

Perceptions of Partnership:
Three Essays on Coalition Formation and Ideological
Information Processing

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Political Science
in the Graduate School of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

How are voters' perceptions of party positions affected by the formation of coalition governments? Voters perceive parties that form coalitions together as more ideologically similar than they would have had otherwise. This framework endogenizes perceptions of parties to the coalition formation process. Instead of relying exclusively on the policies that parties are advocating in election campaigns, voters assess partners relationally based on their mutual interactions. This dissertation extends the existing literature by examining various aspects of how coalition formation impacts voters' perceptions.

Chapter 2 explores whether voters' perceptions of opposition parties are altered by coalition formation. Using survey data from the European Election Study 1989-2019, I find that the impact of coalition formation on voters' perceptions of opposition parties is comparable in size to that of coalition members. However, when distinguishing between different opposition relationships the effect is much larger. Voters perceive two opposition parties divided by a centrist coalition as further apart and opposition parties located in the same bloc as closer together, holding everything else constant. Unlike previous accounts of coalition heuristics, I find that highly sophisticated voters appear more sensitive to coalition signals.

Chapter 3 analyses how cooperation between mainstream and niche parties affect voters' perceptions of party positions on specific policy issues. I compare the perceptions of Dutch parties before and after collaborating with the radical right: the coalition with the List Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and the support agreement with the Freedom Party in 2010. Furthermore, I examine the long-term effects of the Danish government relying on the support of the Danish People's Party in 2001-2011. I find that mainstream parties are perceived as more restrictive towards immigration and

multiculturalism after cooperating with the radical right than they would have been otherwise.

Finally, chapter 4 tests whether coalition formation has a causal effect on the perceived ideological distance between the coalition partners. Observational studies are insufficient to establish a causal relationship between coalition formation and changing perceptions. I present four survey experiments with variation in context, measurement, and treatment. I mainly find an effect of coalition formation when voters have no other information about parties.

To Harry

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Chapter 1

Introduction

How does the formation of coalition governments affect voters' perceptions of party positions in ideological space? That is the overall research question to be explored throughout this dissertation. There is an emerging literature suggesting that voters perceive coalition members as ideologically proximate [FS13a, FA15, AEW16]. These findings potentially have wide-ranging implications for how we should study the electoral campaigns and coalition bargaining of strategic parties. I contribute to this literature by extending the key argument in three directions: beyond the coalition members, to more specific issue dimensions, and across different types of coalition signals. In doing so, I am taking important steps towards establishing the limits of this theoretical argument and bringing the field closer to understanding to what extent coalition signals structure voters' concept of party space and under what circumstances.

This dissertation explores a highly important constraint that party leaders have to take into account when they formulate a political strategy: forming a coalition with other parties could greatly impact how voters perceive the party and its policy positions. The vast majority of the existing literature on party competition treats voter perceptions of parties in an atomistic way, parties are evaluated one-by-one based on the policies they are publicly advocating. However, contrary to the assumptions of most spatial models, parties cannot instantly or independently take the ideological positions that they deem electorally or strategically beneficial [Ada12].

Voters are aware that policy statements might be part of a vote-seeking strategy and that party promises are not binding [FVST17, FV19]. Instead of relying solely on stated policy, voters evaluate parties based, at least partially, on the policy compromises they have made in the past. Researchers have long suggested that voters use information about a party's past behavior to predict what they will actually do once in office and that their past

behavior severely restricts the ability of parties to move in the policy space [Zec79, EH84]. What is novel in the theoretical approach I am proposing is the realization that parties in parliamentary systems are not simply constrained by their own past actions, but by their former interactions with and relationships to other parties.

Democratic representation in parliamentary systems is played out in two arenas. Parties compete for votes in the electoral arena and bargain over coalition formation in the legislative arena. These two games, elections and coalition formation, are arguably of equal importance for the proportional vision of democracy [Pow00]. Unfortunately, representation under parliamentarism is too often portrayed as a sequential two-step process, where each step can be examined and explained in isolation. Some scholars study party competition and vote choice while others study coalition formation [ASB88]. Very little research has attempted to bridge the literatures about parties' electoral competition and their legislative cooperation.

This project aims to connect the two elements, elections and coalition formation, by homing in on how voters' perceptions of party positions in the electoral arena are partially endogenous to their behavior in the legislative arena. I suggest that voters understand individual parties in relation to the entire party system and consider coalitions (past, present, and future) when evaluating party positions. Voters observe crowds of parties that interact with each other in different ways and these interactions inform voters' cognitive map of the party system. Coalition behavior has the potential to shape and reshape the future electoral constituency that a party can mobilize. Thus, party elites are forced to consider the next election when choosing whether to enter government and with whom.

This introductory chapter outlines a theory of how voters' perceptions of ideological party positions develop in response to party interactions in general and coalition formation more specifically. In the first two sections, I briefly recount the conventional theories of party competition and coalition formation. Next, I describe in detail why voters' perceptions of parties are crucial for understanding programmatic party competition and why coalition signals are informative about policy outcomes. I then unite these two elements to argue

that voters will rely on information contained in coalition behavior when placing parties on ideological scales. Finally, I describe the main contributions of the three empirical chapters and outline the rest of the dissertation.

1.1 Conventional Theories of Party Competition

This dissertation explores how voters react to elite interactions. More specifically, it examines how voters' perceptions of parties change in response to coalition formation. My theory is firmly rooted in the tradition of spatial party competition, but deviates from existing approaches in an important aspect: I suggest that voters' perceptions of any given party are partially a product of the behavior of other parties as well as the interaction between parties.

In this section, I provide a brief summary of the most prominent theories of party competition. Any theory of party competition must rely on a set of assumptions, whether realistic or not, about what motivates vote choice at the individual level. The theories presented in this context have in common that they assume atomistic voter utilities. According to these standard approaches, voters evaluate parties one-by-one independently of each other.

1.1.1 Spatial Theories of Voting

The most basic assumption of standard spatial models [Hot29, Dow57] is that political preferences can be ordered from left to right in a matter agreed upon by all voters. Voter preferences are single-peaked and slope downward monotonically. Voters compare the party platforms on offer and choose the party that advocates the policies closest to their own preferences. In other words, the classic spatial model of voting assumes that voters can accurately estimate the positions of parties and that they engage in proximity voting based on policy [DHO70, EH84, Gro04]. More formally, Enelow and Hinich defined the utility of voting for a given party as negatively related to the distance between the voter's ideal

point and the party position [EH84].

According to the most simple account of the Downsian spatial argument, the left/right dimension captures government intervention in the economy [Dow57]. However, there are obviously a multitude of other issues which concern parties and voters. Proximity voting is conceivable in a unidimensional environment as well as an multiple dimensions. In the latter case, each policy dimension is weighted according to its salience [Dow57, 132]. This matches how most scholars today instinctively think about the left/right: as a super-issue that summarizes ideological differences over the most important issues in a given era [FK⁺90, Dal08, Sto63]. As a consequence, political spaces have a variable structure, meaning that the underlying issues that are salient to the public might vary greatly over time and place. Different weights should be given to different issues at different times.

An alternative to the theory of proximity voting, which is still solidly in the spatial and positional realm, is the theory of directional voting [RM89, Ive94]. According to this view, voters do not have specific and well-defined policy preferences, but rather broad intuitions about the direction in which they want society to develop. Voters are not responding to different party positions, but rather to different issues with varying degrees of intensity. They perceive political issues as two-sided and support parties that are on “their side” on the issues they feel strongly about. Thus, voters base their vote choice on the direction of a party’s policy position. Given a choice, voters support the more extreme party, because they interpret extremity as a signal of commitment [TVH08].

A third variation on spatial theory, which is particularly relevant for the current project, is the theory of discounting. According to this view, voters expect that parties cannot fully deliver on their promises so they discount advocated position. Voters perceive some status quo point and evaluate parties’ capacity to move this status quo and then vote based on the policies they expect parties to adopt [TVH08]. We might assume the discounting factor to be the same for all voters, all parties, and all issue dimensions alike [Gro04, AMIG05]. However, if we instead allow for the possibility that some parties are better capable of changing the status quo on some issues, then we are starting to incorporate elements of

issue ownership theory, such as party competence, into the spatial model.

A substantial improvement over these standard spatial models is the recent concept of compensational voting introduced by Kedar [Ked05, Ked09]. Much like the theory of discounting, compensational voting assumes that voters focus on policy outcomes rather than party platforms. But according to this argument, voters take into account the institutional mechanism by which their votes are translated into policy outcomes during post-electoral bargaining. In systems where power is shared and policy is a product of compromise, voters might have incentives to endorse a more extreme party than the most proximate because they expect policy to be a “watered down” version of the advocated platform. Voters are still comparing each party separately but they are considering the counter-factual outcome, i.e. what policy would look like without the party [Ked05].

The theory of compensational voting paved the way for an entire literature on coalition-directed voting suggesting that voters consider coalition outcomes [DMA10]. Building on Downs [Dow57, 142-146], this literature argues that rational behavior is different in political systems governed by coalitions than in systems with single-party government. In both systems, a rational voter will still cast her ballot with the goal of selecting her preferred government, but in a multiparty parliamentary system making the right vote choice becomes much more complicated. Making a rational choice depends on the voters ability to predict which coalitions a given party might enter and what policies such a coalition might implement.

While this might seem like a mouthful, Blais et al. and Duch et al. have shown that it is not beyond the abilities of all voters [BAIL06, DMA10]. Because potential coalitions are frequently discussed by the media during election campaigns, most voters will have heard about the possible coalition outcomes and their policy implications. Furthermore, voters gain information about the likely outcomes through opinion polls and elections campaigns, but also through the recent history of coalition formation. Voters can use the historical information because the composition of governing coalitions is remarkably stable and follows certain patterns. In most countries there have only been about three to four distinct

coalitions in recent history [AD10].

Bargsted and Kedar went on to show that Israeli voters tend to desert their preferred party if they believe that it is unlikely to participate in a coalition. They described this logic as coalition-targeted Duvergerian voting [BK09]. According to Meffert and Gschwend [MG10] and Hobolt and Karp [HK10] there are other types of strategic coalition voting. For instance, in a rental vote or threshold insurance strategy a voter supports a junior coalition member which has troubles passing the electoral threshold.

These theories all consider party positions as exogenous. Voters believe that parties are negotiating from fixed positions and only take into account what the actual policy outcomes of coalitions might be. Voters might be altering their vote choice based on discounting or compensating, but their own preferences as well as their perceptions of “true” party positions remain stable. In contrast, I propose a theory which endogenizes the perception of party positions to coalition formation.

1.1.2 Salience-Based Theories of Voting

The most prominent alternative to spatial theories of voting, what I will refer to as salience-based theories, all evolve from the idea that party competition is not just about ideological differences, but also about management, efficiency, and performance. Stokes introduced the distinction between two types of political issues: positional and valence issues [Sto63]. Positional issues generally involve advocacy of a particular policy or course of action. On this type of issue, voters and parties usually disagree over which goals to pursue. Valence issues on the other hand are generally desired goals, i.e. all actors occupy the same position. According to Stokes, valence issues often take center stage in political competition. In a political context, there is often overwhelming consensus on the goals, but conflict over the means by which they should be achieved. Political battles are usually fought over who are more capable or competent of handling the issue [Sto63].

Voters judge rival parties by their ability to deliver on the most salient and widely agreed upon goals and thus the challenge in party competition is linking the party to a positive

or desirable condition. This is what Budge and Farlie later coined as issue competition [BF83a]. They likewise argued that agreement about the ideal policy is the rule, not the exception, and that is relatively rare for parties to compete on positional issues. Budge and Farlie claim that parties own the issues they have a favourable reputation on. If a given issue becomes more salient more voters are likely to vote for the party which owns the issue. Parties can reinforce their reputations by emphasizing these issues during an election campaign and thereby boost the salience of the issues for voters [BF83a, BF83b].

Petrocik advanced a very similar theory of issue ownership in the context of American politics. He defined issue ownership in terms of the parties' reputations for being able to resolve and handle certain problems. Ownership is produced by a history of attention, initiative and innovation towards these problems, which leads voters to believe that one party is more sincere and committed to doing something about a given problem than others. Petrocik argued that these reputations stem partly from the parties records and performance when in office and partly from the long-term constituency of the parties, i.e. a long-standing commitment to issues and issue publics. Like previous concepts of issue ownership, the key idea is that voters evaluate the profile of each party separately and cast their votes based on which party owns the issues they find most salient [Pet96].

Recently there has been a surge of scholarly work drawing on these concepts of issue ownership and offering additional refinements. Very broadly, issue ownership refers to the connection between certain issues and parties in the minds of voters, but beyond that there is little agreement about what it actually means. Walgrave et al. distinguish between the associative dimension and the competence dimension of issue ownership. Associative issue ownership means the spontaneous association between issue and parties in the minds of voters. Competence issue ownership on the other hand captures the belief that a particular party is better at handling a certain issue [WLT12, 779].

Green and Jennings [GJ17] homed in on one particular conceptual confusion in the theory of Petrocik [Pet96]. Long-term factors originate in the party's constituency or issue public, while the short-term factor refers to the party's reputation for problem solving and

performance when in government [Bel06]. Green and Jennings argued that it is necessary to conceptualise ownership and short-term issue performance separately. Although performance is an important element, issue ownership is more than the sum of short-term changes in issue performance [GJ17].

Rather than defining issue ownership in terms of associations or performance, Egan describes issue ownership in terms of partisan priorities. Through selective commitment to a set of specific consensus issues, particularly in law-making and when allocating government funds, parties establish long-term positive associations in the minds of voters [Ega13, 156]. As in a classic spatial proximity model, voters are evaluating parties individually and choosing the party which is more proximate. Issue competition is merely changing the salience, weight or priority of consensus issues for voters, not the underlying logic.

1.1.3 Prospects of Reconciling the Two Approaches

The coexistence of issue ownership and positional theories has always been complicated. Lately, scholars have been more interested in examining the interactions between competence and positions, rather than thinking about them as competing explanations of vote choice [AMI09, JK19]. A voter is not likely to support a party that takes stances on policy issues that she fundamentally disagree with. Whether the party is very efficient in changing policy outcomes should not change that.

This dissertation entails no empirical test of either theories of vote choice or party competition. It focuses entirely on party placement and spatial perceptions resulting from coalition formation. As such, it does not offer an alternative to positional or issue ownership theories. However, if one explores the implications of voters' reaction to coalition signals, one might find that they have the potential to link salience and competence concerns to spatial competition in a systematic way and thus reconcile the two approaches.

As I will describe in much more detail in the following sections and chapters, the theory of coalition signals suggests that voters place parties on a point in policy space that reflects the policy outcome that the party will provide, rather than the policy stance that the

party is strategically advocating. The expected discrepancy between the policy outcome realized and the policy stance advocated will likely be a function of issue emphasis and party competence. A party which emphasizes or prioritizes an issue will likely have greater success negotiating their position on the issue than a party that de-emphasizes it, holding everything else constant. For instance, the party might be willing to make a lot of valuable concessions on other issues to claim success on the one issue they care about. In short, the perceptions of the position of the party that owns a given issue is transferred to the other members of the coalition. This is the central idea explored in the third dissertation chapter.

More generally, there is evidence suggesting that parties are perceived as more likely to bring about their desired policy if they have a reputation for competence in the negotiation process [For17]. By implication, the perceptions of the entire coalition's policy position is partially endogenous, not only to the composition of the coalition, but also to the relative emphasis of or influence on a given issue. In other words, an entire coalition could alter its perceived position without any of the members changing their stated policy, simply by changing which party is in charge.

In sum, to understand proximity voting and spatial party competition it is not enough to take parties' advocated policy positions into account. We must carefully consider how parties are interacting with each other and how that changes voters' perceptions of party positions and policy space. One of the key arguments of this dissertation is that issue ownership is funneled through signals of coalition formation to shape voters' perceptions of their party system. In that sense, I am presenting a unifying framework.

1.2 Conventional Theories of Coalition Formation

Much like the conventional theories of party competition have not taken party cooperation into account, the conventional theories of coalition formation generally fail to discuss how cooperation might change voters' perceptions of party positions, and thus their vote choice, as well as how the consequences of such a change feeds into the cost-benefit analyses of

strategic parties. The main concerns of students of government coalitions in parliamentary democracies tend to be what type of coalition will form, which parties will participate, and how long it will last.

Riker famously predicted that minimal winning coalitions should be the default outcome. Parties are primarily motivated by office and thus coalition membership is universally desired. Office-seeking parties would vote against any government that they are not themselves part of [Rik62]. On one hand, given that the coalition requires a simple majority to stay in power, a minority cannot keep the spoils of office to themselves. On the other hand, there is no reason to share the spoils with more actors than strictly necessary and thus surplus-majorities are rare. In short, minimal winning coalitions maximize the benefits for a majority of parties [Rik62, 47].

Axelrod and De Swaan relaxed the assumption that parties are primarily office-seeking and gave policy a bigger role in their theories of coalition formation. The policy outcomes that government coalitions agree on is important for coalition members as well, and thus it is preferable to form coalitions that are ideologically coherent. This can be either in a minimal connected winning coalition [Axe70] or in a closed minimal range coalition [DS73].

Following Crombez [Cro96] and Laver and Shepsle [LS96] some parties have disproportionate bargaining power due to their positions in unidimensional policy space. The more bargaining power is concentrated on one party, typically a large centrist party, the smaller the government will be. Policy positions also matter in another way. Laver and Shepsle argued that the organization of issues into cabinet portfolios enabled a so-called structure-induced equilibrium even in multidimensional space. By assumption, the party that holds a portfolio has unilateral power over the corresponding issue. This constrains the potential for coalition deals considerably [LS90b]. These early theories are exclusively focused on the elite level and seat shares are considered exogenous.

One important exception to this rule is the work of Austen-Smith and Banks. They developed a game-theoretic model based on the idea that party behavior in parliament would be a function of electoral promises and rewards [ASB88]. In doing so, they were

among the first since Downs [Dow57] to integrate theories of elections and theories of legislatures. The basic premise is that rational voters are concerned with policy outcomes rather than policy stances, and they will thus take the subsequent bargaining over coalitions into account when they cast their votes. In turn, parties will take voters' perceptions into account when designing both their electoral campaigns and their legislative behavior.

In the model both parties and voters are allowed to “look ahead.” This requires the imposition of an exogenous institutional structure which produces unique predictions at the legislative stage. Like the Baron and Ferejohn theory of sequential bargaining [BF89], this is an example of non-cooperative game theory. In the model, a formateur is selected based on a known rule, namely that the largest party is asked to be formateur. The formateur then proposes a government which is either accepted or rejected. If rejected, another formateur is selected and the process will repeat itself. Given the policy platforms of parties and the structure of the legislative game, voters can deduce the final policy outcome based on a given vote share. Based on a three-party system, authors predict that a coalition between the smallest and the largest party will form at the legislative stage regardless of their policy positions. Instead policy is introduced at the electoral stage. Because the final policy outcome is not monotonic in vote shares, voters have incentive to vote for another party than the most proximate.

Austen-Smith and Banks also acknowledged that voters and parties have a continuous relationship, which spans multiple elections [ASB88, 409]. Thus, voters can condition their vote choice on past performance including how far policy outcomes differ from policy positions. This line of thinking is also in the background of the theory of minority government put forward by Strøm [Str84, Str90]. He highlighted that office and policy, but also votes, were relevant incentives for parties considering to join a coalition government. This included the idea that government participation might come with an electoral cost that is too high for some parties to stomach [RM83]. Strøm considered electoral consequences to be a major factors in explaining minority governments [Str90].

While these contributions have greatly advanced our understanding of the linkages

between the electoral and the legislative games, they are still relying on the assumption that stated party positions are translated into voter perceptions effortlessly and without distortions. These studies portray coalition politics as a two-level game over policy and future vote shares. They look at electoral outcomes, but do not consider the causal channels. So far, no one had taken fully into account how voters' future perceptions of parties might change in response to coalition formation. Given how important coalition formation is in parliamentary democracy, we know surprisingly little about how voters actually think about it.

1.3 Coalition Formation as a Signal of Positions

Recent research has found that voters are not particularly responsive to changes in parties' manifestos [AEST11, AST09, FV14]. This has been framed as a fundamental democratic challenge by some scholars [AB17, CK18], because voters' knowledge about policy positions is a central requirement for programmatic policy-based party competition and the responsible party model. In other words, accurate perceptions of party positions is crucial for the mass-elite linkage. However, there is no good reason why manifesto positions, or any other proxy for stated policy, should be the gold standard against which we evaluate the accuracy of perceptions.

In this dissertation, I argue that voters' perceptions of party ideology are based partially on observable party behavior rather than solely on stated policy promises and manifestos. I am not the first to suggest this idea. In the following section, I will discuss my dependent and independent variables as well as the cognitive mechanisms that connect them. I will conclude by summarizing the key findings of an emerging literature, which has tried to throw light on this by exploring the inferences voters make about party positions when observing a given coalition signal.

1.3.1 Dependent Variable: Party Placement

The outcome of interest in this dissertation is party placement on the left/right scale and on more specific issue scales. These party placements are assumed to measure voters' perceptions of the parties' ideological positions. Why should we, as political science scholars, consider perceptions of party positions interesting?

From the perspective of individual voters, perceptions of parties' spatial positions are mental pictures that help each of us organize our political knowledge and preferences as well as communicate them to fellow citizens. In other words, the concepts of left and right help orient the individual to politics and provides a general reference framework that facilitates political discussion among voters [Dal08, 84]. The spatial model is the predominant way for voters, politicians, commentators, and scholars alike to describe political affiliations and changes. We are talking about attitudes and actors as if they are objects in a physical space and we use phrases such as "further away" or "closer together" to describe political changes. Indeed it seems almost impossible to discuss party politics without referring to positions, movement, or distance [BL12]. Perceptions are meaningful to the voter that perceives them and serve to motivate political actions such as vote choice. As such, it is worthwhile to study whether voters believe that there is any ideological differences between parties, and whether party behavior such as coalition formation have any influence on that.

From a more systemic perspective, perceptions are interesting because they are an indispensable element of the democratic link between voters and parties. Students of advanced democracies generally assume that parties articulate different political programmes in order to win elections and that voters perceive these differences. This is key to the responsible party model, in which parties' policy stances and policy outputs reflect the preferences of their voters. In a proper democracy, citizens should be motivated to vote because of differences in parties' policy positions, rather than because of clientilistic favours or charismatic personalities. Only programmatic competition is normatively desirable [Kit95] and it is a defining feature of programmatic politics that voters know something about what the respective parties stand for and can match those positions to their own preferences.

Empirical evidence shows that voters use their perceptions of parties when deciding how to cast their votes [MLR91]. Whether these perceived positions are actually reflections of substantial policy is a complicated question and beyond the scope of this dissertation [AEST14, AB17, CK18, for an in-depth discussion]. For now it suffices to say that if perceptions do have a substantive content they should be affected by party behavior such as coalition formation. Exploring this relationship is the central aim of this dissertation.

1.3.2 Independent Variable: Coalition Signals

In multi-party systems, parties' activities in parliament are largely structured around the divisions between government and opposition. In proportional parliamentary democracies, there is rarely a majority party and coalition formation is thus a necessity [LS98]. A coalition is a set of parties that agree to pursue a common goal and form binding commitments in order to reach that goal [BD82, 2]. Formal coalitions have collective agency and shared responsibility, meaning that all partners can claim credit or must take blame for policy changes. Because of blurred lines of responsibility in coalition governments, voters won't be able to distinguish the parties when making retrospective judgments. Furthermore, coalition governments often focus on the consensual, and not the divisive, issues. But if parties cannot express their disagreements, voters cannot differentiate their policy positions [SK17, 117].

Coalition formation is important in part because it represents actual behavior and not just cheap talk, and in part because it has serious and widespread policy implications. The individual coalition partners might promote divergent policies, but a rational voter anticipates that once coalition members have negotiated an agreement, they actively work to realize these compromises over the course of the government. It is not a given that voters should necessarily pay much attention to the way individual parties present themselves in party manifestos, public speeches, and interviews for the news media in order to form meaningful perceptions. Using coalition information to update perceptions of party positions is consistent with the policy outcome that parties will actually generate in office. If voters

care more about policy outcomes than proclaimed intentions, then coalition behavior might be the most appropriate focal point.

There are other types of real and consequential party behavior and party cooperation, e.g. legislative agreements, but few are as unambiguous as coalition formation. Parties either have cabinet seats or they do not. They are either in government or outside. Additionally, coalition formation is comprehensive and has wide-ranging consequences for all policy areas. And finally, coalition formation is highly publicized. A party's status as a member of either the coalition government or opposition is thus a cheap and widely available piece of information about the subsequent policy outcomes that voters can expect.

Existing research has shown that there is a sharp difference between party cooperation, where there is no collective agency, and a formal coalition, where collective agency has been created and the coalition members will be judged, as least partially, on the success of the entire coalition [Goo96a, 33]. The opposition faces a trade-off between influencing the policy of the government and having a clear opposition profile. Opposition parties will be reluctant to cooperate with the government because they find it difficult to claim credit for policy change [Hub99]: They will only cooperate with the government if they can extract significant concessions because they want to send a clear signal to voters that the party actually made a difference [GB06]. The distinction between coalition and opposition is therefore meaningful even in political environments where most legislation is broadly supported and passed with a surplus majority.

The focus on ideological signals contained in coalition behavior is consistent throughout this dissertation. However, it is not constrained to solely examining the investitures of majority governing coalitions. There are important variations in the precise nature of the coalition signals and voters might process these versions differently. For instance, it could be very important whether the coalition involves sharing executive offices or merely external support. Perhaps it is the accumulation of policy deals over time which impacts voters' perceptions, or perhaps the opening of coalition negotiations is a strong signal in itself. Finally, it is possible that the nature of the parties involved has an important moderating

effect on the coalition signal. The empirical chapter of this dissertation will engage these different dimensions to evaluate which aspects of coalition behavior are critical for the formation of voter perceptions.

1.3.3 Information Processing

According to the theories of bounded rationality [Sim47, Sim55] people are constrained by their cognitive resources. They have neither the motivation nor the abilities to gather, store and process the information necessary to make fully informed decisions. Systematic information gathering is time consuming, and unless there are pay-offs for being fully informed, most individuals will not make the effort, but rather stumble upon bits of information as they go about their lives. This is rational ignorance [Sim55, Dow57].

Most voters invest little in gathering data about political parties' programmatic policy positions. Generally, they do not read the party manifestos or legislative proposals and amendments. They are unaware about shifts in the parties' policy platforms because they only pay limited attention to this aspect of politics. Voters strive for cognitive economy by processing information as efficiently as possible [FC83]. One way to economize cognitive effort is to rely on heuristics instead of being fully informed.

Several scholars have argued that voters can apply a variety of shortcuts or heuristics to make reasonably good judgments and decisions with minimal effort [Pop94, SBT93, PS10]. Heuristics are methods for arriving at a satisfactory solution, decision, or perception with modest amount of cognitive strain. A heuristic is a strategy that ignores part of the information, with the goal of making decisions more quickly and frugally than more complex methods [GG11, 454].

“Frugally” refers to both the cost associated with attaining all the relevant information and the cognitive cost of information processing. Making accurate judgments about party positions are costly in both aspects: Party manifestos and policy statements can be very boring and technical, and even if one bothers to read them, it can be quite taxing cognitively to estimate what is real and what is cheap talk. A heuristic serves to reduce the effort of

this task, by replacing complex calculations with very simple processes. For instance, voters will substitute readily available information about coalitions for more accurate or relevant information about the individual parties. However, even the most optimistic proponents of information shortcuts acknowledge that heuristics do not always lead to the right decision [Lup94]. Shortcuts are not perfect substitutes for political sophistication [LR01].

According to Popkin voters acquire information as a by-product of their daily activities: from their day-to-day political experiences and through the news media [Pop94]. They are very likely to pick up information about the composition of the current government in this way. By relying on this simple cue rather than the full information, they can minimize both search time and information processing costs. Popkin further suggested voters combine active learning from political campaigns with this information they already possess. When asked on a survey or on election day to make judgments about political parties, voters will piece these bits of information together and make inferences about what the party position is likely to be [Pop94].

This argument is very similar to the dynamic model of vote choice suggested by Zechman, which explicitly incorporates retrospective considerations [Zec79] or Enelow and Hinich who argued that the credibility of the current policy statements is a decreasing function of the distance between this position and the previous record [EH84]. Rational voters derive their voting decisions by ordering parties with respect to the policies that they are expected to implement. The expectations in turn are derived partially from perceptions of the policies that the party has pursued in the past and partially from perceptions of the policies stated in the campaign platform.

1.3.4 Sources of Individual Variation

The conventional wisdom is that heuristics are used by virtually everyone. However, not everyone will use them equally effectively [LR01, 954]. On one hand, voters with high levels of political sophistication have no need for a simplifying mechanism. If heuristics replace more accurate knowledge, they should be less helpful for the politically sophisticated. They

are interested in the political process and follow political debates closely. According to Fortunato and Stevenson, highly sophisticated voters need to rely less on a cabinet membership heuristic. They will perceive cabinet parties as more ideologically different, because they regularly receive and process information about the debates internally in the government [FS13a]. They tend to monitor the activities of cabinet members [MV08] and are thus better capable of distinguishing between them. High sophisticates can make more accurate judgments based on all of the information they already have at their disposal, than by using a simplified heuristic.

