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(Ir)Rational Choices?
The Impact of Learning on Party Policy Moves

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is about party policy makers who update their prior beliefs by observing other parties and (rationally) learn about the effectiveness of alternatives when faced with the choice to change their ideology. Likewise, I learned a lot whilst working on this topic. Probably like every PhD candidate I started my project as a y-centered approach in order to once and for all explain ideological change of parties within a comprehensive framework *and* introduce the idea of diffusion of party policies across borders to the vibrant strand of literature set off by James Adams and colleagues. As a result of struggling with small and technical details about estimating variables, and major questions of writing a thesis at all and the meaning of life – not to mention the birth of our daughter which I am deeply grateful for – the project took a rather long time. Being employed in different research projects dealing with environmental and welfare state policies, the obligations of teaching and the daily work as a research assistant at the chair drew away my attention from the topic too often which throughout the years became a matter of heart. On the other hand, the knowledge and experience acquired through these tasks ultimately shaped the approach taken within this thesis. For too long I halfheartedly struggled about the research design and how to estimate spatial lags for political parties because the data structure obstructs simply transferring rectangular weighing matrices from macro-comparative research designs dealing with countries in a time-series which I was very familiar with. Only later I was inspired through the daily lunch talk with Jan Helmdag to try a dyadic approach as an intermediate step. With new vitality, I returned to my thesis until Jochen Müller gave me the manuscript version of Böhmelt et al.'s (2016) paper about the diffusion of party positions. Inevitable if a thesis takes too long, the paper ruined the day as my initial approach was too similar to theirs. Yet, in retrospect my thesis project benefited as the paper forced me to rethink the research design and motivated me to eventually read the inspiring book *Learning, Policy Making, and Market Reforms* by Meseguer (2009) which had been lying around on my desk for a long time. Looking back, both events ultimately prepared ground for the decision to adapt Meseguer's framework to party policy moves. Her parsimonious and intuitive approach appealed to me as it represented the antipode to my halfheartedly y-centered approach. Based on my previous experience I updated my beliefs about the effectiveness of a y-centered approach for achieving a PhD, finally decided to go for the x-centered "learning approach" and here it is: a thesis about party policy makers who learn.

Of course, many people helped along the way: first I would like thank my supervisor Detlef Jahn for his support and his gentle carrot-and-stick strategy. Many of my (technical) skills emerged via learning by doing in response to ideas and issues he came along with and which inspired and pushed me to always find a solution. I am also thankful to Thomas M. Meyer for his willingness to co-supervise my thesis. As a critical mind and with profound knowledge about party policy moves, I hope the thesis stands to his test.

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1. The Question

Do parties rationally learn when faced with the decision to move left or right?

This thesis is about ideological change of political parties and the way parties gather information, learn by updating their beliefs and ultimately make "rational choices". It is a story about rational learning, about emulating other parties abroad and chasing public opinion. But it is also a story about the conditioning effects of party organizations when activists have some influence over the formation of party policy. As volunteers facing a scarcity of time and resources, members of the party on the ground have a different information horizon, and may arrive at the opposite decision where to move than party elites which (can) rest their decision on a broader set of information resources. In some parties the party on the ground thus constitutes an "internal wall of resistance" to the strategy party elites would choose, if they were free from constraints.

The aim of this thesis in advancing our knowledge about parties' strategic choices is twofold: it proposes a new theoretical approach to explain party policy moves centered on a formal model of learning and policy choices, and puts the learning framework to the test empirically to show its applicability and usefulness. As is notorious in macro-quantitative comparative research which draws from rational choice theory, this research builds on stylized assumptions about actors' behavior and thus offers a micro-foundation, but it lacks in-depth qualitative evidence. Yet, as a first test of the potential of the new approach, the analysis reveals some new insights regarding the role of learning from parties' own experience, from domestic competitors and other parties abroad, which calls for both a refinement and extension of the approach and for qualitative studies to bolster the findings in future research. From this perspective this is not "yet another study about party policy moves", but rather brings the analysis closer to "party leader's informational environment and/or the perceived risks associated with changing policy direction" (Adams et al. 2004, 609) which is key for understanding party dynamics.

The phenomenon under investigation is the zigzag patterns of ideological change many parties in Western democracies exhibit. The corresponding question "What moves parties?" has gained a lot of attention in the past years, and many empirical studies have offered single explanations of *how* parties behave. Public opinion as one explanation truly serves the common sense that parties are responsible. Nevertheless, the type of party or competitor's behavior has been found to influence policy moves which indicates that parties pursue their own goals. The difference between government or opposition parties

seems to be equally important as the internal structure of parties, their previous electoral performance or a change in party leadership (for a recent overview see Fagerholm 2015, but also Adams 2012). Furthermore, some concerns have been raised that question to what extent domestic politics is (still) domestic (Kayser 2007). Economic globalization and Europeanization, as the argument proceeds, either put an indirect pressure on parties by a detour via electoral politics or constrain the ideological alternatives parties (can) offer. Yet, these studies analyze the observable outcome of decisions taken by parties – ideological change – but undertheorize *why* parties decide the way they do. As Harmel and Janda remind us,

> party change does not 'just happen'. In fact, decisions to change a party's organization, issue positions or strategy face a wall of resistance common to large organizations. A successful effort to change the party usually involves both a good reason (which, granted, often does involve the need to take account of environmental changes) and the building of a coalition of support. (1994, 261–62)

One can therefore assume "that most (though not all) party changes result from decisions of party operatives […] which includes internal as well as external causal factors" (Harmel and Janda 1994, 261–62).

Parties are not passive entities exposed to their environment, but after all, it is still parties that decide. Many previous studies analyzing policy moves solely focus on external stimuli. Furthermore, by treating parties as unitary actors they lack any micro-foundation.[1] As Adams et al. (2004, 609) put it in their initial study: "Finally, we emphasize that while we have presented evidence on how European parties adjust their ideologies […] we have not proposed to explain in detail *why* [sic] parties behave in this way". To overcome these limitations this thesis proposes an actor-centered approach with a focus on the concept of *learning*: Party policy makers update their prior beliefs about the effectiveness of a left and a right move in terms of vote gains and losses and choose to move in the most promising direction. The framework adapted from the literature on policy diffusion (Meseguer 2005; 2006; 2009) thus is in line with Montero and Gunther's (2002, 22–23) suggestion, that "[a]nalyses of policy stands or electoral appeals can only be based upon a study of decisions made by political elites, acting within particular historical contexts and weighing conflicting considerations of trade-offs among […] various dimensions of party competition". If re-

[1] Although there is no "party theory" (Montero and Gunther 2002, 7), this does not imply a lack of theories about parties in general. A huge body of literature has been devoted to theories of organizational change (for an overview see e.g. Harmel and Janda 1994; Panebianco 1988; Harmel 2002; Katz and Mair 1994; Jun and Höhne 2010). On the other hand, saliency theory (Robertson 1976) has stimulated much research on party competition via issue emphasis. The focus here, however, is on ideological change and only rare attempts – two of them, Budge (1994) and Budge et al. (2010), will be reviewed below – have been put forward.

duced to the choice "move left or move right" – which implicitly lies at the ground of many previous studies – the thesis aims at answering the research question, *why and when do parties move to the right, and when to the left*?

Two empirical studies and two theoretical ones stick out which are more in line with Harmel and Janda's call: Schumacher et al. (2013) and Meyer (2013) explicitly take the internal structure of parties into account. While the former conclude that "the party organizational balance-of-power between party activists and party leaders conditions the extent to which environmental incentives […] drive party-position change" (Schumacher et al. 2013, 464), Meyer (2013, 213) finds that "the relevance of party members as the party workforce and intra-party decision-making rules determine whether parties are able to move away from the status quo". In both cases the view of parties as unitary actors is broadened to include the internal life. In a similar vein this thesis argues that members of the party on the ground have different incentives and a different, or rather restricted information horizon compared to party elites due to a professionalization of party central offices, whereby an information horizon comprises a variety of available information resources like social networks, documents, or observation in the world (Sonnenwald 1999). Depending on how much influence party members have on the decision where to move, party elites might therefore be restrained in their strategic choice.

With respect to the theoretical approaches Budge's (1994) "New Spatial Theory" (NST) and Budge et al.'s (2010) "Integrated Dynamic Theory" (IDT) are rare attempts to formulate a more general theory of party decision-making. In the first case Budge resorts to "decision rules" which parties apply. Although there is some vague reference to Herbert Simon's (1991; 1993) idea of "satisficing" rather than optimizing given limited resources, he rapidly moves on to finally rest on ideology as the ultimate explanation. As a cognitive shortcut for voters and parties, it "provides politicians with a broad conceptual map of politics into which political events, current problems, electors' preferences and other parties' policies can all be fitted", thereby providing "a way of defining and partitioning policy space and of indicating the broad area within which a particular party should take its position" (Budge 1994, 446). While the decision rules could have been used as a useful starting point for an actor-centered approach Budge refrained from spelling out the necessary assumptions and logic of party decision-making. The IDT builds in the NST and sheds light on the internal life of parties by abandoning the assumption of a unitary actor in favor of internal factional struggle over control of the party's policy stance. Stating that ideological alternation is due to fluctuating factional control, temporarily suspend if one faction can claim credits for gaining votes, Budge et al. implicitly assume that conflicting stimuli are

processed somehow internally and thus influence the decision in which direction to move. However, as with the NST, the IDT provides useful clues for an actor-centered approach but remains at the surface without spelling out how the conflicting stimuli may be processed. Another issue of the IDT is its sole inward-looking approach: the authors assume, that "each party decides independently of the others, as no mutual strategic calculations are involved" (Budge et al. 2010, 794). This is not only in contrast to Adams and Somer-Topcu's (2009b) finding, that parties react to rival's movements (similar Williams 2015), but it also speaks against the established view that party change is driven by both environmental changes *and* internal processes (e.g. Panebianco 1988; Strøm 1990; Harmel and Janda 1994; Katz and Mair 1995; Harmel 2002; Wiesendahl 2010).

Although both the NST and IDT have their advantages and provide a useful starting point for an actor-centered approach they fail to formulate the decision-making process in a more rigorous way. To fill this gap I draw from the literature of policy diffusion and adapt a framework proposed by Meseguer which puts *learning* at the center and relates learning to policy choices. As will be shown, core ideas and assumptions of the NST, IDT *and* the empirical evidence can be incorporated into the framework. Hence, the new theoretical approach not only builds upon previous knowledge, but provides a micro-foundation, overcomes the notion of parties as unitary actors by taking party organizations seriously, and spells out decision rules in a parsimonious and rigorous fashion.

The main result is that parties learn: they do learn from their own experience, the experience of their competitors, and they emulate other parties abroad; in other words, parties move right if observed experience signals them that the expected utility in terms of vote gains favors a right move over a left move (and vice versa). The more nuanced answer is that party elites and members of the party on the ground (may) differ in their perception of information from different sources and that the internal life of a party – in terms of activist-orientation or leadership-domination over the formation of party policy – therefore conditions the way observed experience influences the decision where to move. Information about the effectiveness of own moves and the experience of domestic competitors is easily available to both party elites and members. However, due to a professionalization of party central offices, party elites have much easier access to a broader set of information resources and (could) rest their decision on further experience obtained from elsewhere. Depending on the signal party elites might therefore choose to move in another direction than party members would, based on what they know. This, of course, is only relevant for parties where members indeed have a say in internal politics.

1.1 The Argument

The idea that parties learn begins with party policy makers which have prior beliefs about the effectiveness of a policy move in terms of vote gains and losses. Although there has been a discussion about goals parties may pursue (e.g. Strøm 1990; Harmel and Janda 1994; Müller and Strøm 1999), in the end it boils down to winning votes, because "[v]ote gains and losses do […] provide a rare concrete reference for parties to react to" (Budge et al. 2010, 790).[2] By learning from available experience of policy moves in the past and elsewhere decision makers update their beliefs about the effectiveness of possible moves. The expected utility of a move is then a function of posterior beliefs about average results and about the variability of results, i.e. the "noise" contained in the information. Accordingly, one can hypothesize "that the greater the difference in posterior beliefs about average results following policy A with respect to policy B, the greater the probability of a switch to policy A will be"; and, "the greater the posterior beliefs about the variability of results following policy A compared with policy B, the less likely a change to policy A will be" (Meseguer 2009, 60). In this sense, I argue that parties have the choice to move either left or right, and the decision is made by choosing the alternative with the higher expected utility. Looking at available experience from their own past, from domestic competitors, and from other parties abroad, parties assess the expected utility of each alternative and ultimately choose the one which promises to be more rewarding.

Applying the learning framework, I empirically analyze party policy moves of 137 parties in 22 developed democracies and highly industrialized OECD countries from 1950 to 2013. Learning is operationalized as the posterior beliefs after observing vote gains and losses of moves in the past and elsewhere (main independent variables) which have an impact on the probability of a left or a right move (the dichotomous dependent variable). Apart from shifts in public opinion, which has strong explanatory power, the analysis shows that parties first and foremost learn from domestic experience: they learn from their own experience in the previous election and move right if a right move in the last election brought about gains or a left move resulted in losses. Likewise, they continue to move left, if a left move was successful (or a right move produced undesired results). The same is true for the experience of previous moves of out-group competitors (left-wing and right-wing respectively). With respect to the moves of in-group competitors of the same ideological

[2] Even if parties favor office or policy, votes are the ultimate currency for parties, for they build the foundation for all other goals. Without winning votes, a party's influence remains negligible. In many countries votes even secure the economic survival of a party organization because public subsidies for parties are often based on the number of votes (Nassmacher 2009, Ch. 8).

bloc the analysis comes to inconclusive results, though. Furthermore, within their own family of nations (regional experience) parties tend to emulate other parties abroad, although the rational in "rational choice" gets somewhat lost in that parties do not evaluate the effectiveness of these moves but rather demonstrate "herd behavior". The more parties moved right (or left) – in simple terms of numbers and regardless of their success – the more likely the focal party shifts to the right as well (or left respectively). Global experience, however, does not have any significant impact on parties' decisions. Subsequent analyses then show that the internal life of parties indeed conditions the way parties process available information: the more leader-oriented parties are, the more weight they give to public opinion and the less important their past experience becomes. With increasing leadership-orientation, regional experience gains influence and domestic experience steps back. In the same manner, for more activist-dominated parties, their own and domestic experience is more important than regional or global experience.

These results are in line with some – though not all – assumptions of the NST and IDT and the findings of Schumacher et al. (2013) and Meyer (2013). In contrast to the findings of Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) and Williams (2015), that parties pay more attention to rivals of their own ideological family, the analysis shows, that the electoral results of outgroup competitors have a more profound impact on the decision where to move. Although their focus was on issue competition, this is broadly in line with the findings of Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015) that parties have to respond to *any* rival. It also sheds light on the most recent finding of Böhmelt et al. (2016) that parties acknowledge foreign incumbent parties. An issue with their approach is that they do not distinguish between learning and emulating which leads to the conflation of both concepts throughout their work. The analysis here shows that foreign parties abroad indeed provide examples, but that parties are more prone to simple herd behavior, that is, emulation rather than learning from elsewhere. Empirically, this thesis thus produces some challenging though not overly contradictory results. Above all, it proposes a new theoretical approach to understand and explain the decisions parties make, whose results – party policy moves – we are able to observe and which have been studied extensively in the past without leading to a coherent and parsimonious theory of *why* parties decide the way they do.

