beyond just two electoral cycles. The current paper is limited to exploring whether voters stayed with, or switched away from, a party in two consecutive elections. Yet, recent reports from elections around Western Europe abound with stories of voters who turned away from parties for which they had voted for a long time. This has materialized, for instance, in unprecedented dramatic losses of social democratic parties in the Netherlands, France, and Germany in 2017. While the approach chosen in this paper does not yet allow us to show definitively whether moderation drives individual voters away from major parties in the longer run, it offers a first glimpse into when and for which voter groups the benefits of moderation wear off.

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Appendix

Table A1: Party type classification scheme. CMP = Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2016).

Country	CMP ID	Party	Type	Party family (CMP)	Full name
Australia	63110		Minor Left	Greens	None
Australia	63320	ALP	Major Left	Socialist	ALP
Australia	63321	AD	Minor Left	Socialist	AD
Australia	63410	PUP	Minor Right	Liberal	PUP
Australia	63620	LPA	Major Right	Conservative	LPA
Australia	63710	Katter	Minor Left	Socialist	Katter
Australia	63810	CP	Minor Right	Conservative	CP
Austria	42710	BZO	Minor Right	Conservative	Alliance for the Future of Austria
Austria	42520	OVP	Major Right	Christian Democrat	Austrian People's Party
Austria	42320	SPO	Major Left	Socialist	Austrian Social Democratic Party
Austria	42420	FPO	Minor Right	Rad Right	Freedom Party of Austria
Austria	42421	LIF	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal Forum
Austria	42110	Grune	Minor Left	Green	The Greens
Denmark	13330	CD	Minor Right	Conservative	Centre Democrats
Denmark	13520	KrF	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian People's Party
Denmark	13221	FK	Minor Left	Rad Left	Common Course
Denmark	13620	KF	Minor Right	Conservative	Conservative People's Party
Denmark	13720	DF	Minor Right	Rad Right	Danish People's Party
Denmark	13410	RV	Minor Right	Liberal	Danish Social Liberal Party
Denmark	13421	DU	Minor Right	Liberal	Independents Party
Denmark	13001	LA	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal Alliance
Denmark	13420	V	Major Right	Liberal	Liberal Party
Denmark	13951	FP	Minor Right	Rad Right	Progress Party
Denmark	13229	EL	Minor Left	Rad Left	Red-Green Unity List
Denmark	13320	SD	Major Left	Socialist	Social Democratic Party
Denmark	13230	SF	Minor Left	Rad Left	Socialist People's Party
Finland	14810	KESK	Major Right	Agrarian	Centre Party
Finland	14520	KD	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Democrats
Finland	14223	VAS	Minor Left	Rad Left	Communist Party of Finland
Finland	14320	SSDP	Major Left	Socialist	Finnish Social Democrats
Finland	14110	VL	Minor Left	Green	Green Union
Finland	14420	LKP	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal People's Party
Finland	14620	KOK	Major Right	Conservative	National Coalition Party
Finland	14901	RKP	Minor Right	Regionalist	Swedish People's Party
Finland	14820	PS	Minor Right	Rad Right	True Finns
Germany	41521	CDU/CSU	Major Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Democratic Union
Germany	41420	FDP	Minor Right	Liberal	Free Democratic Party
Germany	41221	PDS	Minor Left	Rad Left	Party of Democratic Socialism
Germany	41320	SPD	Major Left	Socialist	Social Democratic Party of Germany
Germany	41113	green	Minor Left	Green	The Greens
Germany	41223	LINKE	Minor Left	Rad Left	The Left
Iceland	15440	Bf	Minor Right	Liberal	Bright Future
Iceland	15620	SJ	Major Right	Conservative	Independence Party
Iceland	15111	VGF	Minor Left	Green	Left Green Movement
Iceland	15420	FF	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal Party
Iceland	15952	P	Minor Left		Pirate Party
Iceland	15810	F	Major Right	Agrarian	Progressive Party
Iceland	15320	A	Major Left	Socialist	Social Democratic Party
Iceland	15328	S	Major Left	Socialist	The Alliance - Social Democratic Party of Iceland
Ireland	53620	FF	Major Right	Conservative	Fianna Fail
Ireland	53520	FG	Major Left	Christian Democrat	Fina Gael
Ireland	53110	Greens	Minor Left	Green	Green Party
Ireland	53320	Labour	Minor Left	Socialist	Labour Party
Ireland	53420	PD	Minor Right	Liberal	Progressive Democrats
Ireland	53951	SF	Minor Left	Rad Left	Sinn Fein
Ireland	53230	SP	Minor Left	Rad Left	Socialist Party
Ireland	53220	WP	Minor Left	Rad Left	Worker's Party
Netherlands	22953	50plus	Minor Right	Liberal	50PLUS