On the other hand, the politically sophisticated are employing heuristics to make better use of the knowledge they already have [BST91]. Everyone uses heuristics, but the important difference is that the highly sophisticated voters are more likely to increase the accuracy of their decisions when they employ heuristics, while voters with lower sophistication tend to make more mistakes [LR01]. Heuristics are not useful to voters who are completely oblivious to political developments. At a very minimum, voters must know which parties are currently in government. But even beyond that, it requires a rather detailed understanding of the political environment, of seat shares and of issue salience, to make the appropriate inferences.

Furthermore, the political views of the voter will likely impact or reflect the way she perceives the party system. On one hand, a voter might be better able to distinguish parties that are close to her, while perceiving all parties that are far away as practically identical. This implies that extreme voters will tend to view parties as “all the same”. On the other hand, if a voter reports that she is ideologically extreme, this obviously reveals something about her political preferences, but it might also be an indicator of how she interprets the end-points of the ideological scale. If the respondent interprets 0 as communism and 10 as anarcho-capitalism, she is simultaneously less likely to place herself or any of the parties at the extremes. On the other hand, if she uses the entire 11-point scale to describe her national political environment, holding everything else constant, she is more likely to take an extreme position and spread out the parties creating larger ideological distances.

Finally, vote choice or partisanship might impact perceptions of party ideology considerably. There is strong evidence of perceptual bias such that party supporters align the platform of their preferred coalitions with the platform of their own preferred party. Meyer and Strobl showed that voters do not think of coalitions as the weighted average of the coalition members' positions but engage in wishful thinking instead [MS16]. Other individual-level characteristics, such as age, gender, religion or region, are not expected to have any substantial moderating effect on the use of heuristics.

1.3.5 State of the Art

Several recent studies have argued that voters make use of a coalition heuristic when estimating the policy positions of parties in the governing coalition [FS13a, FGFV20, FA15, AEW16, SK17]. Assuming that the formateur or prime minister has the capacity to decide which parties will form the governing coalition, it is reasonable to think that she would always pick coalition partners that are ideologically proximate [FA15]. If a party has several options, the choice of coalition partners reveals the parties' ideological position. As a consequence, voters who observe patterns of coalition formation can use this information to infer about the left/right position of parties.

According to Fortunato and Stevenson, a party's status as a member of either the governing coalition or the opposition is a cheap source of information about ideological positions. They speculated that the signal causes voters to change their perceptions both retrospectively (cabinet formation is more likely if parties were already ideologically similar) and prospectively (governing together will require accommodation and policy compromise in the future) [FS13a]. Fortunato and Adams proceeded to show that voters tend to map the prime minister's policy onto junior coalition members, but not vice versa. Because the prime minister is usually in charge of forming the coalition, voters will infer that she will only select coalition members that are already close to her party's position or is willing to compromise [FA15]. Adams et al. examined party positions on the question of European integration and found that the same mechanism applied [AEW16].

Falco-Gimeno and Fernandez-Vazquez argued that coalition formation is only informative when the party has a choice between several viable coalitions. In other words, the feasibility of the counter-factuals matters. Choosing one cabinet over another does signal that the formateur has more in common with the chosen partner than the alternatives, but if this corresponds with the voters prior perceptions no new knowledge is gained [FGFV20]. For instance, when the British Liberal Democrats unexpectedly joined a coalition with the Conservatives in 2010 this caused a large shift in party placement, whereas there was no change in perceptions when the German FDP as expected joined a coalition with the CDU/CSU in 2009. Following this logic, Falco-Gimeno and Muñoz demonstrated that voters do not just react to actual coalition formation, but also to pre-election coalition signals. A change in coalition expectations could cause a change in perceived ideological positions of parties as well as vote choice [FGM17].

Note that while the work of Kedar [Ked05, Ked09] and Duch et al. [DMA10] among others focused on prospective coalition expectations, this literature is focused on retrospective updating of perceptions. Voters do not just base their coalition expectations on their perceptions of party positions, but the causal arrows runs in the other direction as well, such that voters update their perceptions when observing a coalition formation. That essentially the same question can be studied from both angles perfectly illustrates that learning about which parties to vote for is an iterative process. The ideas about left/right are useful for making predictions and hypotheses about coalition formation [FSV16]. If the coalition outcome corresponds to the predictions, this will increase the voter's confidence in her existing knowledge; if not she will be motivated to revise her perception of the left/right structure. In short, voters update their perceptions of party positions based on past coalitions and then use these perceptions to make predictions about future coalition formation [FV14, FGFV20].

1.4 Main Contributions and Dissertation Outline

In this introductory chapter, I have outlined a theory of how coalition formation affects voters' perceptions of ideological party positions. Fortunato and Stevenson [FS13a] initiated this research agenda and I will now contribute further steps to explore the limitations of this argument and clarify exactly which inferences voters make in more specific circumstances. In the three subsequent chapters, I offer empirical investigations of three questions: Does coalition formation impact voters' perceptions of opposition parties? Do the issue profiles of coalition members impact perceptions of party positions on specific policy issues? What is the causal effect of various signals associated with coalition formation? Table 1.1 describes the cumulative relationship of these three research papers. Finally, I summarize and suggest avenues for further research in the concluding chapter.

1.4.1 The Enemy of My Enemy is a Friend?

In this chapter, I examine whether coalition formation have an impact on voters' perceptions of party positions beyond the formal members of the coalition. To what extent is the perception of opposition parties altered by coalition formation? I argue that coalition formation also sends signals to voters about the parties that are not invited to join the coalition.

Where the previous research has focused on a simple distinction between government and opposition, I provide valuable nuances to the argument by showing how different types of coalitions might produce different inferences. There are currently two very different patterns of coalition formation in Western Europe. In some systems, the shrinking vote share of mainstream parties have turned former competitors into strange bedfellows and grand coalitions across the middle are increasingly common. In this situation, voters should notice that the coalition government are playing the two conflicting opposition wings out against each other. They realize that opposition parties located on different sides of the coalition are opposing government policy for vastly different reasons and perceive them as

Table 1.1: Overview of empirical chapters

Chapter	Research Question	Extensions	Method	Cases	Finding
2	Are perceptions of opposition parties affected by coalition formation?	Beyond coalition members	Hierarchical linear model	EU members 1989-2019	Perceptions of divided and unified opposition parties are affected - especially among high sophisticates
3	Does the inclusion of the radical right affect perceptions of mainstream coalition members?	To specific issue dimensions	Difference-in-differences	Netherlands Denmark 1984-2015	Voters perceive mainstream coalition members as more restrictive towards immigration
4	Does coalition formation have a causal impact on voters' perceptions?	Across types of coalition signals	Survey experiment	Denmark Germany 2018-2020	A causal effect of coalition signals is only found when subjects have no other information

more ideologically different. In contrast, Scandinavian systems are increasingly characterized by bloc politics. In the past, coalition formation was to a large extent dictated by a host of small center parties, but now it appears much more polarized. New parties are aligning themselves with a bloc from the get go. Thus, if oppositions are located on the same side of the coalition voters tend to perceive them as more similar.

Besides examining different patterns of coalition formation, this project also reveals an important conditioning effect of voter sophistication. I find that on average the effect of coalition formation on opposition parties is comparable to the effect on governing parties. However, for voters with higher levels of sophistication, who distinguish between opposition parties that are divided or unified by the current government, the effects are much higher.

1.4.2 Mainstream Sell-outs?

Does the logic of coalition signals apply to more specific issue areas? If one takes salience into account, one might find that coalition formation is not just a question of similarity in positions, but also about differences in emphasis. Each party holds certain issues to be more salient than others when they enter coalition bargaining, and with different types of parties and different salience profiles comes the potential for a type of formalized log-rolling. If one coalition partner emphasizes one issue, and the other(s) emphasize another, it might be easier for them to agree on a shared policy platform. This type of relationship built on tangential preferences is advantageous because it allows parties to preserve the distinctiveness of their platform and does not require them to give resources and influence to a competitor in the electoral market.

So far, studies of radical right participation in government have been primarily about the effects on the radical right. Will they moderate their policy stances when included in policy making? In the third chapter, I turn the question around and examine how the inclusion of a radical right party might impact perceptions of the mainstream right's immigration stances. Mainstream parties might choose to strike a deal with the radical right such that they can pass their preferred legislation on economic issues in exchange for

concessions on the immigration issue. How is this trade perceived by voters?

If voters rely on a coalition formation model that takes log-rolling and tangential preferences into account it should have an impact on their perceptions. It would be rational for voters to focus on the policy position of coalition member in charge of the issue. I find that voters tend to perceive the mainstream coalition members as more extreme on issues related to refugees and asylum after they form a coalition with the radical right. However, because the radical right is moving simultaneously, the distance between the coalition members is preserved.

1.4.3 Does Coalition Formation Impact Voters' Perceptions of Parties?

The contribution of the fourth chapter is simply to identify the causal effect of coalition signals through a series of population-based survey experiments. Its obvious qualities aside, the existing research on how coalition formation impacts voters' perceptions of parties has failed to establish causality. Through the power of random assignments of treatments, the research design allows me to rule out any spurious correlation between coalition formation and the perceived distance between coalition partners. This represents a methodological rather than theoretical innovation, but one that is much needed to drive this research agenda forward.

The four survey experiments presented in this paper vary in terms of context, measurement, and treatments, thus maximizing my abilities to generalize the results. Two experiments use a direct treatment, where participants are explicitly asked to place parties as if a specific hypothetical coalition scenario was true. Another experiment primes participants to think about the current coalition in order to explore the effects of making coalition formation a more salient and accessible consideration. And finally, I move from a dichotomous concept of coalition membership to a (theoretically) continuous concept of commitment to government policy and survival to create higher experimental realism. By studying how participants respond to different frames about the significance of a support agreement, it is possible to determine whether higher commitments cause voters to perceive

parties as more similar.

The survey experiments built on the observational findings of the previous chapters in two ways. First, I am including a “coalition refusal” treatment to explore the effects of explicitly being excluded from the coalition on voters’ perceptions of party positions. Secondly, I measure party placements along several issue scales to examine whether results found on the left/right dimension extend to more specific policy issues as well. Despite giving the effects of coalition formation on voters’ perceptions several changes of manifesting, I only find occasional support for the hypotheses. There are generally no statistically significant effects of the experimental treatments, thus bringing into question the validity of the causal claims made elsewhere.

In this dissertation, I examine various aspects of how coalition formation impacts voters’ perceptions of parties’ ideological positions. The theory outlined above diverges from most of the established party competition literature, which implicitly assumes that voters assess party positions atomistically, i.e. by comparing each party’s stated policy program in isolation to the voter’s own ideal points. The framework I am proposing endogenizes perceptions of parties to the coalition formation process. I suggest that instead of relying exclusively on the policies that parties are advocating in election campaigns, voters assess partners relationally based on their mutual interactions.

This dissertation contributes to a research agenda initiated by Fortunato and Stevenson [FS13a] and further advanced by several other scholars [FA15, SK15, AEW16, FGFV20]. It extends the existing literature in novel ways, thus giving us important insights about the limitations of coalitions heuristics and the specific circumstances in which we should expect coalition behavior to shape voters’ cognitive maps of their party systems.

Chapter 2

The Enemy of My Enemy is a Friend? Coalition-Based Inferences about Opposition Parties

Multi-party parliamentary systems represent strikingly complex environments for decision making. Political parties are simultaneously competing and cooperating while sending ever-changing policy messages to voters. Recent studies have argued that coalition formation is a key piece of information that signals to voters that parties in government are closer to one another than they are to parties in the opposition [FS13a, FA15, SK17]. With just a simple piece of widely available information, voters are able to update their perceptions of coalition members in one fell swoop.

It is now time to turn the attention towards opposition parties. To what extent is the perception of opposition parties altered by coalition formation? In this paper, I argue that coalition formation also sends signals to voters about the parties that are not invited to join the coalition. Voters engage in elaborate spatial reasoning. They realize that when a centrist coalition government is playing the two conflicting opposition wings against each other, the different sides are opposing government policy for vastly different reasons and voters thus perceive these opposition parties as more ideologically different. They also realize that if opposition parties are located to the same ideological side of the government they often belong to a competing bloc that represents a coherent coalition alternative and thus voters perceive them as more similar.

In the following section, I explain my theory of how voters' perceptions of opposition parties are affected by coalition formation. I hypothesize that voters perceive divided opposition dyads as more ideologically different and unified opposition dyads as more ideologically similar. Next, I describe the data from the European Election Study (EES), the survey items I rely on, and the dyadic structure of my data. I proceed to demon-

strate support for the hypotheses, especially among voters with higher levels of political sophistication. Lastly, I conclude and discuss the implications of my findings.

2.1 Coalition-Based Inferences about Positions

Recent research has found that voters are not particularly responsive to changes in parties' manifestos [AEST11, AST09, FV14]. This has been framed as a fundamental democratic challenge by some scholars [AB17, CK18], because voters' knowledge about policy positions is a central requirement for programmatic policy-based party competition and the responsible party model. In other words, accurate perceptions of party positions is crucial for the mass-elite linkage. Some studies have challenged the results of Adams et al. [AEST11] and suggested that voters are more attentive than they appear [FV14, SSS17]. Other recent studies have proceeded to argue that voters incorporate actual party behavior, and specifically coalition information, when estimating the policy positions of parties in government and have used the term coalition heuristics to describe this cognitive mechanism [FS13a, FA15, AEW16, SK17].

Parties, or even party factions, sometimes rhetorically highlight their differences while a significant portion of the legislative work is still relatively broadly supported by most parliamentarians. The ability to distinguish oneself from competitors is crucial for electoral success, while the ability to negotiate a compromise is key in policy-making [MV08, SK15]. In a non-majority situation, the policy outcomes associated with voting for a party are never exactly the policies that the party advocated for during the election. If voters are focused on outcomes, it would be irrational of them to rely entirely on campaign messages. A rational voter should incorporate available information about the coalition not as a short-cut to save cognitive effort, but as a deliberate way to anticipate likely policy outcomes. Researchers have long suggested that voters use information about a party's past performance to predict what they will actually do once in office, and that this severely restricts the ability of parties to move in the policy space [Zec79, EH84]. Voters are aware that policy statements might

be part of a vote-seeking strategy and that parties' promises are not binding and so they discount the policy promises [BST12, FVST17, FV19].

In this type of complex strategical environment, coalition formation is a cheap source of information about ideological movements to come. E.g. Fortunato and Stevenson emphasized how governing together creates incentives for policy compromises and that governing parties actively work to implement the policies they have agreed on [FS13a]. The distinction between government and opposition is a uniquely unambiguous signal. It is one of the most tangible and easily accessible pieces of information that reaches voters.

A shortcoming of the existing theories is that they do not explain how voters' perceptions about the opposition parties' positions evolve. Opposition parties cannot signal their position through implemented policies or coalition formation and some have even argued that voters can only learn about opposition parties' positions through platforms [FV14]. Contrary to that, I will argue that the perceptions of opposition parties do not evolve in a vacuum and that the electoral campaigns are not the only signal. Instead, the perceptions of one party can be significantly affected by the actions of another. There is always several counter-factual coalitions, and when they do not form, their failures are indicative of something about party positions. Along these lines, when exploring how perceptions of party positions evolve it might be fruitful to think about alternative coalition scenarios.

I suggest that in the exact same way that selecting a coalition partner is a signal, so is omitting a potential partner. In short, coalition formation informs the voters about the formateur and the junior coalition member, but it also informs them about parties that are not invited into government.

Spoon and Klüver argued that voters have a hard time distinguishing different policy positions in coalition governments. Their results indicate that there is an even higher discrepancy between perceived and manifesto positions of opposition parties than of coalition members [SK17, 123]. This could suggest that voters also use coalition heuristics to make inferences about opposition parties rather than relying on explicit policy platforms. Fortunato and Stevenson looked for factors that explained variance in the perceived distance

between the policy positions of two parties. Their results indicate that whether two parties are in opposition together does in fact reduce the perceived policy distance but the effect is insignificant and miniscule compared to that for coalition partners [FS13a, 471-473]. That there is no great effect of a simple opposition dummy is not too surprising. Opposition parties are often found on both sides of a coalition government and voters probably take that into account. I claim that it is important to distinguish between different types of opposition parties.

2.2 Opposition During Centrist Coalitions or Bloc Politics

Opposition parties are not all the same. Two opposition parties might be political allies waiting for a chance to form the next coalition government and they might be political enemies who both oppose the current government but for diametrically different reasons. To add to the complexity, sometimes one of them is hardly in opposition to the government at all, but instead acts as a support party for a minority government. Ganghof and Bräuninger distinguish between opposition parties that could become part of a future government and those that could not. The former is much less likely to engage in compromises with the government, because they will deny their opponent any policy success. They are essentially just waiting to bring the government down [GB06]. These types of parties represent a competing bloc [GPT05].

Consider the difference between the two scenarios for a four-party system in figures 2.1a and 2.1b. Assume that voters have an accurate perception of the order of the parties, but do not know the exact policy distance between them. Furthermore, assume that the coalitions will be ideologically connected on the left-right dimension such that members will be adjacent to each other. The assumption of connected coalitions is admittedly a simplification, but it is commonly used [Axe70, LS90b].

Now if a coalition forms between parties A and B, the voters might conclude that A is further to the right or that B is further to the left than they would have been otherwise.

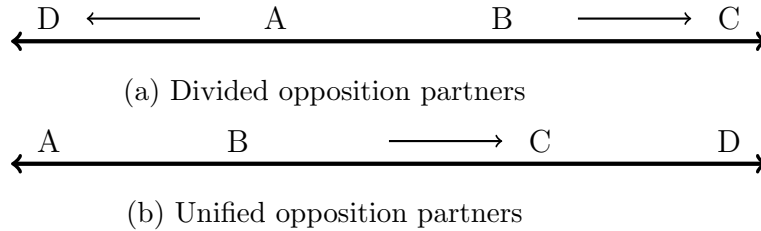


Figure 2.1: Two hypothetical scenarios where a coalition forms between party A and party B. (a) Opposition parties on opposite sides of the coalition are perceived as more distant. (b) Opposition parties on the same side of the coalition are perceived as more proximate.

These are the two competing options explored by Fortunato and Stevenson [FA15]. But there is also a third option: the voters might conclude that party B forms a coalition with A because the alternative coalition partner C is far away. Naturally, these three mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. All three might be at play simultaneously. These predictions are not about policy shifts relative to the status quo, but rather relative to alternative counter-factual coalitions.

Note that the third mechanism has important implications for opposition parties as well: Coalition formation sends a signal to voters that an opposition party is far away from the government, but it also changes how voters perceive the distance between two opposition parties. In the first scenario, figure 2.1a, the two opposition parties are on opposite sides of the government. The same shifts in perceptions which apply to party C, by assumption, also apply to party D. Coalition formation signals that they are both further from the government and thus also further from each other. They are unlikely to form a government on their own. However, in a scenario where the partners in opposition are located on the same side of the government, figure 2.1b, any shift in perceptions away from party B should move opposition party C closer to opposition party D. That party C was not part of the governing coalition signals to voters that it belongs to the opposite bloc and would be more likely to form a coalition with D in the future.

How should one think about perceived distances on the left-right dimension more generally? The intuition behind my theory is that increasing distance between two adjacent

parties implies decreasing distances other places in the party system. E.g. if a party is moving to the right, away from the center, holding everything else constant, that should imply that there is less room on the right-wing and thus that the distance between right-wing parties decreases. Remember that the left-right dimension is an abstraction and as such any placement or distance is relative.

In short, I hypothesize that the effect of coalition formation on the perception of opposition parties' policy positions depends crucially on the relationship between the two opposition parties:

Hypothesis 1: Voters will perceive party dyads divided on opposite sides of the coalition as more ideologically different, *holding everything else constant*.

Hypothesis 2: Voters will perceive party dyads unified on the same side of the coalition as more ideologically similar, *holding everything else constant*.

Additionally, there might be important heterogeneity in how voters interpret the coalition signal. Fortunato and Stevenson found insignificant interaction effect between dyad relationships and political interest [FS13a], but keep in mind that distinguishing between different types of opposition parties might be more demanding of voters than simply recognizing who is in government and who is not. Respondents with low political sophistication will have a harder time placing parties and they might not recognize a party as belonging to a certain bloc. Research has shown that a substantial number of survey respondents are “face-saving don’t knows”, i.e. they have a tendency to select the mid-point category when they do not wish to incur the cognitive cost of determining the right response, yet do not want to use the “do not know” category either [SRS14]. Thus, respondents with low political sophistication will likely add some noise to the data, but they are also more likely to place all parties in the center. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: All effects of coalition signals are stronger for voters with high levels of political sophistication than for voters with lower levels.

2.3 Data and Methods

In order to test my hypotheses, I examine survey data from the European Election Study (EES) 1989-2019 [SvdESK97, SLAB09, SHPT15, vEvdBH⁺13, vdEOS93, vdEFS⁺02]. I only focus on Western European advanced multiparty parliamentary systems in non-majority situations (full list of cases can be found in the appendix). I am including minority single-party governments and expect that the same inferences will be made for opposition parties deselected by a minority government as those deselected by a coalition government. The EES contains high-quality cross-national survey data and provides a comprehensive exploration of party perceptions in Western European democracies over an extended period.

In every survey, respondents were asked about their perceptions of party positions with the following question: “In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?”. Although the surveys are conducted around the time of elections for the European Parliament, the relevant survey item asks specifically about national politics. The timing is not particularly important, since the question is about perceptions and not voting intentions.

Following the research design of Fortunato and Stevenson [FS13a], I transform the data such that there is one observation per respondent per party-dyad. The dependent variable is the perceived ideological distance between each pair of parties in the system. With dyadic data I can say something about convergence and divergence in perceptions, rather than just speak to absolute deviation from manifesto position.

The main independent variable is a categorical variable specifying whether the parties are coalition partners, opposition partners divided by the government, unified opposition partners, or neither. The baseline are dyads where one party is in government and the other in opposition. Cabinet membership is taken from the ParlGov dataset [DM17]. For each party system, I identify the average perceived ideological range of the current government. Party-dyads with average perceived positions located on opposite sides of this range are operationalized as divided. Party-dyads with average perceived positions that are unified

on the same side of the ideological range of the government (or in between members of the governing coalition) are operationalized as unified partners. I regress individual respondents' perceived ideological difference between two parties on the relationship of the party-dyad. The evidence will be consistent with my hypotheses if the coefficient estimates for unified opposition partners is negative and the coefficient for divided opposition partners is positive.

To examine the conditioning effects of political sophistication, I include measures of self-reported political interest and the level of formal education. Self-reported political interest was included in five of the seven waves of the EES and answers were given on a four point scale. Education level in the EES is measured as age when the respondent finished full-time education. There are three levels: younger than 15, 16-19, and older than 20. The distribution of the two variables across the seven waves of the EES is provided in the appendix. While the distribution of self-reported political interest is quite stable over time, with most respondents choosing the two middle categories, the distribution of formal education has changed radically. In 1989 the three groups were roughly of equal size, but in 2019 a mere five percent of the sample had 15 years or less of formal education while almost two-thirds had twenty years or more. I analyze the effects of these two ordinal variables using binary indicators. In all cases the lowest level of sophistication is the baseline.

I include a number of control variables. Most importantly, I control for the ideological distance of a party-dyad as indicated in the parties' manifestos, and the party-dyad's record of governing together in the recent past. This model captures three essential ways that voters can infer party positions: through knowledge about the parties' explicit policy platform, through historic records of policy compromise and coalition governing, and lastly, through the interpretation of current signals about possible and impossible coalitions. These controls allow me to test whether the coalition heuristic matters even accounting for other common voter heuristics.

Coalition members might attempt to differentiate each other through their election campaign and media presence. It is hard to capture the entirety of party communication,

but I will use party manifestos as a proxy. I would expect the ideological distance between party manifestos to be higher than what is perceived by voters if the parties are partners in a coalition or in a unified opposition. Explicit policy platforms are evaluated with the “rile” measure from the Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR) [VKL⁺19]. I have rescaled the variable to match the ten-unit left-right scale used in the analysis and calculated the absolute distance. The discrepancy between perceived distance and ideological distance as reflected in party manifestos is smaller for high sophisticates than low sophisticates. However, the relationship is not strong. Generally, respondents “misjudge” the distance by more than two full units on a ten-unit scale. Because the weight that voters place on a manifesto is also likely to vary according to sophistication, I have included the interaction.

Researchers sometimes worry that the MARPOR data is unreliable [MLB12]. As a robustness check, I have included an identical analysis using left-right estimates from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey [PRB⁺17] in the appendix. I have matched the EES years with the most recent expert survey and excluded 1989, 1994, and 2019. One can perhaps think of experts as just very politically sophisticated respondents who are likely to take coalition signals into account when placing parties. Thus, there is a great risk of over-controlling. Nevertheless, the results corroborate my findings.

Furthermore, I control for a history of joint cabinet participation. Perceived ideological similarity of opposition partners could be a remaining effect of the use of the coalition heuristic in a previous election period when the party-dyad was in government together. For any pair of parties, the record of co-governing is equal to the fraction of days in the past 15 years that the two parties have been in a coalition government together. The record includes the entire duration of the government spell in progress at the time of the survey.

Finally, I control for the ideological self-placement of the respondent, which will reflect the way she perceives the party system. If a respondent reports that she is ideologically extreme, this obviously reveals something about her political preferences, but it is also an indicator of how she interprets the end-points of the scale. On one hand, if the respondent

interprets 0 as communism and 10 as anarcho-capitalism, she is simultaneously less likely to place herself or any of the parties at the extremes. On the other hand, if she uses the entire ten-unit scale to describe her national party system, holding everything else constant, she is more likely to take an extreme position and spread out the parties creating larger ideological distances. Extremity is measured as the absolute distance between the respondents' left-right self-placement and five, which is the theoretical midpoint of the left-right scale.

My data structure has multiple possible sources of variance. Respondents are nested within country-years, but because the unit of analysis is party-dyads, the same individual respondent will be included multiple times. Additionally, party dyads are nested within countries and many of them will appear multiple times across the years. In short, party-dyads are crossed with both respondents and surveys [Hox02, 123]. Hierarchical linear models are appropriate where there is variation at more than one level. However, when models become large and complicated, it is best only to include a random part for those elements in which there is a strong justification [Hox02, 31]. I follow the recommendations of Fortunato and Stevenson and focus on dealing with unexplained factors at the levels of surveys (years) and party dyads [FS13a, 473]. I also ran the models using OLS with and without cluster-corrected standard errors at the level of individual respondents and found that this level did not cause substantial problems.

2.4 Results

Table 2.1 displays the results of a hierarchical linear model with party dyad and survey random effects. The results are based on survey data from the European Election Study 1989-2019. I find strong support for my hypotheses.

The general effect of being in an opposition dyad is 0.1 units on the ten-unit scale, meaning that two parties in opposition are perceived as further apart than two otherwise identical parties where one is in opposition and the other in government. Despite being

Table 2.1: Hierarchical linear model of perceived distance between party dyads. Random effects for surveys and party dyads

	Model 1	Model 2
Coalition government members	-0.074*** (0.015)	-0.125*** (0.015)
Opposition members	0.109*** (0.010)	
Divided opposition members		0.547*** (0.016)
Unified opposition members		-0.125*** (0.015)
Manifesto distance [0-10]	0.038*** (0.003)	0.039*** (0.003)
Record of governing together [0-1]	0.017 (0.050)	-0.078 (0.050)
Respondent extremity [0-5]	0.187*** (0.002)	0.187*** (0.002)
A little interested	0.064*** (0.009)	0.064*** (0.009)
Somewhat interested	0.172*** (0.009)	0.171*** (0.009)
Very interested	0.234*** (0.010)	0.232*** (0.010)
Education 16-19 years	0.024** (0.007)	0.022** (0.007)
Education \geq 20 years	0.075*** (0.007)	0.073*** (0.007)
Constant	2.544*** (0.121)	2.558*** (0.110)
Random effect: Dyad (786)	1.944 (1.394)	1.681 (1.296)
Random effect: Survey (7)	0.082 (0.286)	0.067 (0.260)
Random effect: Residual	4.611 (2.1479)	4.605 (2.146)
Observations	836457	836457
Log Likelihood	-1828440.703	-1827856.036

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

statistically significant, this effect is probably too small to be substantially significant. Yet it is larger than the negative effect for governing dyads. As expected, there is a positive effect of ideological distance in party manifestos and of respondent extremity. There is no significant effect of a recent history of governing together. Finally, there is a positive effect of sophistication, indicating that respondents with higher levels of sophistication are more likely to use the entire spectrum.

In model 2, I distinguish between divided and unified opposition parties. This makes a large difference. Divided opposition dyads are perceived as more than half a unit further apart than a similar mixed dyad. While this might still sound like a small effect, it can have large electoral effects in very fragmented party systems where up to 13-14 parties are trying to locate the optimal ideological position on a ten-unit scale. The effect for unified opposition dyads is exactly the same as for governing dyads, supporting the notion that unified opposition dyads are perceived as viable alternatives for a future coalition government.