1.2 Plan of the Thesis

Before presenting the structure of this work, two caveats are worth mentioning – a more general as well as a conceptual one. First, I employ a macro-quantitative comparative research design which has some disadvantages. A mixed-methods design combining quantitative analyses with qualitative in-depth case studies surely would entail a more comprehensive picture of parties' strategic choices, and could back the stylized assumptions about actors' behavior most often postulated rather than tested in rational choice-inspired analyses. Yet, because qualitative research has moved beyond mere narratives (cf. Bennett and Checkel 2014) a serious and adequately conducted mixed-methods research design would have surmounted the resources available for this study.[3] The results show that is indeed worth considering expert interviews with party elites in subsequent research. In the meantime, however, I devote my attention to an x-centered approach (Gerring 2001, Ch. 8) – which impact learning ("the x") has on policy moves ("the y") – encompassing a sound quantitative analysis which is conceptually (though not technically) in line with Achen's (2002) ART approach (A Rule of Three) by solely considering learning, emulation and chasing public opinion as explanatory variables.[4]

Conceptually I limit the analysis of the effectiveness of a policy move, and consequently the expected utility, to the most obvious ingredients: vote gains and vote losses. However, party policy makers may take other aspects into account. Following Budge et al. (2010) one might include the need for a minimal consent within the party into the calculation as opposed to political infightings damaging the organization. Similarly, the expected utility might include considerations about the long-term strategy and positioning of a party as Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009a) suggest in the finding that parties "moderate now, to win votes later". Spatial theories of party competition might want to add components stemming from limitations of the ideological space, e.g. avoid leapfrogging for it may damage the party's credibility.

In principle, all these aspects can be incorporated into the learning framework if one is able to "translate" the finding into a measure of the expected utility of both alternatives – as opposed to the *assumed* factional struggle over control, for example. Yet, the point Meseguer (2009, 64) makes for her study is applicable to this thesis as well: all these aspects are

[3] Gerring (2012, 384) points out that "the employment of multiple methods often entails the deployment of multiple skill-sets […]. This is not always possible for an individual researcher to undertake. Needless to say, little is gained from a study that employs multiple methods in a naive or superficial fashion."

[4] As Achen (2002, 446) stresses, "[a] statistical specification with more than three explanatory variables is meaningless." The alternative would be to include as many "controls" as are known (from previous studies) to circumvent an omitted variable bias, but this runs the risk of empirical infinity *and* theoretical arbitrariness.

"interesting and very likely worth exploring in a different project. However, for the time being, modeling learning only from [electoral] results offers a very good pilot experiment of the potential of this approach."

In this sense, the thesis proceeds in the following way: Chapter 2 discusses the current state of the art of party policy moves against the background of the underlying and often implicit assumptions of why these actors decide the way they do. The findings are (re-) interpreted in light of deducible decision rules which might inform parties' choices, whereby a distinction can be made regarding those studies that focus on the arena of domestic party competition, and those that look beyond borders. Proceeding with a critical appreciation of the NST and IDT, their advantages (but also some shortcomings) are carved out, which are useful as cornerstones for the adaption of Meseguer's approach. To address the aim of this thesis to advance an actor-centered approach for explaining policy change with a focus on learning, Chapter 3 first presents the premises necessary for the framework, namely who learns and how the internal structure of a party organization conditions party elites' behavior. Then, some notions of learning from the literature are reviewed and the spotlight is put on (bounded) rational learning. Having established who learns, the formal model of learning and decision making is adapted to party policy moves. Drawing on the concept of Bayesian learning, it is shown how the evaluation of available experience in terms of effectiveness alters the expected utility of a right and a left move respectively. The decision to move either right or left ultimately depends on weighing the expected vote gain and the "noise" attached to this information for a right move versus a left move. In order to assess the expected utility, parties can resort to four sources of information: their own, domestic, regional or global experience. Before putting the framework to the test Chapter 4 details the data and method, and presents the operationalization of the dependent and independent variables alongside descriptive statistics. Therefore, Chapter 3 and 4 lay the groundwork for the empirical analysis in Chapter 5, which addresses the main question of when and why parties choose to move right or left, as well as the accompanying questions regarding which sources of information parties resort to, and whether the internal life of a party conditions the way observed experience informs the final choice. The thesis concludes by reviewing the main findings in Chapter 6 and possible avenues for future research.

2. What Moves Parties?

With the publication of "Mapping Policy Preferences" (Budge et al. 2001) a large data base on the ideology of political parties became publicly available for the first time and allowed for testing many assumptions and predictions of spatial and formal theories of party competition with real world data. When looking at party movements on a generalized left-right scale many parties show an alternating behavior of left and right swings which ties them to an ideological range most of the time. Apart from analyzing actual placements on this left-right scale, questions emerged about the driving forces behind the alternating pattern itself. Ideological change of parties from one election to the next – later referred to as party policy moves, party policy change, or simply policy moves – thus became the subject of many studies. Probably because of the availability of this new database and scant data about the internal life of parties,[5] many studies focused on external, environmental reasons for these changes. At the same time, they implicitly assumed that parties are more or less rational actors who, as the word implies, act – and not simply *re*act to these stimuli in a mechanical reflex. Therefore, the focus was on impacts on the observable outcome rather than on explanations of how parties decide and weigh conflicting incentives. One of the first attempts to explain the zigzag pattern of policy moves, Budge's (1994) "New Spatial Theory", made some reference to decision rules which parties apply. However, he did not discuss any micro-foundation of these rules or what would happen if a party is exposed to conflicting stimuli. Building on the NST in 2004 Adams et al. established a foundation for a flourishing strand of literature analyzing policy moves, but because the focus was on external stimuli, a more encompassing theory of party decision making remained out of reach. In 2010 Budge et al. revitalized the decision rules and carried them over into a simulation of "a *process* [sic] of factional alternation of control of the party, temporarily suspended when a party achieves vote success" (2010, 790). Not even their approach, however, is able to satisfactorily answer the question of how parties decide and process (conflicting) information because ultimately their argument rests on the assumption that factions try to "impose their own version of the common ideology on the party" and that "[e]xogenous and endogenous

[5] Even today there is no encompassing database which captures aspects of the internal life of parties in a systematic and comparative manner over a wider time span. Most of these studies and data collections remain snapshots at certain points in time like Laver and Hunt's (1992) expert survey or Katz and Mair's (1992) project about party organizations. As part of his project, Meyer (2013) updated some data for several parties, but no dataset thus far catches up with the coverage of the "Mapping Policy Preferences" data. Right before finalizing the thesis, Poguntke et al. (2016) published a new database encompassing organizational dimensions of 122 parties in 19 countries, which is limited to the 2010-2014 period however and the data is not yet publicly available; further see the recently published special issue of *Party Politics* (Polk and Kölln 2017) which may overcome some limitations in the future, but probably will not extend to the past.

events erode support for the faction controlling the party" (Budge et al. 2010, 792). Comparing their simulation with real world movements they interpret the results as an *ex post* indication of actually unobserved factional struggle. Hence, in contrast to the predominant focus on external impacts on policy moves, I adapt Meseguer's (2009) approach and focus on party policy makers and learning as the main driving force of party policy change. I argue that change is the result of a learning process whereby members of the party update their prior beliefs about the effectiveness of a left vs. a right move. The posterior beliefs then amalgamate into the decision and, as rational choice theory predicts, the alternative with the higher expected utility is chosen over the other.

Appropriately adapting the framework necessitates reviewing the current state of the art in order to embed the thesis in the literature on the one hand, and to show the descent from previous research on the other. In this sense, the next chapter discusses the results of empirical studies related to party policy moves. Afterwards, as rare representatives of primarily theoretical contributions the "New Spatial Theory" and the "Integrated Dynamic Theory" are critically assessed with respect to useful concepts and assumptions which can and should be carried over to the new framework. Summing up both parts, the research gap is uncovered which this thesis aims to fill, namely a coherent and parsimonious theoretical approach which spells out the decision rules in a more rigorous fashion and which overcomes the notion of parties as unitary actors. Thus, Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for the model of learning in Chapter 3.

2.1 The State of the Art: Empirical Evidence

A huge body of literature has evolved since Downs' (1957) famous work which deals with voter and party behavior and the role ideology, party positions or platforms play. Spatial modelling in political science, however, is mainly concerned with analyzing equilibria and single elections (for a famous introduction see Enelow and Hinich 1984; also Adams 2001; Roemer 2001; Adams et al. 2005; Schofield 2008). On the other hand, much has been written about party platforms and positions following the establishment of the Manifesto Research Group in the late 1970s. An inspection of the data provided by the Manifesto Project[6] reveals that parties never fully converged in ideological terms (Budge et al. 2001, 1; Klingemann et al. 2006, 1), despite the theoretical expectations following Downs' work.

[6] Given various name changes, which partly reflect the evolution and funding of the project, for the ease of use hereafter I simply use the term Manifesto data or Manifesto Project to refer to the data (Volkens et al. 2015) or the project and its major publications (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2013).

Until the mid-2000s both strands have evolved almost independently from each other. Since then Adams and colleagues initiated a research agenda under the heading "What moves parties?" which in turn triggered subsequent analyses of the effects of policy moves in terms of voters' perceptions and electoral results (e.g. Ezrow 2005; Tavits 2007; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009a; Ezrow 2010; Adams et al. 2011; Meyer 2013). Furthermore, it fostered a discussion whether ideological change is best captured in terms of positional change or whether parties have other options in adapting programmatic profiles like obscuring or clarifying (Lacewell 2015) and (de-)emphasizing issues (van de Wardt 2014; Ward et al. 2015). Likewise, some studies analyze *directional* change (e.g. Adams et al. 2004; 2006; Haupt 2010; Ezrow et al. 2011; Schumacher et al. 2013), while others focus on the *magnitude* of change (e.g. Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009; Meyer 2013; Somer-Topcu and Zar 2014; Schumacher et al. 2015). Finally, some studies estimate effects on positions itself, in other words, they look at *levels* (e.g. Ward et al. 2011; Böhmelt et al. 2016). Although the learning framework is applied to *directional* changes in this thesis, it seems promising to extend its scope and analyze magnitude or levels in future research. All considered, however, summarizing the state of the art is quite challenging because all studies are closely intertwined, but not all findings have deducible implications for the question whether to move left or right. Yet, despite the vast range in terms of dependent and explanatory variables, model specifications and country or party samples, three recurring themes can be identified: first, with only very few exceptions almost all studies treat parties as unitary actors and rarely discuss the constraining effects of the internal life of parties (Schumacher et al. 2013 and Meyer 2013 being the exemption). Second, despite a discussion about goals parties may pursue, all studies implicitly assume that parties change (or position themselves) in order to attract more votes. Finally, because all studies focus on the impact of a particular factor there is no indication about the consequences of contradictory information: if, for example, public opinion moves to the left, some studies suggest a move in accordance (e.g. Adams et al. 2004; 2006; Ezrow et al. 2011; Schumacher et al. 2013). At the same time, a rival party's move might imply a move to the right because parties tend to observe their competitors (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b; Williams 2015). Similarly, paying attention to opinion leaders of party supporters (Adams and Ezrow 2009) may signal to a party that a move to the right is rewarding, whereas a party should move left with rising levels of economic openness as Haupt's (2010) finding suggests. While the learning framework as applied in this thesis does not capture all these aspects, but rather focuses solely on effectiveness in terms of vote change, it nevertheless is open to include many of them in future research.

In this sense, the findings thus far are (re-) interpreted in light of deducible implications for decision making. I will split the discussion into two parts: to start with, studies which focus on domestic party competition are discussed, complemented by studies which look beyond borders and examine economic globalization, Europeanization and diffusion.

Domestic Competition: Public Opinion, Voters, and Competitors

Later, public opinion became probably *the* most important control variable, but in the first study by Adams et al. (2004) it was in the center of the analysis. Examining policy moves of parties in eight Western European countries from mid-1970s to 1998 they found that "political parties shift their ideological positions in response to public opinion when opinion clearly shifts away from the party" (Adams et al. 2004, 608), while there was no evidence that parties respond to past election results.[7] With Downs in mind these results are straightforward in terms of decision rules: if public opinion moves to the right, move in accordance; if it moves left, move to the left as well (but see Meyer 2013, Ch. 7 for "null findings" of public opinion shifts).

Using the same sample, Adams et al. (2006) refined their findings because niche parties – atheoretically defined as communist, green or extreme nationalist parties – do behave differently than their mainstream competitors: although parties usually gain by moving towards the mean voter, this benefit is modest for these parties, which leaves incentives to propose non-centrist positions (Adams and Merrill, III 2005; Ezrow 2005).[8] Niche parties, often occupying more extreme positions, might even lose by moderating their program as a result of core voters' punishment (Adams et al. 2006, 525; Ezrow 2008) because huge shifts are often viewed suspiciously and do not pay out in votes (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009a).[9] Rather than public opinion, for niche parties the decision to move left or right depends on their supporters. Ezrow et al. (2011, 288) first and foremost find support for their partisan constituency result, "which states that while niche parties are unresponsive to

[7] Although of limited explanatory power – because the result is statistically insignificant – at least for the sample it is interesting to note that even advantaged parties slightly move in accordance. In a Downsian sense they could have stayed put to gain without extra efforts. One might therefore speculate whether advantaged parties seize a chance to pull the median voter even further.

[8] This is in line with Downs' expectations (1957, Ch. 8) if the voter distribution is multi- rather than unimodal.

[9] Furthermore, parties cannot move too far, otherwise they risk leaving "their" ideological territory and getting punished by (core) voters for credibility's sake (Meyer 2010). Similarly, Tavits (2007) finds that parties lose if they shift on "principled issues" whereas they can gain if they are responsive to the environment on pragmatic issues; in general, a party's willingness to engage in larger moves seems higher if the party lost votes (Somer-Topcu 2009) or office (Schumacher et al. 2015). In addition, parties can only moderate their policy images slowly because voters' perceptions draw on the histories and origins of parties (Adams et al. 2011). Hence, it is easier for new parties to move around, while older parties are constrained by their own historical development (Pelizzo 2009; similar Meyer 2009).

shifts in the mean voter position, these ideologically oriented parties are responsive to the shifts in their supporters' positions". Yet, based on an extended sample (15 Western European countries from 1973 to 2002) – and contrary to Adams et al. (2004) – they also find support for the past election model, which asserts that "a party remains at the same position or provides more of the same […] if it gained votes in the last election; and changes its policy direction from last time, if it lost votes" (Budge 1994, 453–54).

Claiming "that party organization may have more explanatory power than the mainstream/niche dichotomy" (2013, 470),[10] Schumacher et al. rephrased the argument: rather than the type of party the internal life conditions how environmental stimuli are processed (similar Meyer 2013, Part III). Leadership-dominated parties move in accordance with policy shifts of the mean voter and are more willing to move after office exclusion, whereas activist-dominated parties are responsive to party voters (Schumacher et al. 2013, 474). These results are in line with the learning framework that party policy makers update their beliefs about the effectiveness of the last move in light of vote gains or losses but may be constrained in their decision by an internal "wall of resistance".

Refining the notion of "supporters" and based on the analysis of mass-parties in the UK, France and Germany from 1973 to 1997, Schwennicke (2007, 21) argues that parties are better off if they "chase" the unaligned and uncommitted citizens, "while the preferences of core supporters do not significantly affect changes in the policy position of parties". Similarly, Adams and Ezrow (2009) look at parties in twelve Western European countries from 1973-2002 and arrive at the conclusion that opinion leaders, i.e. politically engaged citizens, matter more than other voters in the electorate. Likewise, Meyer (2013, Ch. 8), analyzing ten Western European countries with varying time frames, finds that, among others, parties are more likely to respond to (their) voters if mean political interest is high and the share of voters identifying with a party is large.