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Country	CMP ID	Party	Type	Party family (CMP)	Full name
Netherlands	22522	KVP	Major Right	Christian Democrat	Catholic People's Party
Netherlands	22711	CD	Minor Right		Centre Democrats
Netherlands	22521	CDA	Major Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Democratic Appeal
Netherlands	22525	CHU	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Historical Union
Netherlands	22526	CU	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Union
Netherlands	22330	D66	Minor Right	Liberal	Democrats 66
Netherlands	22110	GL	Minor Left	Green	Green Left
Netherlands	22320	PvdA	Major Left	Socialist	Labour Party
Netherlands	22720	LPF	Minor Right	Rad Right	List Pim Fortuyn
Netherlands	22430	LN	Minor Right	Rad Right	Livable Netherlands
Netherlands	22951	PvdD	Minor Left	Green	Party for the Animals
Netherlands	22722	PVV	Minor Right	Rad Right	Party of Freedom
Netherlands	22420	VVD	Major Right	Liberal	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
Netherlands	22952	SGP	Minor Right	Conservative	Political Reformed Party
Netherlands	22528	RPF	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Reformatory Political Federation
Netherlands	22220	SP	Minor Left	Rad Left	Socialist Party
New Zealand	64110	Greens	Minor Left	Green	Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand
New Zealand	64320	Labour	Major Left	Socialist	New Zealand Labour Party
New Zealand	64321	Alliance	Minor Left	Socialst	The Alliance
New Zealand	64420	ACT	Minor Right	Liberal	ACT New Zealand
New Zealand	64421	UFNZ	Minor Right	Liberal	United Future New Zealand
New Zealand	64422	Progressive	Minor Left	Socialist	Jim Anderson's Progressive Coalition
New Zealand	64620	National	Major Right	Conservative	New Zealand National Party
New Zealand	64621	NZF	Minor Right	Conservative	New Zealand First Party
New Zealand	64901	MP	Minor Left	Special Issue	Maori Party
New Zealand	64902	Mana	Minor Left	Special Issue	Mana Party
New Zealand	64951	NZDP	Minor Left	Special Issue	Social Credit Political League
Norway	12810	Sp	Minor Right	Agrarian	Centre Party
Norway	12520	KrF	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Democrat
Norway	12620	H	Major Right	Conservative	Conservative Party
Norway	12420	V	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal Party
Norway	12410	DLF	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal People's Party
Norway	12220	NKP	Minor Left	Rad Left	Norwegian Communist Party
Norway	12320	DnA	Major Left	Socialist	Norwegian Labour Party
Norway	12951	FrP	Minor Right	Rad Right	Progress Party
Norway	12221	SV	Minor Left	Rad Left	Socialist Left Party
Portugal	35211	BE	Minor Left	Rad Left	Left Bloc
Portugal	35520	CDS-PP	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Social Democratic Center-Popular Party
Portugal	35313	PSD	Major Right	Liberal	Social Democratic Party
Portugal	35311	PS	Major Left	Socialist	Socialist Party
Portugal	35229	CDU	Minor Left	Rad Left	Unified Democratic Coalition
Spain	33906	PA	Minor Left	Socialist	Andalusian Party
Spain	33904	PAR	Minor Right	Regionalist	Aragonese Party
Spain	33909	CHA	Minor Left	Regionalist	Aragonist Council
Spain	33902	PNV	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Basque Nationalist Party
Spain	33903	EA	Minor Left	Regionalist	Basque Solidarity
Spain	33907	CC	Minor Right	Regionalist	Canarian Coalition
Spain	33905	ERC	Minor Left	Regionalist	Catalan Republican Left
Spain	33220	PCE	Minor Left	Rad Left	Communist Party of Spain
Spain	33611	CiU	Minor Right	Conservative	Convergence and Union
Spain	33908	BNG	Minor Left	Regionalist	Galacian Nationalist Bloc
Spain	33910	UPN	Minor Right	Conservative	Navarerese People's Union
Spain	33610	PP	Major Right	Conservative	Popular Party
Spain	33320	PSOE	Major Left	Socialist	Spanish Socialist Worker's Party
Sweden	11810	C	Minor Right	Agrarian	Centre Party
Sweden	11520	KD	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Democrat
Sweden	11110	MP	Minor Left	Green	Green Party
Sweden	11220	V	Minor Left	Rad Left	Left Party
Sweden	11620	M	Major Right	Conservative	Moderates
Sweden	11951	NyD	Minor Right	Rad Right	New Democracy
Sweden	11320	SAP	Major Left	Socialist	Social Democrats
Sweden	11710	SD	Minor Right	Rad Right	Sweden Democrats
Sweden	11420	FP	Minor Right	Liberal	The Liberal Party
Switzerland	43540	CSP/PCS	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Christian Social Party
Switzerland	43811	BDP/PBD	Minor Right	Conservative	Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland

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Country	CMP ID	Party	Type	Party family (CMP)	Full name
Switzerland	43520	CVP/PDC	Major Right	Christian Democrat	Conservative People's Party
Switzerland	43711	EDU/UDF	Minor Right	Conservative	Federal Democratic Union
Switzerland	43951	FPS	Minor Right		Freedom Party of Switzerland
Switzerland	43902	MCG	Minor Right		Geneva Citizen's Movement
Switzerland	43120	GLP	Minor Left	Green	Green Liberal Party
Switzerland	43110	GPS/PES	Minor Left	Green	Green Party of Switzerland
Switzerland	43321	LdU/AdI	Minor Left	Socialist	Independent's Alliance
Switzerland	43531	LPS/PLS	Minor Right	Liberal	Liberal Party of Switzerland
Switzerland	43530	EVP/PEV	Minor Right	Christian Democrat	Protestant People's Party
Switzerland	43420	FDP/PRD	Major Right	Liberal	Radical Democratic Party
Switzerland	43320	SPS/PSS	Major Left	Socialist	Social Democratic Party of Switzerland
Switzerland	43710	SD/DS	Minor Right	Rad Right	Swiss Democrats
Switzerland	43220	PdaS/PdtS	Minor Left	Rad Left	Swiss Labour Party
Switzerland	43810	SVP/UDC	Minor Right	Rad Right	Swiss People's Party
Switzerland	43901	LdT	Minor Right		Ticino League
Great Britain	51620	Con	Major Right	Conservative	Conservative Party
Great Britain	51110	Green	Minor Left	Green	Green Party of England and Wales
Great Britain	51320	Labour	Major Left	Socialist	Labour Party
Great Britain	51421	LibDems	Minor Left	Liberal	Liberal Democrats
Great Britain	51901	PC	Minor Left	Regionalist	Plaid Cymru
Great Britain	51902	SNP	Minor Left	Regionalist	Scottish National Party
Great Britain	51951	UKIP	Minor Right	Rad Right	United Kingdome Independence Party
Great Britain	51420	Liberal Party	Minor Left	Liberal	

Table A2: Does movement to the center increase vote shares for major right and left parties? Outcome: Vote share. Results using Däaubler-Benoit data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Moderation t-2 to t-1 (economic L/R)	0.64	
	(0.53)	
Moderation t-1 to t (economic L/R)	1.46*	
	(0.57)	
Moderation t-2 to t-1 (social L/C)		0.00
		(0.51)
Moderation t-1 to t (social L/C)		0.68
		(0.53)
Vote share in in previous election	0.82*	0.81*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intercept	5.03*	5.18*
	(1.04)	(1.06)
R^2	0.67	0.66
Parties	335	335
RMSE	5.79	5.84

* $p < 0.05$

Table A3: Does movement to the center from t-1 to t increase voting for Major Left parties? Outcome: Vote for Major Left party (vs. any other choice).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Moderation (economic L/R, CMP-logrile)	0.08*			
	(0.01)			
Moderation (economic L/R, Däubler-Benoit Dim1)		0.05*		
		(0.01)		
Moderation (social L/C, CMP-loglibcons)			0.01*	
			(0.01)	
Moderation (social L/C, Däubler-Benoit Dim2)				0.07*
				(0.01)
Left-right self-placement	−0.27*	−0.27*	−0.27*	−0.27*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age 29 or below	−0.10*	−0.09*	−0.09*	−0.09*
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Age 45-64	0.08*	0.08*	0.07*	0.08*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 65 or above	0.10*	0.10*	0.10*	0.10*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party attachment	0.12*	0.13*	0.12*	0.13*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Intercept	−0.30*	−0.30*	−0.31*	−0.31*
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Log Likelihood	−47490.11	−45851.97	−47599.76	−45808.96
Respondents	88499	85228	88499	85228
Election-years	30	28	30	28
Countries	16	16	16	16

* $p < 0.05$

Table A4: Does movement to the center from t-1 to t increase voting for major right parties? Outcome: Vote for major right party (vs. any other choice).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Moderation (economic L/R, CMP-logrile)	0.16*			
	(0.01)			
Moderation (economic L/R, Däubler-Benoit Dim1)		0.06*		
		(0.01)		
Moderation (social L/C, CMP-loglibcons)			−0.01	
			(0.01)	
Moderation (social L/C, Däubler-Benoit Dim2)				0.13*
				(0.01)
Left-right self-placement	0.31*	0.32*	0.31*	0.32*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age 29 or below	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age 45-64	0.04*	0.04*	0.04*	0.04*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 65 or above	0.09*	0.08*	0.09*	0.08*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Party attachment	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Intercept	−0.67*	−0.61*	−0.64*	−0.60*
	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)
Log Likelihood	−43633.08	−42161.35	−44012.70	−41984.81
Respondents	88499	85228	88499	85228
Election-years	30	28	30	28
Countries	16	16	16	16