Table 2.2: Interactive model of perceived distance between party dyads conditional on political sophistication. Random effects for surveys and party dyads

	Model 3	Model 4
Coalition government members	0.073* (0.029)	-0.096*** (0.024)
Divided opposition members	-0.097** (0.033)	0.039 (0.027)
Unified opposition members	0.118*** (0.027)	0.069** (0.022)
Manifesto distance [0-10]	0.022*** (0.006)	0.027*** (0.005)
Record of governing together [0-1]	-0.473*** (0.053)	-0.469*** (0.053)
Respondent extremity [0-5]	0.186*** (0.002)	0.186*** (0.002)
A little interested	0.072*** (0.016)	0.061*** (0.009)
Somewhat interested	0.108*** (0.016)	0.166*** (0.009)
Very interested	0.102*** (0.018)	0.229*** (0.010)
Education 16-19 years	0.023** (0.007)	0.020 (0.013)
Education \geq 20 years	0.073*** (0.007)	-0.010 (0.013)
Government * A little	-0.118*** (0.028)	
Government * Somewhat	-0.237*** (0.027)	
Government * Very	-0.269*** (0.032)	
Divided * A little	0.299*** (0.030)	
Divided * Somewhat	0.645*** (0.030)	
Divided * Very	0.793*** (0.033)	
Unified * A little	-0.087*** (0.025)	
Unified * Somewhat	-0.250*** (0.025)	
Unified * Very	-0.343*** (0.028)	
Manifesto * A little	-0.006 (0.005)	
Manifesto * Somewhat	0.023*** (0.005)	
Manifesto * Very	0.050*** (0.006)	
Government * 16-19 years		-0.005 (0.023)
Government * \geq 20 years		-0.020 (0.022)
Divided * 16-19 years		0.177*** (0.024)
Divided * \geq 20 years		0.594*** (0.023)
Unified * 16-19 years		-0.097*** (0.020)
Unified * \geq 20 years		-0.210*** (0.019)
Manifesto * 16-19 years		-0.001 (0.004)
Manifesto * \geq 20 years		0.020*** (0.004)
Constant	2.702*** (0.086)	2.709*** (0.086)
Random effect: Dyad (786)	1.672 (1.293)	1.679 (1.296)
Random effect: Survey (7)	0.318 (0.564)	0.318 (0.564)
Random effect: Residual	4.562 (2.136)	4.566 (2.137)
Observations	836, 457	836, 457
Log Likelihood	-1, 824, 119.982	-1, 824, 436.646

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

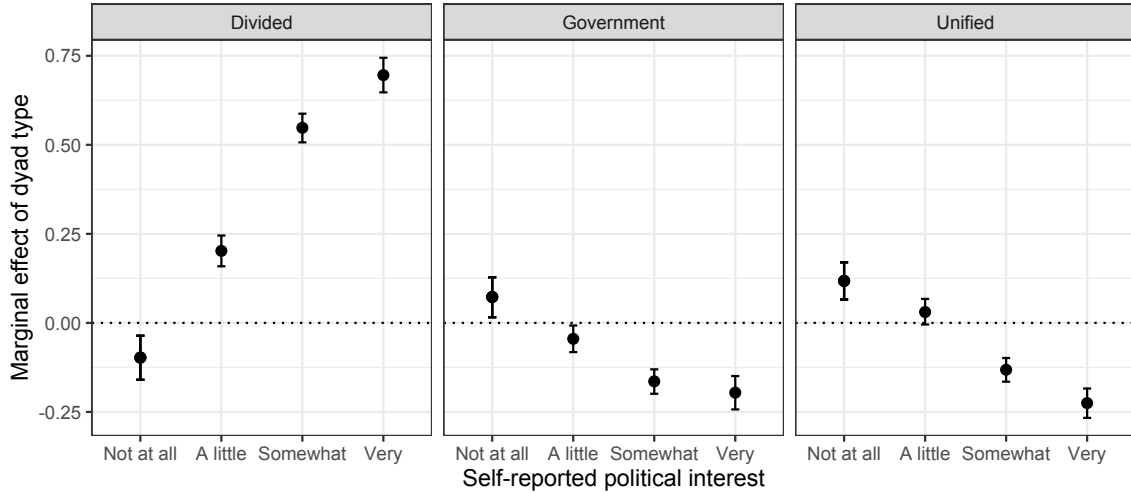


Figure 2.2: Marginal effect of dyad type on perceived distance between party dyads conditional on political interest. Coefficient estimates incl. 95% confidence intervals.

Table 2.2 includes interactions with the sophistication indicators. Among the respondents who said that they were “not at all” interested in politics, coalition signals have the exact opposite effect as one would expect. Divided opposition dyads are perceived as closer together while unified opposition and governing dyads are perceived as further apart compared to a mixed dyad. However, as the level of self-reported interest increases so does the perceived distance of the divided dyads, while the perceived distance between unified opposition dyads and governing dyads decreases monotonically. For respondents who are only “a little interested” there is already a strong positive effect for divided opposition dyads and for the most interested respondents the effect corresponds to approximately 0.7 units. For respondents who are “somewhat” to “very” interested there is the expected negative effect for both unified and governing dyads. This finding runs counter to previous results showing that political interest had a mitigating effect on the impact of coalition signals [FS13a].

There is a similar effect for education. Respondents with 15 years of formal education or less perceive governing dyads as slightly closer together and all opposition dyads as slightly further apart. The perception of governing dyads does not change significantly as the level of education increases. For divided opposition dyads the effect goes from insignificant to

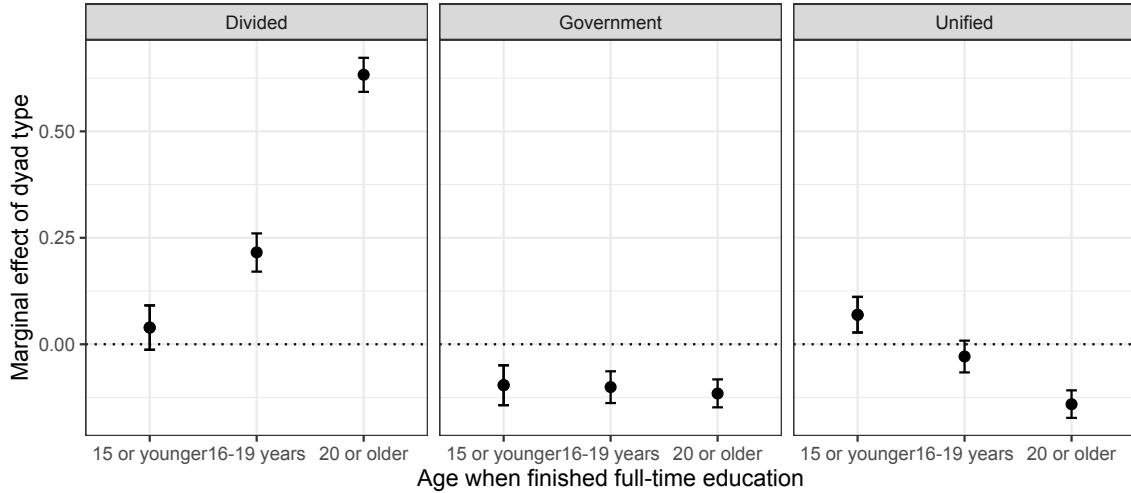


Figure 2.3: Marginal effect of dyad type on perceived distance between party dyads conditional on formal education. Coefficient estimates incl. 95% confidence intervals.

an effect of almost 0.6 units. For unified opposition dyads the effect goes from positive to negative.

There are also positive interaction effects for manifesto distance. In short, respondents with higher levels of sophistication are more likely to respond to both coalition signals and party communications. The marginal effects of belonging to one of the three types of party dyads are illustrated in figure 2.2 and figure 2.3. The marginal effect of sophistication is included in the appendix.

2.5 Conclusion and Discussion

In this chapter, I argue that voters use coalition signals to infer policy positions of opposition parties. I hypothesize that voters will distinguish between different types of opposition dyads, and that they will perceive opposition parties as more ideologically different if they are located on opposite sides of the coalition, but as more similar if they are located on the same side of the coalition. I test my hypotheses on survey data from the European Election Study (EES). Given the dyadic structure there are dependencies between observations at different levels of the data. To accommodate that I use a hierarchical linear model with

random effects for party dyads and surveys. I find strong support for my hypotheses.

The results suggest that voters generally perceive opposition parties that are divided by a coalition government as approximately 0.5 units further apart on the ten-unit left-right scale than they would have in a counter-factual scenario where one of the same parties was in coalition and the other in opposition. Given how little other information average voters have about opposition parties, an effect of this size is far from trivial. Especially in very fragmented party systems, where some parties are located very close to each other, an effect of this size could have important consequences for party competition. The effect for unified opposition dyads is much smaller, but still present and comparable to the effect for governing parties.

Furthermore, my results clearly indicate that the coalition signals are interpreted differently by respondents with low and high political sophistication. Voters who are very interested in politics or have a high level of formal education tend to consider opposition parties, that are not invited into the governing coalition, as further apart from the established government and thus further from opposition parties on the other side. I also find evidence that politically sophisticated voters think of opposition parties unified on the same side as closer together.

Contrary to previous findings, my results suggest that the effect of this specific coalition signal is highest among politically sophisticated voters. Scholars have tended to interpret perceptions that deviated from party platforms as a sign of lacking interest and attention to politics. However, the results of this study imply that high sophisticates rely more on both manifestos and coalition signals than low sophisticates.

One might worry that the same results could be generated by voters having accurate perceptions of the parties' positions and parties forming connected coalitions. I mitigate this concern empirically by controlling for positions outlined in party manifestos and for parties' shared history of governing together. There are potentially other ways that voters could learn about party positions, but these capture two very important ones. Furthermore, this type of criticism is slightly misguided. Voter perceptions do not have to be distorted

by the coalition heuristic for this project to make sense. The criticism presupposes that there are objective positions on a tangible left-right dimension to learn about, but that is not necessarily the case. The take-away from this analysis should not be that coalition information is simply used to replace more accurate information. This would be missing the important point that even voters with high level of political sophistication are discounting parties' strategic policy positions and taking their past and future coalition behavior into account.

Chapter 3

Mainstream Sell-outs? How Collaboration with the Radical Right Changes Perceptions of Party Positions on Immigration

At the very beginning of the millennium, William Downs suggested that mainstream parties might adopt a strategy of cooperating with radical right parties. He argued that when doing so, they risk being perceived by voters as “sell-outs” who have compromised their liberal principles [Dow01]. Twenty years later we have witnessed radical right parties joining coalitions or supporting minority governments in several European countries. The parties that make it into government are not directly anti-democratic, but they are still extreme outliers in terms of their positions towards immigration. Hence, it seems that from the perspective of mainstream right parties, this risk is considered worth taking.

Voters generally tend to perceive parties that govern together in a coalition as more ideologically similar than they would have otherwise [FS13a, FA15, AEW16]. Existing research have suggested that this disproportionately affects junior coalition members in general and niche party coalition members in particular. Large mainstream parties are partially insulated from the effects of coalition formation on voters’ perceptions, while smaller parties are perceived as compromising “sell-outs” [FA15, 15-16]. This could be one of the mechanisms creating differences in the electoral cost of governing [Hje18]. While this might be true on the general left/right dimension, we do not know how if it extends to specific policy issues.

In this chapter, I explore to what extent and on which issues public perceptions of party positions are affected by collaborations between mainstream and radical right. Based on a theory of log-rolling and tangential preferences, I suggest that voters will project the positions of the mainstream right onto the radical right on the general left/right and on

economic issues. However, on the core issues of the radical right, specifically on immigration, voters will assume that the mainstream right have made significant concessions to the radical right and thus perceive them as more restrictive on these issues.

This chapter unites two different literatures and extends them in novel ways. First, it moves the literature on coalition heuristics from a sole focus on the abstract left/right, towards thinking more carefully about how the mechanism linking coalition formation and spatial perceptions works on more specific issues. Secondly, it contributes to the party competition literature, which has so far focused entirely on how mainstream parties respond strategically in order to compete with radical right parties. To my knowledge, no one has looked at the perceptions following cooperation and whether mainstream parties incur a reputation for radicalizing when they join forces with the radical right. One of the main contributions of this paper is to explore the possibility that mainstream parties will risk being perceived as “selling out” on their liberal principles concerning immigration and multiculturalism so that they can form coalitions with radical right parties.

3.1 Moderation or Accommodation?

For a long time, research about radical right parties was mainly focused on explaining their electoral success [VdBFT05], while their impact on policy making and party competition was understudied [VS10, Han15, ACK18]. In recent years, a number of studies have tried to fill this gap by exploring what the long-term effects of radical right success might be. There is a general expectation that radical right parties have become more mainstream, either because they have moderated to become respectable potential coalition members or because their mainstream competitors have adopted radical policy stances to diffuse the threat posed by the radical right [WM17].

That radical right parties will moderate in order to cooperate with other parties is central to the inclusion-moderation thesis [vSvdB07, AR15]. If a party is systematically excluded from any sort of cooperation on principle it will have no incentives to moderate

its positions. Furthermore, party supporters might interpret the ostracism as a violation of their democratic rights and develop strong feelings of in-group solidarity and dissatisfaction with the political system. In contrast, radical right parties are likely to tone down their critic of the establishment and become more amenable when they are themselves part of the government.

The results provide mixed support for this theory. Van Spanje and van der Brug found that perceived moderation by the radical right on the left/right scale is more likely when mainstream parties do not construct a *cordon sanitaire*. Inclusion means that radical right are perceived as a legitimate part of the system [vSvdB07]. Akkerman and Rooduijn similarly asked how inclusion or exclusion affects the policy agendas of radical right parties but did not find a moderating effect. Contrary to the inclusion-moderation thesis, they found that the lack of a *cordon sanitaire* made parties even more radical in their manifesto positions towards immigration [AR15]. Radical right parties might start to look more like mainstream parties in terms of their behavior when they cooperate with other parties in the legislature or in government, but their policy positions on the core issues remains as extreme as before [AdLR16].

Furthermore, scholars have examined how cooperation affects the electoral fortunes of radical right parties. Akkerman and de Lange examined the electoral success of six radical right parties after they joined governments. They argued that voters attribute credit and blame according to issue ownership. Thus, the radical right are evaluated based on their ability to ensure more restrictive immigration and integration policy [ADL12]. Van Spanje argued that radical right parties suffer an extra cost of governing, because they are perceived as losing the purity of their anti-establishment messages: They can no longer claim that they want to kick the establishment out of office [vS11]. In short, radical right parties might be perceived as more moderate and part of the establishment, but they still explicitly take extreme policy positions on their core issues and voters expect them to deliver.

There is less disagreement about how the mainstream parties have moved to the right, although scholars are discussing the exact mechanisms driving it. There appears to be a

contagion effect such that mainstream parties adopt more anti-immigrant and monoculturalist positions as a reaction to the success of the radical right [Han15, VS10, AC16], also known as an accommodating strategy [Meg05]. Independent of public opinion, which appears remarkably stable [DG19], the entry of radical right parties into parliament caused mainstream parties to shift their positions on multiculturalism [ACK18]. Radical right parties are often described as challenger or blackmail parties [Dow57] who are changing the competitive space. Representation in parliament can be considered a critical point where the radical right becomes an electoral threat that mainstream parties must react to, because at this point they become established parties with access to more resources and media attention.

According to Wagner and Meyer radical right success have motivated both mainstream left and mainstream right parties to move to the right on the secondary cultural dimension over time. This means that the average position of the mainstream left is as far right today as the average position of the radical right was in the 1980s [WM17]. Akkerman on the other hand found that there was virtually no effect for the mainstream left parties, and even for mainstream right parties, who were on a path towards more restrictive immigration policies independently, the impact of the radical right is easy to overestimate. She also warned against thinking in broad ideological terms such as “the cultural dimension”. Instead mainstream parties are adopting a mixed strategy where they only adopt radical right positions on a few very specific issues within the broader immigration issue area while maintaining more permissive stances on others [Akk15].

Prior literature on accommodation has focused entirely on how mainstream parties will approach radical right parties in order to compete with them. While there is an idea that radical right parties will be perceived as moderate when they cooperate with mainstream parties, to the best of my knowledge, no one has seriously examined whether mainstream parties will incur a reputation for radicalizing when they join forces with the radical right. The main contribution of this paper is to explore the possibility that mainstream parties will risk being perceived as “selling out” on their liberal principles concerning immigration

and multiculturalism so that they can form coalitions with radical right parties.

3.2 The Effects of Coalition Formation on Voters' Perceptions

Several recent studies have argued that voters rely on coalition information when estimating the policy positions of parties in the governing coalition [FS13a, FA15, AEW16, SK17]. Parties in government are perceived as closer to one another than they are to parties in the opposition holding everything else constant. A party's status as a member of either the governing coalition or the opposition is a cheap and widely available source of information about its policy position [FS13b].

Coalitions with low internal conflict of interest find it easier to form and govern together and are thus preferred by its members [LS98, 97-98]. It follows that the coalitions that form will often be ideologically connected and that members will be adjacent to each other on the left/right spectrum. An important implication of this model is that the choice of coalition partner is an important signal about a party's policy positions [FS13a, FV14].

If the prime minister puts together the coalition and describes the overarching guidelines for its political program, it seems natural that voters will use the prime minister's party's ideology as a focal point when thinking about the ideological position of the entire coalition on the general left/right spectrum. Fortunato and Adams have demonstrated that the change in perceptions of parties' left/right position was asymmetrical. Voters map the prime minister's left/right position onto junior coalition members, but not vice versa [FA15]. Since radical right parties have few coalition alternatives they have a weak bargaining position, and usually become the junior coalition member [ADL12, 579-580]. Consequently, voters will expect them to have difficulties realizing their policy goals on the left/right.

Hypothesis 1: Following cooperation between the mainstream and the radical right, voters will perceive radical right coalition members' positions on the general left/right dimension as closer to the positions of the mainstream right.

However, there are alternative ways of negotiating. If one takes salience into account, one might find that coalition formation is not just a question of similarity in positions, but also about differences in emphasis. Parties have incentives to select coalition partners that neither inhibit policy goals nor pose a threat in the electoral competition. A coalition partner with similar policy positions will naturally appeal to the same voters, while a coalition partner with very different positions is hard to negotiate with. But if each party hold certain issues to be more salient than others comes the potential for a type of formalized log-rolling.

According to the theories of issue ownership [BF83a, Pet96] all parties have a policy profile with certain core issues that are particularly important to them. Much have been written in recent years about how these policy profile influences electoral competition and how niche parties, especially, attempt to change the political agenda and increase the salience of the issues they own. However, only very few scholars have paid attention to how issue profiles might constrain or facilitate coalition formation.

Luebbert argued that these issue priorities will be decisive in the bargaining over a governing coalition. Tangential preferences are compatible because coalition members address different unrelated issues. If one coalition partner emphasizes one issue, and the other(s) emphasizes another, it might be easier for them to agree on a shared policy platform. This type of relationship is preferable because it allows parties to preserve the distinctiveness of their platform and do not require them to give resources and influence to a competitor in the electoral market [Lue86, 64]. Log-rolling is a strategy of delegation rather than accommodation and it can be an attractive option for both mainstream and radical right parties.

The model suggests that parties with complementary policy agendas, i.e. tangential preferences, focus on their own issues, while delegating control of other issues to the coalition partners. This delegation is most obvious when cabinet members obtain ministerial portfolios that correspond to the issues they emphasize [BDD11, Sai19], but log-rolling is most likely a part of less formalized types of cooperation as well. For instance, mainstream

right parties make concessions to radical right parties on immigration issues in exchange for leverage over economic policy [ADL12, 579-580]. By log-rolling radical rights parties can minimize the compromising on their core issues such as immigration and multiculturalism [AdLR16]. Voters are well-aware of this delegation of responsibility: they know that some parties have more leeway on certain issues and this influences their perceptions of party positions.

Voters focus on the policy position of the coalition member in charge of the issue. They are mainly concerned with political outcomes and the policy consequences associated with supporting any member of the coalition - not with the policies that individual parties are advocating during the election campaign [FS13a]. Voters care less about whether coalition members are sincerely accommodating and approaching each other. They simply observe that the mainstream parties are facilitating radical right immigration policy and hence, they will use the radical right position to place all coalition members on this issue. Similarly, they know that the radical right are lending votes to mainstream right economic policy and thus place all members closer to the mainstream right position. Furthermore, being in charge is associated with higher exposure of the party position. Because voters possess more knowledge about the positions of the governing party that attributes higher salience to an issue, it is natural for them to use this knowledge when placing other, more vague and diffuse, coalition members.

This leads to the following issue specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Following the cooperation between the mainstream and the radical right, voters will perceive mainstream right coalition members' positions on immigration as closer to the positions of the radical right.

Hypothesis 3: Following cooperation between the mainstream and the radical right, voters will perceive radical right coalition members' positions on economic issues as closer to the positions of the mainstream right.

The first hypothesis runs directly counter to predictions made elsewhere. According to

Fortunato and Adams niche parties, more so than other parties, depend on maintaining a distinct policy profile. They risk losing the purity of their messages and being perceived as compromising when they join coalition governments [FA15]. My theory suggests that this might be true on economic issues and on the general left/right dimension, but not on the issues they actually care about.

Most other studies have focused exclusively on the left/right dimension, with the notable exception of Adams et al. that looked at party placement on a scale concerning European unification. They found that voters' perceptions are also affected by coalition formation when it comes to EU policy [AEW16], but it is unclear if it is more or less than on the left/right dimension. Furthermore, it is quite hard to extrapolate to any other issue since European unification is an extremely multi-faceted high-level issue that spills over into both economic and immigration issues.

3.3 Case-Selection: Radical Right in Government

Testing these three hypotheses requires substantial variation in the salience profile of the coalition members. This is complicated because governing parties tend to be mainstream parties that emphasize traditional economic issues. There are relatively few instances of radical right parties in government. On top of that, I can only look at cases where survey data with consistent measurement of party placement on issues over time is available. This narrows the field down to the Netherlands and Denmark.

There is only one brief instance where a radical right party became an official coalition member (strong treatment), but two instances where a coalition relied on the external legislative support of the radical right (weak treatment). In line with Akkerman and de Lange [ADL12], I argue that the collaboration between the Danish mainstream right and the Danish People's Party (DPP) from 2001 and forward, as well as between the Dutch mainstream right and the Freedom Party (PVV) represents a type of coalition-like government. Both radical right parties were part of a more or less permanent coalition that

ensures acceptance of all or almost all government proposals [DS73, 85].

Do these parties have a niche salience profile? It has been argued that radical right parties have increased their emphasis on economic issues and have attempted to frame them in ways that support an ideology of welfare chauvinism [WM17]. Welfare chauvinism is the belief that immigrants make excessive use of the welfare state and that access should be restricted to the “deserving” natives. This links left-wing economic attitudes with right-wing views on immigration. This approach was pioneered by the Danish Peoples Party and has been adopted by other parties such as the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) [SVK16]. However, according to the analysis of Wagner and Meyer, there was no evidence of salience moderation by the Danish radical right parties, and only limited moderation in the Netherlands [WM17].

3.3.1 Strong Treatment: Radical Right as a Coalition Member

Prior to the 2002 election, the Dutch government was ruled by the so-called purple coalition consisting of the social-democratic Labour Party (PvdA) and the liberal People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and Democrats 66 (D66). This broad centrist government agreed on most of the economic policy as well as the key ethical issues: same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and euthanasia. The main opposition party, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), was forced to acknowledge these positions if they were to participate in a coalition in the near future [PVdMDL03]. As a result, many issues were not particularly salient at the 2002 election. Instead, the newly emerged List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) was able to set the political agenda. The news in the early spring of 2002 was centered around Pim Fortuyn’s viewpoints on asylum seekers, immigration and Islam as well as the mainstream parties’ attempt to diminish him as unacceptable [VHKODR03].

In many ways, the LPF is not the ideal-typical radical right party [Mud07]: Pim Fortuyn himself rejected the label and was an ardent defender of gay rights, gender equality, and other liberal policies [Bru17]. Likewise, the party was not uniformly against immigrants, e.g. LPF suggested a general pardon for illegal immigrants [VHKODR03]. Nevertheless, in

terms of its issue profile, which is the object of interest in this particular context, the LPF is undeniably a niche party with strong viewpoints on immigration and multiculturalism.

Aside from his anti-immigration policies, Fortuyn successfully mobilized voters who were dissatisfied with politics and thought that the mainstream parties had become too similar [Sil18]. The rapid rise of the LPF caused a regular realignment of Dutch politics, in which mainstream parties quickly adopted new tough stances on immigration [DL16, 911-910]. The Liberal VVD was already on a path towards more restrictive immigration policy, but the rise of LPF accelerated this process considerably [Akk15].

Despite the assassination of Pim Fortuyn himself, LPF entered parliament with 26 seats, more than any new party ever before, and managed to become the second largest party. As a result it was invited into government negotiations and eventually formed a coalition government with the CDA and VVD under the leadership of Jan Peter Balkenende [VHIDR03]. That it only took 68 days to negotiate the coalition agreement, could suggest that the three parties were already quite close to each other [DL16]. The LPF supplied four ministers to the cabinet and became in charge of health, transport, economic affairs, and integration and asylum – the latter without portfolio.

However, the LPF quickly suffered from the loss of its charismatic leader and lack of party organization. The LPF ministers were unable to settle their differences and obstructed the workings of the entire coalition government [VHIDR03, BVdB10]. Meanwhile the support for the LPF in public opinion polls quickly dropped. By October it was only equivalent to four seats in parliament and the coalition government split. The cabinet including LPF was not successful in implementing any new legislation on immigration [ADL12, 586]. New elections were held in late January 2003 [VHIDR03, 70]. To what extent did the participation of LPF affect the public perception of the two other coalition members VVD and CDA?

3.3.2 Weak Treatment: Radical Right as a Support Party

While a majority coalition provides a clear and strong signal to voters about which parties can cooperate, things quickly become more complicated with minority governments and especially externally supported minority governments. Support parties operate in a grey area between opposition and government. There are several reasons why a party might choose to stay out of the coalition: The party might present itself as ideologically opposed to “politics as usual” or perhaps “the time is not right” for a new inexperienced party to negotiate with bigger established parties [BB06]. Due to increased political fragmentation and the anti-establishment profile of many new parties, externally supported minority governments seem to become more common and thus something we need to take into account [OL14]. In this section, I will discuss the Mark Rutte I cabinet in the Netherlands 2010-2012, and the Anders Fogh Rasmussen cabinets (I-III) in Denmark 2001-2011. Other scholars have argued that these governments were majority cabinets in disguise [OL14, DL16], but it is unclear whether they were perceived as such by voters, including the corresponding changes to party placements.

In the Dutch 2010 election, the Freedom Party (PVV) gained more than 15 percent of the vote and thus became a key player in the coalition formation process. This resulted in the first Dutch minority government since 1922 [OL14]. Instead of formally joining the VVD and CDA minority government, the three parties created a support agreement with detailed information about which legislation the PVV would support and how it would oppose a motion of no confidence [DL16]. The support agreement covered four areas: the budget, immigration, safety and care for the elderly. But it also stated that the parties were divided on how to think about Islam. In a separate coalition agreement the CDA and VVD covered all remaining aspects [OL14, 8-9].

In Denmark, a Liberal-Conservative minority government headed by Anders Fogh Rasmussen took office after the 2001 elections. A coalition between the Liberals (V) and Conservatives (K) was nothing new – the parties had governed together in 1982-1993. However, they were always supported by a combination of the three center parties. After the 2001

elections, the Liberal-Conservative government relied on the parliamentary support of the Danish People’s Party (DPP). This was the first time in the postwar period that a government relied on parliamentary support of the right wing, and only the third time that a government formed without the support of the center parties. Furthermore, the DPP suddenly went from having primarily blackmail potential [Dow57, Sar76] to having coalition potential [Ped05]. The continuation of the government was a central theme in both the 2005 and the 2007 election. In 2005, the right-wing bloc maintained its majority, but in 2007 the emergence of a new party, which explicitly opposed the DPP, weakened the coalition electorally. Nevertheless, since there was no viable alternative, the coalition stayed in office with the continuing support of the DPP [DL16, 908]. The first cabinet (2001-2005) was very successful in shifting immigration and integration legislation to the right, while the second and third cabinets made far fewer changes [ADL12, 585]. I will examine how the perceptions of Liberals and Conservatives developed when their cooperation with DPP became more formal and more public.

3.4 Data and Methods

The empirical analysis stands on three legs. In all cases, I am interested in examining the effect of coalition formation on the perceived ideological position on the participating parties. The challenge is to construct the proper counter-factual. The difference-in-differences (DiD) design is appropriate when some parties experience a change while others do not [AK99, 1296]. The treatment effect is measured by comparing the difference in outcomes before and after for the governing parties participating in the coalition with the before and after for opposition parties. The assumption, known as the “parallel trends” assumption [Xu17], is that absent the coalition the governing parties would have evolved in parallel with the opposition parties [LM14, 588]. Naturally, they would have been more right-wing but the difference, i.e. the party fixed effect, would have been constant over time.

According to comparative research there are only small differences in how mainstream

right and mainstream left parties react to the success of radical right parties. They shift their manifesto positions in the same way [WM17, VS10]. Thus, it is plausible that deviations in perceptions can be attributed to coalition formation.

First, I utilize a Dutch individual-level panel study conducted around the 2002 and 2003 elections. The panel study allows me to compare the perceptions of the same individual before and after coalition formation – thus I can control for all the respondent-level covariates simply by using fixed effects. With a DiD design, I examine whether individual respondents perceived the mainstream right VVD and CDA to converge towards the LPF on immigration issues after the three parties formed a coalition, and likewise, whether they perceived LPF to converge to the mainstream right on the left/right dimension.

The Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES) 2002-2003 consisted of three waves. 1907 face-to-face interviews in the pre-election phase was conducted between April 18th and May 14th 2002¹. The election was held on May 15th and the 1574 post-election interviews started the day after and continued until June 27th. Respondents in the two surveys were asked to place parties on a different set of issue scales. After the 2003 election, and after the coalition with LPF was formed and fell, 81 percent of the participants from the 2002 post-election study were re-interviewed. This time they were asked to place parties on the left/right dimension and one two issues related to immigration, one from the pre-election and one from the post-election wave:

- Allowing asylum seekers to enter the Netherlands has frequently been in the news during the last few years. Some people think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers than the government currently does [number 1]. Other people think that the Netherlands should send asylum seekers who are already staying here back to their country of origin [number 7].
- There is disagreement in the Netherlands about foreigners and ethnic minorities. Some people and parties think that these people should be able to live in the Nether-

¹A few alterations were made after the assassination of Pim Fortuyn on May 6th, but nothing that directly affected the items of interest.

lands while preserving all customs of their own culture [number 1]. Others think that these people, if they stay in the Netherlands, should completely adjust themselves to Dutch culture [number 7].

Unfortunately, participants were not asked to evaluate party positions on any economic issues in the post-election wave. Thus I am unable to test the third hypothesis in this study.

Secondly, I conduct a similar analysis using the support agreement between the VVD, CDA, and PVV after the 2010 election as the treatment in my DiD design. Since there is no panel data collected before and after coalition formation, I will have to compare party placement in the DPES 2010 and DPES 2012 and use a host of demographic variables as controls. More specifically, I control for respondent self-placement, age, gender, education, self-reported interest in politics, and how often the respondent reads a national newspaper.

An issue scale concerning multiculturalism (see above) and one concerning economic redistribution reoccurred in the two surveys²:

- Some people and parties think that the differences in incomes in our country should be increased [number 1]. Others think that these differences should be decreased [number 7].

Lastly, I examine long-term effects in Denmark of exposing voters to the weak coalition treatment over a full decade by using the generalized synthetic control method (GSCM) [Xu17]. The GSCM is essentially a generalization of the DiD design, but has the great advantage that it does not assume random intervention. In other words, it relaxes the “parallel trends” assumption [Xu17]. The method solves the problem that a unit, here a mainstream right party, experiences treatment, here coalition formation, at a certain point in time, without there being a comparable case to use as a counter-factual. The solution is to create artificial cases by weighing a set of comparison units.

²All Dutch surveys included batteries asking about party positions on the issue of EU integration, and in 2010-2012 there were batteries concerning euthanasia. The theory does not provide any clear hypotheses on these issues so they are not included in the main analysis. Results are provided in the appendix.

The untreated comparison units, here parties, make up a donor pool [ADH15]. Using a set of predictor variables the algorithm assigns different weights to each donor in order to approximate the trend in party placements before the intervention. This synthetic control then matches the treated unit in the pre-treatment period, but will diverge afterwards if the treatment has any effect. In contrast to the standard synthetic control method [ADH15], GSCM uses fixed effects for units so it is not a problem that the two treated units, Liberals and Conservatives, are located on one side of the political spectrum [Xu17].

Data is derived from the Danish National Election Study 1994-2015. Seven parties were featured continuously over this period: Liberals (V), Conservatives (K), Christian-Democrats (KD), Social Liberals (RV), Social Democrats (SD), Socialist (SF), and the Red-Green Unity List (EL). The radical right party, Danish People’s Party (DF), was not included in the election study prior to 1998. Because of this shorter pre-treatment period I cannot construct an accurate synthetic control, and hence it is not possible to test hypothesis 1 or 3. This study is thus exclusively focused on the impact of cooperation on the perceived positions of the mainstream right.

Since I need control units that were measured on the exact same variables, I have to construct the donor pool from the five Danish opposition parties which were consistently included in the national election study. The priority have been to maximize the number of parties in the donor pool, rather than systematically choosing comparative units. It is admittedly a strong assumption that the opposition parties in the donor pool is completely unaffected by the treatment. The parties were placed along these issue dimensions³:

- The parties disagree on how many refugees we can receive. Some think we receive far too many [number 1]. Others say we can easily take more refugees [number 5].
- The parties also disagree how large the public sector should be. Some parties say we should cut public revenues and expenditures [number 1]. Others say that we must

³There are also issue scales for law and order and environmental policy, but given that there are no clear theoretical expectations for these issues they are only featured in the appendix.

face increasing public revenues and expenditures [number 5].

For both the DPES and the DNES all issue scales and the left/right dimensions have been rescaled to 0 to 1 and recoded such that higher values indicate the more “restrictive” position taken by the radical right.

3.4.1 Controlling for Strategic Repositioning

Before Fortuyn changed the political arena the VVD had already made a draft that was practically neutral towards multiculturalism (defending classical liberal values such as personal freedom and individual responsibility), but they radically changed their positions in January 2002 [PVdMDL03, 39-40]. Similarly, it should not come as a complete surprise to Danish voters that the Danish mainstream right coalition ended up relying on the support of the DPP. Both V and K had already started to shift on the immigration issues after the 1993 election and had been on a decade long journey towards the right before they formed the coalition [DL16, 910]. Thus, it becomes an important question whether coalition formation caused a direct or an indirect change in public perceptions of party positions. Was the shift in voters’ perceptions only due to shifts in policy platforms? Or was there an independent effect of coalition participation in itself?

The most important control variable is the explicit ideological distance that parties, strategically or otherwise, try to portray. Like most of previous research, I rely on data from the Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR) data [FS13a, FA15, AEW16]. Unfortunately, this approach is not ideal when it comes to more specific issues. First of all, the match between MARPOR categories and issues included in the DPES and DNES is far from perfect. The MARPOR coding scheme is not designed for capturing radical right discourse. The 56 individual issue categories are not fully reliable and there is not a specific category capturing immigration [PG13]. More generally, it can be problematic to rely too much on individual MARPOR categories, because they tend to be very noisy measures [MLB12]. Nevertheless, the manifesto positions are the only measures that so closely tracks these specific elections and allow me to measure the explicit ideological

positions of parties both before and after the coalition formation. Being able to control for changes in explicit party positions over this exact period is absolutely crucial for the empirical strategy outlined above, and thus, I include MARPOR data in all three analyses despite its various shortcomings. A detailed description of the measures used can be found in the appendix.

While MARPOR data covers all of the elections in this analysis, the alternatives are much more limited. There is the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) conducted approx. every four years in 1999-2014. Because the waves are so far apart, they are not suitable for analyzing differences between the 2002 and 2003 elections or the 2010 and 2012 elections. However, the CHES can be used to fit the synthetic control in the Danish case. While more recent waves of the CHES includes very specific issue questions, the earliest waves only have very broad categories: GALTAN, which captures position of the party in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights, and LRECON, which captures the position of the party in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues [BDVE⁺15].

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Study 1: Short-Term Effects of Strong Treatment

In the first study, I simply explore whether coalition formation had an impact on how voters subsequently placed the two mainstream governing parties VVD and CDA and the radical right LPF on a number of issue scales. Following the notation in Angrist and Krueger [AK99, 1299], the observed placement by individual i of party j at time t absent the coalition formation is estimated as a function of *party* effects that are fixed over time and a year effect that is common for all parties. The effect of the coalition is simply to add a constant, the treatment effect, here denoted as δ . The interaction term *year * party* is equivalent to a dummy that equals one if the party was exposed to the treatment. The *manifesto* position is specific to both year and party and controls for any indirect effects of coalition formation that might have caused parties to change explicit and strategic positions.

Finally, λ_i is respondent fixed effects, and ϵ_{ijt} is the error term:

$$placement_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 party_j + \beta_2 year_t + \delta(year * party)_{jt} + \beta_3 manifesto_{jt} + \lambda_i + \epsilon_{ijt}$$

In the difference-in-differences (DiD) design, I compare the change in party placement for mainstream right parties that formed a coalition with the LPF to the same change for mainstream left parties that did not. For this design to provide the effect of coalition formation, the change for control parties must provide an accurate estimate of how the mainstream right parties would have changed if LPF was not included in the coalition. In other words, I assume that the difference between the mainstream right and the mainstream left would have been constant had it not been for the treatment. Absent the coalition treatment, party placement would have been a function of respondent-specific idiosyncratic effects, the time, whether the party was mainstream right, and the party's ideological platform represented by the party manifesto. The baseline in this analysis varies by issue. For the left/right dimension, all seven opposition parties (PvdA, GL, SP, D66, CU SGP, and LN) are included in the baseline. For the multiculturalism issue, the baseline is the mainstream left parties D66 and PvdA and the green party GroenLinks (GL) and for asylum it is only D66 and PvdA⁴.

According to the hypotheses, there should be a significant negative treatment effect of being the LPF after the coalition on the left/right dimension and a significant positive treatment effect of being a mainstream right party after the coalition formation on the immigration issues.

In table 3.1 one sees that there are significant treatment effects across the board for the mainstream right parties, but not for the radical right. The CDA and VVD are on average perceived as 0.14 units to the right of the opposition on the left/right dimension, while they are perceived as 0.19 units more restrictive towards granting asylum to refugees and

⁴GroenLinks was not included in the 2002 pre-election survey and is thus not part of the baseline on the Asylum question. SP, CU, SGP, and LN were only included in the survey battery concerning left/right placement.

Table 3.1: D-i-D analysis of perceived party positions before/after the 2002 coalition formation on three issue scales [0-1]

	Left/right	Asylum	Multiculturalism
CDA/VVD (dummy)	0.140*** (0.005)	0.191*** (0.004)	0.264*** (0.005)
LPF (dummy)	0.205*** (0.006)	0.385*** (0.006)	0.390*** (0.008)
2003 (dummy)	-0.140*** (0.003)	-0.097*** (0.005)	-0.048*** (0.006)
2003 * CDA/VVD	0.070*** (0.006)	0.078*** (0.006)	0.044*** (0.006)
2003 * LPF	0.106*** (0.008)	-0.001 (0.007)	0.055*** (0.008)
Manifesto position	0.831*** (0.014)	4.006*** (0.126)	2.462*** (0.137)
Observations	35,183	21,197	21,427
R ²	0.378	0.615	0.588
Adjusted R ²	0.325	0.548	0.526
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

0.26 units more opposed to multiculturalism. As we would expect, LPF is even further to the right on all scales. This is all after taking manifesto positions into account. After the treatment, in 2003, the opposition parties are perceived as further to the left on all scales.

On the left/right dimension there is a strong positive and significant treatment effect for both mainstream parties and the radical right. Contrary to hypothesis 1, the results suggest that both VVD, CDA, and the LPF were perceived as slightly further to the right than they would have been if they had not joined a coalition together. This also runs directly counter to previous findings, which showed that the perceptions of the prime ministers' party was largely unaffected by coalition formation, while the junior member was perceived as largely adopting the prime minister's position [FA15]. The mainstream parties were less affected than LPF.

On the question of asylum, we see that the two mainstream right parties were perceived as 0.08 units more restrictive on the issue-scale, than they would have been otherwise, because of the coalition with the LPF. Absent the treatment, all the parties in the system would have moved 0.1 units towards more permissive positions. Hence, there is a net positive change between 2002 and 2003 for all parties: governing and opposition. Please keep in mind that there is no substantial policy anchoring the scales. The results could indicate that the use of the scale changed radically between the two elections: That the discourse on immigration policies shifted during 2002, and positions that were previously

considered radical became normalized. The key take away should be that there was a positive treatment effect for the mainstream right, and thus that including the radical right did have a strong significant impact on how the mainstream right parties were perceived by voters relative to other parties. The interesting movements over time are relative not absolute. In short, these coefficient estimates provides strong support for hypothesis 2.

There is a similar effect on the related question of multiculturalism. Here the treatment effect is 0.04 for the mainstream right indicating that the mainstream right were perceived as significantly more opposed to multiculturalism than they would have been otherwise. Surprisingly, there is an even larger effect for the LPF. Why is there a difference in the results between two seemingly related issues? The devil is in the detail and one should be careful when making general claims about “the immigration issue”. A careful observer of Dutch politics would argue that the two issues are in fact not so similar [AdLR16]. Specifically on the issue of asylum the LPF was more moderate than the VVD at the end of the 2002 campaign.

That there are somewhat different results between the asylum and the multiculturalism issue might raise concerns that the treatment on the asylum issue is confounded. Pim Fortuyn was assassinated merely 7 days before the election after most of the responses for party placement on the issue of granting asylum to refugees was collected. Perhaps it was his murder, not the entry of the LPF into parliament and/or the governing coalition, that caused a major change in voter perceptions [BW19]. By looking only at individuals who answered the pre-election survey after the murder, I can establish that the effect is not solely due to the assassination. Please refer to the appendix for the results.

When examining the subset that answered the survey after the assassination of Pim Fortuyn one also sees that the pre-treatment 2002 perception of LPF is slightly more moderate. Dinas et al. showed that the murder itself generated a surge in sympathy for the LPF which motivated survey respondents to place the party much closer to their own positions on the issues of asylum seekers, crime, economic redistribution, and euthanasia [DHvS16]. For this subset there is a positive and significant treatment effect suggesting

that the LPF was not perceived as moderating very much after joining the coalition.

All in all, I find mixed support for the first and second hypothesis. I cannot test the third hypothesis in this analysis, since there were no strictly economic issues included in both the surveys.

3.5.2 Study 2: Short-Term Effects of Weak Treatment

The second study explores whether the support agreement between VVD, CDA and the PVV impacted how voters placed the relevant parties on immigration and economic issues. According to the hypotheses, there should be a negative treatment effect for the PVV on the left/right scale, moving the PVV to the left, and a positive effect on the redistribution issue, moving the PVV to the right. Meanwhile there should be a positive treatment effect for the mainstream parties on multiculturalism, such that the parties are perceived as more restrictive after joining a coalition with the PVV. The baseline in this analysis is the opposition parties PvdA, D66 and the Socialist Party (SP), except for on the general left/right where the GL are also included. The observed placement by individual i of party j at time t is estimated with the following equation where the interaction term $year*party$ is equivalent to a dummy for exposure to the treatment, δ is the treatment effect, and ϵ_{ijt} is the error term:

$$placement_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 party_j + \beta_2 year_t + \delta(year * party)_{jt} + \beta_3 manifesto_{jt} + \vec{\beta}_4 demo + \epsilon_{ijt}$$

Table 3.2 shows that after taking manifesto positions into account, the mainstream right is still perceived as further right on the left/right dimension and more negative towards multiculturalism and economic redistribution than the baseline parties. Surprisingly, the PVV is perceived as less restrictive towards multiculturalism but more opposed to redistribution and generally further right than what is indicated by the party's manifesto.

There are strong treatment effects on all issues for both mainstream and radical right. I find the expected relationship on the general left/right dimension. There is a strong

Table 3.2: D-i-D analysis of perceived party positions before/after the 2010 coalition formation on three issue scales [0-1]

	Left/Right	Multiculturalism	Redistribution
CDA/VVD (dummy)	0.178*** (0.006)	0.046*** (0.006)	0.182*** (0.006)
PVV (dummy)	0.308*** (0.007)	-0.228*** (0.030)	0.168*** (0.007)
2012 (dummy)	0.095*** (0.004)	-0.057*** (0.006)	0.142*** (0.007)
2012 * CDA/VVD	-0.167*** (0.007)	0.065*** (0.008)	-0.136*** (0.009)
2012 * PVV	-0.200*** (0.009)	0.067*** (0.011)	-0.263*** (0.013)
Manifesto position	1.762*** (0.041)	4.534*** (0.185)	2.652*** (0.101)
Resp. self-placement	0.0003 (0.006)	0.138*** (0.007)	0.122*** (0.008)
Age	0.0003*** (0.0001)	0.001*** (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0001)
Female	-0.002 (0.003)	0.014*** (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Lower vocational	-0.008 (0.007)	-0.056*** (0.009)	-0.027*** (0.009)
Secondary education	0.002 (0.008)	-0.030*** (0.011)	-0.043*** (0.011)
Middle voc/higher sec	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.037*** (0.009)	-0.023*** (0.009)
Higher voc/university	0.007 (0.007)	-0.020** (0.009)	-0.033*** (0.009)
Political interest	0.014** (0.005)	-0.010 (0.007)	0.0004 (0.007)
Newspaper reading	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.007 (0.005)	0.008 (0.005)
Constant	-0.472*** (0.020)	-1.792*** (0.089)	-1.549*** (0.071)
Observations	22,606	15,838	19,270
R ²	0.470	0.404	0.219
Adjusted R ²	0.470	0.403	0.218

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

treatment effect for PVV, which is perceived as 0.2 units further to the left after signing the support agreement than it would have been otherwise. However, the mainstream right parties are not unaffected. They too are perceived as moving towards the political center.

On the questions of multiculturalism, which is certainly the most salient issue for the PVV, there is a moderate positive treatment effect for all three right-wing parties. The three parties are perceived as staying put, while the control parties move 0.06 units further towards permissive positions on the issue after the mainstream right signed the support agreement with PVV. Again, this could indicate a shift in how the scale is perceived and used. I interpret it as partial support for the second hypothesis. It is noteworthy that the coalition agreement had a substantial effect on multiculturalism even though the three parties had stated explicitly that they disagreed [OL14].

Finally, there is a significant treatment effect on the issue of redistribution for the PVV, but in the opposite direction. The party is perceived as 0.26 units further to the left than it would have been otherwise, consequently moving it further away from the coalition partners. There is also a significant effect for the two mainstream right parties, which are perceived as largely staying put after the coalition formed. Like with the two other issues, the picture is that of a right-wing coalition which is moving in parallel instead of approaching each other. The PVV is more heavily affected on the left/right and on redistribution, but the differences between parties are small.

3.5.3 Study 3: Long-Term Effects of Weak Treatment

The seven Danish parties in the third analysis are observed in seven election studies over a period of 21 years (1994-2015). All studies are post-election studies, which mean that only 1994 and 1998 came before the coalition treatment in 2001. I create time-series data by computing weekly averages of all placements of a party based on response date. Unfortunately, the exact time of data collection is only available in 1994 and 2001, so in all other years I am forced to assume that observations are uniformly distributed over the entire data collection period and base weekly averages on that. Violating this assumption should

not have any substantial effects on the validity of the results. I am looking for change in perceptions between elections and not over the course of the months that the survey is in the field. Calculating weekly averages is a method to generate more pre-treatment observations, not because I expect there to be meaningful trends at that level.

The goal is to create a synthetic control for the issue position of V and one for the issue position of K by taking weighted averages of the five opposition party positions in the donor pool. This combination of parties in the donor pool will do a better job at matching the characteristics of the two parties of interest than comparing to any single party alone [ADH15].

I specify a number of matching variables where the synthetic controls should mimic the treated units in the pre-treatment period. For instance, to create a synthetic control for the perceived position of the Liberals on refugees and asylum I create a synthetic control that matches on manifesto position on asylum and the general left/right and the average placement on the cultural dimension (GALTAN) and the general left/right in an expert survey. I also used the average self-placement of respondents who indicated that they identified with the party as a measure of party supporter positions. Lastly, I also include party size.

The best possible weights will minimize the sum of absolute distances between the synthetic controls and the treated parties on these matching variables. However, not every variable is equally important. The synthetic control should most closely reproduce the values of variables that are good predictors of the outcome of interest [ADH15] - in this case party placement. Specifically for the asylum issue, the model returns the coefficient estimates displayed in table 3.3

Following Abadie et al. [ADH15, 498], the treatment effect for the two treated parties $j \in [1, 2]$ in the post-treatment period t is given by the equation below where δ is the treatment effect and w is a $(J-2 \times 1)$ vector of weights, one for each of the comparison parties in the donor pool

Table 3.3: Coefficient estimates for perceived party position on the asylum issue

	beta	S.E.	CI.lower	CI.upper	p.value
Manifesto issue position	0.45	0.04	0.46	0.61	0.00
Manifesto left/right position	0.24	0.03	0.15	0.27	0.00
Expert cultural position	-0.26	0.04	-0.36	-0.18	0.00
Expert left/right position	1.18	0.08	0.77	1.10	0.00
Party size	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00
Supporter issue position	-0.48	0.04	-0.53	-0.36	0.00

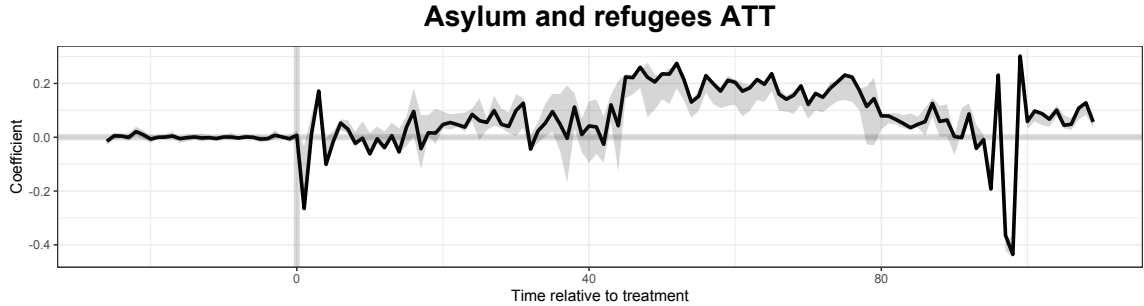


Figure 3.1: Generalized synthetic control estimates: Average treatment effect of coalition formation on mainstream right on the asylum issue

$$\delta_{jt} = placement_{jt} - \sum_{j=3}^J w_j placement_{jt}$$

Figure 3.1 graphs the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), on the question of asylum. Since there are two treated parties, it is possible to average the treatment effect to summarize the main result. The graph shows the difference between the reported perceptions of party placements and the estimated counter-factual. There is a significant positive effect on the two mainstream right parties between the 40th and the 80th time point after the treatment. In other words, the Liberals and Conservatives were perceived as more restrictive towards refugees and asylum seekers than they would have been otherwise. Over time the ATT slowly starts to creep downwards again and approaches zero.

The same relationship is illustrated in figure 3.2. The figure plots the average on treated units and their estimated synthetic controls. The figure also plots the raw data. One sees that observations are clustered around the seven elections and that all of the controls are found at lower values because the opposition parties are much more positive

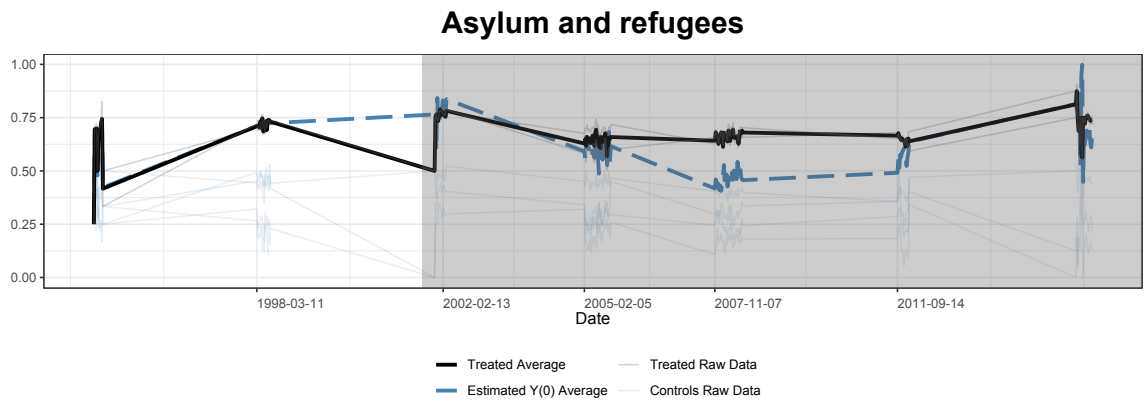


Figure 3.2: Outcome and counter-factual perceptions of positions on the asylum issue of mainstream right after coalition formation.

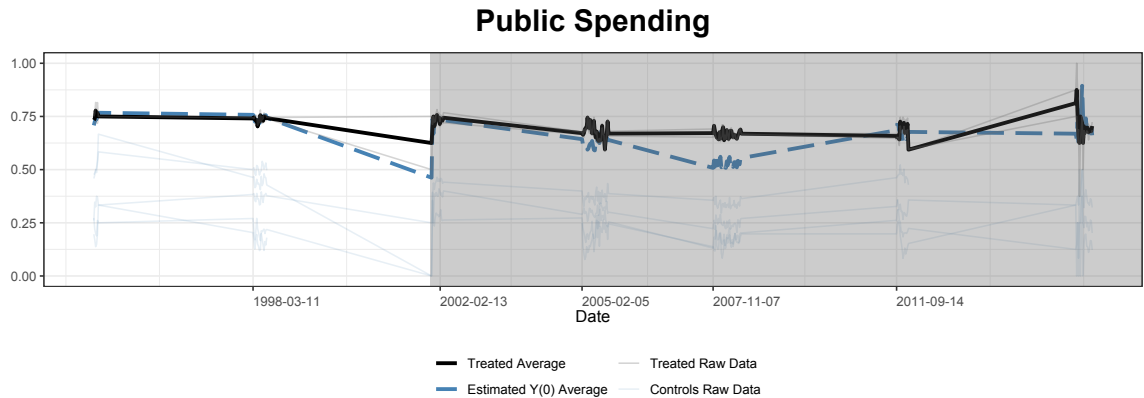


Figure 3.3: Outcome and counter-factual perceptions of positions on the public spending issue of mainstream right after coalition formation.

towards immigrants. This shows that the estimated synthetic control was slightly higher than the treated units in 2001, but then quite a lot smaller in 2005, 2007, and 2011. This result suggests that the two mainstream right parties were indeed perceived as more critical towards refugees after the coalition formation supported by the Danish People's Party.

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 also show the average of treated units and synthetic controls, but on the issue of public spending versus tax and on the general left/right. According to the hypotheses there should not be any significant effect of cooperation with the radical right for the mainstream parties on public perceptions on this economic issue scale, since the

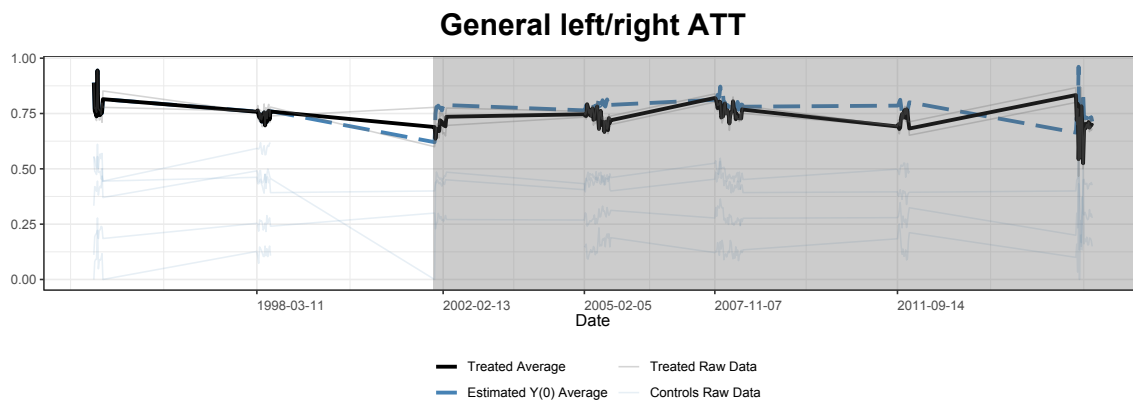


Figure 3.4: Outcome and counter-factual perceptions of positions on the general left/right dimension of mainstream right after coalition formation.

Table 3.4: Average treatment effect of the treated (ATT) averaged over all periods

Issue	Treatment effect	S.E.	Lower bound	Upper bound	p-value
Asylum	0.0819	0.008	0.0588	0.0922	0
Spending	0.0572	0.0141	0.0157	0.0714	0.002
Left/right	-0.0461	0.0010	-0.0486	-0.0447	0

mainstream parties are in charge of this policy area, or on the overarching left/right. The model reveal that there are some effects but that they are smaller and shorter lived.

2005 is the first election after the Danish People’s party started supporting the mainstream right-wing coalition. Here there is practically no difference between the perceived economic position of the treated parties and the synthetic controls. Immediately after the 2007 election, the mainstream right was perceived as more right-wing on public spending than they would have been otherwise, but in 2011 and 2015 the effect is gone again.

On the left/right dimension in figure 3.4, the two parties are generally thought of as more moderate than what would have been expected. In 2005 and 2007, the blue line representing the average perception of the synthetic control is slightly above the treated average. However, these differences are hardly of any practical significance. In 2011 and 2015, the two lines are almost impossible to distinguish.

Table 3.4 summarizes the results of the GSCM for all three issue scales. The treatment effect is averaged across all treated parties and all post-treatment periods, and thus rep-

resents a one-figure summary of the effect of coalition formation on voters' perceptions of party positions. As expected there is a positive effect on the issue of asylum and refugees, meaning that the mainstream right parties on average was perceived as much more restrictive towards immigration after the coalition formation than they would have been otherwise. This results provides strong support for hypothesis 2. There is also a small positive effect on the issue of public spending and a even smaller negative effect on the left/right dimension. These two results are not explained by the existing theory. All the estimates are significant at the $\alpha = 0.001$ level.