In sum, these studies suggest to move left if party supporters shift to the left, and to move right if party supporters turn to the right. This decision promises at least to preserve a vote share similar to the previous election. Yet, for mainstream parties – or better: leadership-dominated parties – it is more rational to move in accordance with public opinion. Although polling has become increasingly more professionalized, it is questionable whether

[10] Indeed, these studies triggered a discussion about *niche parties* themselves, their defining characteristics and their measurement (e.g. Meguid 2005; 2008; Wagner 2012; Bischof 2015; Meyer and Miller 2015); yet, the discussion is far from being settled.

parties can rely on this information.[11] Or, as Budge (1994, 445) puts it: "polls do not provide information on what actually influences voting", so there is "no real guidance from polls nor from voting analysts in the absence of verified theory" and a "party may as well follow its own preferences". Empirically, this is backed by Adams et al. who analyze the effects of party policy moves, and find

> that voters react strongly to their *perceptions* [sic] of parties' Left-Right shifts but not to parties' *actual* [sic] shifts as coded by the Comparative Manifesto Project [which] raises troubling questions about the nature of mass-elite policy linkages. In situations where parties shift the Left-Right orientations of the policy statements that they publish in their election manifestos, we find no evidence that voters respond by adjusting their own Left-Right positions, their partisan loyalties, or even their perceptions of the parties' Left-Right positions. (2011, 379)

Given the uncertainty surrounding voter movements, past results are "a rare concrete reference for parties to react to" (Budge et al. 2010, 790) – as are moves of competitors. Party leaders and central offices are probably much more aware of competitors' standpoints and movements than of those of (their) voters. Based on a larger sample of parties in 25 OECD countries from the first post-war election to 1998, Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) analyze parties' responses to rivals' previous moves. They find that parties tend to shift in the same direction, whereupon "parties are more responsive to policy shifts by other members of their ideological family than to the policy shifts of other parties in the system" (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b, 842).[12] Williams (2015) refines the argument by replicating and modifying the former study. According to his analysis, party family membership indeed exerts the largest effect in that parties tend to move in the same direction as their contenders of the same family "suggesting that parties competing over the same bloc of voters for policy and non-policy reasons are likely to move in similar ways as their competitors" (Williams 2015, 155). Second, parties which are direct neighbors in spatial terms are found to share similar strategies (i.e. they move in accordance) and third, the further away any competitor is, the lesser the impact on the focal party. Both studies thus suggest,

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[11] There is also an issue in academic research. All mentioned studies including voters' movements (in the broadest sense) have to rely on survey data. For this reason, most of them resort to the Eurobarometer, as it is a rare instance of comparable cross-country, longitudinal survey data. Apart from methodological concerns regarding whether left-right self-placements actually need to be rescaled to be comparable across countries (Lo et al. 2014), these studies are limited to Western European countries starting in the 1970s. Therefore, later on (e.g. Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b) this measure has been replaced by the Kim/Fording Median Voter (Kim and Fording 1998), which closely resembles voter movements of the Eurobarometer (McDonald and Budge 2005, 198–202) but can be calculated for every election when data on party ideology and vote share is available. Yet, the other side of the coin is that an endogeneity problem (may) arise in studies analyzing policy moves or positions.

[12] Party family is not used in the sense of "*familles spirituelles*" (Beyme 1982) but broadly as belonging to the left-wing (Ecology, Communist or Social Democratic party families) or right-wing (Conservative, Christian Democratic or Nationalist party families), respectively (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b, 834).

that decision making for a party is relatively straightforward: move left (right) if your competitors moved left (right) at the previous election, especially if they are members of your own ideological bloc. It is interesting to note, though, that both studies do not pay attention to whether the rival's move was successful or not. Obviously, it seems irrational to follow a move which brought about losses. This aspect will be picked up in the learning framework in that the effectiveness of competitors' moves is evaluated beforehand. Thus far, one can summarize that the likelihood of a party's move to the right increases if decision makers observe that either public opinion moves right, (party) voters turn right and/or competitors shifted to the right at the previous election; and vice versa for left moves. All analyzed impacts originate from domestic party competition. However, some studies examined effects external to the political system, above all the impact of (economic) globalization, Europeanization, and most recently, diffusion.

International Impacts: Economic Globalization, Europeanization, and Diffusion

Haupt (2010), analyzing policy moves in 17 Western European countries from the early 1970s to 2003, concludes that parties adjust their economic policy positions (and their general left-right positions) in response to changes in economic openness. Specifically, parties propose more interventionist policies (i.e. they move left), the more open the national economy becomes in terms of imports and capital mobility. This indicates that parties probably react "to increased demand for welfare compensation in light of increased economic risks" (Haupt 2006, 24) to cushion the effects of open markets (see also Finseraas and Jensen 2010).[13] She proceeds: "With respect to parties' rightward shifts in response to rises in exports, it is plausible that export-oriented countries experience economic gains from trade that legitimize markets, which thereby renders business friendly (right-wing) policies more attractive" (Haupt 2010, 16). However, economic globalization affects some parties more than others. Albeit based on a smaller sample of eight European countries from 1976 to 1998, Adams et al. (2009, 630) find that left-wing parties are generally more resistant to changes than their right-wing counterparts, i.e. "they appear unresponsive to short-term public opinion shifts and less responsive to short-term changes in the global economy". This result corroborates earlier findings that social democratic parties in particular are trapped between ideological heritage on the one hand and a changing society and (global) economy on the other, and need to adapt to new challenges in order to preserve

[13] This fact is widely discussed in the area of comparative welfare state research as the "compensation hypothesis" (e.g. Garrett 1998; Burgoon 2001; Genschel 2004), though with a focus on actual social policies enacted by governments. Haupt's finding thus lends support to friendlier views that the linkage between proposed and enacted policies still exists, i.e. parties in government do have some room for maneuver despite inherent necessities.

electoral success (Kitschelt 1994; Bonoli and Powell 2004). Finally, Ward et al. (2011) analyze the effects of economic globalization on positions, and find that it pushes parties' left-right positions to the right if the country is more open, but this effect is mediated by the position of the median voter. If the median voter is far to the left, globalization exerts a pull to the right, which – again – causes left-wing parties particular trouble. These studies thus suggest that economic globalization exerts a functional and direct impact on policy moves, and that parties respond in a knee-jerk manner through no fault of their own.

The remaining studies are closely intertwined although they do not focus on directional change; rather they support the notion which Kayser (2007) discusses under the heading "How Domestic is Domestic Politics". Looking at the impact of Europeanization, Nanou and Dorussen (2013) find that parties tend to converge in their positions, thereby offering less choice to voters, in order to avoid a mismatch to commitments deriving from EU membership (see also Dorussen and Nanou 2006). While this affects mainstream parties to a larger extent, even smaller, Eurosceptic parties are not resistant. This indicates that the "room to maneuver" decreases and one may hypothesize that it may alter directional change in the long run if parties tend to follow any form of an "EU position". Focusing on the magnitude of change as well, Somer-Topcu and Zar (2014) analyze the function elections to the European Parliament (EP) perform. Based on their sample of 14 European countries from 1979 to 2010 they conclude that elections to the EP are used as trial balloons, i.e. opposition parties change their manifesto in the light of a loss. "However, this effect exists only if the turnout rates are not too low at the European level in comparison with the national level, and when a particular European election and the following national election are not too far apart in time" (Somer-Topcu and Zar 2014, 893). The latter could be integrated more easily into future research within the learning framework if one looks at the direction of change, i.e. parties may factor in the effectiveness of their move at the EP election compared to the past national election. Yet, rather than deducible implications for decision making, these studies above all indicate that the "global level matters".

A final aspect which only recently entered the arena is diffusion. Going back in time, European parties in particular have a long history of cross-border interaction, in the case of socialist parties, for example, going back to the First International in the latter half of the 19th century. In a systematic but mostly historical-narrative approach, Mittag (2006) and colleagues identify three stages of party cooperation in Europe along the lines of ideological families. The first one called *Inkubationsphase* (incubation), ranging from late 19th century until World War II, is characterized by loose attempts and experiments in different types of cooperation and interaction, mainly based on personal relationships, mutual attendance at

party congresses or coordinated relief operations. With the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ESCS) and its supervisory body, the Common Assembly, factions found their way into European politics. The first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 especially pushed the formation of European political parties. This second stage, *Etablierungsphase* (establishment), is characterized by formal institutionalization and first attempts to formulate common policy positions – which may partly explain the convergence found in Dorussen and Nanou's studies; however due to widely differing (national-colored) views there has been a tendency toward the lowest common denominator. The introduction of Article 138a of the Maastricht Treaty initiated a third stage, a phase of professionalization (*Professionalisierungsphase*). The following efforts to formulate concrete and legal foundations led to the adoption of the Statute on European Parties in 2004, which fundamentally changed the financing of European parties and caused either modifications of structures or even the creation of new party federations (Ladrech 2006, 497). As a result, more coherent organizations emerged. No longer "simple transnational umbrella organizations for fighting EP elections, the new 'Euro-parties' began to develop as extraparliamentary party organizations at the European level" (Hix 2005, 187). In sum, transnational party cooperation has closely mirrored the European integration process, and European parties provide – disregarding the "daily work" of the EU – an institutionalized platform for cross-border exchange of ideas, political guidelines, strategies, and techniques. Again, rather than deducible implications in the sense of decision rules, this strand of literature provides insight into "party leader's informational environment" (Adams et al. 2004, 609) which is seen as key for understanding party dynamics. Parties – or more specifically, party elites – have much easier and broader access to information about policy moves and experiences from abroad, which is likely to influence their beliefs, and hence parties' strategic choices even more if they are in government. In this sense, the most recent study indeed supports this hypothesis: Böhmelt et al. (2016) analyze whether parties in 26 OECD countries from 1977 to 2010 learn or emulate parties in other countries. Their "analyses support the *Foreign Incumbent Hypothesis* [sic] that political parties respond to the left-right positions of political parties that recently were governing coalition members in foreign countries" (2016, 33).[14]

To sum up the findings with respect to the international level, there is evidence that parties move in accordance with shifts in economic globalization, whereby parties tend to move

[14] Together with the results of this thesis, that parties tend to emulate other parties abroad, this may partly explain what Kayser (2007, 351) labels a "puzzle" with respect to Kim and Fording's (1998; 2003) findings of international covariation of the median voter.

left with increasing openness (in terms of imports and capital mobility). Yet, it is questionable if parties just mechanically react – as is implicitly assumed in these studies. Furthermore, one may question the direct impact on policy moves; it seems more plausible that economic globalization influences voters' demands thereby affecting policy moves by a detour via the electorate (Kayser 2007). More importantly though, is that domestic politics indeed is no longer domestic, and that other parties abroad provide experience decision makers can resort to in their search for information.

To put the empirical studies in a nutshell: domestic party competition still explains the lion's share of policy moves, but international aspects gain influence. Public opinion, competitor behavior, voter movements, and past results all signal parties as to where to move, while economic globalization and Europeanization constrain the "menu" on offer. Finally, with increasing transnational cooperation at both the governmental and party level, much more easily accessible information about other parties' strategic choices is available to decision makers. All empirical studies are unified in their focus on parties as unitary actors (with only two exceptions), how they behave and how they react to different signals and stimuli. However, none has made a more thorough attempt to explain why parties behave this way and how they deal with conflicting information. As rare representatives of foremost theoretical approaches which try to incorporate some of these aspects, Budge's (1994) "New Spatial Theory" and Budge et al.'s (2010) "Integrated Dynamic Theory" are worth considering before presenting the research gap this thesis aims to fill.

2.2 NST and IDT: Two Theoretical Approaches

One of the first attempts to explain real world movements in party ideology has been proposed by Budge (1994) as the "New Spatial Theory" (NST). Drawing on this work and summarizing the research conducted by Adams and colleagues in the meantime, Budge et al. (2010) presented a modified version called "Integrated Dynamic Theory" (IDT).

The "New Spatial Theory"

Budge's NST basically introduces two key concepts for the understanding of party strategy. First, parties act under *uncertainty*. This, however, does not preclude rationality: as Simon (1997) shows, suboptimal strategies can be rational under given circumstances with limited information and high calculating costs. Although polling has become ever more professionalized, surveys cannot explain how voters actually decide. As a result, parties might get some initial clues about important issues, but it remains unclear whether these issues in-

deed account for the voting decision. To handle this uncertainty, ideology provides a framework to which both parties and voters can refer to, as it shapes the perception of politics and produces plausible reasons for actions (Campbell et al. 1960). Ideology sets reasonable limits for each party as to how far one could go without leapfrogging the competitor, while at the same time being sufficiently ambiguous to allow for some adjustments or movements within this pre-defined policy space. The fact that the long-standing *ideological history* constrains parties is the second concept of the NST. Building on these premises, Budge (1994, 451–54) introduces five decision rules which party leaders apply:

1. *Stay Put*: a sufficient number of people who voted for the policy stance last time indicates the existence of (ideologically-tied) groups to which the party can return. This decision rule has the advantage of maintaining coherent or "pure" positions.
2. *Alternate*: as a result of internal (e.g. party factions or dissatisfied members) or external (e.g. support of unpopular policies) pressures, parties may return to the position prior to the last one, resulting in a zigzag movement. In addition, this behavior prevents ideological leapfrogging.
3. *Evaluate last move*: given the certainty of the last election's vote share, parties can evaluate their last shift in terms of success or failure. Based on this evaluation they provide "more of the same" (or at least stay put) if the move brought about gains. If the party lost votes, the chance of moving back is higher.
4. *Expect competitive elections, or not*: according to Robertson (1976) parties make assumptions about whether the next election will be competitive or non-competitive. In the first case, they move to the center in order to win the decisive votes. In a non-competitive election, when circumstances suggest a clear-cut winner, parties will take ideologically "sound" positions to ensure internal support.
5. *Outflank "marker" parties*: if two or more parties compete more or less on the same ground (like socialist and social democratic parties or center parties in the middle of moderate right-wing and left-wing parties), smaller parties in particular choose more extreme positions to the left or right, respectively, than the (bigger) "marker" party. In doing so, smaller parties ensure their distinctiveness.

Putting these decision rules to the test with empirical policy moves derived from Manifesto data, Budge concludes that rules #2 and #3 (alternation and evaluation) account for most of real world movements, but policy alternation clearly predominates party behavior. Although alternating behavior can be observed across all party families, left-wing parties apply this rule extensively, which indicates left-wing parties' difficulty in reconciling attracting

enough votes on the one hand, and the need to stay ideologically sound on the other (Budge 1994, 465–66).

Apart from the introduction of uncertainty and ideological constraints, the idea of decision rules as the linchpin of party strategies is certainly the most promising aspect of the NST. Although he remains vague, with rule #2 Budge even allows for organizational or environmental changes to affect parties' strategic choices, whether they are a result of internal struggle, external change like unpopular policies, or a changing electorate. The focus thus is on parties as (more or less) rational actors who ultimately decide on their own choices.

Since rule #2 and #3 have a prominent position it is worth taking a quick look at both rules in terms of underlying assumptions. Rule #3 is straightforward in terms of reason and direction of change. Party leaders evaluate the last policy shift on the basis of the electoral result. Hence, this decision rule provides both a micro-foundation for why a change occurs (i.e. as the outcome of the evaluation process) and the direction in which a party's policy will be adjusted (i.e. "provide more, if successful; move back, if not"). For this reason, and because it already includes a notion of learning, rule #3 is well-suited to be carried over to the learning framework as "learning from one's own experience".

With rule #2 the direction of change is clear, as it always will be a reverse move. The reason is more problematic though because it simply states *that* parties will change but not exactly *why*. The mechanism underlying why parties choose to return to their previous position is left uncovered, which is unsatisfactory given the conclusion that this rule especially accounts for the largest portion of parties' real world movements.

In their enhanced and modified version – the "Integrated Dynamic Theory" – Budge et al. (2010) pay more attention to this link. Unfortunately, they reduce the idea of decision rules to a simple inward-looking evaluation of who is in control of the party, namely the dominant faction. Therefore, in the next section the IDT is presented in detail, and it is argued that sticking to decision rules is more advantageous than the inherent reduction in the IDT.

The "Integrated Dynamic Theory"

The key point of the IDT is "that policy change is driven by a *process* [sic] of factional alternation of control of the party, temporarily suspended when a party achieves vote success" (Budge et al. 2010, 790). It thus abandons the idea of a unified leadership in favor of internal factional struggle over control of the party's policy stance. The IDT is based on five assumptions, which partly incorporate the decision rules and two key concepts of the NST (Budge et al. 2010, 792).