* $p < 0.05$

Table A5: Does moderation increase voting for major left parties? Outcome: Vote for major left party in previous election, then major left party in current election (vs. any other choice). Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	−0.65*	−0.68*
	(0.14)	(0.13)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R, CMP-logrile)	−0.10*	
	(0.01)	
Left-right self-placement	−0.27*	−0.27*
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age 29 or below	−0.11*	−0.11*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age 45-64	0.12*	0.12*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 65 or above	0.19*	0.18*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party attachment	0.33*	0.34*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C, CMP-loglibcons)		−0.01
		(0.01)
Log Likelihood	−34682.76	−34795.90
Respondents	71086	71086
Election-years	28	28
Countries	15	15

* $p < 0.05$

Table A6: Does moderation increase voting for Major Right parties? Outcome: Vote for major right party in previous election, then major right party in current election (vs. any other choice). Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	−0.89*	−0.90*
	(0.20)	(0.20)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R, CMP-logrile)	0.01	
	(0.01)	
Left-right self-placement	0.30*	0.30*
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age 29 or below	−0.04	−0.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age 45-64	0.06*	0.07*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 65 or above	0.13*	0.13*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party attachment	0.26*	0.26*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C, CMP-loglibcons)		−0.03*
		(0.01)
Log Likelihood	−33156.28	−33146.07
Respondents	71654	71654
Election-years	28	28
Countries	15	15

* $p < 0.05$

Table A7: Does moderation increase switching to minor left parties and abstentions? Outcome: Vote for major left party in previous election, then minor left party or abstention in current election (vs. major left party in current election). Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R)	−0.01	
	(0.02)	
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C)		−0.04*
		(0.02)
Left-right self-placement	−0.02*	−0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 29 or below	0.17*	0.17*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age 45-64	−0.18*	−0.18*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age 65 or above	−0.35*	−0.35*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Party attachment	−0.75*	−0.75*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intercept	−1.02*	−1.02*
	(0.18)	(0.18)
Log Likelihood	−9106.36	−9103.47
Respondents	24583	24583
Election-years	27	27
Countries	15	15

* $p < 0.05$

Table A8: Does moderation increase switching to minor right parties and abstentions? Outcome: Vote for major right party in previous election, then minor right party or abstention in current election (vs. major right party in current election). Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R)	−0.01	
	(0.02)	
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C)		0.05*
		(0.02)
Left-right self-placement	−0.02*	−0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 29 or below	0.11*	0.12*
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age 45-64	−0.13*	−0.13*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age 65 or above	−0.08*	−0.08*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Party attachment	−0.71*	−0.71*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intercept	−1.28*	−1.26*
	(0.10)	(0.10)
Log Likelihood	−8257.16	−8253.87
Respondents	24179	24179
Election-years	27	27
Countries	14	14

* $p < 0.05$

Table A9: Does moderation result in different behavior for core and fickle voters? Outcome: Vote for Major Left party in previous election, then Major Left party in current election (vs. any other choice). Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	-1.75^*	-1.76^*
	(0.42)	(0.44)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R)	-0.08^*	
	(0.01)	
High attachment	0.28^*	0.27^*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 29 or below	-0.14^*	-0.14^*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age 45-64	0.13^*	0.13^*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 65 or above	0.21^*	0.21^*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right self-placement	-0.27^*	-0.27^*
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R) $\times$ High attachment	0.04^*	
	(0.01)	
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C)		0.03^*
		(0.01)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C) $\times$ High attachment		0.06^*
		(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-37284.76	-37323.08
Respondents	87045	87045
Election-years	26	26
Countries	15	15

$^*p < 0.05$

Table A10: Does moderation result in different behavior for core and fickle voters? Outcome: Vote for major right party in previous election, then major right party in current election (vs. any other choice). Results using CMP data.

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	-1.93^*	-1.95^*
	(0.47)	(0.45)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R)	0.09^*	
	(0.01)	
High attachment	0.22^*	0.23^*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 29 or below	-0.05^*	-0.05^*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age 45-64	0.08^*	0.08^*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age 65 or above	0.12^*	0.12^*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Left-right self-placement	0.30^*	0.30^*
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (economic L/R) $\times$ High attachment	0.06^*	
	(0.01)	
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C)		-0.00
		(0.01)
Moderation t-2 to t-1, prior choice (social L/C) $\times$ High attachment		0.11^*
		(0.02)
Log Likelihood	-35604.64	-35700.66
Respondents	87565	87565
Election-years	26	26
Countries	15	15

$^*p < 0.05$