3.6 Conclusion and Discussion

A lot of recent literature in the field of party competition has been devoted to studying what happens to radical right parties and their reputations when they start cooperating with the establishment. Few scholars have paid any attention to the trade-offs facing mainstream parties. Radical right parties represent attractive coalition partners because their preferences are to a large extent tangential to those of mainstream parties. That means that the parties can engage in log-rolling and delegate control to the parties that attach more salience to the respective economic and immigration issues. However, when engaging in this strategy mainstream parties naturally risk being accused of selling out on the issue of the radical right.

In this chapter, I hypothesize that all coalition members will be perceived to take policy positions that are closer to the position of the party that attributes most salience to an issue. More specifically, I propose that the immigration positions of the radical right will rub off on their mainstream parties. In turn, the perceptions of the radical right on economic issues will start to approach that of the mainstream right. I test my hypothesis on data from a strong (2002) and a weak (2010) coalition treatment in the Netherlands, as well as on the long-term evolution of voter perceptions of Danish parties (1994-2015).

I find mixed support for my hypotheses. The perceptions of VVD's and CDA's po-

sitions on the issue of asylum was certainly tainted after their coalition with the LPF in 2002, but the perception of their position on multiculturalism less so. The perceptions of VVD and CDA was also affected by the weak coalition treatment when they signed a support agreement with PVV in 2010. In line with my hypothesis, the two mainstream right parties were perceived as moving towards PVV on immigration and multiculturalism holding everything else constant. Contrary to my hypothesis, the perceptions of the radical right moved too. Similarly, I generally found that all coalition partners moved in unison on the economic issues and on the left/right dimension. Lastly, the analysis of long-term trends in Denmark using GSCM shows that the mainstream right governing parties were strongly affected by the radical right support when it comes to asylum and refugees, but also to some extent on the issue of spending in the public sector.

I have so far found more support for the second hypothesis about immigration issues, than for the first hypothesis about the general left/right and the third hypothesis about economic issues. Admittedly, between 0.05 and 0.10 on a 0-1 scale might not sound like a practically significant effect. However, recall that both the Danish and the Dutch party systems are rather crowded. Survey respondents are tasked with placing 8-13 parties on a 11-point scale. Perceived ideological movements of half a unit might imply that parties are leap-frogging each other or have substantive consequences for which party is perceived as more proximate to the voter.

The results suggest that voters are grouping coalition partners together on various issues, but that perceptions are often moving in parallel rather than approaching each other. This matches previous results, which have found that instead of moderating on the immigration issue, the radical right has moved even further to the right such that the gap remains intact [AdLR16, WM17] and adds to the mounting evidence against the inclusion-moderation thesis. Whether the radical right parties' ability to maintain a distinct profile on the immigration issue is caused by their somewhat informal cooperation with the mainstream right, as opposed to formal coalition membership, is certainly a hypothesis worth exploring further.

These three studies offers some variation in terms of the political context and the policy issues studied, but more work is needed to establish the generalizability of the claims. The argument is not limited to radical right parties, but could also apply to situations with smaller differences in issue emphasis. The theory suggest that voters assume that, when bargaining over the coalition policy, parties have a larger say on the issues they care deeply about. A more direct way of testing the effect of perceived policy influence, is to examine whether voters project the issue position of the minister responsible for a given policy onto all other members of the coalition. If this is the case, then cabinet leaders could strategically change the policy image of the entire coalition without any of the actors changing their stated policy simply by shuffling portfolios.

This chapter takes the important first step, in theorizing about how cooperation with niche parties will affect voter perceptions of party positions. As Western European party systems are becoming more fragmented, we are likely to witness even more radical right parties or other types of niche parties in government. Any coalition formation or support agreement between parties with complementary policy would represent a valuable case for testing the hypotheses outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4

Does Coalition Formation Impact Voters' Perceptions of Parties? Evidence from a Series of Survey Experiments

How does coalition formation impact voters' perceptions of their party system? Coalition formation is an essential part of the representational linkages in multiparty parliamentary systems. It fundamentally constrains what parties can and cannot do in the legislature and in government, and it should be a crucial consideration when holding parties accountable at the next election. Yet we still know surprisingly little about how voters' think about coalitions.

Political science scholars have only recently started paying any attention to how voters respond to coalition formation. Fortunato and Stevenson argued that voters perceive parties that serve together in a coalition government as more ideologically similar than they should based on manifesto positions alone [FS13a]. Fortunato and Adams showed that the divergence between perceived and explicit positions is highly asymmetrical. Voters map the prime minister's policy onto junior coalition members, but not vice versa [FA15]. Adams et al. showed that the same mechanism applies to voters' perceptions of party positions concerning European integration [AEW16].

Studying public perceptions in real-world contexts has strong benefits for improving external validity. However, many other factors can potentially co-vary with changes in public perceptions, raising concerns about omitted variable problems and the internal validity of the above designs. Most critically, much depends on the researcher's ability to control for explicit changes in policy platforms with the manifesto positions. However, this measure is notoriously associated with noise [BLM09] and scaling problems [LBML11]. To mitigate such threats to causal inference, one might look to experimental studies to pinpoint exactly how variation in coalition signals might influence voter perceptions. Previously,

Falco-Gimeno and Muñoz have tested the effects of pre-electoral coalition signals experimentally in the context of Spanish regional elections. Their results were only marginally significant [FGM17].

In this chapter, I examine the effect of coalition signals on voters' perceptions of party positions through four different survey experiments. In the following section, I briefly give an overview of the current literature on coalition formation and voters' perceptions. I also present the main hypothesis derived from this literature. I then proceed to describe the considerations behind the research design. In the next three sections, I describe the design of the four survey experiments, which vary in terms of context, measurement, and treatment, and the results in detail. This is the first study to provide such a thorough test of the theory of coalition heuristics. By developing an array of different treatments, I have given the effect of coalition signals on voter perceptions several opportunities to manifest itself. Nevertheless, the experiments fail to find systematic support for the theory and the evidence generally suggests that it should be revised.

4.1 Theoretical Background

How do voters learn about parties' policy positions? Research has shown that voters are not attentive to shifts in parties' policy platforms – at least not initially. Depending on how you analyze the empirics, voters are at best changing their perceptions of parties' ideological placement marginally in response to shifts in the parties' policy platforms [FV14]. At worst, there is no significant relationship between shifts in policy platforms and changes in party placement [AEST11].

This could indicate that voters are not paying attention to policy platforms, but rather to elite behavior. There are several plausible reasons why voters might be unresponsive to policy platforms in the short run: Perhaps they are not sure how to balance new platforms with past performance and discount the new platform as cheap talk motivated by opportunism. In fact, it might be quite rational for voters to place more emphasis on parties'

actions and implemented policies, rather than pre-election promises [Ada12]. Unfortunately it is cognitively very costly to obtain, store, and access full information about parties' legislative behavior. This is where coalition formation can offer a convenient short-cut.

Several recent studies have argue that voters incorporate coalition information when estimating the policy positions of parties in the governing coalition and most have used the term “coalition heuristics” to describe this cognitive process [FS13a, FA15, AEW16, SK17, FGFV20]. In short they argue, that party's status as a member of either the coalition government or opposition is a cheap and widely available piece of information about parties' ideological positions.

According to Fortunato and Stevenson, there are potentially two complementary ways that the coalition heuristic could work [FS13a, 463-465]. First, ideological proximity increases the probability of forming the government in the first place. It is simply easier for parties that are ideologically similar, and not just ideologically adjacent, to negotiate a coalition agreement [MS01]. Thus, the choice of a coalition partner reveals the true ideological position of a party net of any ambiguous talk about policy differences. When push comes to shove, who will the party align itself with? Secondly, once parties have committed themselves to cooperation they have strong incentives to realize their policy compromise over time. Because coalitions stand and fall together, the coalition members have large incentives to make cooperation work [GB06]. Fearing ministerial drift, coalition members monitor each other closely to make sure that the agreed upon compromises are also implemented [MV04]. They are therefore more likely to make and implement policy compromise along the way, than parties participating in more ad-hoc cooperation. The experimental treatments in this project are designed to test both of these mechanisms.

In short, the choice of coalition partner is an important signal about a party's ideological preferences. Coalition formation signals to voters that the coalition members are more ideologically similar, i.e. closer in ideological space, to one another than they would have been otherwise [FS13a, FA15, AEW16]. This is the central claim of the coalition heuristic literature and the hypothesis, which I test in this chapter.

4.2 Causal Effects of Coalition Formation

The theories about the impact of coalition formation on voters' perceptions of party positions have rightfully attracted a lot of scholarly attention. However, so far no work has adequately tested the causal claims. In this chapter, I present a series of survey experiments aimed at testing the causal effect of coalition formation on voters' perceptions. This empirical strategy has the advantage of allowing me to combine random assignment to treatments (to ensure internal validity) with large variation across the demographic characteristics of experimental subjects (to improve external validity).

4.2.1 Internal Validity: The Need for an Experimental Test

Does coalition formation have a negative effect on the perceived distance between parties? We can observe what happens to perceptions before and after coalition formation [FA15, AEW16] and we can compare perceptions of parties in government with parties outside government [FS13a]. However, we cannot know for certain whether differences in perception, over time or between parties, are direct results of coalition formation. It is crucial for causal identification that all relevant aspects that are not consequences of the coalition formation are controlled for [KKV94]. If the differences can be explained by some omitted variable, such as a rapprochement between party platforms and public policy stances, the hypothesized causal relationship between perceptions and coalition formation would be spurious. The changes in perceived party position could have happened anyway.

Studies of coalition heuristics [FS13a, AEW16], like many observational studies, suffers from a problem with causal identification. In the real world, no two political situations are exactly alike in all respects except for the composition of the coalition government. Identifying the causal effect of a coalition signal requires comparing what happens under a particular coalition formation with what would have occurred under a different counter-factual government, holding all of the other avenues through which party positions are communicated constant. Defining this counter-factual through the use of control variables

is a fiendishly difficult task.

Part of the difficulty stem from the limitations of existing data. Many of the observational studies rely on national election studies, such as the European Election Study (EES) or those included in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), where voters' perceptions of parties are surveyed every two to five years. Because the time interval between measurements of perceptions is so large, there are a relatively limited number of observations to draw upon and it is difficult, if not impossible, to sufficiently control for all of the different changes in policy and rhetoric taking place in between observations. It is possible that coalition formation and voters' perceptions covary because they are both products of party platforms.

The previous studies have mainly attempted to solve the associated omitted variable problem by using manifesto positions, also collected at every election, as a proxy for the policy positions that parties are advocating in election campaigns. This use of manifesto data is standard to the literature, but it is problematic for several reasons: manifesto data was originally intended to measure issue emphasis, left-right positions based on manifestos tend to lack face validity, manifesto data is prone to bias etc. [Lav03, BLM09, DG10].

Most importantly, manifesto data only represents the positions that parties are strategically trying to convey to voters. Manifestos are designed to frame the party in a positive light and thus they are unlikely to convey any type of dissent or compromise [MHBS07, 27]. Thus, the manifesto data does nothing to control for the many external sources of parties' reputations. In addition, they risk overestimating the ideological distance between governing parties, that portray themselves as more extreme to preempt discounting of their policy positions [BST12].

Other complications stem from the problem that it can be difficult to assess exactly when coalition formation occurs. To use the language of causal identification, it is often unclear whether the treatment has been administered. Parties have established coalition reputations that are reinforced over time [AD10, MS10, DM14], but they also announce ahead of elections which coalition they prefer [Gsc07] and sometimes they even form pre-

electoral coalitions [Gol06]. As a consequence, there are few, if any, naturally occurring coalition formations that represent genuine external shocks. Thus, comparisons between parties are complicated by the nuances of their various histories and constituencies.

Experimental research does away with the omitted variable problem. It draws on the power of random assignments of participants to variations of the independent variable to establish unbiased causal inferences [Mut11]. Because participants are randomly assigned to treatments, any systematic variation in their perceptions can be attributed to the specific differences in their treatment. As it is neither ethically defensible nor practically possible to directly manipulate the actual coalition governments, I am left to experimentally manipulate survey participants' information about the coalition that have formed or will form in the future.

4.2.2 External Validity: Accumulation of Evidence

The best way to establish generalizability of the results is through accumulation and the convergence of many different studies. Scholars should compare results from studies in one particular setting to other studies and assess whether the findings related to a given hypothesis are consistent across participants, contexts, measures and treatments. In this chapter, I present four experimental studies which vary along these dimensions. The design considerations are summarized in table 4.1 and described in much more detail in the sections below.

Three of the four studies are situated in Denmark. Even though the studies takes place in the same country, they are two years apart and thus capture different political situations. In 2018, the country was governed by a multi-party right-wing minority coalition and in 2020 it is governed by the Social Democrats in a single-party minority government. While minority governments are the norm in Denmark, they are still unheard of in post-war Germany, which is the setting for the remaining survey experiment.

The studies also differ in terms of their dependent variables. One study looks exclusively at party placements on the left/right dimension, two studies include an immigration

Table 4.1: Summary of design consideration

	Context	Measurement	Treatment
1A	<u>Denmark 2018</u> Multiparty minority	Left-right, Immigration, Economy, Environment, Crime	<u>Direct treatment</u> Hypothetical scenario Refusal to negotiate/ coalition formation
1B	<u>Denmark 2018</u> Multiparty minority	Left-right	<u>Direct treatment</u> Hypothetical scenario Refusal/invitation to negotiate
2	<u>Germany 2019</u> Grand coalition	Left-right, Immigration, Economy	<u>Indirect treatment</u> Priming of current coalition Ongoing legislative process
3	<u>Denmark 2020</u> Single-party minority	Left-right, Immigration, Economy	<u>Indirect treatment</u> Framing of current relationship with support parties High/low commitment to government

issue and an economic issue along with the left-right, and one study adds the environment and law and order to the list. Aside from Adams et al. studying party positions on European integration [AEW16] and Hjermitsev studying party position towards immigration [Hje19], these studies are the first to explore the effect of coalition signals on specific issue dimensions.¹

Finally, the studies presented here vary in terms of experimental treatments. Coalition formation can reveal ideological information through several complementary mechanisms and, as mentioned above, it can be hard to pinpoint exactly when the important transfer of information occurs. Signals are issued at different points in time: the negotiation stage of coalitions, the final agreement, the performance of coalition governments through legislation, or the long-term comprehensive commitments of coalition members to the policy and survival of the government. Some or all of these could potentially affect voters' perceptions. The treatments contain all these types of behavior associated with coalition formation.

The treatments also vary in terms of their directness. Direct treatments are those in which the manipulation is precisely what it appears to be to the participant. The survey prompts make no effort to hide for participants that they are being exposed to new information. Instead they explicitly ask participants to consider a hypothetical scenario. In contrast, with indirect treatments the relevant characteristics of the treatment are seldom obvious to the participant. The goal is to indirectly induce an altered thought process by priming participants to think of the current political situation or by framing the coalition in a particular way.

The target population is in all cases the general electorate. The specific subjects vary by nature of the different recruitment and timing of the studies.

¹I suspect that this gap in the literature has a lot to do with the lack of consistent measurements of perceptions of parties' issue positions across time and space in observational data. This is just another benefit of the experimental design.

4.3 Study 1: Hypothetical Coalition Scenarios

The first two studies take as their starting point that the important signal contained in coalition formation is whether two parties are willing to cooperate or not. In that respect, the approach is similar to the study by Falco-Gimeno and Muñoz [FGM17]. The studies were built into the same survey conducted in April and May 2018 in Denmark. Denmark is in many ways the perfect setting for studying the effects of coalition signals. Coalition formation is an integral part of Danish politics and voters have great experience thinking through various coalition scenarios. The subsequent coalition formation is always a key topic during Danish election campaigns and party leaders go through great lengths to make their coalition preferences known.

A key feature of Danish politics is that coalition formation is structured around two clearly defined blocs of parties which present themselves as clear government alternatives. Surprisingly, this structure is sometimes described as the main cause that minority governments are the overwhelming norm in Denmark. These minority governments can govern effectively, exactly because they rely on a stable bloc majority [GPT05]. Furthermore, the party of the prime minister is always quite predictable because it is determined by which bloc gets the support of the median legislator. A social-democratic prime minister is usually replaced by a liberal and vice versa [GPT05]. I take advantage of this pattern by making either the Social Democrats (SD) or the Liberals (V) issue the coalition signals.

Additionally, the Danish political system is quite fragmented and it is not unusual to have 10 parties represented in parliament. This opens up to possibilities of a wide range of coalition constellations. Finally, the emergence of new parties is a regular occurrence in Danish politics, especially in recent years, and thus not something that should strike participants as unfamiliar or unrealistic.

4.3.1 Experimental Design

Participants are asked to make judgments about the policy positions of parties based on two different hypothetical scenarios. I am solely looking at between-subjects effects, i.e. comparing the average placement of groups that received different treatments and the control group. 1,117 computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) of Danish citizens 18 years and older were completed between early April and late May 2018 in collaboration with Lucid.

In the first experiment, participants are randomly divided into a “coalition formation” condition (2/5), a “coalition refusal” condition (2/5), or a control group (1/5). Participants in the control group are asked to place all parties currently represented in their national parliament on the left-right and issue dimensions. The remaining participants are exposed to different hypothetical scenarios concerning existing parties. Participants receive a positive signal (a coalition has formed) or a negative signal (a coalition cannot possibly form) issued by the Liberals (V), which the party of the current prime minister. Subsequently, respondents are asked to place all parties in the party system on the left-right scale and other policy dimensions as if the coalition scenario was real.

Hypothesis 1a Participants who receive a “coalition formation” signal will shift their perceptions of the Liberals and the party invited into government towards each other, compared to participants who receive a “coalition refusal” signal.

Many voters have sufficient experience with the coalition formation process to infer whether a particular constellation is realistic or not [MHGP11, DT12]. On one hand, the experimental stimuli might be too realistic to elicit any response. Participants might not feel that they learn something new. On the other hand, if the experimental stimulus deviates too far from established notions, it might be discarded as confusing or simply unrealistic. If the stimulus material is considered nonsensical participants might not engage with it much. To alleviate this type of problem, the treatments vary in terms of the specific parties involved. As a consequence, some coalitions will be familiar and some completely novel.

The signal is directed towards one of four minor parties: two right of the Liberals (Danish Peoples Party (DF) or the Liberal Alliance (LA)) and two left of the Liberals (Radical Liberals (RV) or the Alternative (AL)). The four minor parties were chosen primarily because the notion of them collaborating with the Liberals (V) is not entirely unlikely and secondly because they represent very different types of parties in terms of their history, their issue profiles, their party organization, and their past relationship with the Liberals (V). By incorporating this variation into the treatment, I can better generalize the results beyond any particular pair of parties.

During this period, Denmark was governed by a minority coalition consisting of the Liberals (V), the Conservatives (K), and the Liberal Alliance (LA) with the support of the larger Danish People's Party (DF). The Liberal prime minister's had been relying on the parliamentary support of the Danish Peoples Party since 2001, and almost two decades later, many felt that it was time that the Danish Peoples Party realized their coalition potential and claimed cabinet seats. Prior to 2001, the Liberal-Conservative governments had for a long time relied on the center parties - the so-called "king makers". Between 1980 and 2000, only two governments were able to form without the support of the center parties. Thus, voters with a good memory might consider a centrist coalition formation involving a centrist party a realistic possibility. In 2018 the only "old" center party still represented in parliament is the Radical Liberals (RV). However, in 2013 a former Radical Liberal minister had split from the party and formed the Alternative (AL). Although generally considered a left-wing party, the Alternative claimed to do away with "politics as usually" and ideological constraints. This has left the party somewhat ambiguous in terms of coalition preferences.

Imagine that there has just been a parliamentary election. The party Liberals now announces that they **[have already formed/cannot possibly form]** a government where **[Danish People’s Party/Liberal Alliance/Radical Liberals/the Alternative]** is also included.

You will now get a number of questions about the parties’ policy positions. When answering them, you should as far as possible imagine that the situation you just read about was real. Based on the new situation, where will you place the following parties on a scale from ”left” to ”right”?

After respondents have placed all existing parties on multiple ideological scales they are asked a simple attention check. Could they recall which two parties they had just read about? Luckily, as seen in table 4.2, the vast majority could. While this is of course no guarantee that the participants found the assignment meaningful, it at least assures us that most participants did read the treatment material.

Table 4.2: Percentage of participants in each treatment group who could recall the stimulus material correctly

	Coalition Formation	Coalition Refusal
The Alternative	85%	79%
Danish People’s Party	85%	83%
Liberal Alliance	80%	75%
Radical Liberals	81%	87%

For the second survey experiment, all participants are asked to imagine a new party, the Reform Party, which will run in the next election. A new hypothetical party obviously comes with the great advantage that respondents have no recollection and thus no lingering effects of the party’s track record of coalition formation. As a potential downside, a purely hypothetical treatment might lack experimental realism. Based on random assignment participants are told that the party is located either to the left or to the right of where the individual participant had previously placed the Social Democrats (SD). Tailoring the treatment to operationalize the concepts “left of” or “right of” using background information is not a violation of the experimental control as long as the tailoring is applied

according to the same systematic rule [Mut11, 91-92].

Participants are then randomly assigned to a new “coalition invitation” condition (1/3), a “coalition refusal condition” (1/3), or to the control group (1/3). The experiment thus included two independent factors: the direction and the coalition signal, combined to form a two by three design yielding six conditions in total. The control group receives no information beyond the tailored ideological range. Additionally, the two treatment groups receive either a positive or a negative coalitional cue, which according to the theory of coalition signals should affect participants’ best guess about the ideological position of the hypothetical Reform Party.

Hypothesis 1b Participants who receive a “coalition invitation” signal will shift their perceptions of the new hypothetical party closer to the Social Democrats, compared to participants who receive a “coalition refusal” signal.

Imagine that a new party, the Reform Party, is running in the next parliamentary elections. The Reform Party has not yet announced any specific policies, but the party is somewhere in the range of [0 to SD placement/SD to 10]. Also, imagine that the party Social Democrats announces that they [**have a strong wish/have absolutely no wish**] to form a coalition government with the Reform Party. If you had to take a guess, where would you place the Reform Party on a scale from “left” to “right”?

Tailoring the treatment does have the downside that some participants are very constrained in where they are allowed to place the hypothetical party. For instance, if they receive a left-wing condition and placed the Social Democrats at two, they are only left with three options for placing the new party. This does not affect the ability to causally identify the effect, since the problem affects the control and treatment groups equally. However, potential treatment effects could be suppressed for these outliers. An analysis only with participants who placed the Social Democrats between 3 and 7 (approximate two-thirds of participants) are included in the appendix as a robustness check.

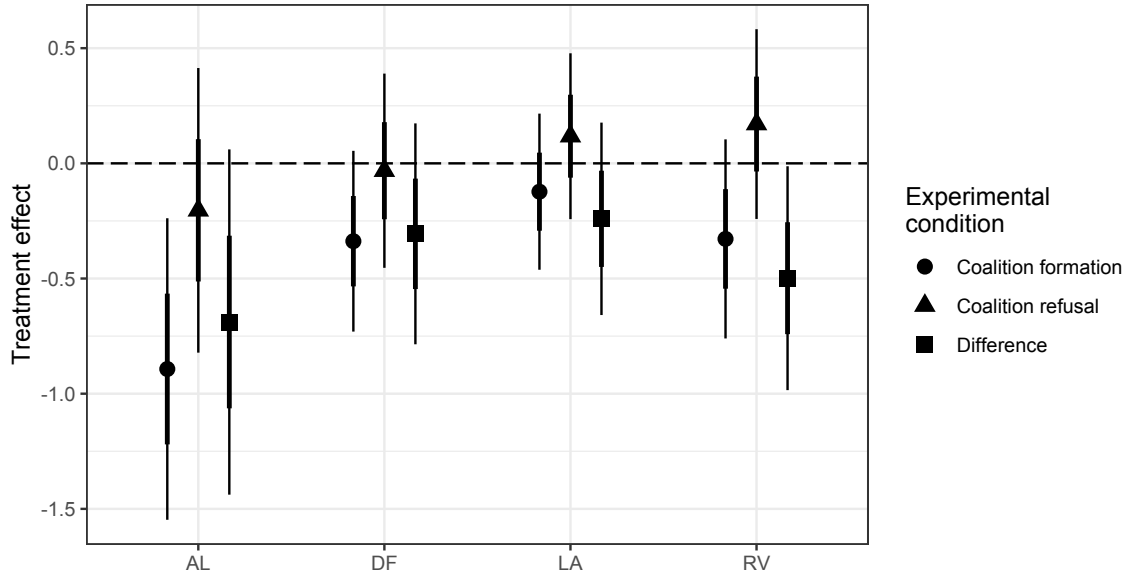


Figure 4.1: Treatment effects of experiment 1 on perceived distance between Liberals (V) and other parties on the general left/right dimension. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

4.3.2 Results: Real Parties in a Hypothetical Scenario

Figure 4.1 depicts the effect of the “coalition formation” and “coalition refusal” treatment on the perceived distance between the Liberals (V) and each of the four parties included in the treatment. A positive treatment effect means that the two parties mentioned in the treatment material is perceived as further apart, while a negative treatment effect means that they are perceived as closer together compared to party placements in the control group. Generally, the direction of the results support the hypothesis, but they are rarely significant.

As expected, the effects of the “coalition formation” treatment are negative, such that participants perceive the parties as closer to the Liberals (V); when they are considering a scenario where the parties have already joined a coalition government. However, the effect is only significant for the Alternative (AL). The Liberals and the Alternative are perceived 0.9 units closer together on the 0-10 left-right scale by participants in the “coalition formation” condition compared to the control group.

There is no statistically significant effect of the “coalition refusal” treatment for any of the parties. For two of the four parties the insignificant effect of the treatment is in the expected positive direction, meaning that parties are perceived as further apart by participants who are considering a scenario where a coalition is impossible. The Alternative (AL) and the Danish People’s Party (DF) are on average perceived as closer to the Liberals (V) by participants in the “coalition refusal” condition than participants in the control group, which is counter-intuitive. Again, it is important to emphasize that the effects are small and not statistically significant.

The two treatment effects are only significantly different from each other for the Radical Liberals (RV). Participants in the “coalition formation” condition on average placed the Radical Liberals (RV) and the Liberals (V) 0.3 units further apart than participants in the control group, while participants in the “coalition refusal” condition placed them 0.2 units further apart. Neither of these treatment effects are significantly different from the control group, but they are significantly different from each other.

The survey experiment also included party placement batteries on more specific issues: immigration, economy, crime, and the environment. It is possible to conduct the same analysis along these various issue scales, but the results are not consistent. The Radical Liberals (RV) are perceived as closer to the Liberals (V) in the “coalition formation” treatment on both the immigration and the economic issue. Furthermore, the Liberal Alliance (LA) is perceived as further apart in the “coalition refusal” treatment on the issue concerning refugees. These are the only statistically significant effects.²

Another way to analyze the same data, is to consider the treatment effects on the perceived position of the individual party. The four parties that either form a coalition with the Liberals (V) or not were selected not because they are particularly interesting themselves, but because they represent left-wing versus right-wing parties. Thus, it is possible to average across these parties to consider the different effects on the perceived

²Please refer to the appendix for a full overview of the treatment effects on perceived distance between the Liberals (V) and other parties on specific issues.

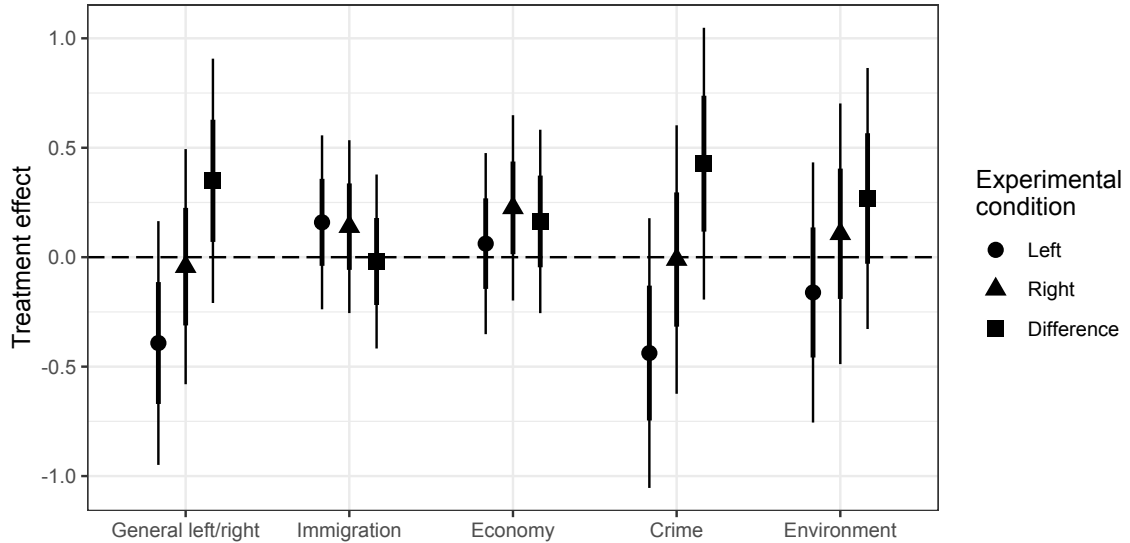


Figure 4.2: Treatment effects of experiment 1 on perceived positions of the Liberals (V) on various issue dimensions. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

position of the Liberals. One would expect perceptions of the Liberals (V) to move towards the right when their coalition partner is right-wing (DF or LA), but move towards the left when their coalition partner is left-wing (RV or AL).