1. *Ideology*: like in the NST, position taking is bounded to an ideological space limited by the party's overall ideology (i.e. ideological constraints).
2. *Factionalism*: unlike NST, parties are not treated as unitary actors, rather internal factions struggle over leadership and control of a party's policy position. Depending on which faction currently controls the party, the party is closer to the faction's ideal point (albeit limited by the overall ideology; see assumption #1).
3. *Costs of control*: exogenous and endogenous events erode support for the controlling faction, hence rival factions can overtake the leadership and force its own stance on the party, which leads to zigzag movements.
4. *Elections*: successful elections stop the zigzag movement in the short run, as long as the current strategy pays out in terms of votes or offices (this comes close to decision rule #3 in the NST, i.e. evaluation in light of success or failure).
5. *Magnitude of change*: the magnitude of change depends on the strength of the factions at the time the former leading faction is displaced.

Modelled as a decision tree, Budge et al. arrive at theoretical movements which mirror zigzag moves. The first move is given exogenously; at Election Two the party either continues if it gained votes, or reverses if it lost votes. In the case that the party gains further votes at Election Three the movement is, however, reversed because the party would a) risk leaving "its" ideological space, and b) ideological frustration would mount within the party.[15] Checking their simulation model against Manifesto data they conclude that the IDT performs regarding the prediction of actual policy shifts (Budge et al. 2010, 800–803).

Apart from the assumption that parties never move more than twice in the same direction, the decision tree is nothing more than decision rule #2 in conjunction with #3 of the NST. It is therefore questionable why it needed to be overburdened by the idea of factional struggle, as the obvious drawback of the IDT is its lack of insight into actual behavior of party factions – a lack of comparable, longitudinal data on party factional strength *and* its policy stance certainly being the most important shortcoming. Notwithstanding, inferences are drawn from observable policy moves to the unobservable existence of factional struggles over control of the party. The authors are well aware of this problem (Budge et al. 2010, 791), but they interpret the fit of their simulation as support for their hypothesis. Theoretically, however, the IDT is no worse or better than the NST in predicting policy moves because the NST's decision rules are equally plausible as the decision tree and the decision to alternate after two similar moves may be a result of all kinds of considerations

[15] One interesting side aspect of this decision tree would be the examination of whether moving three times in a row, hence eliding rival factions, leads to splits in parties and the emergence of new ones.

beyond factional control. By simply referring to "exogenous and endogenous events" the authors even bypass a discussion about which of the impacts on policy moves found in previous studies actually matter. Certainly, drawing attention to internal (factional) processes is a benefit of the IDT, but it seems more promising to treat internal struggle as a constraining factor or the "wall of resistance" (like Schumacher et al. 2013 or Meyer 2013).

Apart from that Budge et al. (2010, 790) explicitly argue for "*past votes* [sic] as the sole exogenous reference point, rather than electoral preferences and support, as reflected in opinion polls". This aspect is picked up in the learning framework in that parties update their previous beliefs about the effectiveness of right vs. left moves by evaluating vote gains and losses. I include "electoral preferences and support" though, in the figurative sense interpreted as shifts in public opinion, as a "control" in the analysis as it may nevertheless be part of the information horizon of party leaders, and has been found to be highly influential in previous studies. The difference is that information about effectiveness based on observable experience can be taken for granted – in a sense it is a retrospective fact. Polling, on the other hand is tainted with uncertainty due to margins of error or simply due to differences in response and actual behavior – in this sense the information gives no more than hints, so it is rather a prospective expectation.

In sum, the advantage of going back to the concept of decision rules is twofold: first, viewing party change as purely driven by factional struggle neglects the evidence for how external factors affect policy moves. It thus speaks against the established view that party change is driven by both external, "environmental" changes *and* internal processes (e.g. Panebianco 1988; Strøm 1990; Harmel and Janda 1994; Katz and Mair 1995; Harmel 2002). Or, as Kitschelt (1994, 217) puts it: "organizational structures and strategic choices must be placed within a framework of variable systemic conditions [...]. These systemic conditions affect the actor's rational choice of strategies in light of preconceived preferences, but also the nature of preferences themselves." Second, decision rules are open to new insights gained by different approaches to party behavior; if framed in a coherent theoretical framework (like the learning approach) additional rules can be added and tested. This is not to say that internal struggle should be left aside – on the contrary, factional control surely plays an important role (Kitschelt 1994, 5; Harmel et al. 1995; Harmel and Tan 2003) – but it can be incorporated in party members' information horizon if one can come up with a sensible measure. Yet, there may be additional factors affecting party policy moves which have not been considered at all, and which remain undetected if one pays attention only to factions alone.

2.3 Research Gap

The main contribution of both NST and IDT is to emphasize the uncertainty under which parties act when choosing policy positions. Bringing parties internal life back to the research agenda – an aspect to which Adams and colleagues indeed paid very little attention – is an additional benefit. The limitations are, however, that they fail to detail the micro-foundation of *why* a party may choose one option over the other – the exception being rule #3 of the NST – despite the promising idea of decision rules and reference to past election results as a signal of the effectiveness of a move (vague in the NST and explicit in the IDT). As the authors emphasize, past results are probably the only "true" information parties can rely on (Budge et al. 2010, 790). Yet, the IDT only hazily refers to "exogenous events" bypassing a more thorough discussion of which events do matter, and how they affect the internal balance of power. Both approaches thus promise an inward-looking approach for understanding party behavior but fail to go the extra mile and spell out the micro-foundation in a rigorous way.

In contrast, all empirical studies focus on the impact of external factors and how these shape the reactions of parties. By treating parties as unitary actors which somehow process information and arrive at a "rational choice", they not only neglect the internal life of parties and how parties arrive at decisions, they also implicitly assume that parties respond to these impacts in a symmetrical and mechanical manner – if public opinion moves right, the party moves right; if public opinion moves left, parties move left as well. While this basic example could be explained with reference to Downs' work, it falls short in explaining how parties decide when public opinion moves left, but competitors' shifts suggest to move right.

To overcome these limitations an actor-centered approach for the analysis of policy shifts is presented in the next chapter. It takes its origin from parties, which face uncertainty in their decision to either move right or left. Seeking information about possible solutions, members of the party learn by updating their prior beliefs about the expected utility of one or the other alternative in light of observed experience. Past results, public opinion, competitors' moves and the experience of other parties abroad provide examples which make up the information horizon of party elites. On the other hand, members of the party on the ground have their own, albeit restricted, information horizon and may come to a different decision than party elites do. Depending on how much influence they have on parties' strategic choices they thus may constrain party elites in their decision.

This way, the new framework provides a micro-foundation of *why* parties choose one option over the other and formulates the decision rules in a more rigorous way. Furthermore, it takes much of the findings of the empirical studies with respect to external impacts on policy moves into account. At the same time, it overcomes the notion of parties as unitary actors. Depending on the internal balance of power the final decision either rests on the information available to party elites and their evaluation of the expected utility; or it represents a compromise between party leaders and members of the party on the ground and their respective evaluation – which at times may differ. To fill the research gap, Chapter 3 discusses who learns and what is meant by "learning" before adapting and elaborating Meseguer's framework for the analysis of party policy moves.

3. Learning and Policy Moves

This thesis argues that party members learn about the effectiveness of a left and a right move in terms of vote gains and losses. By gathering information from the past and elsewhere, they update their prior beliefs and the posterior beliefs inform the decision where to move next. To this end, they can resort to their own past, evaluate previous moves of competitors, and look at available information beyond national borders. By adapting a framework which Meseguer (2005; 2006; 2009) originally applied for the analysis of governments' adoption of market liberalization policies, party elites and the internal life of parties are put in the spotlight, and a formal model of learning is proposed to explain why and when parties move right or left. The new framework thus can be seen as an answer to Adams et al. (2004, 609) who suspect "that the key to understanding party dynamics may lie in party leaders' informational environment and/or the perceived risks associated with changing policy direction". The new framework draws on the idea of an "information horizon" which consists of a variety of resources like social networks, experts, documents, experiments and real-world observations an individual seeking information can resort to in a given context and situation (Sonnenwald 1999). In this sense, I argue that election results from the past and elsewhere provide party elites and activists with useful clues about the effectiveness of policy moves, although both differ regarding the scope of information they are able to/willing to process. In this way, the learning framework directly touches upon the notion of "informational environment". As has been noted as a caveat, election results may not be the sole information a decision rests upon, but it provides a useful and parsimonious starting point in line with much of the previous literature.

Bennett and Howlett's (1992) review of theories of policy learning was structured along the question "who learns what to what effect".[16] In this sense, Chapter 3 mirrors their question, detailing and discussing the premises of the formal model of learning. Considering that all empirical studies and the NST treat parties as unitary actors, while the IDT suggests to look at factions, it is necessary to justify the focus on party elites vs. members on the ground. To this end, in Section 3.1 I draw on the famous work of Katz and Mair (1993), which proposed a functional division and "disassembled" a party into the *party in public office*, *the party on the ground* and the *party central office*. I argue that the party in public office has an interest in gaining (or maintaining) public office, i.e. it is office- and vote-seeking,

[16] Dolowitz and Marsh (2000; 1996) went even further and proposed a framework along additional questions like "from where", "from whom", or "why" based on a continuum "want to…have to", and one may add the question "when". Although "time" is left for future research, the former questions are more or less explicitly answered in this thesis, which shows the ancestry from the literature of policy diffusion and transfers.

whereas the party on the ground is mainly policy-driven. Due to an ever-increasing professionalization and fusion of the party in public office and the party central office, party elites have an informational lead over party members and thus may arrive at different decisions than members would. Depending on the internal balance of power this influences the decision where to move to a greater or lesser extent.

Thereafter, in Section 3.2 the concept of learning is discussed. Although many intuitively have a common sense understanding of what learning is, several notions of "learning" can be found especially in the field of (comparative) public policy and in analyses of policy diffusion and transfers (Meseguer's framework indeed originates from the literature of diffusion, too). By reviewing different notions, the focus is on the concepts of rational and bounded learning. The former implies that decision makers update their prior beliefs in light of all experience, whereas the latter implies that "policy makers do not have full analytical capabilities", that "[p]olicy makers do not look at all available information", that "they do not process the available information in the same way", and that "they acquire a series of cognitive biases when analyzing the flow of information" (Meseguer 2009, 18–19). However, the distinction between rational and bounded learning vanishes once the (unrealistic) assumption is dropped that gathering information comes for free. Because parties face uncertainty over how voters will react to a policy move, I argue that they attempt to reduce that uncertainty by learning from observed experience. Party elites are therefore regarded as rational learners whose posterior beliefs inform their decision where to move, whereas members on the ground are presumably rather bounded learners, foremost due to a restricted information horizon.

Chapter 3 closes with the formal model of learning (Section 3.3) by presenting Meseguer's approach and adapting it to party policy moves. Inspired by Bayesian updating, the formal model provides an operationalization of learning and relates learning to decisions. As a result, it shows *why* parties move: either because the expected utility of a right move is higher than the expected utility of a left move, and/or the more ambiguous, the "noisier" the experience of a right move compared to the alternative, the less likely the decision to move right; and vice versa. It thus mirrors Meseguer's (2009, 39) approach in that "testing learning involves two steps. The first is to come up with some measure of learning. The second step is to relate that measure of learning to the choices actually observed and to evaluate whether learning had any impact on those policy choices". By adding the prerequisite to define the agents of change, these three tasks are addressed throughout Chapter 3 and lay the groundwork for the empirical test of this approach in Chapter 5.

3.1 Who Learns? On Party Elites and Party Organizations

Almost all empirical studies treat parties as unitary actors and do not address the question of who decides. Especially in the public policy literature this status is usually assigned to the government. However, with respect to parties' strategic choices the answer is unclear. In order to overcome the notion of unitary actors one has to take party organizations seriously; or as Katz (2002, 87) puts it: "[E]ven in the case in which the party can be regarded as an *actor* [sic], it is important to remember that each party is also an *organization* [sic] with its own internal life and politics." In this sense, this section justifies two premises of the learning framework: first, party elites of the party central office (not factions) are the decisive actors; and second, the party on the ground may constrain them, i.e. it can be regarded as the "wall of resistance". With respect to decision-making within a party I argue that party elites are foremost interested in vote- and office-seeking. To this end, they draw on a broader set of information resources, hence a focus on public opinion ("electoral preferences and support") and successful parties (elsewhere). In turn, the party on the ground, mainly driven by policy considerations and restricted in their information horizon, may come to a different decision based on the information which is easily available to them like their own results and competitors' behavior. Depending on its strength, it thus constrains party elites to a greater or lesser extent. Chasing public opinion, for example, may be disregarded as opportunistic behavior with uncertain outcomes; instead a vote gain in the past election signaled that it worked out, so "why fix it, if it ain't broken?"[17]

Parties as Organizations

Political parties are usually structured vertically, i.e. hierarchically, and horizontally, e.g. territorially. This is counteracted by functional linkages, personal connections and informal ties cross-cutting the formal structure. Locating decision makers is further complicated by the fact that each political party is unique in its appearance, and that party organizations are subject to change. However, because the learning framework is an actor-centered approach, one needs to identify the locus of decision making. Despite a wide variety of organizational appearances, parties share some main features which render it possible to look from a functional perspective and identify members of the party central office as the decision makers. Although they may have to deal with members of the party on the ground if the latter have some influence in internal politics, they remain otherwise free from constraints. The party central office is the battleground where policy considerations of the

[17] This resembles decision rule #3 of the NST ("provide more of the same").

party on the ground are weighed against the electoral payoffs and office-seeking intents of the party in public office. Since information horizons arising within a given context and situation are determined both socially and individually (Sonnenwald 1999), apparently the party in public office, the party central office and the party on the ground differ in their tasks, their incentives and aims, and consequently their perception of choices they face and the information they gather when seeking solutions. Adopting this point of view provides a way to understand why the party on the ground may constrain party elites in their decisions.

The appearance of political parties' structure is shaped by external and internal factors. External factors encompass for example state and party law, the electoral system or state subsidies, whereas membership, the party statute or factional struggle over control are considered internal influences. Depending on one's focus, several attempts have been made to describe party organizations and change from different perspectives (cf. Kirchheimer 1965; Panebianco 1988; Harmel and Janda 1994; Kitschelt 1994; Katz and Mair 1995; Harmel and Tan 2003). The early literature was mainly influenced by Michels' ([1911] 1962) "iron law of oligarchy", who stated that sooner or later, as a party matures, every party tends to establish oligarchic structures. Apart from several party types (for overviews see Deschouwer 1992; Wolinetz 2002; Krouwel 2006), which were developed as a description and characterization of political parties in the first place – but implicitly always with a notion of transformation – a smaller part of the literature deals with organizational principles per se (Wiesendahl 2010, 36). From this point of view parties are seen as firms, franchise systems, fighting organizations (i.e. oligarchic parties), stratarchies, or organized anarchies. Each one assigns different tasks and influence over strategic choices to different bodies of the party.

The term fighting organization ("*Kampfesorganisation*") can be traced back to Michels ([1911] 1962). Fighting parties have a clear goal, which is successful competition and mobilization of voters. Thus, the organization is simply a means to an end. To ensure the achievement of these goals, the party is best organized in a rational-efficient way with a hierarchical and centralized structure, a high level of central authority and committed loyalty from their members. The organization itself is essentially closed, and organizational change only occurs if the aspired aims change (Wiesendahl 2010, 39). As a party matures and oligarchic structures emerge, an informational divide materializes due to the professionalization and education of party leaders vis-à-vis the "incompetence of the masses" (Michels [1911] 1962, pt. 1/C).

Treating parties as *firms* ("enterprise-in-office") sheds more light on the role networks and party elites play. A party is embodied by a team of politicians, and the organization acts as an electoral service provider to support the team, provide (campaign) resources and organize (campaigning) activities (Monroe 2001). From this perspective parties are still vehicles to achieve an end with a special emphasis on office-seeking. Here, the different incentives and the informational divide become obvious between the professional staff and the party volunteers. As a Republican party chair in Monroe's study puts it:

> It's my impression that people volunteer their time because they are concerned with a certain issue or they like a certain candidate. But the staffers are there because it's part of their job–they have been told that they have to be there–and they are only concerned about one thing: and that is winning *that* [sic] election. (2001, 96–97)

While the fighting organization appears as a closed entity, the firm is more open and able to adapt to changing environments (Wiesendahl 2010, 40). Refining the idea, Carty describes parties as *franchise systems*. In his view,

> the party embodies and sustains a brand that defines its place in the political spectrum and is the focus for supporters' generalized loyalties. Typically, parties' central organizations are responsible for providing the basic product line (policy and leadership), for devising and directing the major communication line (the national campaign) and for establishing standard organizational management, training and financing functions. [...] Local units, however they are defined (geographically or otherwise), more often provide the basic organizational home of most party members, and are typically charged with delivering the product, i.e. creating organizations that can find and support candidates as well as mobilizing campaigns to deliver the vote on the ground. (2004, 11)

Carty's idea of franchise systems already accepts the notion of stratarchical parties, i.e. the autonomy of organizational units within a party. According to Eldersveld (1971, 80) *stratarchy* is constituted by a "proliferation of the ruling group and diffusion of power prerogatives and power exercise." Instead of a centralized decision-making body, stratified decision making with a considerable degree of independence takes place within the party with its "balkanization" of power relations.

Finally, the notion of parties as *organized anarchy* not only accepts the fact that (sub)units within the organization have autonomous action space, but goes even further in suggesting that parties are structured only to a rather limited extent. Instead, they are characterized, at the most, by a fragmented structure, loose linkages and only insufficient internal communication. The drawbacks of parties which resemble this type of organizational principle are ambiguous role models which lead to inefficiency, trial and error, improvisation and idle states. The huge advantage, however, is that malfunctioning in one unit does not affect the functioning of other areas (Wiesendahl 2010, 42), e.g. a defeat at the national level does not

alter the work at the local level and vice versa. The ability to lead such a party is limited and coherent behavior is nearly impossible. However, because of its open character and "self-immunization" against disruption, adaption to a changing environment and easier (partial) organizational transformation may better ensure a party's survival in the long run.

Given the huge variety of party organizations all over the world, Bolleyer (2012) argues that the best way to understand parties' organizational principles is to locate them in a threefold typology between hierarchy, stratarchy and federation. Each type has a primary goal, e.g. a hierarchical party emphasizes unilateral control; federations, the protection of the composite nature of the structure; and stratarchies are characterized by a functional division of labor (Bolleyer 2012, 5). Depending on each type, the power is either centralized (hierarchy); divided (stratarchy), whereby the "centre defines the core dimensions of party policy [...] while the regional or local levels select (also) national candidates" (Bolleyer 2012, 5); or dispersed (federations), usually along territorial lines.[18] While it is easier in hierarchies and stratarchies for party elites to run national campaigns and present more consistent sets of policy alternatives, party federations lack this ability because the local branches usually try to keep the center out. However, even party federations need to assure at least some coherence to compete successfully in national elections.

Despite a "quite widespread consensus that the relevant relationships are now more *stratarchical* [sic] than hierarchical" (Mair 1994, 17), all types – firms, franchise systems, stratarchies and organized anarchies – exemplify the relevance of context and situation for information horizons. Due to the autonomy of (sub)units each one has a different task to fulfill and different issues to tackle; consequently, decision makers in the focal unit make use of different information resources. Hence, if the choice is over core dimensions of party policy at the highest level, usually the national one, it is unlikely that lower-level units (can) employ the same amount of resources – if any at all – as the responsible one.

A recurring theme in all types is that despite varying levels of power and autonomy assigned to (local) subunits, party operatives at the highest level of the organization can be viewed as the nucleus because they play an important role in the operation of a party, in setting guidelines, in defining core positions and in running and monitoring national election campaigns. Subunits, on the other hand, fulfill more specific and targeted tasks, and party members are viewed as either labor force or a stable voter base. Likewise, all types

[18] Interestingly, all new right-wing parties Bolleyer analyses are hierarchies, whereas most of the green parties are federations (although some are characterized as stratarchies). Adams et al. (2006, 513) atheoretically defined niche parties as communist, green or extreme nationalist parties. Rather than occupying a "policy niche" it seems also likely that niche parties behave differently, because their internal life differs from stratarchical mainstream parties (similar Schumacher et al. 2013).

imply that there is an informational gap between those responsible for the overall strategy and those responsible for more specific tasks at lower levels of the party organization.

If one is interested in opening the black box and overcoming the notion of parties as unitary actors, this indicates that the focus on factions might be misleading; rather, the internal structure and organizational principle shape parties' responses to environmental stimuli and the way (new) information is gathered and processed. Yet, because it is impossible to determine the predominant principle for every party – particularly because many parties no longer exist – and analyze its impact on decisions, a more general assumption about the way the internal life of a party affects decision making is necessary. To this end, and considering the vast empirical diversity of organizational appearances, Katz and Mair (1993) have proposed a *functional division* of party organizations into "three faces".

The Three Faces of Party Organizations

Katz and Mair differentiate the *party in public office* from the *party on the ground* and consider the *party central office* as the mediator between the two. The party in public office is embodied by politicians who were elected to govern (or at least to be seated in parliament). Its main characteristic, which distinguishes it from the other faces, is the legitimacy conferred by the public mandate (Katz and Mair 1993, 595–97). Members of the party in public office are therefore dependent on extra-party forces like electoral success, which secures their own position, rewards or other (material) benefits holding office affords. On the other hand, the party in public office is transient, i.e. the party as an organization continues to exist even if the party is out of office. Office- and vote-seeking are the main motivation driving these members. Apart from the personal benefits, politicians usually have some policy ambitions as well. Other than the members on the ground who share the same policy objectives (at least to some extent), the party in public office has an advantage because it has access to resources (e.g. the expertise of the state bureaucracy) and the power to implement these policies. In addition, party politicians in public office could devote themselves to this job full time, whereas the members on the ground usually participate voluntarily during their leisure time. This puts members of the party in public office in a unique position vis-à-vis the party on the ground. On the other hand, these politicians face constraints from the obligations of government, whereas the party on the ground does not. This means that party elites in public office may be forced to cut back ambitions due to compromises (with coalition partners) or unfeasibility of policies. While it is likely to be less of a problem for the party in public office – the members are accountable to the whole electorate and take these constraints as given – members of the party on the ground might

interpret deviations as a "withdrawal from the party's real position". Finally, the party in public office has access to resources, which they could use in internal politics, first and foremost patronage (Katz and Mair 1993, 595–97). In sum, the party in public office has a strong inclination to be electorally successful – even at the cost of policy compromises – and it has an advantage with respect to the information horizon regarding scope and access to information. The reverse is true for the party on the ground.

The party on the ground fulfils its tasks to pre-filter interests and turn them into politicized demands by embodying the local representation "of the segment of society that the party as a whole claims to represent" (Katz and Mair 1993, 598). Some small personal benefits from holding local offices can be gained but the main incentives to join the party on the ground are symbolic, solidary and rest upon ideological reasons, i.e. they are public purposive incentives. Parties provide a collective identity by means of shared values, beliefs and interests, thus contouring the party for outsiders, and provide options to assign the individual a place within the organization (Jun 2010, 17–18). What distinguishes the party on the ground from the party in public office in the first place is *voluntariness*. Leaders of the party on the ground therefore need to assure loyalty from their members, and satisfy their demands in order to maintain the organization per se, given that members leaving is always a threat to party organizations. Apart from the local structure the party on the ground is represented at the national level by the party congress and by other committees and congresses set up for specific purposes, but the members lack access to governmental decision making. However, they do have and provide their own resources: in line with Carty's (2004, 11) notion of locally delivering the product designed at the national level, the party on the ground can provide labor force for election campaigns and other political agitation in support of the party in public office. Second, it provides personnel for both local leadership positions and local public offices, but at times for national public offices as well. Third, it puts local interests and demands on the agenda, and thus helps to ensure a party's openness and responsiveness to civil society. Finally, and most important for the party in public office, it provides a more or less stable voter base (Katz and Mair 1993, 594–98). Taken together, the party on the ground can be viewed as merely policy-driven but is far away from the amount of resources available to the party in public office. Due to restrictions, not least in terms of time and resources, and their initial incentives, members may therefore favor different strategies than party elites or may choose other options when faced with a decision. From their point of view policy compromises and guidance from public opinion grounded in vote-seeking intents may be disregarded as opportunistic behavior with uncertain outcomes, which may provoke protest and abstention from the party on the ground.

On the other hand, even these members are probably aware that winning (national) elections is a goal in itself to ensure influence over public policies (Jun 2010, 22).

The party central office consists of two groups: the national executive committee(s) and the central party staff or secretariat (Katz and Mair 1993, 598–99). The national executive committee comprises members recruited from different faces of the party – some may be delegates from the party on the ground elected to congresses, some may be members of affiliated organizations (e.g. trade unions), or some may be (ex officio) members of the party in public office. The party central office fulfils four primary functions (Katz and Mair 1993, 600): first, it can be viewed as the nucleus of a party organization; either a "rudimentary party on the ground" establishes a central office in order to prepare ground for the establishment of a national representation, or elected representatives and their core supporters try to build an organization on the ground, which backs the party in public office. However, once a party is established this function loses importance. The second and third function is diametrical coordination: the central office controls the party on the ground on behalf of the party in public office in order to ensure a more coherent appearance or to run national campaigns. Reversely, the central office supervises the party in public office on behalf of the party on the ground because its permanence, expertise and intersection enables permanent control the party on the ground could not uphold due to its voluntary nature. At the same time the central office acts as a gatekeeper, filtering and aggregating demands from the ground. Finally, the central office employs its own resources to provide services like party press, affiliated foundations, policy research, mass media communication and the like (Katz and Mair 1993, 600).

The most important feature of the party central office is its centrality, its mediating position vis-à-vis the other two faces: if the members are united the party central office can be seen as *the* locus of decision-making, if they disagree the party central office is turned into a battleground, where the party on the ground competes with the party in public office over internal hegemony (Katz and Mair 1993, 599). Yet, "[t]he question is whether the party in central office will be the agent of the party on the ground in controlling the party in public office, or rather the agent of the party in public office in organizing and directing their (compliant) supporters on the party on the ground" (Katz and Mair 2002, 122).

The Declining Importance of the Party on the Ground

If one accepts the notion that the previously described party types were written with empirical examples of their time in mind, a pattern emerges when looking at the development of

party organizations through these lenses in a more chronological order, namely that the party on the ground and the other two faces are steadily drifting apart. Whereas a fighting organization appeared as a closed unit where all three faces were hierarchically connected, the notion of organized anarchy or stratarchy already accepts a fragmentation, and the idea of firms or franchise systems describes the manifestation of separation and division of labor which many parties especially in Western Europe underwent (and still do). Although national electorates and organizational coverage have expanded, membership has declined throughout the decades (Katz et al. 1992; Scarrow 2000) which has fundamentally altered the distribution of power between the three faces of a party. While the party on the ground still has some power with respect to candidate and leadership selection, the "policy making" (e.g. electoral manifestos, general trajectory) is placed in the hands of electoralist party leadership and parliamentary groups. If at all, the party on the ground may have an influence in the run-up to party congresses (Scarrow et al. 2000, 145–48). The introduction of state subsidies in many countries further ignited this process, as the necessity of membership fees to finance the party organization became less and less important for the financial survival of the party. Because the subsidy amount often depends on votes (Nassmacher 2009, Ch. 8), this shifted the focus away from the party on the ground, which fed in politicized demands and ensured a party's responsiveness to civil society in the first place, to a professionalization of campaigning and "electioneering" where the saliency of topics becomes less important. This creates a situation for parties that is no longer about selling but marketing, and no longer about art but science in campaigning (Farrell and Webb 2000, 122).

With increasing complexity of parliamentary work, a growing number of professional, full-time staff of the party in public office further shifted the internal balance (Katz and Mair 2002, 123). In addition, there are hardly any pure opposition parties left, rather a "parliamentarization" (Koole 1994) of parties has taken place (Katz and Mair 2002, 126). All these developments "reflect a general shift in the internal power relations within parties, with the parliamentary face–and especially that part of it intimately associated with the party leadership–emerging as the main power house" (Farrell and Webb 2000, 121). Needless to say, this is accompanied by an ever-increasing information gap which puts the leadership in a unique position vis-à-vis party members. Similarly, Katz and Mair observe a shift toward "depoliticizing" the party organization by an increasing professionalization of party central offices, which blurs the division of the party central office and the party in public office: "Indeed, as parties become more externally oriented, the roles of the professionals serving the party in central office and of those serving the party in public office become almost

inseparable, with both responding in the main to the demands of the party leadership in Parliament and in government" (Katz and Mair 2002, 126). From this point of view, the party on the ground may be viewed as a legacy which party elites try to circumvent, or simply maintain to uphold the *image* of a mass party (Katz and Mair 2002, 127–28).

These general trends are backed by the findings of some rare[19] in-depth cases studies which indeed provide evidence that a gap in the formulation of national policy making exists. This occurs because electoral manifestos – on which the observation of a policy move ultimately rests – are usually drafted by the leadership in close cooperation with members of the party in public office and rank-and-file members, while members on the ground become involved too late in the process to make any major changes before ratifying the program at the party congress (Dolezal et al. 2012; Däubler 2013; Pettitt 2016). Despite meaningful participation of members on the local level, there is a decreasing trend of involvement at the national level which even led some parties to "outsource" policy development through greater community consultation thus downplaying and bypassing party members (Gauja 2013). In sum, the trend against which Mair (1994, 17) warned, that "mutual autonomy will develop to a degree in which the local party will become essentially unconcerned about any real input into the national party (and vice versa)", seems to have intensified.

Considering the insights gained from parties' organizational principles, the functional divisions, and empirical evidence about recent developments of party organizations and policy formulation, it is justified to treat party elites as the agenda setter mainly interested in gaining votes and office and which, in addition, have access to a much broader set of information resources when seeking solutions to the problems they face. On the contrary, due to their volunteer status, scarcity of time and resources, members of the party on the ground have a rather restricted information horizon and may therefore favor a – in their view – less opportunistic and uncertain strategy; in other words, they may favor retrospective facts over prospective expectations. Depending on how much say activists have in internal politics this alters the way observed experience informs a party's decision where to move. Due to the wide availability of information about past performance and domestic competitors even to members on the ground, this information can often be taken for granted, whereas conducting polls or retrieving information about other parties' strategies from abroad and adapting them to the domestic context requires much more resources and is to some extent always vulnerable to uncertainty. This may lead one to hypothesize that the more leader-oriented a party, the more they observe shifts in public opinion and gain

[19] Recently, the "how" and "why" of manifestos gained popularity (Harmel 2016) but is still in its infancy.

insights about the effectiveness of rivals' moves and successful parties abroad in order to maximize votes. This is in line with what one would expect from the work of Downs (1957, Ch. 8). Alternatively, activist-dominated parties might rest their decision on known facts, like past results and domestic competitors' moves: in line with decision rule #3 of the NST, providing more of the same promises at least to retain a similar vote share; from this point of view it might be a bad idea to "fix it, if it ain't broken". This attitude is in line with Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) *Prospect Theor*y in which they found that "people underweight outcomes that are merely probable in comparison with outcomes that are obtained with certainty. This tendency, called the certainty effect, contributes to risk aversion in choices involving sure gains and to risk seeking in choices involving sure losses" (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 263). Party elites without constraints may therefore draw their lessons from all information resources available. Contrarily, members on the ground who have a say in internal politics might favor a different move based on what they learned. The decision to move left or right then represents a compromise between both "faces".