Figure 4.2 plots the difference between receiving a “coalition formation” treatment that involves the Liberals and either a right-wing or a left-wing partner. None of the treatment effects are statistically significant. The Liberals are approximately one-third of a unit further to the right on the 0-10 left-right dimension when they cooperate with a right-wing coalition member, than when they cooperate with a left-wing coalition member and that is not a significant effect. There are similar non-significant effects on crime, even smaller effects on the economy and the environment, and no effect at all on the immigration issue.

The effects of the “coalition formation” treatment on perceived positions of all individual parties on the left-right dimension are shown in the appendix.

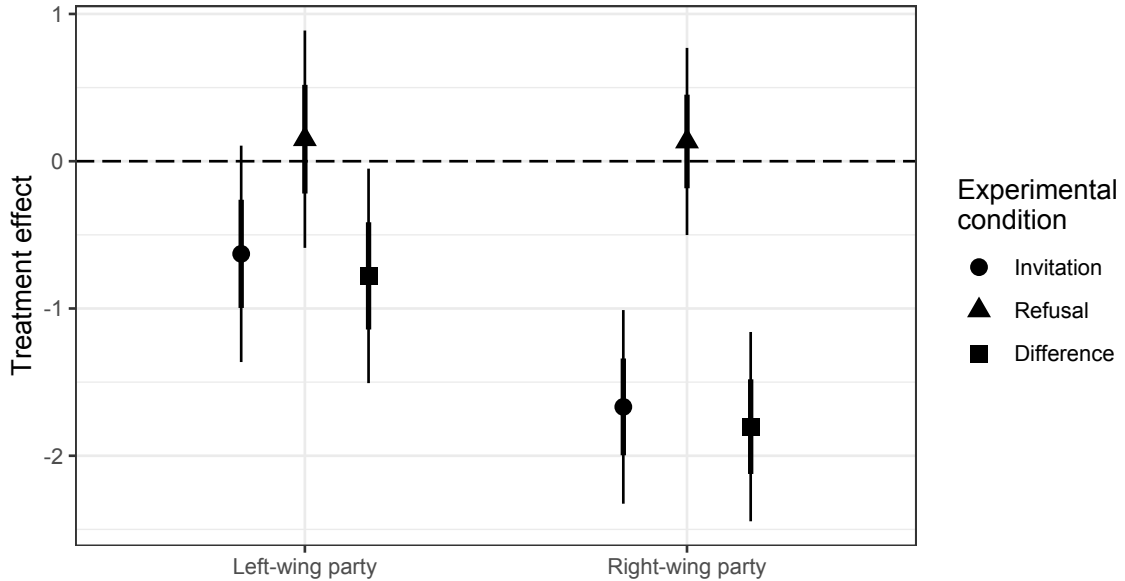


Figure 4.3: Treatment effects of experiment 1B on perceived distance between the hypothetical Reform Party and the Social Democrats (SD). Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

4.3.3 Results: Hypothetical Party

The treatment effects from the second experiment are depicted in figure 4.3. The figure plots the effect of being the “coalition invitation” and the “coalition refusal” treatment compared to the control, as well as the difference between treatment effects. For both the right-wing and a left-wing versions of the Reform Party, there is a negative effect of the “coalition invitation” treatment, but the effect is only statistically significant for the right-wing version. This means that the placements of a hypothetical right-wing party move left and thus closer to the Social Democrats, when respondents are told that it will be invited into a coalition government. I find a insignificant positive effect of the “coalition refusal” treatment, meaning that the placements move away from the Social Democrats in this condition.

For both parties, the effect of the “invitation” condition is significantly different from the “refusal” condition. In line with the hypothesis, voters place a hypothetical party closer to the Social Democrats when they learn that the two parties can cooperate than they do

when they are told that they cannot. Furthermore, participants in the treatment groups were generally more willing to engage with the question and place a hypothetical party, which clearly suggests that they found the extra information useful.

A table showing the average party placement of the hypothetical Reform Party based on whether it is left of or right of the Social Democrats (SD) is included in the appendix.

4.4 Study 2: Priming on the Existing Coalition

The second study is a simple priming experiment. The priming represents an indirect treatment [Mut11, 50], where the stimulus is designed to bring to mind a specific consideration without misrepresenting the truth. Generally, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of voters know which party is in government [FS13b, FLS14]. However, cabinet membership might not be the consideration at the “top of the head” [Z⁺92] for most voters. Voters are not carrying around a firm idea of the ideological positions of their parties – they do not automatically think of the SPD as a four, but make up their mind on the spot when presented with the survey question. If coalition membership is a relevant consideration at all when placing parties on ideological scale, then it should have a large impact when it is more accessible and has recently been invoked.

4.4.1 Experimental Design

In the past 15 years, coalition formation in Germany has become increasingly complicated. The 2017 federal election resulted in a substantial fragmentation of the German system. The election campaign was focused on immigration policy and the AfD entered parliament as the third largest party, which made the subsequent coalition formation process very difficult. On election night, the SPD announced that they refused to continue the grand coalition with CDU/CSU. The four parties in the Jamaica coalition (CDU/CSU, FDP, Greens) initiated “exploratory talks”, but after four weeks the FDP pulled the plug on these negotiations [BDMS19]. CDU/CSU reiterated that they did not want to form a

minority government and the Federal President stated that he would not allow an early election. SPD eventually caved and another grand coalition formed on March 14th 2018 [PK18].

Do German voters perceive the coalition members as closer together in ideological space when they are primed to think about this formation process and the composition of the current coalition government? Germany is an interesting setting to study this particular question because CDU/CSU and SPD are so clearly cooperating and competing at the same time. To some extent this is true for all coalition governments, but the grand coalition represents an extreme case both because the two members have historically been leading opposing blocs, but also because the parties are simultaneously opposing each other in many state elections. As a consequence there are many competing salient considerations that participants in the control group might think of before coalition membership.

In this experiment, participants were randomly divided into treatment and control groups. The focus has been to keep the manipulation as short and to the point as possible, in line with the general recommendations of survey experiments [Mut11, 87]. Members of the control group were not shown any messages. The treatment group are primed to think about the current coalition government in Germany with the following message:

Since December 17th 2013, the federal government has been a grand coalition between the two parties CDU/CSU and SPD. The same government formed again after the 2017 election.

After the treatment, I asked participants to place parties on a 0-10 general left-right scale. Participants were also prompted to place parties on a scale measuring positions towards immigration opportunities for foreigners. 0 means that immigration opportunities should be simplified, while 10 means immigration opportunities should be restricted. Finally, participants placed parties on a scale of public service versus tax, where 0 means advocacy for less taxes and dues, while 10 means advocacy for more social welfare benefits. Respondents were asked to place all six parties currently represented in the German federal parliament except the CSU: CDU, SPD, Die Linke, Grne, FDP, and AfD.

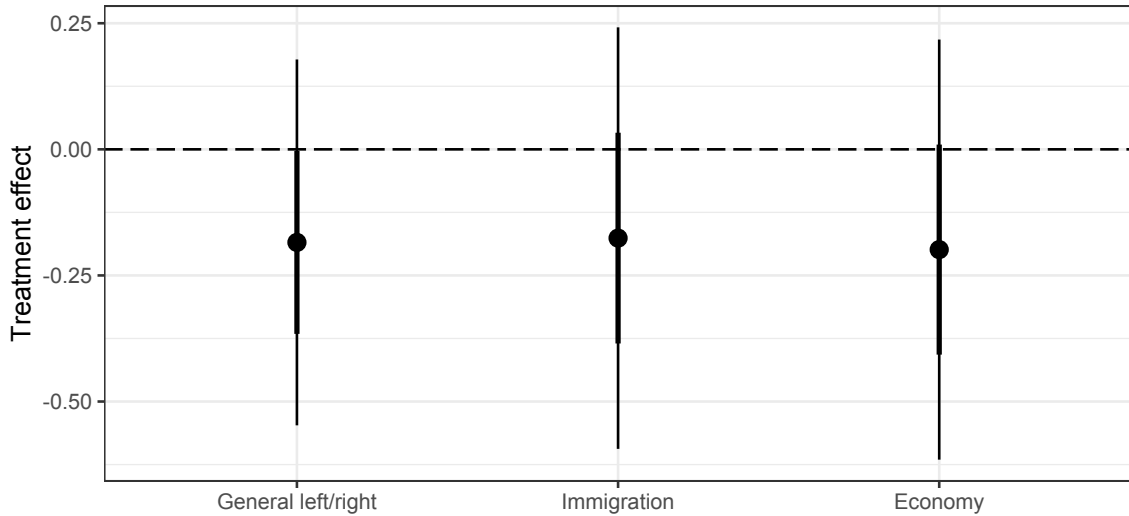


Figure 4.4: Treatment effects of experiment 2 on the perceived distance between SPD and CDU. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

Hypothesis 2 Participants who received the priming treatment will place the CDU/CSU and SPD closer together.

An online survey was conducted through the crowdsourcing website Amazon Mechanical Turk between January 28th and February 22th 2019. The first question asks whether participants are eligible German voters. It requires a fair comprehension of the German language to pass. 58 respondents were filtered out because they did not pass this initial test or they failed to provide consent, thus bringing the total sample to 292 observations³. After the first few days the responses became very infrequent, suggesting that the survey frame offered through MTurk is very small even in Germany.

4.4.2 Results

Figure 4.4 shows the effect of priming participants to think of the current constellation before placing parties on the general left-right and on the two issue scales: immigration

³A total of 474 completed surveys were collected, but they only come from 350 unique IP addresses. Only one response per IP address was preserved.

and economy. There is no significant change in the perceived distance between the two parties in government: the SPD and the CDU. However, the treatment effects are in the expected direction. Across the three scales, there is an insignificant negative effect, meaning that participants place the two parties closer together when reminded of their collaboration. Treatment effects on placement of individual parties are listed in the appendix. None of the effects were statistically significant.

4.5 Study 3: Framing Commitments to Cooperation

Finally, for the fourth experiment, I invite the reader to think more carefully about what voters are reacting to when observing a coalition formation. Why does coalition formation have a significant impact on voter perceptions? What is it signaling to voters? And could we think of other types of party behavior which would send a similar signal? The fourth experiment proposes the idea that it is not coalition formation per se that generates a shift in voters' perceptions of party positions, but rather the coalition members long-term comprehensive commitment to cooperation.

4.5.1 From Cabinet Membership to Commitment

In a parliamentary situation where no single party holds a majority of seats, government formation requires coalition building of some sort. A coalition is a set of parties that agree to pursue a common goal, agree to pool their resources, communicate, and form binding commitments in order to reach that goal, and agree on how to distribute the pay-offs when they reach the goal [BD82, 2]. The commitment to pursue the same policy goal is exactly the elite behavior which should impact voters' perceptions of party positions. Voters should take coalitions into account because they interpret coalition formation as a broad-ranging and stable policy compromise [FS13a, 460].

The existing literature on voters' perceptions of coalition members has thus far operated with a simple dichotomous division between opposition and government, but the real

world is often more complicated than that. Students of the functioning of coalition governments have suggested that even formal coalitions will differ in the extent and nature of commitments between parties. Müller and Strøm argued that governments can be placed on a continuum of “tight” to “lose” commitments and coalition loyalty [MSm00]. Furthermore, commitment to cooperation, which is the essential feature of a coalition, does not necessarily imply a majority governing coalition [Str90, 24]. Roughly one-third of cabinets in advanced parliamentary democracies have minority status [Str84, Str90, LS98] and this number seems to be increasing as parties across the European continent are increasingly struggling to form viable majority governments [OL14, Str90, 59].

Denmark holds the world record in minority governing: The country have not seen a cabinet with a parliamentary majority since the early 1960’s. Instead the political system has developed informal institutions, such as the broad legislative agreements, to build parliamentary majorities and secure effective policy-making [CS16]. Because of this long-standing tradition, the Danish party system lends itself to studying the effect of coalition signals under minority governments.

Minority governments come in two forms [Str90, And13, 108]:

Substantial minority governments are not supported by a parliamentary majority. It finds support for its policy proposals on an ad hoc basis, from day to day and from issue to issue.

Formal minority governments strike a deal with one or more pseudo-opposition parties, which receives concessions in return for permanent support. Because of their secure basis in parliament, formal minority governments might also be described as majority governments in disguise [DS73] or quasi-majority coalition governments [Dam69].

According to Strøm one of the defining features of a formal minority government, is that parliamentary support takes the form of an explicit, comprehensive, and long-term commitment to the policies and survival of the government [Str90, 61-62]. Having established

that participation in coalition government can represent varying degrees of commitment to government policy, I believe it is theoretically sound to conceptualize both formal and substantial minority governments as belonging on the same spectrum, albeit on lower points.

Exactly one year before the election, party leader of the Social Democrats (SD) Mette Frederiksen announced that she intended to form a single-party government after the election. This maneuver was widely interpreted as an attempt to move the social-democratic stance on immigration policy to the right, while signaling to voters that their long-term coalition partner, the Social Liberals (RV), would not have any influence on immigration policy. After the election, the Social Democrats (SD) signed a support agreement with the Social Liberals (RV), the Socialist People’s Party (SF) and the Red-Green Unity List (EL). This 18 pages document is rather detailed on policy areas where the four parties agree, such as welfare services and environmental initiatives, while other areas are entirely absent, e.g. immigration policy and European integration. Of the three support parties, the Social Liberals (RV) have by far been the most vocal in its criticism of the government.

Because a support agreement is a new invention in Danish politics, there is no clear precedent for how to interpret it. Does a support agreement represent an explicit, comprehensive, and long-term commitment or is it merely a symbolic piece of paper? Since the impact of the support agreement is so ambiguous, it provides an ideal context for experimental manipulation of coalition signals. Voters are unlikely to have a firm idea about how explicit, comprehensive, and long-term, or in other words, how broad-ranging and stable, the external support parties commitment to the government is.

4.5.2 Experimental Design

In a survey experiment, I test whether framing the agreement as either purely symbolic or a serious commitment cause voters to perceive the four participating parties as converging on the left-right spectrum and on specific issues. 2,164 computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) of Danish citizens 18 years and older were completed during April 2020 in collaboration with YouGov.

It is possible that the previous experiments have failed to adequately test how coalition formation impacts voters' perceptions of party position, because participants are heavily pre-treated. It is hard to manipulate voters ideas about whether parties are in a coalition or not. Luckily, there are meaningful nuances in between. By switching the outcome of interest towards the continuous concept of parties' degree of commitment to cooperation, I can actually generate the variation necessary to test the mechanisms proposed by previous studies [FS13a, FA15]. Thinking of coalition participation as a continuum is not simply a neat trick to construct an experimental treatment, although it is certainly useful for that, it is a logic that is already present in various accounts of coalition governing. Even though I have conceptualized commitment to government policy and survival as a continuous scale, I operationalize it with two distinct points. Participants are randomly assigned to a "high commitment" condition, a "low commitment" condition, or a control group.

In both treatment conditions, participants are requested to read three excerpts of a mock news article. The texts vary in terms of how comprehensive and constraining the commitments in the support agreement are presented. In the "high commitment" condition, the government is presented as a formal minority government and the support parties as pseudo-opposition parties. In the "low commitment" condition, the government is presented as a substantial minority government and the support parties as actual opposition parties. I test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 Participants who receive a treatment where the government is described as a formal minority government will shift their perceptions of support parties' left-right position closer to the position of the Social Democrats, compared to participants who receive a treatment where the government is described as a substantial minority government.

The national budget negotiations was the [**easiest/hardest**] in a decade.

[The unambiguous deals in/different interpretations of] red bloc's support agreement affected the negotiations over this year's national budget. The results were [already/far from] given in advance.

With an 18 page long support agreement, SD-leader Mette Frederiksen secured the prime minister's office with the support of the Radical Liberals, SF, and the Unity List. The so-called support agreement with the title "fair direction for Denmark", which was signed by the four parties on June 25, worked as a [**strongly disciplining/vague and non-committal**] framework for the budget negotiations. The conflicts were [**thus cancelled/waiting in line**], even before the SD-government and the three external support parties got into the final negotiations over this year's budget.

According to the text, what best describes the negotiations over this years national budget?

- The negotiations were easy because the left-wing parties were committed to implementing their shared policy.
- The negotiations were hard because the left-wing parties interpreted their policy deals very differently.
- Do not know.

The red-green quartet, which has performed [**well-coordinated/uncoordinated**] so far, [**agreed/disagreed**] about the narrative. The support agreement leaves [**almost no/incredibly much**] room for interpretation and can easily start to look like a [**de facto coalition agreement/ “support dis-agreement”**] when political ambitions are translated into concrete initiatives. The budget for 2020 was [**an important/only the first**] step towards [**realizing/interpreting**] the support agreement and thus the biggest [**victories/battles**] are still ahead.

According to the text, what might the support agreement start to look like?

- A de facto coalition agreement which works like an internal law.
- A support dis-agreement which contains broad ambitions instead of concrete policy.
- Do not know

[**I cannot possibly imagine that the Social Democrats will not live up to the support agreement/We are more independent today that we have been for decades**] said party leader of the Radical Liberals Morten Østergaard after negotiations have been concluded. We still believe that the conditions for passing our policy is best in the current constellation he says. [**The crucial thing for us is not the portfolios, but the policy/However, that is not necessarily true for all eternity**].

The experimental treatments are completely void of any issue content and do not mention any directions or locations such as left, right, “closer too”, or “further away”. I use negotiations over the national budget as context, because these negotiations touch on virtually all policy areas and thus reveal whether the commitments are truly comprehensive. Additionally, since these negotiations were finalized months before the survey was fielded, there is a smaller chance that voters has a clear recollection of how easy or hard they were.

After each of the first two excerpts, participants were asked which of two statements best summarized the content. This serves as an attention check, but also to motivate participants to engage with the treatment. If participants are required to read multiple blocks of text without answering questions, they are less likely to process the material [Mut11, 87] Unfortunately, only 826 out of 1437 participants (57 %) in the two treatment groups managed to summarize the article correctly. At the end of the treatment, participants are asked to evaluate how large of an impact they think the support agreement had on the cooperation between the government and the external support parties. This survey item serves as a manipulation check and allows me to assess whether the treatments had the intended effect on participants view of the commitments made by support parties. Answers range from “no impact” to “decisive impact” and have been rescaled to 0-1.

Immediately following the manipulation check, participants are requested to place all 10 parties represented in parliament on a left-right dimension from 0-10 and on issue scales on public spending and on immigration. The four parties included in the support agreement have very public conflicts over these two issues.

4.5.3 Results

First of all, it is worth establishing whether the experimental manipulation was successful such that the treatments had the intended effect on the independent variable. Participants in the “high commitment” condition evaluated the support agreement to be 0.11 units more important than participants in the control group and 0.13 units more important than participants in the “low commitment” condition. This difference is highly significant and strongly suggests that the treatment material worked as intended. It is also worth noting, that a larger share of the participants in the treatment groups felt confident answering the question, while almost a third of participants in the control group did not. Treatment effects are depicted in figure 4.5 and descriptive statistics by treatment condition are listed in the appendix.

Is there any treatment effects on perceived distance between support parties and the

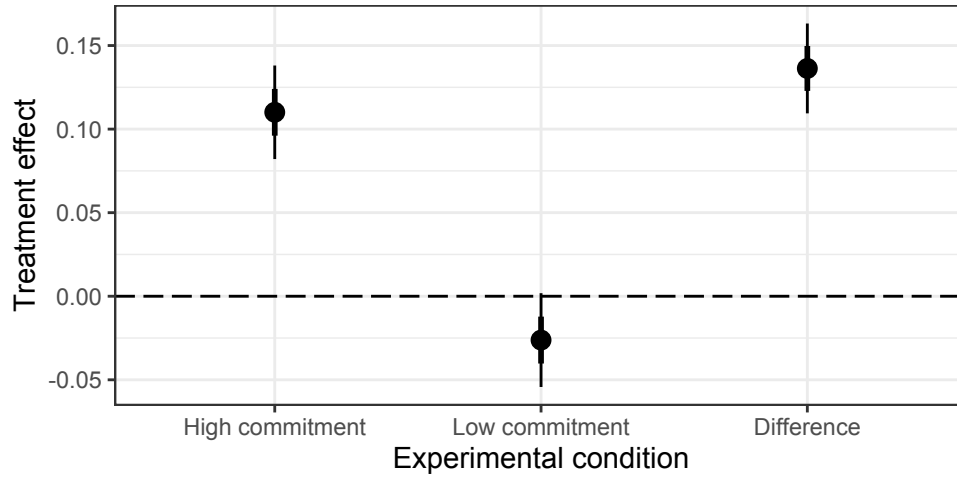


Figure 4.5: Manipulation check: Treatment effects of experiment 3 on the perceived impact of the support agreement. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

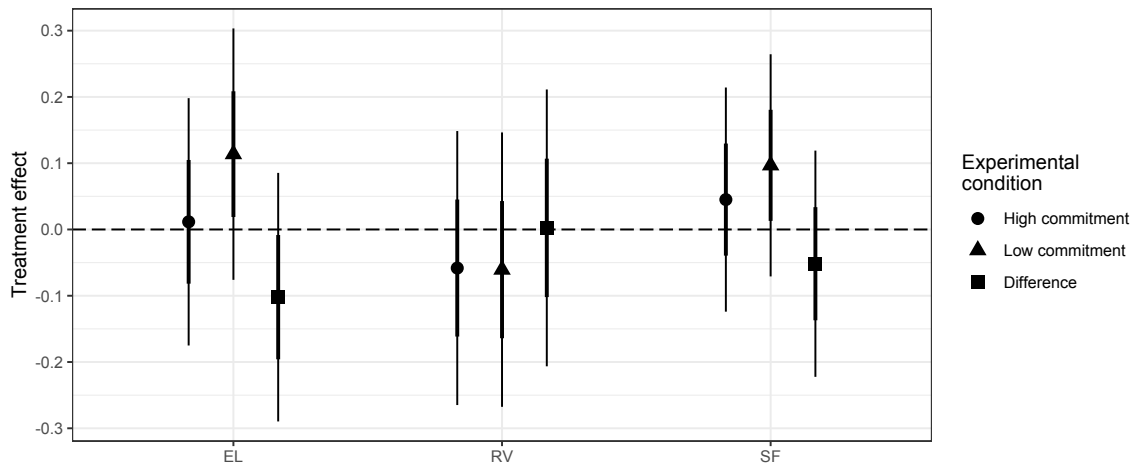


Figure 4.6: Treatment effects of experiment 3 on perceived distance between government (SD) and each of the support parties on the general left/right dimension. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

government? As shown in figure 4.1, there are no significant effect of neither the “high commitment” treatment or the “low commitment” treatment on the perceived distance between the government and the three support parties on the left-right dimension.

There is an insignificant negative effect of the “high commitment” treatment for the perceived distance between the Radical Liberals (RV) and the government, but there is also an insignificant negative effect of the “low commitment” treatment. The treatments are designed to represent two extreme interpretations of what the support agreement might mean. Thus, I strongly expected the control group to fall somewhere between the treatment condition. That is never the case. This might suggest, that the mere mentioning of the support agreement and the cooperation between government and support parties (regardless of how difficult) reminds participants that the four parties have a special relationship.

Contrary to the theoretical expectations, the insignificant effects for the Socialist People’s Party (SF) and the Red-Green Unity List (EL) are positive, meaning that participants in the treatment conditions tend to think of these two parties as further away from the government than the participants in the control group. The treatment includes a quote by the party leader of the Radical Liberals. By disproportionately emphasizing the successful cooperation with the Radical Liberals, the treatments might have motivate participants to move the Social Democrats to the right toward the Radical Liberals, thereby effectively moving them further away from the left-wing parties. These speculations are partially supported by the treatment effects on placement of individual parties (please refer to the appendix for a full overview). There is generally very little effect of the treatments on the placement of Social Democrats (SD), but the slight insignificant change that does occur is positive, thus moving the government right.

The treatment effects on individual parties found in the appendix, also reveal that there are insignificant effects for most of the “true” opposition parties. The effect of the “low commitment” treatment is significant for the Conservatives (K) and the Liberal Alliance (LA). These right-wing opposition parties are seen as moving away from the government and support parties. As expected the only left-wing party in opposition, the Alternative

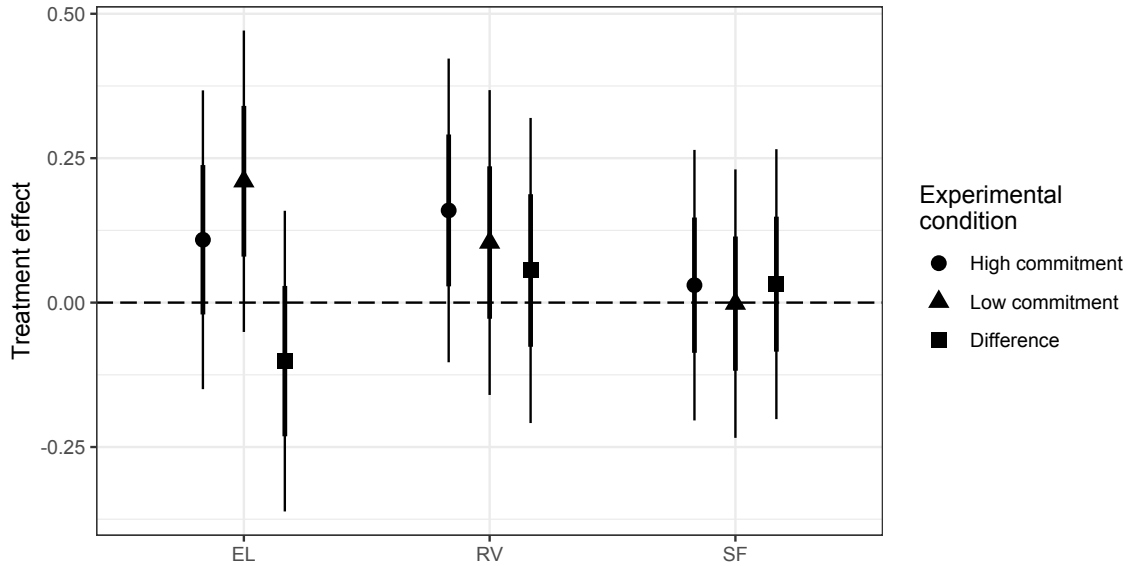


Figure 4.7: Treatment effects of experiment 3 on perceived distance between government (SD) and each of the support parties on the immigration issue. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

(AL), is perceived as more extreme left-wing by participants in the treatment groups, but the effect is not significant.

On one hand, the predictions on the immigration issue are much clearer. On this issue dimension all three support parties are less restrictive than the government and there is nothing pulling the perception of the government in opposite directions. Thus, treatment effects should be negative for all distances between support parties and the government. On the other hand, the government has made a large effort to convey to the public that it will not give support parties any concessions on this issue. This suggests that there should be a smaller effect on the immigration issue than on other issues.

Figure 4.7 shows treatment effects for the question of how many refugees the country can accept. 0 indicates far fewer refugees than now, and 10 indicates that Denmark should accommodate many more refugees. Contrary to the expectations, there are insignificant positive treatment effects across the board, meaning that the support parties, if anything, are perceived as further away from the government. The distance between the government

and the Socialist People’s Party (SF) is practically unaffected by the treatments. The perceived distance to the Red-Green Unity List (EL) is highest in the “low commitment” condition, while it is higher for the Radical Liberals (RV) in the “high commitment” condition. Neither of these treatment effects, nor the difference between the two treatments, are statistically significant⁴.

4.6 Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter examines whether coalition formation has a causal effect on the perceived ideological distance between coalition members. The short answer is that it does not. Four survey experiment with substantial variation in terms of context, measurement, and treatments all failed to produce unambiguous and statistically significant results. This is puzzling in light of the prominent observational studies that finds evidence in support of the theory about coalition heuristics. Much more work is needed to reconcile the large contradictions generated by different approaches.

The first two studies are incorporated into the same survey. They both entail a direct treatment in which participants are explicitly asked to make judgments based on hypothetical scenarios. A large centrist party is issuing either a positive signal that a coalition can form or a negative signal denying the possibility of a coalition with a minor party. The effects of these treatments are usually, but not always, in the hypothesized direction, but they are only rarely statistically significant.

Despite running many models, I only find a significant negative effect of the “coalition formation” treatment on the perceived distance between the Liberals (V) and the Alternative (AL) on the general left-right dimension. This suggests that the two parties would be perceived as closer together if the Liberals formed a coalition with the Alternative. I also find that there is a significant difference between the effect of the “coalition formation” and

⁴A similar analysis using an economic issue scale also failed to produce any significant result. A graph of treatment effects are located in the appendix. Treatment effects on the placements individual parties on the immigration issue and the economic issue can also be found in appendix.

the “coalition treatment for the Radical Liberals (RV). These significant results support the theory of coalition heuristics, but they are accompanied by various null-results. For most issues and parties, the results are insignificant.