Overcoming the notion of parties as unitary actors, this section defined who decides within parties – a necessary premise for an actor-centered approach. Furthermore, it elaborated that party elites of the party central office (and the obvious fusion with the party in public office) have different incentives and a much broader information horizon than members of the party on the ground, and that the latter has lost importance over the years thereby justifying regarding party elites as the ultimate policy makers. While party elites are mainly interested in gaining votes (and office), the party on the ground, mostly policy-driven, may nevertheless condition the strategies party elites can choose based on the information which is available to them – if members have some influence over the formation of party policy. Section 3.1 thus accomplished the first task of Chapter 3, namely to define the agents of change. To avoid confusion in the following parts, the general terms "members" or "decision makers" apply to those ultimately responsible in the party as a whole; when contrasting the "faces" I will use the term "party elites" to refer to the party central office and party in public office, while reserving the term "activists" for members of the party on the ground. Note that if activists have a rather limited influence, the terms "members" or "decision makers" coincide with party elites. To move on, the core concept of the framework – learning – needs to be detailed. As Simon (1991, 25) notes: "All learning takes place inside individual human heads; an organization learns in only two ways: (a) by the learning of its members, or (b) by ingesting new members who have knowledge the organization didn't previously have".

3.2 The Concept of Learning

There are many definitions and variants of learning, especially in the fields of neuropsychology, sociology or pedagogy, but the common denominator is that learning entails a cognitive process which includes the modification of existing or acquisition of new knowledge, behavior, skills and the like. In political science, some definitions – surely inspired by the former – have emerged to explain political phenomena. Especially in the fields of (comparative) public policy and above all in analyses of diffusion and transfer of policies, concepts like political learning, policy-oriented learning, lesson-drawing or social learning have been proposed and employed to explain changes in policies (Bennett and Howlett 1992). By substituting governmental decision makers with party policy makers and change of policies with ideological change, this strand of literature is well-suited to shed light on the phenomenon under investigation, namely party policy moves.

Theories of Policy Learning: A Short Review

Theories of policy learning differ with respect to the question of who learns, learns what and to what effect (Bennett and Howlett 1992, 288–89). Comparing social policy programs in Britain and Sweden in one of the early efforts, Heclo (1974, 305) argued that societies learn through politics: "Politics finds its sources not only in power but also in uncertainty–men collectively wondering what to do. Finding feasible courses of action includes, but is more than, locating which way the vectors of political pressure are pushing". Carried over to political parties, the last sentence in particular can be interpreted as a hint that learning may complement vote-seeking strategies solely based on observing shifts in public opinion. Hall (1993, 278) defined social learning as "a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information. Learning is indicated when policy changes as the result of such a process". Thus, Hall introduced an instrumental definition of learning. Sabatier (1987) in turn argued that learning entails a conceptual use of research which alters policy makers' beliefs about causal relationships in the long run ("enlightenment"), i.e. "relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and that are concerned with the attainment or revisions of the precepts of one's belief system" (Sabatier 1987, 672).

The main argument is that party members have some prior beliefs about the effectiveness of a policy move in terms of vote gains and losses. By learning from available experience of policy moves in the past and from elsewhere, they update their beliefs about the effectiveness of a left or right move and thereby reduce their uncertainty; depending on the

expected utility, they then opt for the most promising alternative. Every definition thus contains an aspect which is reflected in the argument – uncertainty from Heclo, learning as an instrumental behavior from Hall and the notion that new information alters one's beliefs from Sabatier.

This short review is nowhere near exhaustive, indeed "[t]here is no shortage of concepts and hypotheses; if anything this literature is over-theorized" (Bennett 1997, 214). Rose (1991), subsequently extended by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996; 2000), proposed a useful approach though, and spelled out "lesson-drawing" as a (stylized) process which resembles the basic assumption about party members' and, above all, elites' behavior the main argument rests upon: dissatisfied decision makers look for alternative policies across space and time in order to address a perceived problem. Dissatisfaction occurs if a program, an instrument of public policy aimed at achieving policy intentions (Rose 1985), generally running by routine is disrupted and no longer produces the desired outcome. Policy makers then engage in an instrumental search for an alternative, whereby proximity both in terms of space (i.e. geography, language, common culture etc.) and time is favored over lengthy and tedious quests due to lower costs (Rose 1991, 13–15). The process starts with scanning programs elsewhere that have addressed a similar problem. Afterwards a conceptual model is built which spells out the cause and effect relationship. These models are then compared to the home program. If another model performs better, a new program will be introduced or the home program adjusted accordingly. If not, the lesson learned will be what *not* to do. Before its introduction the new program will be prospectively evaluated whether it will work in the home setting or whether additional adjustments are necessary to make it work (Rose 1991, 19–20). A lesson thus is defined "as an action-oriented conclusion about a programme or programmes in operation elsewhere" (Rose 1991, 7).

Substituting key words, the last paragraph can be rephrased for party policy competition: a program running by routine is a policy standpoint (e.g. an election manifesto) which serves well as long as circumstances do not question its feasibility. In Rose's (1991, 10) words: "Doing nothing is always a strategy that [party elites] can follow. Inaction is efficient, for it requires the minimum investment of effort". However, economic and societal changes, behavior of competitors, or shifts in public opinion may challenge the idle state leading to dissatisfaction with the status quo. The most severe impact on dissatisfaction *and* trigger for change surely is electoral defeat (Mair 1983, 408; Panebianco 1988, 243) – Janda (1990, 6)

even called it the "mother of change".[20] However, faced with uncertainty about voters' reactions to policy changes, party members may try to reduce their uncertainty and adapt to the new environment by gathering information about possible solutions, e.g. by (re-) evaluating their own past. If their own experience is not comparable to the actual situation, they may collect more recent information by polling or looking at competitors' strategies. Depending on the resources available they may also look at experience elsewhere, i.e. Social Democrats in Sweden can turn to their Norwegian counterparts, or Australian Conservatives may consult the British Conservatives or the US-American Republicans. Proximity and similarity in context – the electoral and party system, language, or common history – thereby dramatically reduce the transaction costs, and render the adaption of other parties' solutions to one's own context a lot easier. The party on the ground, however, neither has access to these sources nor the resources to engage in a purposive search on their own. They may rather take the most obvious information into account which is immediately available to them like their own experience and competitors' moves during the last election. If party elites draw similar lessons as the activists, regardless of their limited information horizon, there will be no struggle over the question of where to move. If not, and members have a say in internal politics, the party on the ground may hamper a change because from their point of view there may be no need to; or reversely, members on the ground may foster a change because they demand to "fix it because it is broken" if the party suffered from losses. However, as previously discussed, it is mostly party elites seeking and gathering information, rather than activists. With his definition of a lesson as an "action-oriented conclusion about a program" Rose's (1991, 7) lesson-drawing connects to the discussion about rational and bounded learning and one of the tasks of Chapter 3, namely to relate learning to choices.

Rational Learning, Bounded Learning, and Emulation[21]

According to Simon (1993, 394–95), *decision making* encompasses three stages: the first is finding and attending to problems, which presumes setting priorities. If parties do not see a necessity to change their ideological position, nothing will happen. Similarly, a party may be busy with organizational restructuring or a leadership debate in which case there is no observable ideological or directional change. The second stage is to think about solutions or alternatives to solve the problem. Considering that "[s]olutions aren't handed to us" and that "[w]e are not given an inventory or a list of solutions" (Simon 1993, 394), at this stage

[20] See also Somer-Topcu 2009 and Schumacher et al. 2015, whose findings support the idea of the certainty effect of Kahneman and Tversky's *Prospect Theory*, in that larger changes could be observed after losses.
[21] The following section is particularly based on Meseguer 2009, Ch. 1.2.

both rational and bounded learning are (still) fully compatible because both assume that decision makers engage in a purposive search for information. Finally, if one has come up with some solutions, the task is to evaluate and choose among the "menu" of available options. This is where learning ties in because learning "entail[s] an improved understanding of the cause-and-effects relationships […] in light of experience" (Meseguer 2009, 14). Furthermore, at this stage rational and bounded learning differ because *rational learning* presumes that policy makers have full analytical capabilities and efficiently process information in the same way, whereas *bounded learners* resort to cognitive shortcuts, heuristics, and acquire biases in their processing (Meseguer 2009, 18). "Economic rationality" then predicts that policy makers choose the solution which maximizes their utility (Simon 1993, 395–96), whereas "psychological rationality" challenges the sole focus on the substance of choice; rather it sheds light on the process and the limits decision makers face. In this view, because of incomplete knowledge and limited abilities to compute the information people resort to "satisficing decisions": they oversimplify the problem to the extent that it can be processed within the bounds of computational resources and information available to them. By optimizing the approximate problem, decision makers produce satisficing solutions (Simon 1993, 397–98). From this perspective, one may speculate whether party elites are actually rational learners and members on the ground rather bounded learners.

Rational learning predicts convergence because politicians "would scan all available information regardless of its origin and interpret all of it in exactly the same manner, drawing the same conclusions about the relative merits of different policies and marginalizing prior beliefs about policies in the light of mounting evidence" (Meseguer 2005, 72). In other words, "rational learning predicts that what is observed will eventually override what was initially believed" (Meseguer 2009, 18) and that observed experience therefore may be the sole factor shaping party members' beliefs about the effectiveness of policy moves. However, learning only takes place when prior beliefs are vague; if not, the beliefs would ultimately prevail over experience (Meseguer 2006, 39).

The key characteristic of bounded learners and decision makers "is not that they reason poorly but that they often act intuitively. And the behavior of these agents is not guided by what they are able to compute, but by what they happen to see at a given moment" (Kahneman 2003, 1469). Bounded learning thus assumes that "policy makers do not have full analytical capabilities. Policy makers do not look at all available information, they do not process the available information in the same way, and they acquire a series of cognitive biases when analyzing the flow of information" (Meseguer 2009, 18–19). The following heuristics can be noted in bounded learning:

- *Representativeness heuristic*: the diffusion of innovations evolves in an S-shape because policy makers overemphasize initial success.
- *Availability heuristic*: the diffusion of innovations shows a geographic pattern because policy diffusion seems to require examples from nearby.
- *Heuristic of anchoring*: policy makers limit the adaption of innovations to those particularly in need, thereby producing "commonality amid diversity" (Meseguer 2006, 41).

With party central offices becoming ever more professionalized, one would expect that rational learning becomes increasingly important, though applying the three heuristics may reduce the transaction costs. For Swedish parties Norway may tell them much more than Australia, not only because Australia is far away but because party competition differs fundamentally as a result of the electoral system. Furthermore, apart from similarities in language and a common history, the Swedish party system resembles that of Norway which makes it easier to evaluate and adapt the insights gained from Norwegian party moves. However, rational and bounded learning do not stand in opposition to one another if one drops the (unrealistic) assumption of rational learning, that gathering information comes for free (Meseguer 2009, 21). If party elites turn to their region to look for experience, it may be due to the availability heuristic (bounded learning); contrarily, they may turn to their region because the experience is less noisy (rational learning). The more information is gathered from more diverse settings, the higher the probability that the variance of the results increases. From this follows that "[t]he weight a rational learner will give to observed experience vis-à-vis what was initially believed about the performance of [policy moves] is negatively related to the noise that the observed results convey" (Meseguer 2009, 21). If rational learners thus take into account not only the results – the "quantity" of interest – but also the "quality of information" (Meseguer 2005, 74), the distinction between bounded and rational learning vanishes.

To sum up, I assume that party elites are rational learners engaging in a purposive search for information as described in Rose's lesson-drawing, while activists, if they have some influence, are more likely to be bounded learners simply due to their limited information horizon. As the NST and IDT have convincingly argued, uncertainty is a key feature surrounding parties' decision making because they "lack any certain knowledge as to how electors will react to this movement" (Budge 1994, 451). To reduce the uncertainty around the question "move left or turn right?" party members can resort to some prior beliefs about what might work; or they learn by updating their prior beliefs on the basis of observed experience from their own past and elsewhere – be it rational or bounded. Using

Bayes' rule, the combination of prior beliefs and available data combines into posterior beliefs which finally inform the decision where to move next. Because "Bayesian updating is an intuitive, simple, and appealing mechanism to operationalize learning" (Meseguer 2009, 39), the formal model of learning is presented below. However, before moving on, an alternative explanation to rational learning needs to be discussed, namely emulation.

Although there has been a debate over which mechanisms are at work in the diffusion of policies, how many of them, what to call them and how to capture them empirically (cf. Bennett 1991; Stone 1999; Hoberg 2001; Elkins and Simmons 2005; Simmons et al. 2006; Dobbin et al. 2007; Jahn and Stephan 2015; Maggetti and Gilardi 2016), a recurring concept is emulation, sometimes also called imitation. It differs from bounded and rational learning because "policy emulation is a 'blind' action in that it does not entail enhanced reflection about the mapping from policies to outcomes that any of the aforementioned versions of learning do" (Meseguer 2005, 79). Inspired by sociological institutionalism, emulation assumes that policy makers conform to their normative environment. This way, rationality is dropped in favor of appropriateness (Jahn and Stephan 2015, 28). Regardless of their result, policies are adopted from normative forerunners for reasons of credibility or reputation, or simply because "everybody else is doing it" resulting in "herd behavior" (Levi-Faur 2002). In terms of party politics, conformity may arise for instance if some issues become internationally virulent and parties start emphasizing the issue in their manifestos (on which the observation of a policy move ultimately rests). For domestic party competition Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015, 748), for example, found that parties "adjust their issue attention in response to (lagged) changes in other parties' issue attention". In other words, parties cannot ignore some issues and may be forced to respond in any case, regardless of whether it pays out in terms of vote gains, or worse, results in vote losses.[22]

Empirically, emulation is often captured by the sheer number of previous adopters, which approximates the "climate of opinion in favor of [a] policy" (Meseguer 2009, 28). Once a policy has been introduced this may trigger a self-reinforcing process which leads to the famous S-shaped curve in studies of the diffusion of innovations (Rogers 2003, Ch. 1). This is the indicator which serves as a control in the empirical analyses of whether parties' decisions are informed by rational learning or just by (symbolic) emulation.

The last section justified the (preliminary) assumption that party elites are rational learners – in contrast to "opportunists" who simply do what everybody else is doing – and that

[22] Given the empirical finding that parties indeed tend to emulate other parties within their own family of nations, it seems worthwhile to test if Green-Pedersen and Mortensen's framework "travels" beyond the domestic level.

members of the party on the ground are rather bounded learners due to their limited information horizon. The next section tackles the remaining tasks in Chapter 3, namely to come up with a measure of learning and how this measure relates to party policy moves.

3.3 A Formal Model of Learning and Policy Choices

A useful approach in understanding rational learning comes in the shape of "Bayesian learning" because "Bayes's [sic] rule is essentially the rule used to revise prior beliefs. Bayes's rule [further] entails weighing both prior beliefs and observed experience by both the quantity and the quality of information" (Meseguer 2005, 74). Bayesian updating thus provides an intuitive and simple mechanism to establish an empirical measure of learning. To this end, I will proceed by presenting the idea of Bayesian updating encompassing the concept of prior distributions, which reflect previous knowledge, and posterior distributions, which reflect the knowledge after observing data, and how this informs the choices parties make. Before discussing the formal model a caveat is worth mentioning though: I draw on the concept of Bayesian updating to justify the operationalization of learning as point estimates about average (mean) vote gains or losses and the variance of results under right and left moves as posterior beliefs. The decision to move in one direction or the other then depends on the difference in posterior beliefs. Empirically, though broadly in line with Meseguer's approach (2006, 52; 2009, 40), I simply include the mean and variance of observed experience – as opposed to Bayesian estimators – as independent variables into fixed- and random-effects logistic regression models. In other words, rather than doing a Bayesian analysis in a strict sense, the adapted framework uses Bayes' rule as an illustrative analogy to operationalize learning and relate this measure to choices.

This becomes apparent in my adaption of the framework to party policy moves because usually "[t]he process of Bayesian inference involves passing from a prior distribution, $p(\theta)$, to a posterior distribution, $p(\theta|y)$, and it is natural to expect that some general relations might hold between these two distributions" (Gelman et al. 2013, 32). To circumvent the difficulties in adequately defining the prior distribution I assume noninformative, also called flat or uniform, priors which are overridden by observed experience, because in the absence of verified theory of voting behavior "it is more realistic to assume that politicians in many cases operate with only very hazy, if any, expectations about the election outcome" (Budge 1994, 452). The rationale for using noninformative priors is "'to let the data speak for themselves,' so that inferences are unaffected by information external to the data" (Gelman et al. 2013, 51). Furthermore, the less informative the prior, the closer Bayesian

estimators resemble frequentist point estimates of univariate distributions (Ghosh et al. 2006, 33–34; Tschirk 2014, 125–27), which justifies the use of "simple, frequentist" estimates of the mean and the variance in this thesis rather than Bayesian estimators. One may contest these assumptions; yet, they are spelled out because "from a Bayesian perspective, likelihood-based analyses of data assume prior ignorance, although seldom is this assumption made explicit, even if it is plausible" (Jackman 2004, 468).

Having stated the concessions of my adaption, I will now present Meseguer's learning framework and illustrate the operationalization of learning, discuss modifications and justify deviations. The adaption is carried out over a series of steps: first, Bayesian updating is introduced, which encompasses the rule of how party members update their beliefs; in other words, how they learn. Because learning includes passing from prior to posterior knowledge, the use of a noninformative prior with its implications is subsequently justified. Afterwards, sequences of learning are discussed and the sources of information parties can resort to, namely their own experience, insights gained from competitors' behavior (domestic experience), and observing other parties abroad (regional and global experience). Finally, relating the measure of learning to the choice of whether to move left or move right, this chapter closes by hypothesizing that a) the likelihood of a right move is higher if the difference in posterior beliefs about average vote gains or losses signals parties that a right move is rewarding, and b) that the likelihood of a right move decreases if the variability of results of right moves is greater compared to that of left moves (and vice versa), i.e. the quality of the information is much "noisier". First, the basics of Bayesian learning are presented.

Bayesian Updating

The difficulty when talking about Bayesian updating while coming from frequentist statistics is to adapt to the different notion of probability. A frequentist interpretation sees probability as the relative frequency of an outcome over repeated runs (e.g. when tossing a coin infinite times the probability of the coin turning up heads converges to $\frac{1}{2}$). Contrarily, the Bayesian approach sees probability as a "degree of belief" (Ghosh et al. 2006, 29–30; Tschirk 2014, 17–18). Both approaches also differ with respect to their perspective on what is fixed and what is random: the frequentist approach assumes a fixed but unknown parameter θ ("*theta*") of a population from which a random sample (data y) is drawn. Inferences are based on the sampling distribution or data characteristics of y. On the contrary, for Bayesians data y is fixed and θ represents a random variable whose inferences are conditional on y (Jackman 2004, 486) because they are based on the posterior distribution which includes the prior distribution *and* observed data.

Bayesian analysis rests solely on one single rule of probability – Bayes' rule – which provides an updating equation about the unknown parameter θ given the observed data y. "Informally, to make inference about θ is to learn about the unknown θ from data [y], i.e. based on the data, explore which values of θ are probable, what might be plausible numbers as estimates of different components of θ and the extent of uncertainty associated with such estimates" (Ghosh et al. 2006, 30). In its simplest form, it can be expressed as

$$Posterior \propto Prior * Likelihood$$

In other words, "the posterior is proportional to the prior times the likelihood" (Jackman 2004, 485). For continuous parameters, like average vote gains or losses, it can formally be written as:

$$p(\theta|y) \propto p(\theta) * p(y|\theta)$$

where $p(\theta|y)$ is the joint probability distribution for θ from data y, $p(\theta)$ is the prior distribution and $p(y|\theta)$ represents the sampling distribution (Gelman et al. 2013, 6–7), also referred to as the likelihood function. The likelihood function summarizes the sample information about θ and "is simply the probability of the data given the parameter" (Jackman 2004, 485).

A hypothetical example (Figure 3.1) may illustrate the rule: suppose that party elites or activists try to assess the expected vote gain or loss of a right move taking the quality of information (the variance of the results) into account. Suppose further that vote gains/losses are normally distributed – a fair assumption given that gains or losses expressed as vote share is a zero-sum game for each election: if one party loses, other parties gain. In the first case (left column), decision makers have no clue about possible outcomes. All results are therefore seen as equally likely, i.e. a flat, noninformative prior (for discrete variables the probability is $\frac{1}{n}$, while for finite, continuous variables it approximates zero). In the second case (right column), for some reason they believe that a right move will bring a vote gain of around two percentage points as the most probable outcome; taking their uncertainty into account, their belief can be expressed as a normal distribution with a mean equal to two and a variance of one – an informative prior.[23]

[23] Technically, one looks for a joint posterior distribution with two unknown parameters, the mean and the variance. One way to solve this problem is to treat one of the parameters temporarily as nuisance, but the goal is to obtain the marginal posterior distribution of each parameter (for a mathematical description see Gelman et al. 2013, 63–69). If the data is assumed to be normally distributed, an inverse-gamma or a scaled inverse-chi²-distribution (a special case of the former) are conjugate prior densities for the variance (Gelman et al. 2013, 583; Shikano 2015, 40). Conjugacy is established if the prior and the posterior distribution is in the same class of distributions (e.g. if the data is normally distributed, choosing a Gaussian prior for the mean

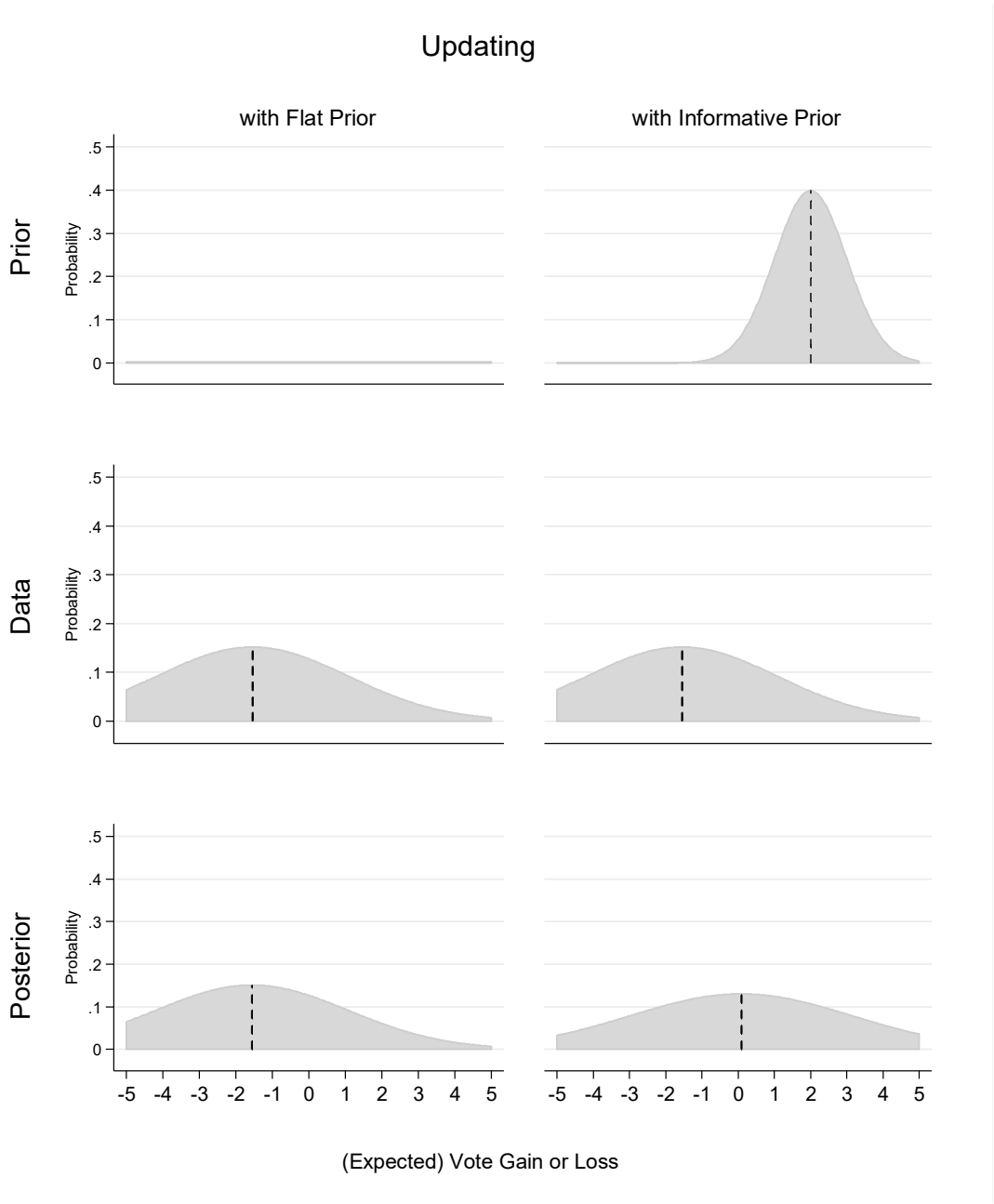

Figure 3.1 A Hypothetical Example of Bayesian Updating

They now observe ten right moves of other parties: six which brought about vote losses (-4.5, -2.0, -5.0, -5.0, -1.5 and -2.0 percentage points) and four which brought about gains (1.5, 1.0, 0.5, and 1.5 percentage points). At first sight, it becomes obvious that moving right was an unsuccessful endeavor because the average vote gain/loss is -1.55 (with variance 6.914). The data now alters the beliefs of party members.

ensures that the posterior distribution is also normally distributed). With respect to the given example the priors for the mean/variance thus are flat/inverse-gamma and normal/inverse-gamma.

Their updated beliefs *after* obtaining experience from others are expressed by the posterior distribution, whereby the mean and variance are sufficient statistics to summarize the distribution (Gelman et al. 2013, 64).[24] In the first case, the posterior distribution is entirely driven by the ten observations and the posterior mean (-1.561) and variance (6.977) very closely resemble the frequentist estimates.[25] That is, uninformed party elites would expect a loss of around -1.55 percentage points as the most probable outcome when moving right. In the second case, the posterior mean (.0832 with variance 9.383) lies between the prior and the observed mean. In other words, by observing ten right moves, whereby six out of ten moves resulted in vote losses and the magnitude of losses was much higher than gains under successful moves, decision makers no longer uphold their belief that a right move will yield a gain of two percentage points. Instead they now expect only a marginal gain, if at all, when moving to the right. In addition, while their prior belief showed some, but less, dispersion after observing "noisy" results, their uncertainty surrounding the expected average gain/loss increased. Due to their initial belief, however, they do not await a loss equal to the observed mean because the prior influences the posterior distribution. If observed experience increases and information is abundant, the prior would vanish away though.

In both cases, party members *learned* about the effectiveness of a right move by updating their initial beliefs about the most likely outcome in light of observed experience from other parties. To conclude the example and give an outlook on how learning relates to choices, suppose that the very same members now observe that left moves generated a vote gain of three percentage points on average with even less variability. By balancing the information about the likely gains or losses of left and right moves and taking the "noise" of both into account, one would expect that these parties – in line with rational choice theory – choose to move left.

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[24] In order to take full advantage of a Bayesian approach it is more common to summarize the posterior distribution in terms of quantiles and credible intervals (Ghosh et al. 2006, 41–42; Gelman et al. 2013, 32–34). However, as Meseguer (2009, 43) points out, the mean (representing the quantity of interest) and the variance (representing the quality of information) are useful for the purpose of having an operational measure of learning.

[25] Because computing posterior densities can become challenging, integration is usually performed via Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) simulations. The reported means and variances are drawn from the posterior distributions derived by such a MCMC simulation based on a flat/inverse-gamma and normal/inverse-gamma prior, hence the slight deviation. The idea of Monte Carlo simulation is that "[a]nything we want to know about a random variable θ, we can learn by repeated sampling from the probability density function of θ" (Jackman 2004, 493). Markov chain simulation in turn "is a general method based on drawing values of θ from approximate distributions and then correcting those draws to better approximate the target posterior distribution $p(\theta|y)$" (Gelman et al. 2013, 275), whereby the Markov chain is a sequence of values from the target distribution where each value depends on its immediate predecessor. This shall ensure that the chain converges to the target distribution as its stationary or invariant parametrization (Jackman 2004, 494). For this reason, checking for convergence is essential, otherwise inferences are distorted. In both cases inspections of the trace and autocorrelation plots indicate convergence.

Having laid out the fundamentals of Bayesian updating, in other words, how members of the party organization learn, I will proceed with the adaption of the framework to party policy moves and discuss deviations – the most important one surely being the decision to operationalize learning by means of "simple" point estimates (mean and variance) of vote gains/losses (as opposed to Bayesian estimators like Meseguer). In addition, I deviate from Bayesian analysis in that I explicitly include learning from own experience as an independent variable, rather than incorporating it as a prior. In order to justify these modifications, it is necessary to take a closer look at the underlying assumptions with a focus on priors in particular.

On Priors

As the name implies, the prior distribution for θ represents the point of departure because it is not conditional on previous observations and represents either subjective beliefs or more informative objective priors. It also quantifies the uncertainty about θ before taking empirical evidence into account (Ghosh et al. 2006, 30; Gelman et al. 2013, 7). Some nomenclature is helpful when talking about priors: priors can be distinguished between subjective vs. objective priors and noninformative vs. informative priors. Because probability in Bayesian analysis represents "the degree of belief" in a random event, it is personal by definition. Therefore, Bayesian analysis has been criticized as highly subjective. The standard counterargument is that "[f]or example, linear regression models are generally at least as suspect as any prior distribution that might be assumed" (Gelman et al. 2013, 13) and that Bayesians, at least, make their assumptions explicit. In principle, a prior contains all information and experience from one's lifetime including knowledge but also beliefs. All considered, the problem is how to derive a probability distribution which adequately represents this information; therefore prior distributions are always approximations (Tschirk 2014, 109). To tackle the criticism of subjectivity, more objective prior distributions have been proposed which can be divided into noninformative and informative priors. Noninformative "reference prior distributions" have a flat, vague, or diffuse density. In its simplest form, a flat or uniform prior assigns equal probability to all values of the parameter. Adding at least some information to the prior, one can go from weakly informative priors to informative priors when pre-existing knowledge allows for reasonable assumptions about the distribution (Gelman et al. 2013, 51–56; Tschirk 2014, 109–11). This is one of the main advantages of Bayesian analysis, that previous knowledge can be explicitly incorporated into the analysis.