In the second experiment, I find partial support for the hypothesis that coalition signals impact voters’ perceptions’ of party positions. Here the negative and positive coalition signals are directed towards a hypothetical party which the participants have absolutely no other information about. There is a statistically significant difference between a “coalition invitation” and a “coalition refusal” treatment for both the left-wing and the right-wing parties. This means that participants place the new party closer to the Social Democrats (SD) if the two parties can potentially form a coalition together, than if they cannot. However, most of the treatment effects are not statistically significant when compared to the control group.

The third experiment uses an indirect treatment. Participants in the treatment group are primed to think about the composition of the current coalition government in Germany before they place all German parties on ideological scales. If coalition membership has a causal effect on perceptions, it should have a large effect when this consideration is primed and made more accessible to participants than other salient considerations. The effects are all in the hypothesized direction, but none are statistically significant.

The fourth and final experiment, deviates from all previous research and conceptualizes the dependent variable as a continuous long-term and comprehensive commitment to government policy and survival, rather than the dichotomous coalition membership. This has the dual purpose of capturing some of the nuances of party cooperation under minority governments, while simultaneously presenting an indirect treatment with more experimental realism. Not only are all results statistically insignificant, but the direction of effects are also in many cases contradicting the hypothesis.

Take together these experimental results raise serious concerns about the causal mechanisms suggested by the theory of coalition heuristics [FS13a, FA15]. In this chapter, I have tested hypotheses directly derived from this theory with various different treatments and in

different settings without finding any systematic support. In most cases treatment effects were small and statistically insignificant. This suggests that the effects of coalition formation on voters' perceptions of party positions are limited to some particular circumstances and that more work is needed to specify the relevant context.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

In this dissertation, I have outlined a theory of how coalition formation impact voters' perceptions of parties' ideological positions and tested various aspects of this theory in three empirical studies. In stark contrast to most of the established party competition literature, the theoretical framework that I propose endogenizes perceptions of political parties to the coalition formation process and suggests that voters assess parties relationally, i.e. based on their mutual interactions, rather than atomistically, i.e. based on their declared policy positions alone. In this final chapter, I discuss the results of my empirical investigations summarized in table 5.1. I then point towards a bigger research agenda focusing on how these changes to voters' perceptions of party positions might be consequential for parties' electoral strategies (both in terms of issue positions and salience) as well as their willingness to join coalitions in the future.

5.1 Summary of Results

5.1.1 The Enemy of My Enemy is a Friend?

In the second chapter, I show that the perceptions of opposition parties are at least as affected by coalition formation as the perceptions of governing parties. Because coalition formation sends a strong signal about which parties can and cannot cooperate with one another, voters tend to perceive opposition parties as further away from the governing parties in the policy space than they would have without consideration of the parties' coalition participation. Opposition status has distinct effects on the perceptions of party positions, depending on where opposition parties are situated relative to the governing coalition. If opposition parties are divided by the government, e.g. where the government is spanning the ideological center and opposition parties flank them on both sides, opposition

Table 5.1: Overview of empirical chapters

Chapter	Research Question	Extensions	Method	Cases	Finding
2	Are perceptions of opposition parties affected by coalition formation?	Beyond coalition members	Hierarchical linear model	EU members 1989-2019	Perceptions of divided and unified opposition parties are affected - especially those of high sophisticates
3	Does the inclusion of the radical right affect perceptions of mainstream coalition members?	To specific issue dimensions	Difference-in-differences	Netherlands Denmark 1984-2015	Voters perceive mainstream coalition members as more extreme on immigration issues
4	Does coalition formation have a causal impact on voters' perceptions?	Across types of coalition signals	Survey experiment	Denmark Germany 2018-2020	A causal effect of coalition signals is only found when subjects have no other information

parties are perceived as further apart, but if they are unified on the same side of the government, e.g. in a competing opposition bloc, they are perceived as closer together.

Contrary to previous studies [FS13a], I find that this effect is strongest for survey respondents with high interest in politics and with longer educations. In order for voters to draw the appropriate inferences from the coalition signal, they must be able to disentangle why one coalition formed and not another and this requires a substantial amount of political knowledge. This strongly suggests that coalition signals are useful even for attentive voters and that they can be combined with existing knowledge to shape the cognitive maps of the party system.

Additionally, the findings highlight that the actions of one set of parties can strongly affect the perception of another set of parties. Parties cannot control their reputations single-handedly. Instead, perceptions of parties are evolving through the complex interactions between parties. Understanding these mechanisms in more details and deriving implications for vote choice and party strategy are important tasks for future research.

5.1.2 Mainstream Sell-outs?

In the third chapter, I examine whether the effect of coalition formation on voters' perceptions of party positions extends beyond the general left/right dimension to more specific policy issue. We might expect the mechanism to work in the same way on economic issues strongly correlated with general left/right in the 20th century. But what about recently salient issues? In this paper, I hypothesize that the issue position of the coalition partner that makes a particular issue most salient will “rub off” on the perceptions of the positions of the coalition members. I offer immigration policy as an example.

Using a difference-in-differences design and the related generalized synthetic control method, I show that mainstream right parties are perceived as more restrictive on issues of granting asylum to refugees and on multiculturalism after cooperating with the radical right than they would have been otherwise. Simultaneously, the radical right is perceived as radicalizing even further on restrictions to immigration. Perceptions of coalition mem-

bers are moving in parallel, rather than approaching each other, and the ideological gap on the immigration issue is preserved rather than shrinking. I do not, however, find the hypothesized effect for the radical right's perceived movement on the questions of economic distribution considered most salient by the mainstream right: The radical right does not appear to move towards their mainstream coalition partners. In sum, the argument advanced in my study appears to apply only to a particular class of issues, and I therefore find only mixed support for the hypotheses outlined.

This chapter represents an important first step towards disaggregating the effects of coalition formation on perceptions of party positions. The chapter builds on the idea that parties benefit from forming coalitions with parties that have a very different issue profile, i.e. complementary or tangential policy preferences. By log-rolling, parties can minimize the risk that their voters perceive them as compromising their positions on their core issues. This argument should extend to other issues and other types of niche parties too. The take away is that voters are partially aware of the delegation of responsibility, but more work is needed to establish how voters experience these policy trades and how it affects their vote choice and ability to hold the various coalition members accountable.

5.1.3 Does Coalition Formation Impact Voters' Perceptions of Parties?

In the fourth chapter, I test the causal claims made in the existing literature on voters' coalition-based perceptions of party positions with a series of survey experiments. The previous studies in this field, including my own two observational studies, suffer from a considerable omitted variable problem. The manifesto data they use as a proxy to control for other sources of changes to voters' perceptions of party positions are insufficient to create the necessary counter-factual, and thus there is great uncertainty about what the most appropriate interpretation of the correlations is. A causal investigation is much needed.

The four survey experiments vary in terms of context, measurements, and treatments. Two experiments use a direct treatment, where participants are asked to consider hypothetical coalitions, while the two others generate variation in the explanatory variable in

indirect ways by either priming participants to think of the current coalition or by framing the current coalition in a particular light. The latter devises a more subtle test of the theory, since it relates to the underlying concept of long-term commitment to government policy and survival, which is arguably the important signal contained in coalition formation. Despite thus giving the hypothesis of coalition formation affecting voter perceptions a whole range of experimental opportunities to obtain empirical support, the results were overwhelmingly inconclusive.

The treatment effects are often, but not always, in the hypothesized direction, but they are generally statistically insignificant. I do find partial support for the theory with a direct treatment involving a hypothetical party: Survey participants think of this party as closer to an existing party if the two are likely to form a coalition together in the near future than if they are not. Nevertheless, there is a large discrepancy between the findings produced by observational research and those produced by experimental research and thus there is still an important task in reconciling those results. That the hypothesis is rejected in different setting and with different treatments strongly indicates that the effect of coalition formation on voters' perceptions of parties ideological positions, if present at all, is conditional on some specific conditions of the political situation. Investigation these limitations and establishing under what conditions, if any, coalition formation will have a significant causal impact is a worthwhile endeavor for future research.

5.2 Prospects for Future Work

This dissertation lays some important groundwork for developing a relational theory of party competition, but much more work is needed to develop this theoretical argument further.

5.2.1 Effects of Other Types of Observable Party Behavior

The emphasis in this dissertation is on the effects of party behavior, more specifically coalition formation, as opposed to the effects of party messages in manifestos, speeches, debates, or media performances. The dissertation makes this important distinction, because party messages are firmly in the hands of party officials. Setting aside for now any problems of intra-party dissent, strategic parties can to a large extent change their policy positions and increase or decrease their attention to an issue as they see fit. Party behavior on the other hand is interactive and therefore heavily constrained. Coalition formation is one type of observable party behavior, but there are many other types of inter-party cooperation, which should be studied.

This dissertation starts to unpack the effects of collaborations between parties in the legislature by also investigating support agreements (chapter 3) and by developing a continuous measure of long-term comprehensive commitment to government policy and survival (chapter 4). Going forward, one might categorize all types of party cooperation as belonging somewhere on this hierarchy: Is party cooperation a formal coalition where parties share executive office? Is there a formal agreement about external support for a minority government? Or are there issue-by-issue, day-to-day, negotiations over how to pass legislation? Future research should do more to explore how voters process these different types of party cooperation.

Secondly, it is quite possible that the effect of coalition membership on voters' perceptions of party positions is not a direct effect of coalition formation per se, but rather the cumulative effect of the policies that the coalition government passes and implements over time. It is still unclear whether voters are responding to the conclusions of coalition negotiations and the investiture of a coalition government, i.e. a single event in time, or rather to years of joint legislation by the parties in government. There is evidence to support the latter: Voters take policy outputs as cues about the governing parties' ideological positions and shift the parties left when they implement generous welfare policies [ABW19].

This focus on legislation can easily be extended to cooperation among parties outside

of government. Scholars have found that media reports of inter-party bargaining over legislation impacts voters' perceptions of party position independent of coalition formation [AWW20]. One approach would be to look at legislative records and consider how often two parties are voting together or proposing an amendment together. Another simpler approach, would rely on the insight that effective minority governments, mainly found in Scandinavia, tend to rely on a bloc majority [GPT05]. What are the consequences, if any, of belonging to the same ideological bloc as a minority government?

Thirdly, there are important exceptions to the general rule that party messages are issued by single parties, which could also be considered in this context. Sometimes parties campaign together on a shared platform and sometimes they even form pre-electoral coalitions [Mag20]. This again brings up the important question of when the transfer of information happens: Is a pre-electoral agreement or the initiation of coalitions negotiations enough for voters to update their perceptions of party positions? How do voters react to such messages? By comparing a quantitative content analysis of the platforms that individual parties promote with the platforms they share, it would be possible to establish how voters weight these various inputs. However, it is quite possible that the results will not yield much, since previous research have found that voters are not particular attentive to this type of message [AEST11].

Finally, it would be worthwhile to explore how cooperation involving non-partisan actors affects voters perceptions of party positions. Many parties have close ties to interest groups and labor unions and these relationships sends important signals to voters about where the party stands ideologically. Since parties are not competing with interest groups, they do not necessarily have to differentiate themselves from the non-party allies, but they still have to think strategically about how the cooperation constrains their ability to move in policy space.

5.2.2 Are Party Positions Endogenous to Salience?

In a recent study, Meyer and Wagner introduced the concept of emphasis-based policy change. Assuming that lower-level policy issues are nested within aggregate issue dimensions, the authors argued that parties can change their positions on higher-level issue dimensions by increasing or decreasing the emphasis on particular issues within that dimension [MW19]. There might be a similar mechanism influencing voters' perceptions of the ideological position of the coalition and its members. If certain parties are allowed to emphasize or take the lead on a specific policy issue, this could change the perceptions of the coalitions overall left/right position without any of the actors changing their stated policy and risking a reputation for “flip-flopping”.

In this dissertation, I have done an initial exploration of this idea by relating the salience profile of radical right parties to party placements on their core issue (chapter 3). I suggest that when the mainstream right cooperates with the radical right, voters will assume that the mainstream right have made significant concessions on issues related to immigration and thus perceive them as more restrictive. A more formal and general version of this hypothesis, would state that voters perceive the ideological position of the coalition as an average of the stated policy position of the individual coalition members weighted by the issue emphasis.¹

To test this type of hypothesis, one would need measures of voters' party placements on a range of issues as well as measures of stated issue positions and issue salience. Such data is not currently available. There are only very few party placement batteries that are comparable over time or across party systems, especially when it comes to specific policy issues. Furthermore, both issue salience and issue positions are usually derived from manifesto data (MARPOR) making the two concepts conflated. To make matters worse, the manifesto data produces rather unreliable measures of issue positions [PG13]. To further advance this research agenda, the field is in desperate need for better measures of stated

¹Meyer and Strobl have found that the perceived left/right position of the coalition is rarely an average weighted by party size. Instead voters engage in wishful thinking [MS16].

party policy.

In the third chapter, I suggest that issue emphasis affects voters' perceptions of party position through (perceived) issue influence. In other words, voters assume that parties have a larger say on the issues about which they care deeply, when bargaining over the coalition policy. A more direct way to examine the effects of delegating responsibility is to look at portfolio allocation. Do voters project the issue position of the minister responsible for a given resort onto all other members of the coalition? If this is the case, then cabinet leaders could strategically change the policy image of the entire coalition by shuffling portfolios. Devising an empirical strategy for testing this argument is, once again, complicated by the lack of survey data with party placements on more specific issues. Furthermore, the issue scales that are included in national election studies seldom matches ministerial resort.

5.2.3 Are Party Positions Endogenous to Competence?

This dissertation provides some interesting insights into how voters think about the trade-offs and compromises implicit in coalition formation, but more work is needed. An assumption in this research, made most explicitly in the third paper, is that voters switch their perceptions of party positions according to who is “calling the shots” in the government [FA15]. In other words, the changes in perceptions of party positions are derived from perceptions of competence in inter-party bargaining and they are consequences of the attribution of responsibility. This would imply that the relative strength of coalition members, e.g. the institutional strength of the prime minister or the share of cabinet seats, has an important conditioning effect on which party positions voters' perceptions will gravitate towards. This connection between policy influence and perceptions has not been tested thoroughly.

Fortunato argued that compromises are generally interpreted by voters as lack of competence and therefore electorally costly [For17]. This highlights the trade-offs between seeking office and policy versus seeking votes and reelection [Str90]. If this trade-off was universally true, parties would have no electoral incentive to cooperate at any point. But

is that an accurate description of how voters think about cooperation between parties? Supposedly voters would also be disappointed if parties failed to use their parliamentary seats to gain influence. Recent research suggests that voters tend to perceive of moderate parties as more competent exactly because they are better able to compromise and “get things done” [JK19].

This would suggest a type of retrospective voting which is more focused on the political process and the legislative outputs, than on the economic and social outcomes. Voters ultimately care more about real world outcomes, but they might also be acutely aware that not everything is in the hands of their national politicians. Some of the recent regional and global events have made that very clear. Thus, one might want to consider a concept of competence or performance, which focuses on how successful the party is implementing its policies and fulfilling its pledges without giving too many concessions to other parties. Assessing this type of party behavior is much more demanding than the coalition heuristic in its simplest form: Voters have to observe the legislative output of the coalition government over a long period. However, existing research suggest that it is not beyond their means [ABW19, AWW20].

If responsibility and performance feed into spatial perceptions in the way suggested in this dissertation, it would imply that considerations over general competence was built into perceptions of party positions. The parties in charge have the ability to shape their perceived position through their stated policy positions, while parties that are considered less capable in a bargaining situation are automatically associated with the positions of their coalition partners.

5.2.4 Electoral Implications and Strategic Party Response

Having established that elite behavior affects the perceptions of voters, the natural next steps are to examine the electoral implications. What types of opportunities and limitations does a restructuring of voters perceptions create for parties competing in elections? To what extent can strategic parties anticipate and pre-empt these effects by taking a different

approach to the two-level game of electoral politics and coalition politics?

In the background of this dissertation is the idea that parties are experiencing tension between cooperating and competing. Several scholars have hypothesized that when the ideological range of the coalition government's platform decreases due to convergence, so does electoral appeal of coalition members [BST12, FA15, Hje18, FGFV20]. To my knowledge, no-one has tested this relationship directly.

In this context, it would be pertinent to address the literature on party persuasion versus partisan switching. Many scholars have argued that party cues lead public opinion and that voters take their issue positions based on the location of the party with whom they identify [Bar02, BB17]. Others have argued that if voters are aware of party differences on an issue they find salient, they are likely to change their affiliation and vote choice [CL06]. If voters are perceiving parties as ideologically converging toward other coalition members, will that have an effect on vote choice, on the voters' ideological self-placement, or neither?

Going one step further, I would like to elaborate on the strategic implications of my analysis from the perspective of political parties. Cabinet members face a trade-off between maintaining a distinct policy profile and participating in a coalition, which inevitably requires policy compromise [MV08]. Previous research has argued that coalition members increase the emphasis on their own issues closer to the election [SK15] and that coalition members take very extreme positions knowing that voters will discount them [BST12].

One potential solution to the problem facing parties is to replace formal coalition membership with support of a minority government. External support parties try to avoid the image of failing to deliver on their policy promises by taking on an ambiguous role in politics. When policy outcomes are positive, they will frame themselves as *de facto* coalition members, but when policy outcomes are negative, they will frame themselves as opposition parties and avoid blame. To what extent is such a strategy successful? And what would that mean for voters' ability to hold their government accountable?

Theories of party competition already include many different considerations about advantageous party positions, issue emphasis, issue ownership, and the electoral threat of competitors. By incorporating relational aspects, I am adding another layer: Party strategists have to consider how their relationship with other parties will affect their electoral prospects and often they are faced with a complex trade-off between vote, office, and policy-seeking. Clarifying this theoretical contribution further will likely be the long-term object of my academic career.

Chapter 6

Appendix

6.1 Appendix of Chapter 2

Full list of cases

European Election Study 1989

Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands

European Election Study 1994

Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain

European Election Study 1999

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK

European Election Study 2004

Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden

European Election Study 2009

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden

European Election Study 2014

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, UK

European Election Study 2019

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK

Table 6.1: Distribution of self-reported political interest by survey

	No at all	A little	Somewhat	Very
EES 1989	0.15	0.34	0.37	0.14
EES 1994	0.13	0.31	0.40	0.15
EES 1999	0.08	0.36	0.43	0.13
EES 2004	0.07	0.40	0.43	0.11
EES 2009	0.05	0.34	0.44	0.16
EES 2014	0.10	0.24	0.43	0.23
EES 2019	0.08	0.32	0.42	0.18
Total	0.09	0.33	0.42	0.16

Table 6.2: Distribution of age when finished full-time education by survey

	≤ 15 years	16-19 years	≥ 20 years
EES 1989	0.35	0.34	0.31
EES 1994	0.33	0.35	0.32
EES 1999	0.20	0.31	0.49
EES 2004	0.12	0.32	0.56
EES 2009	0.10	0.29	0.62
EES 2014	0.15	0.31	0.54
EES 2019	0.05	0.31	0.64
Total	0.17	0.32	0.51

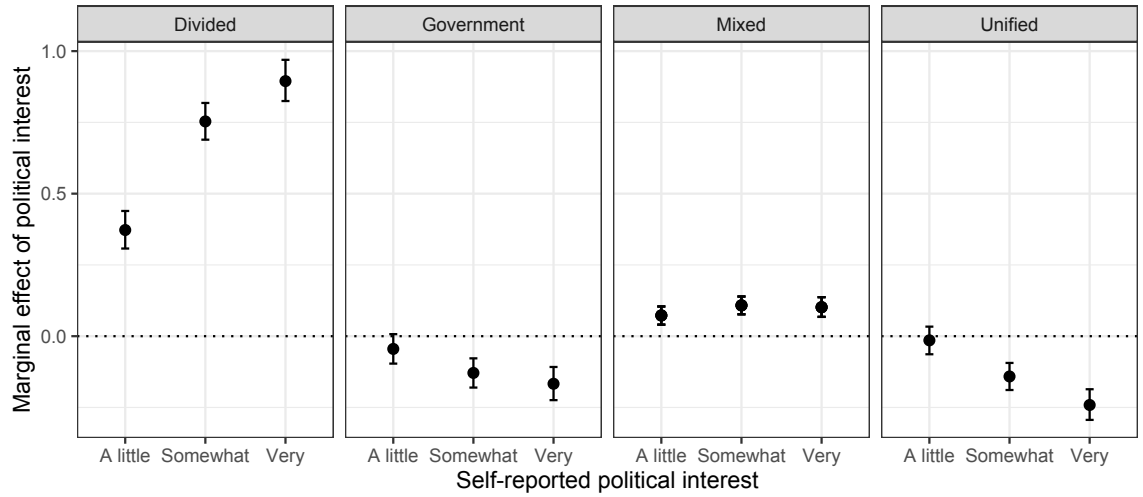


Figure 6.1: Marginal effect of political interest on perceived distance between party dyads conditional on dyad type. Coefficient estimates incl. 95% confidence intervals

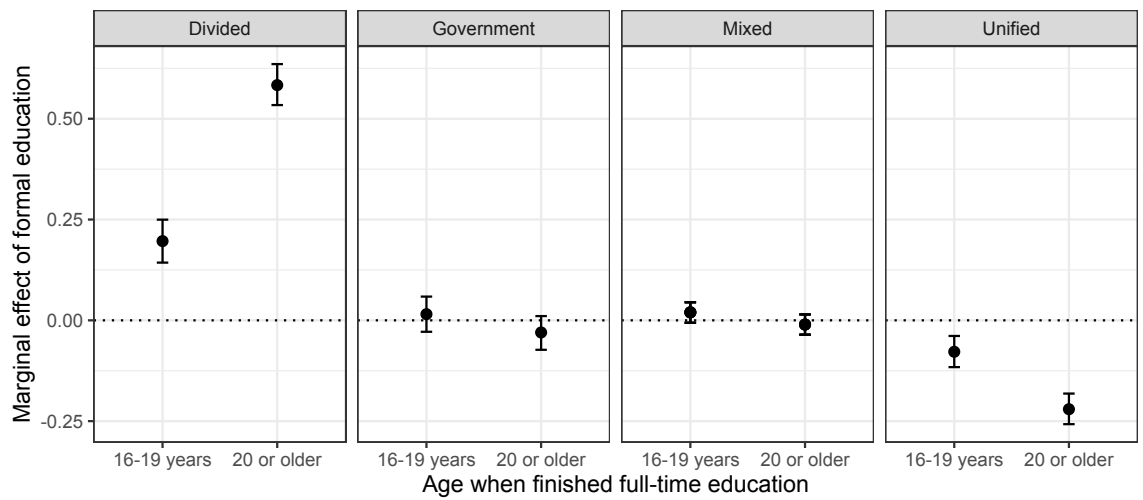


Figure 6.2: Marginal effect of formal education on perceived distance between party dyads conditional on dyad type. Coefficient estimates incl. 95% confidence intervals

Table 6.3: Results controlling for expert placements (CHES). Hierarchical linear model of perceived distance between party dyads. Random effects for surveys and party dyads.

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Constant	2.38*** (0.13)	2.38*** (0.13)	2.65*** (0.14)	2.69*** (0.13)
Coalition government members	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.03)
Opposition members	-0.12*** (0.01)			
Divided opposition members		-0.07** (0.02)	-0.51*** (0.05)	-0.33*** (0.03)
Unified opposition members		-0.22*** (0.02)	-0.11** (0.04)	-0.12*** (0.03)
Expert distance [0-10]	0.09*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Record of governing together [0-1]	-0.27*** (0.08)	-0.28*** (0.08)	-0.25** (0.08)	-0.28*** (0.08)
Respondent extremity [0-5]	0.19*** (0.00)	0.19*** (0.00)	0.19*** (0.00)	0.19*** (0.00)
A little interested	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.07*** (0.01)
Somewhat interested	0.18*** (0.01)	0.18*** (0.01)	-0.18*** (0.03)	0.18*** (0.01)
Very interested	0.24*** (0.01)	0.24*** (0.01)	-0.23*** (0.03)	0.24*** (0.01)
Education 16-19 years	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.02)
Education \geq 20 years	0.11*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.01)	-0.33*** (0.02)
Government * A little			-0.03 (0.04)	
Government * Somewhat			-0.05 (0.04)	
Government * Very			-0.05 (0.04)	
Divided * A little			0.30*** (0.04)	
Divided * Somewhat			0.52*** (0.04)	
Divided * Very			0.71*** (0.05)	
Unified * A little			-0.06 (0.03)	
Unified * Somewhat			-0.12*** (0.03)	
Unified * Very			-0.15*** (0.04)	
Manifesto * A little			0.02** (0.01)	
Manifesto * Somewhat			0.11*** (0.01)	
Manifesto * Very			0.14*** (0.01)	
Government * 16-19 years				0.07* (0.03)
Government * \geq 20 years				0.10*** (0.03)
Divided * 16-19 years				0.10** (0.03)
Divided * \geq 20 years				0.41*** (0.03)
Unified * 16-19 years				-0.07* (0.03)
Unified * \geq 20 years				-0.10*** (0.02)
Manifesto * 16-19 years				0.06*** (0.01)
Manifesto * \geq 20 years				0.14*** (0.01)
Random effect: Dyad (446)	1.39 (1.18)	1.35 (1.16)	1.37 (1.17)	1.39 (1.18)
Random effect: Survey (4)	0.05 (0.23)	0.05 (0.23)	0.06 (0.23)	0.05 (0.22)
Random effect: Residual	4.41 (2.10)	4.41 (2.10)	4.39 (2.10)	4.39 (2.10)
Observations	503, 678	503, 678	503, 678	503, 678
Log Likelihood	-1,089,789.75	-1,089,778.26	-1,088,676.13	-1,088,770.61

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

6.2 Appendix of Chapter 3

Categorization of manifesto positions

Asylum/Multiculturalism:

per601 (National Way of Life: Positive) + per608 (Multiculturalism: Negative) - per602 (National Way of Life: Negative) - per607 (Multiculturalism: Positive)

Redistribution/Public spending:

per505 (Welfare State Limitation) + per507 (Education Limitation) - per504 (Welfare State Expansion) - per506 (Education Expansion)

Europe:

per110 (European Union: Negative) - per108 (European Union: Positive)

Euthanasia:

per603 (Traditional Morality: Positive) - per604 (Traditional Morality: Negative),

Law and order:

per605 (Law and Order: Positive)

Environmental policy:

per410 (Economic Growth: Positive) - per416 (Anti-Growth Economy: Positive) - per501 (Environmental Protection)

Table 6.4: D-i-D analysis of perceived party positions before/after the 2002 coalition formation. Subset of voters who answered pre-election survey after the assassination of Pim Fortuyn. Effects on perceived position towards the issue of European unification [0-1].

	Asylum after Fortuyn	EU integration
CDA/VVD (dummy)	0.187*** (0.009)	0.010 (0.007)
LPF (dummy)	0.344*** (0.011)	0.245*** (0.009)
2003 (dummy)	-0.096*** (0.009)	-0.006 (0.006)
2003 * CDA/VVD	0.082*** (0.010)	0.010 (0.009)
2003 * LPF	0.040*** (0.012)	0.007 (0.011)
Manifesto position	4.020*** (0.124)	0.649*** (0.145)
Observations	14,085	13,654
R ²	0.641	0.340
Adjusted R ²	0.557	0.261
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 6.5: D-i-D analysis of perceived party positions before/after the 2010 coalition formation on issue scales related to European unification and euthanasia [0-1].

	EU integration	Euthanasia
Mainstream right	-0.096*** (0.005)	-0.041*** (0.006)
PVV	0.151*** (0.010)	0.081*** (0.007)
After coalition formation	0.070*** (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)
After * Mainstream	-0.010 (0.008)	0.090*** (0.009)
After * PVV	-0.470*** (0.019)	-0.043*** (0.011)
Manifesto position	1.889*** (0.066)	-7.706*** (0.180)
Respondent self-placement	0.116*** (0.007)	0.071*** (0.007)
Age	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.002*** (0.0001)
Female	0.009** (0.004)	0.011*** (0.004)
Lower vocational education	-0.022** (0.010)	-0.011 (0.010)
Secondary education	-0.036*** (0.011)	0.031*** (0.011)
Middle vocational/higher secondary	-0.033*** (0.009)	0.019** (0.009)
Higher vocational/university education	-0.028*** (0.010)	0.056*** (0.010)
Self-reported political interest	-0.014** (0.007)	0.038*** (0.007)
Newspaper reading	-0.011** (0.005)	-0.003 (0.006)
Constant	-0.327*** (0.029)	2.522*** (0.049)
Observations	18,387	18,110
R ²	0.329	0.177
Adjusted R ²	0.329	0.176
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Figure 6.3: Outcome and counter-factual perceptions of positions on the law and order issue of mainstream right after coalition formation.

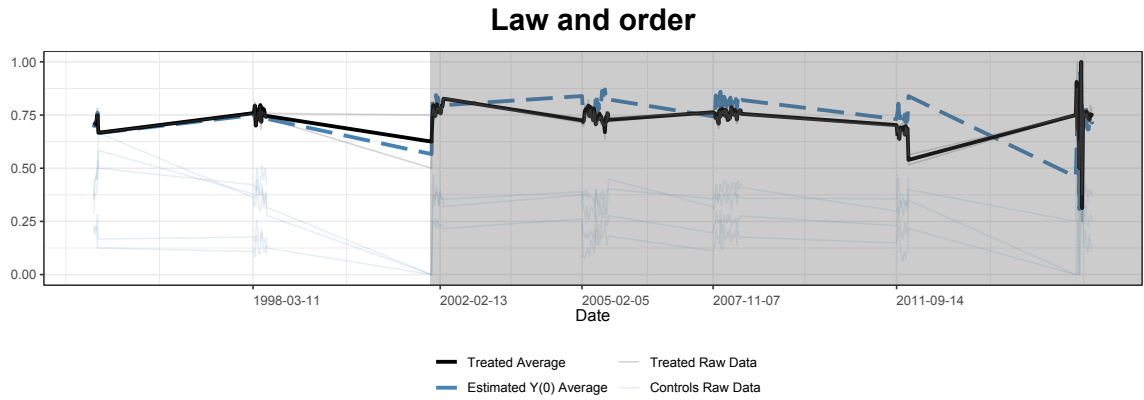


Figure 6.4: Outcome and counter-factual perceptions of positions on the environmental issue of mainstream right after coalition formation.

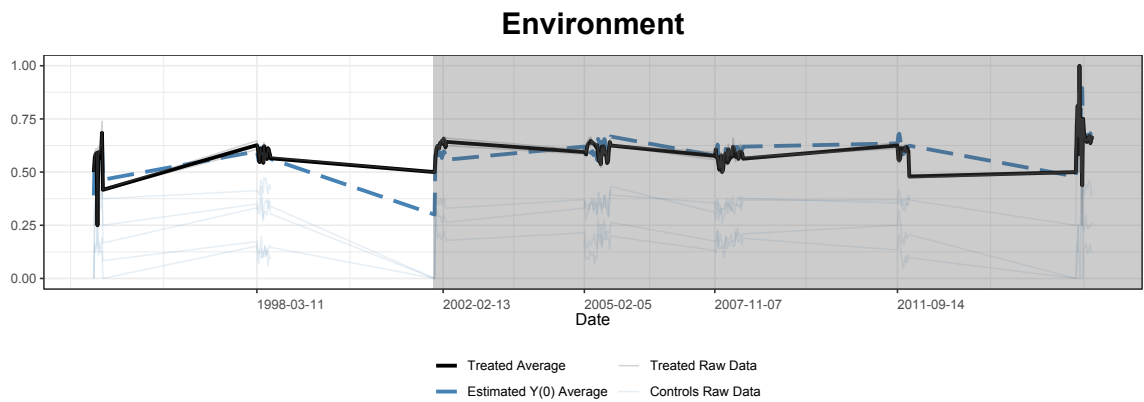


Table 6.6: Average left/right party placements in the Netherlands 2002-2003

	SP	GL	PvdA	D66	CDA	CU	LN	SGP	VVD	LPF
2002	0.24(0.18)	0.26(0.16)	0.35(0.16)	0.45(0.15)	0.63(0.15)	0.65(0.21)	0.67(0.19)	0.68(0.22)	0.70(0.17)	0.75(0.20)
2003	0.15(0.15)	0.18(0.14)	0.28(0.14)	0.38(0.14)	0.57(0.15)	0.58(0.19)	0.58(0.21)	0.61(0.21)	0.66(0.15)	0.66(0.22)
Diff	-0.09(0.00)	-0.08(0.00)	-0.07(0.00)	-0.07(0.00)	-0.08(0.00)	-0.07(0.01)	-0.09(0.01)	-0.07(0.01)	-0.04(0.00)	-0.09(0.01)

Table 6.7: Average left/right party placements in the Netherlands 2010-2012

	SP	GL	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD	PVV
2010	0.24(0.20)	0.23(0.16)	0.32(0.19)	0.46(0.16)	0.59(0.19)	0.74(0.20)	0.78(0.26)
2012	0.24(0.21)	0.25(0.17)	0.33(0.19)	0.50(0.16)	0.57(0.17)	0.74(0.21)	0.70(0.28)
Diff	0.00(0.01)	0.02(0.01)	0.01(0.01)	0.04(0.01)	-0.02(0.01)	0.00(0.01)	-0.08(0.01)

Table 6.8: Average party placements on the asylum issue in the Netherlands 2002-2003. Some people think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers than the government currently does [0]. Other people think that the Netherlands should send asylum seekers who are already staying here back to their country of origin [1]

	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD	LPF
2002	0.38(0.21)	0.46(0.19)	0.54(0.19)	0.70(0.22)	0.93(0.15)
2003	0.41(0.20)	0.43(0.19)	0.60(0.19)	0.76(0.19)	0.83(0.29)
Diff	0.03(0.01)	0.03(0.00)	0.06(0.00)	0.06(0.01)	-0.10(0.01)

Table 6.9: Average party placements on the multiculturalism issue in the Netherlands 2002-2003. Some people and parties think that these people should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all customs of their own culture [0]. Others think that these people, if they stay in the Netherlands, should completely adjust themselves to Dutch culture [1]

	GL	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD	LPF
2002	0.35(0.25)	0.43(0.23)	0.48(0.21)	0.64(0.21)	0.74(0.20)	0.89(0.19)
2003	0.31(0.26)	0.37(0.23)	0.43(0.23)	0.64(0.23)	0.77(0.23)	0.91(0.19)
Diff	-0.04(0.01)	-0.06(0.01)	-0.05(0.01)	0.00(0.01)	0.03(0.01)	0.02(0.00)

Table 6.10: Average party placements on the multiculturalism issue in the Netherlands 2010-2012. Some people and parties think that these people should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all customs of their own culture [0]. Others think that these people, if they stay in the Netherlands, should completely adjust themselves to Dutch culture [1]

	SP	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD	PVV
2010	0.45(0.25)	0.43(0.23)	0.51(0.19)	0.52(0.22)	0.69(0.20)	0.95(0.15)
2012	0.46(0.27)	0.42(0.27)	0.49(0.22)	0.54(0.23)	0.63(0.23)	0.88(0.27)
Diff	0.01(0.01)	-0.01(0.01)	-0.02(0.01)	0.02(0.01)	-0.06(0.01)	-0.07(0.01)

Table 6.11: Average party placements on the redistribution issue in the Netherlands 2010-2012. Some people and parties think that the differences in incomes in our country should be increased [1]. Others think that these differences should be decreased [0].

	SP	PvdA	D66	CDA	VVD	PVV
2010	0.21(0.26)	0.25(0.23)	0.41(0.19)	0.46(0.21)	0.65(0.25)	0.48(0.28)
2012	0.23(0.27)	0.28(0.23)	0.47(0.18)	0.46(0.18)	0.67(0.26)	0.46(0.27)
Diff	0.02(0.01)	0.03(0.01)	0.06(0.01)	0.00(0.01)	0.02(0.01)	-0.02(0.01)

Table 6.12: Average left/right party placements in Denmark 1994-2015

	EL	SF	SD	RV	KD	K	V
1994	0.09 (0.16)	0.21 (0.15)	0.41 (0.14)	0.48 (0.13)	0.54 (0.17)	0.73 (0.16)	0.77 (0.18)
1998	0.12 (0.18)	0.35 (0.16)	0.44 (0.15)	0.47 (0.14)	0.59 (0.16)	0.72 (0.16)	0.75 (0.19)
2001	0.15 (0.18)	0.28 (0.16)	0.44 (0.15)	0.46 (0.14)	0.55 (0.16)	0.66 (0.19)	0.73 (0.20)
2005	0.15 (0.17)	0.28 (0.15)	0.44 (0.13)	0.46 (0.14)		0.72 (0.17)	0.74 (0.18)
2007	0.13 (0.22)	0.28 (0.22)	0.44 (0.19)	0.48 (0.18)	0.52 (0.21)	0.77 (0.24)	0.76 (0.28)
2011	0.15 (0.21)	0.28 (0.18)	0.38 (0.18)	0.50 (0.14)		0.72 (0.20)	0.74 (0.21)
2015	0.17 (0.25)	0.29 (0.20)	0.43 (0.20)	0.47 (0.18)		0.71 (0.24)	0.68 (0.25)

Table 6.13: Average party placements on the asylum issue in Denmark 1994-2015.

	EL	SF	SD	RV	KD	K	V
1994	0.25 (0.30)	0.26 (0.23)	0.37 (0.20)	0.42 (0.19)	0.39 (0.21)	0.67 (0.19)	0.71 (0.21)
1998	0.19 (0.26)	0.26 (0.23)	0.47 (0.20)	0.42 (0.20)	0.47 (0.21)	0.72 (0.17)	0.72 (0.18)
2001	0.24 (0.25)	0.31 (0.23)	0.48 (0.23)	0.41 (0.22)	0.46 (0.20)	0.76 (0.17)	0.77(0.17)
2005	0.19 (0.24)	0.27 (0.22)	0.45 (0.22)	0.29 (0.23)		0.69 (0.18)	0.59 (0.24)
2007	0.17 (0.25)	0.24 (0.21)	0.40 (0.19)	0.30 (0.22)		0.65 (0.19)	0.68 (0.20)
2011	0.14 (0.21)	0.25 (0.21)	0.39 (0.20)	0.33 (0.22)		0.65 (0.20)	0.64 (0.17)
2015	0.15 (0.24)	0.27 (0.23)	0.46 (0.24)	0.35 (0.26)		(0.74) 0.20	0.75 (0.19)

Table 6.14: Average party placements on the public spending issue in Denmark 1994-2015.

	EL	SF	SD	RV	KD	K	V
1994	0.16 (0.23)	0.21 (0.21)	0.34 (0.19)	0.49 (0.17)	0.49 (0.17)	0.73 (0.16)	0.79 (0.18)
1998	0.16 (0.22)	0.21 (0.19)	0.37 (0.19)	0.44 (0.19)	0.50 (0.18)	0.73 (0.17)	0.75 (0.20)
2001	0.23 (0.24)	0.28 (0.21)	0.39 (0.19)	0.44 (0.18)	0.48 (0.16)	0.72 (0.19)	0.75 (0.21)
2005	0.17 (0.23)	0.23 (0.21)	0.30 (0.18)	0.37 (0.20)		0.68 (0.19)	0.68 (0.20)
2007	0.16 (0.23)	0.18 (0.20)	0.25 (0.18)	0.34 (0.19)		0.67 (0.20)	0.66 (0.21)
2011	0.15 (0.22)	0.23 (0.20)	0.31 (0.21)	0.47 (0.21)		0.71 (0.20)	0.67 (0.19)
2015	0.15 (0.22)	0.24 (0.20)	0.36 (0.19)	0.45 (0.21)		0.71 (0.21)	0.67 (0.21)

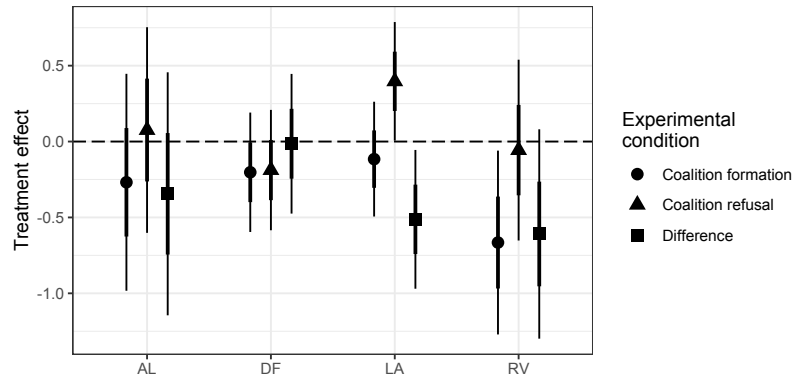
6.3 Appendix of Chapter 4

Direction	Treatment	Mean	Std. Dev.	Do not know	N
Left-wing party	Control	4.43	2.58	14 %	187
	Coalition invitation	4.31	1.80	14 %	205
	Coalition refusal	4.78	3.49	10 %	194
Right-wing party	Control	6.72	2.11	14 %	201
	Coalition invitation	5.51	1.85	11 %	187
	Coalition refusal	6.87	2.76	8 %	197

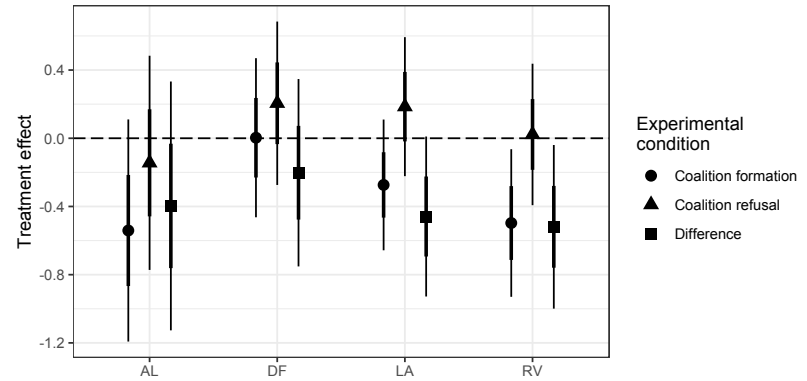
Table 6.15: Average placement of hypothetical party in experiment 1B

Treatment	Mean	Std. Dev.	Do not know	N
Control	0.52	0.23	31 %	727
High commitment condition	0.63	0.23	15 %	723
Low commitment condition	0.50	0.23	18 %	714

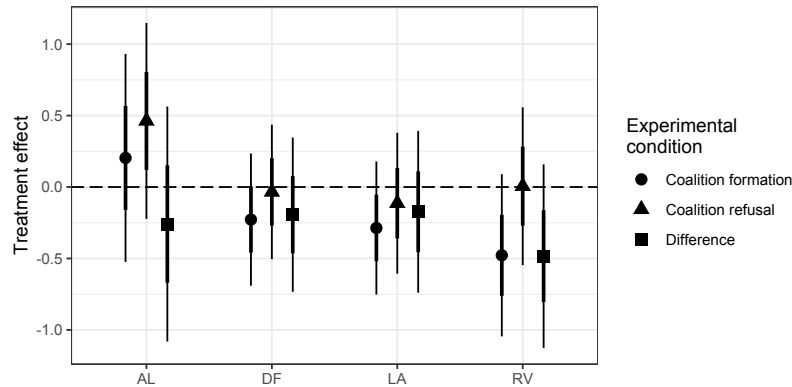
Table 6.16: Manipulation check: Descriptive statistics of perceived impact of support agreement by treatment group



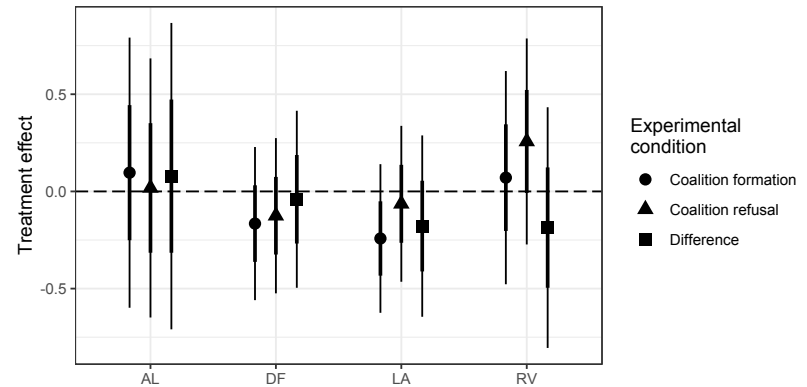
(a) Some parties believe we accept too many **refugees** [0]. Others say we can easily accept more refugees [10].



(b) Some parties say we need to cut **public revenue and expenditure** [0]. Others say we must expect rising public spending and revenue in the future [10].



(c) Some parties suggest to maintain **law and order** with stricter penalties [0]. Other parties instead talk about preventing crime and treating criminals humanly [10].



(d) Some parties distinguish themselves by paying high attention on environmental considerations [0]. Others say that **environmental considerations** are getting out of hand [10].

Figure 6.5: Treatment effects of experiment 1 on perceived distance between Liberals (V) and other parties on specific policy issues. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

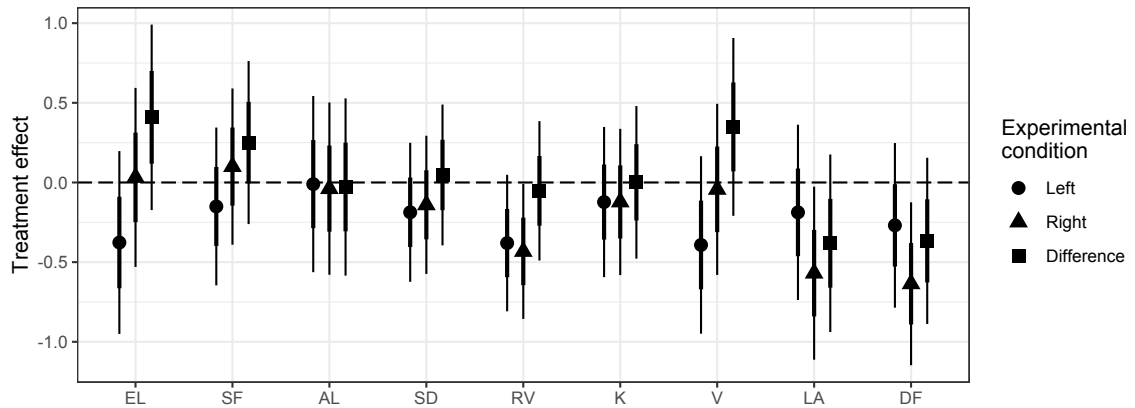


Figure 6.6: Effects of the coalition formation treatment in experiment 1A on perceived position on the general left-right dimension. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

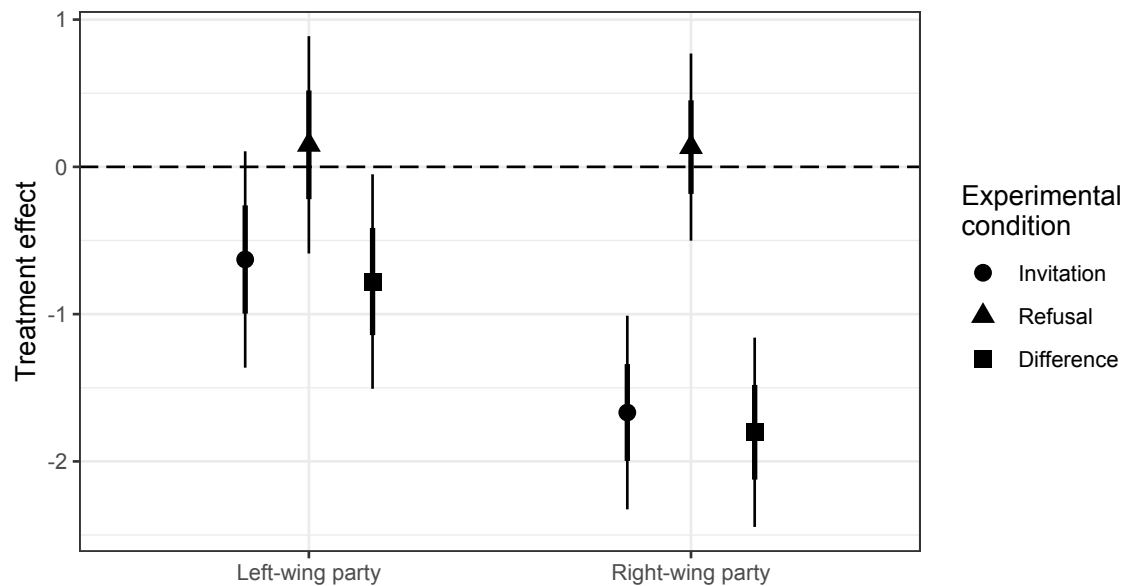


Figure 6.7: Robustness check of experiment 1B: Treatment effects on perceived distance between the hypothetical Reform Party and the Social Democrats (SD). Participants who placed the Social Democrats below 3 or above 7 are excluded from analysis. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

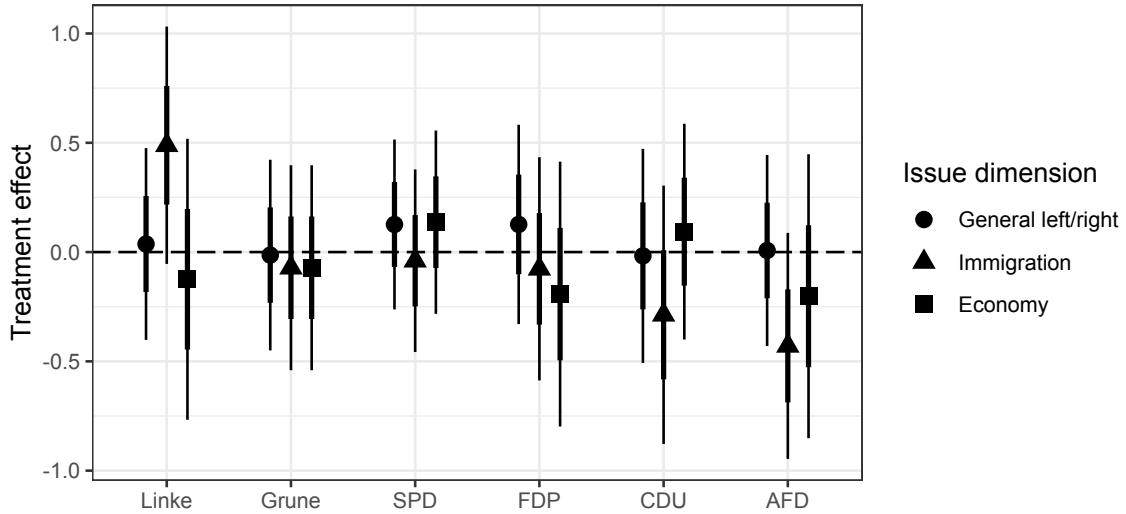


Figure 6.8: Treatment effects of experiment 2 on perceived party positions. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

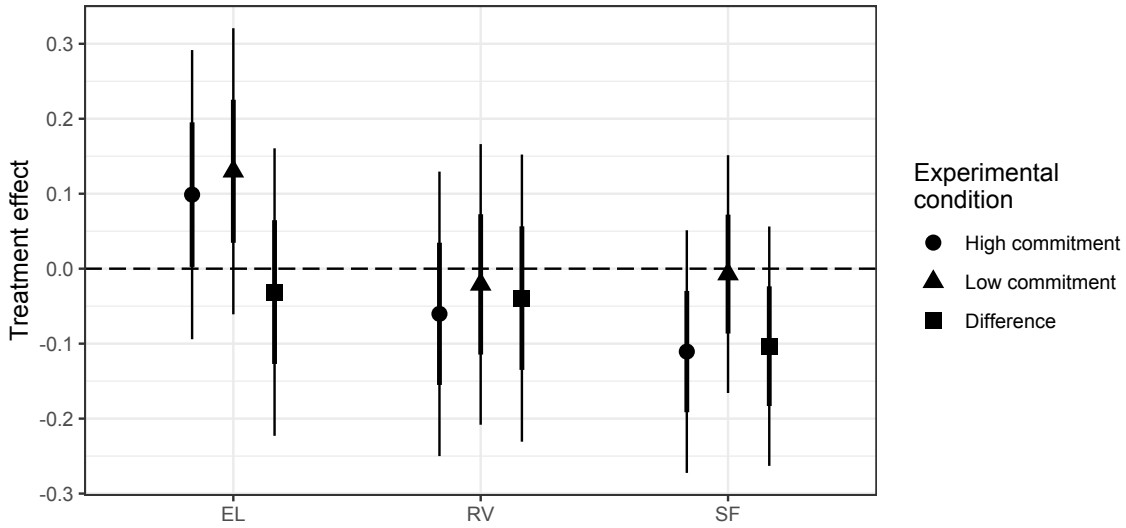


Figure 6.9: Treatment effects on perceived distance between government (SD) and each of the support parties on the economic issue. Some parties say we need to cut public revenue and expenditure [0]. Others say we must expect rising public spending and revenue in the future [10]. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

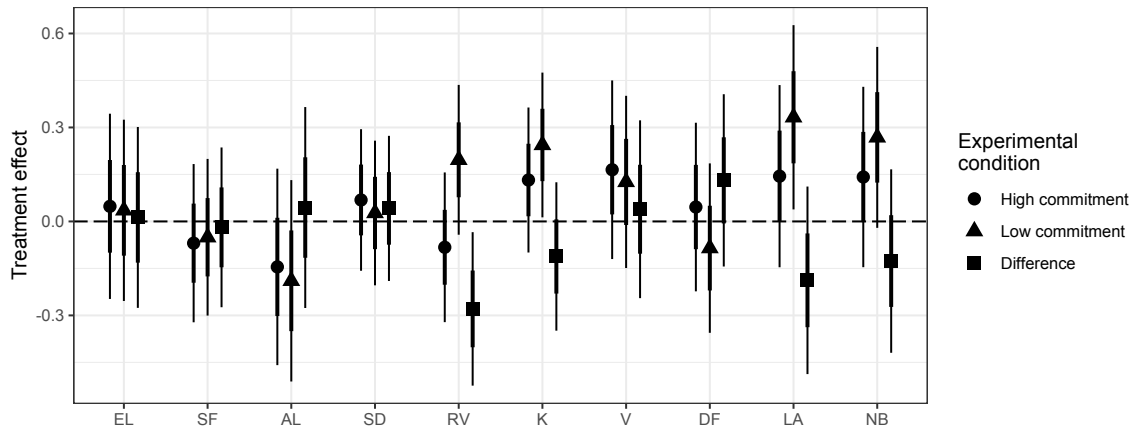


Figure 6.10: Treatment effects of experiment 3 on perceived party positions on the general left/right dimension. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

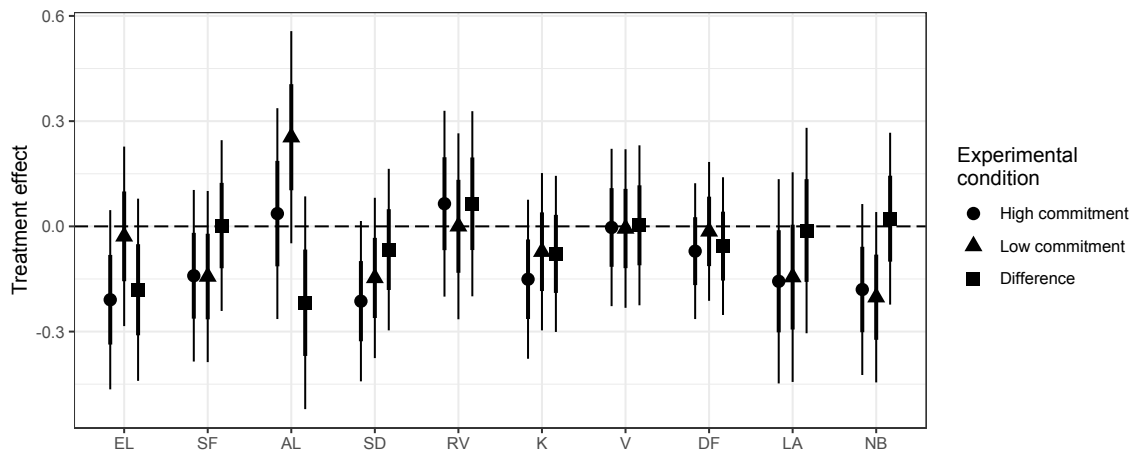


Figure 6.11: Treatment effects of experiment 3 on perceived party positions on the immigration issue. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

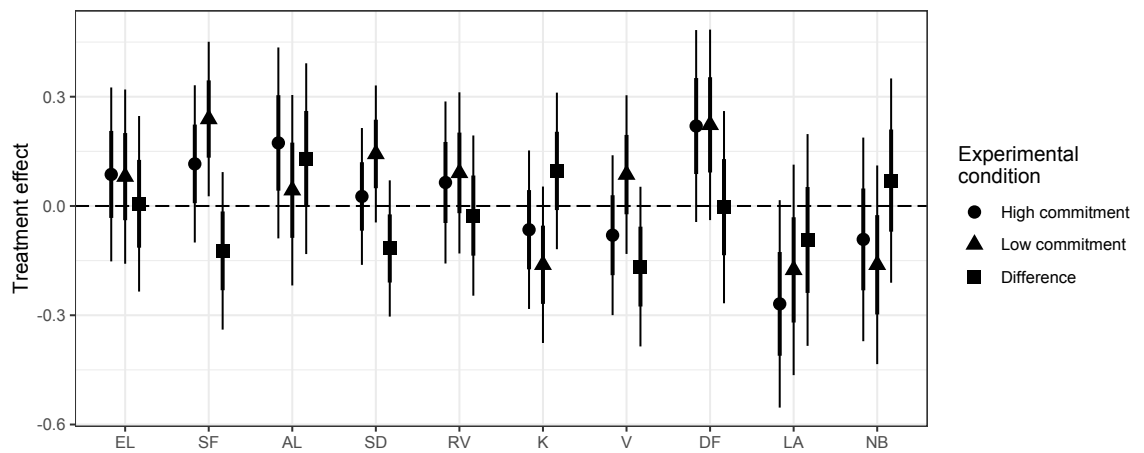


Figure 6.12: Treatment effects of experiment 3 on perceived party positions on the economic issue. Coefficient estimates incl. 95 % confidence intervals.

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Biography

Ida Bæk Hjerimitslev earned a PhD in Political Science from the Department of Political Science at Duke University in 2020. Prior to studying at Duke University, she graduated from the University of Copenhagen with an MSc in Political Science in 2014. As a visiting graduate student, she has spent time at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Århus University

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