Meseguer (2009, 40–42) assumes that governments' prior beliefs at time *t* about the effects of market reforms can be expressed by the average rate of growth and the variance in the world under a particular policy the year before. Further assuming that growth is normally distributed, she thus makes use of an informative prior. Given that the number of competitors in most party systems is relatively low or learning from their own past is restricted to the times a party competed in elections, it is rather seldom the case that abundant data is available (although this is less a problem when learning from other parties abroad). In this case a strong, informative prior would prevail over the posterior distribution which makes it even more challenging to justify its use and adequately define the distribution. It is reasonable to think of party elites commissioning a survey or assigning personnel to compile media reports, especially since party central offices are becoming ever more professionalized, but given a lack of systematically exploitable (time-series) data about party elites' actual informational environment it seems virtually impossible to come up with a sensible informative prior. In future research one might think of moving the analysis even closer to the information horizon by including estimates from surveys in between two elections to define a prior, or to use the last election result (which can be taken for granted) as the starting point. However, even in this case it is debatable if these polls satisfactorily touch upon the notion of informational environment. Similarly, one might discuss whether the last national election result, the last election to the European Parliament (as suggested by Somer-Topcu and Zar 2014) or the last results of subnational elections are sufficient, and whether to include only the last election, the last two or three, or all, representing the cumulative experience of a parties' history. From the perspective of party elites, it might be questionable though if looking way back in time makes sense given that (societal or electoral) circumstances have changed which renders the information outdated and useless. Considering this and with the notion in mind that the adaption of the learning framework is a first step to test the potential of this approach for explaining party policy moves, for the time being relying on a noninformative, flat prior seems less problematic than constructing an informative prior.[26]

The rationale for using a flat prior, which assigns equal probability to every value, is "to let the data speak for themselves" (Gelman et al. 2013, 51). Even Bayes, though with a discrete set in mind, argued for the use of a uniform prior, and subsequent interpretations of Laplace's rationale for the uniform prior "ascribe to him the so-called 'principle of insufficient reason', which claims that a uniform specification is appropriate if nothing is known about θ" (Gelman et al. 2013, 34). Mathematically, using a uniform prior for a continuous varia-

[26] This issue seems worth exploring in future research though.

ble is improper because it does not integrate to 1; improper priors in turn may lead to improper posterior distributions which would render all inferences invalid. On the other hand, even improper priors may lead to proper posterior densities which is the case for normally distributed data with an unknown mean or variance (Gelman et al. 2013, 52); in other words, assuming a noninformative, flat prior does not hamper the operationalization of learning by drawing the mean and variance from the posterior distribution. Apart from the technical side, the use of a uniform prior is justified with regard to contents, as the NST and IDT carved out uncertainty as a fundamental feature of decision making. Empirically backed by the findings of Adams et al. (2011), that voters do no respond to parties' actual policy moves, Budge argues that polls do not provide real guidance for parties, and that parties may instead follow their own preferences. Furthermore, he points out that "it is more realistic to assume that politicians in many cases operate with only very hazy, if any, expectations about the election outcome" (Budge 1994, 452). For this reason, it is justifiable to assume that party members have no clue *a priori* about the likely outcome of a left or a right move (in Bayesian terms, they know nothing about θ). In this case the posterior beliefs are solely driven by the observed data and Bayesian estimators thus resemble "frequentist" point estimates. I therefore opt for the "simple" mean and variance of the given sample as operationalizations of posterior beliefs about the quantity of interest and quality of information under both left and right moves.

To sum up, I deviate from Meseguer's approach by assuming a flat, instead of an informative, prior and subsequently rely on "frequentist" point estimates of the sample as opposed to Bayesian estimators. Having laid out how party members update their beliefs, the next step in adapting the framework is to shed light on sequences of learning and sources of information party elites and members on the ground can resort to.

On Learning

Although the preceding sections already hinted at the basic assumptions of learning, it is important to state them here explicitly. In line with Meseguer (2009, 42–44) I assume that vote gains or losses are normally distributed and that party members learn about the unknown mean and unknown variance by observing results from their own past and other parties (elsewhere). Assuming normality is justified because gains or losses expressed as vote share are a zero-sum game for each focal election. As vote share expressed as percentage points is finite, a gain of one party is by necessity the loss of one or several other parties (and vice versa). Empirically, in the sample of policy moves used for the analysis the variable indeed approximates a standard normal distribution. Additionally, vote

gains/losses is assumed to be a random variable, also normally distributed with unknown mean and variance (whereby both parameters are random too). In the run-up to the next election decision makers evaluate their own performance, draw conclusions about competitors' behavior and results of the last election (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b; Williams 2015) and observe other parties abroad (Böhmelt et al. 2016). Some of them moved left (L), others moved right (R). Thus, at time *t* the following (sum of) information *X* about gains/losses, about the effectiveness of left moves and right moves becomes available:

$$X_t^j = \sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{tn}^R + \sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{tn}^L \quad ; \text{with j} = \{Right\ moves, Left\ moves\}$$

Party members now learn about the effectiveness of right and left moves by updating their initial beliefs according to Bayes' rule in light of this new information (as described above). The new data are, again, assumed to follow a normal distribution, i.e. the sample mean $\bar{x}$ and sample sum of squares (variance) σ^2 are sufficient statistics to summarize the distribution under each of the moves. Furthermore, it is assumed that the observations are independent. Due to the uniform prior (which was justified in the preceding section) these estimates are practically the mean and variance of the posterior distribution. Therefore, they are used as the operational measure of learning, whereby the mean represents the expected vote gain/loss and the variance represents the "noise", or quality of information.

Thus far, learning has been portrayed as a snapshot of how party members process available information at any one time. Yet, because Bayesian analysis explicitly allows for the inclusion of prior knowledge it is most suitable to describe a sequential process of learning (Shikano 2015, 46–52). In this case the posterior beliefs at time *t* become the prior beliefs at *t+1* (Meseguer 2009, 43–44). Consequently, the initial prior can have a long-lasting effect on the beliefs (Meseguer 2009, 47–58). This may be a feasible assumption for public policies where most of them indeed show signs of path-dependency and switching policies is rather exceptional, a "rare event", not the rule. However, this is different for party policy stances. Although the IDT and especially the NST argue that ideological history constrains parties and sets reasonable limits for policy moves, ideology is ambiguous enough to allow for shifting positions within an area (Budge 1994, 448).

When looking at actual movements parties indeed show an alternating zigzag pattern indicating that changes are the rule, rather than the exception. Hence, ideological inertia is less prevalent and parties face the uncertainty of how voters will react to their move in the run-up to every election. On the one hand, priors may change due to exchange of personnel in the party central office or switching campaign staff who bring in new beliefs. Furthermore,

national elections are often up to five years apart (as stipulated by law in many countries), i.e. enough time for societal or electoral changes to take place which quickly renders the initial prior outdated. Undeniably, processes of partisan de-alignment have had a profound impact on electoral behavior, outcomes of which can be observed at different levels: both at the aggregate level of advanced industrial democracies as well as within almost all nations, increasing electoral volatility and an increasing number of effective parties show that uncertainty has rather increased since the 1950s. At the individual level vote switching between elections, split-ticket voting, and late timing of the electoral decision has become much more common making voters especially prone to short-term effects, campaigns and issues (Dalton et al. 2000).

Taken together it seems more appropriate to assume that parties' decisions are rather independent from election to election, though the weaker argument is that at least the last election is connected (as implied by decision rule #3 of the NST and all empirical studies which control for alternating behavior).[27] By including the effectiveness of the past move as parties' own experience, the framework is explicitly intended to test whether the previous result has any impact on the decision where to move. I thus deviate from a strict Bayesian approach (and partly from Meseguer's) in that I neither use the posterior as the new prior nor take the past result as a prior (which may be an intuitive reaction),[28] but rather contrast learning from parties' own experience to learning from other sources. The friendlier reading, though, is that parties' own experience solely operationalized as the past vote gain/loss comprises Bayesian updating with a flat prior and only one data point, so the variance is zero, because the result can be taken for granted and there is no uncertainty surrounding it.

Thus far, some hints have been interspersed about the information horizon of parties; below these assumptions are made explicit because they directly affect the empirical analysis.

On Gathering Information

Returning to the notions of rational and bounded learning it was stated that rational learners have full analytical capabilities and efficiently process a vast amount of information, whereas bounded learners apply cognitive shortcuts and heuristics to arrive at "satisficing decisions", not because they are unable to compute ample information, but because they

[27] There is also an implication in Bayesian terms stemming from the decision to assume a flat prior instead of an informative one: in an independent or only loosely connected updating process a uniform prior is similar to nullifying previous knowledge. Otherwise at $t+1$ the former posterior would turn into an informative prior, which may be difficult to justify in light of the evidence just presented.

[28] And it also seems a promising avenue for future research.

are guided "by what they happen to see at a given moment" (Kahneman 2003, 1469). Yet, the boundaries vanish if one considers that gathering information is costly. Rational learners may therefore resort to information which is at hand (with respect to time or geography) because it is less costly, and may be less "noisy" due to greater comparability of contexts. For this reason, and because Meseguer (2009, 45–47) is interested in whether governments discriminate with respect to the sources of information, she introduces three levels: own experience, average experience in the region, and average experience in the world (excluding own and regional experience):

> World experience is more abundant, and thus a rational learner should find it more informative. […] On the other hand, experience coming from the region allows controlling for characteristics such as shared institutional affiliations, common language, common religion, and shared colonial past. […] To the extent that these shared traits may translate into less volatile outcomes, a rational learner might find the regional experience more informative than the world experience. (Meseguer 2009, 46)

Taking the current state of the art into account, one additional level must be added, namely the national level. Accordingly, I assume that party elites can resort to four sources which make up their information horizon: (1) their own experience, (2) domestic experience, (3) regional experience, and (4) global experience. I further assume that due to an ever-increasing professionalization of party central offices, scarcity of time and other resources, the members' volunteer status and disparate commitment levels, the party on the ground has a limited information horizon consisting only of own and domestic experience. In other words, party elites may be bounded rational learners when guided by regional rather than global experience because the information is less noisy, but party activists are bounded learners due to restrictions in available information. This does not preclude rationally learning from their own and domestic experience though.

The notion of *own experience* has already been touched upon, in that party members can return to a party's own past. However, evaluating the effectiveness of past moves which are way back in history may provide outdated information. In line with decision rule #3 of the NST – that parties provide "more of the same" if they were successful or move in the opposite direction if they lost votes – and in line with all empirical studies which include "alternation" as an independent variable, implicitly presuming dependent decision making, I assume that parties evaluate their *last* move in terms of vote gain or loss. The nice thing about the effectiveness of the last move is that there is no uncertainty surrounding the result. This does not mean there is certainty about the reasons for the gain or loss because "decision makers lack any clear idea of what aspect of their policy produced the rise or fall in votes or whether policy was really involved in the result at all" (Budge 1994, 453). Yet,

although uncertainty is always present, party members can take two pieces of information with certainty – the direction of their move and the result – so "it is also rational to continue with the rule adopted initially" (Budge 1994, 453). For the operationalization of learning from parties' own experience this also means that I do not take the variance into account, because it is always zero (in methodological terms, a constant). To give an example of how learning from one's own experience relates to choices, suppose a party moved to the right and gained three percentage points of votes. By balancing the information, and because there is no immediate experience from moving left, this signals decision makers to move to the right (again). A similar signal occurs when the party moved left but lost votes – this is the NST's rule #3 in operational terms.

Although the past result can be taken for granted, it may be disregarded because it provides only one single piece of information. Learning from domestic experience may therefore be a better option. *Domestic experience* encompasses all information gathered from the national level. Looking back to the state of the art these are public opinion, (party) voters and competitors' behavior. Tracing public opinion (Adams et al. 2004) is rational from a Downsian point of view, especially if a party is able to identify the median voter. Two readings are possible in this case: if parties move in accordance with public opinion it may be the case that party elites are "short-term" learners which neglect the uncertainty of polling and base their decision on this information anyway. Or, party elites are "functional opportunists" which simply react to public opinion. Yet, both readings only loosely connect to the concept of learning as proposed in this thesis; public opinion is therefore included only as a control variable. Similarly, by tracking the movement of party supporters (Schwennicke 2007; Adams and Ezrow 2009; Ezrow et al. 2011; Schumacher et al. 2013) party elites may learn about promising avenues. Because polling or other tools to track public opinion and voters entail an expenditure of resources, it is more likely that this kind of information is available to party elites rather than to party activists (unless internally spread "top-down"); at best, the latter have an idea or impression based on news coverage and the like. Yet, as has been stated: „[P]olls do not provide information on what actually influences voting" rather "[t]hey may in general terms identify certain issues as important to electors, but leave it open as to whether these will necessarily affect their vote" (Budge 1994, 445). In contrast, past results are "a rare concrete reference for parties to react to" (Budge et al. 2010, 790). In line with Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) and Williams (2015), I therefore assume that parties learn from competitors' moves and their results at the last election.

Similar to own experience, there is only vague certainty about the reasons why the election turned out the way it did, but the very same pieces of information remain indisputable: the

direction of competitors' moves and their gains or losses. Party policy makers may thus favor domestic experience because the information comes at a low cost, is immediately available once the election results are published and it provides more information than the party's own result alone. Furthermore, because all parties operate in the same context, there is no need to transfer and adapt the information to one's own context, i.e. from a rational learner's point of view as much control of characteristics as possible. Yet, by necessity the information will be "noisy" because for each election vote share is a zero-sum game – if some parties gain, others have to lose. I therefore assume that party members are aware of this fact, and disregard the variance for the operationalization of learning from domestic experience as well.[29] While the information is easily available to both party elites and members on the ground, the drawback of domestic experience is that the results may be outdated if the last election took place according to the regular schedule (stipulated by electoral laws) which, in some cases, may be up to five years. Therefore, gathering more recent information, though stemming from abroad, is a third option for party elites, but unlikely for the party on the ground.

Those studies summarized under the heading "International Impacts" in Section 2.1 touch upon the notion of party leaders' informational environment in that they indicate that domestic politics is no longer domestic and that the global level matters. Cross-border exchange of political parties, membership in EU parties or transnational party federations and regular attendance at intergovernmental meetings makes it much easier for party elites to obtain information about policy moves and experience from abroad. In line with Böhmelt et al. (2016), who argue that parties respond to successful examples, I assume that party elites learn from other parties elsewhere, but – in line with Meseguer – I distinguish between regional and global experience.

The rationale of *regional experience* and *global experience* is that abundant information is available, though it comes at the cost of comparability. While it is reasonable that governments are attuned to the global level, the number of countries which could serve as an example is manageable compared to the number of parties at the global level. Taking the diversity of electoral systems, party systems, cleavage structures and the like into account, global experience may be too confusing and "noisy" for party elites. Instead, they may find it more useful to look at regional experience because it is less "noisy" (rational learning). Or, they

[29] In addition, because in most countries the number of competitors is relatively low, especially when dividing the competitors into members of the same or the opposite ideological bloc (like Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b), empirically the variables turned out to be zero-inflated almost approximating a constant. Anyway, further tests revealed that the variance turned out to be statistically insignificant in all cases, and that it did not alter the results.

may turn to the region due to the availability heuristic (bounded learning), which would entail a geographic pattern of diffusion of innovations in line with the first law of geography – that "everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things" (Tobler 1970, 236).

Empirically, considerable progress has been made in studies of public policy diffusion regarding the weighing matrix W which "connects" entities. Starting with simple measures of geographic proximity like neighborship or capital distances, more advanced matrices now take trade flows and economic competition into account, while the previous ones have been discredited (Maggetti and Gilardi 2016; Neumayer and Plümper 2016). Yet, to some extent geographic proximity implies similarities which allows for controlling common characteristics. One way to grasp regional experience which explicitly takes this notion into account but goes beyond simple geography is the concept of "families of nations" (Castles 1993; 1998), which "starts from two observations that are not easily contestable. First, that there are groupings of nations that to varying degrees share common historical and cultural experiences. Second, that families of nations defined in this sense do, in some areas, appear to manifest rather similar policy outcomes" (Castles 1993, xv). Simply because of their geographic proximity, common history, affinity in language, traditions and legal systems, similarities in cleavage structures and party systems (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), and patterns of institutions and public policies, party elites may find it easy to carry over and adapt the insights gained from regional experience to their own context. In line with Castles (1998, 8–9), I distinguish between four families of nations: an English-speaking family, a Scandinavian or Nordic family, a continental Western European grouping and a Southern European family. Information from regional experience, thus, is more abundant than domestic experience, although it contains a bit more "noise" because it is not immediately transferable. Albeit contrasted with global experience it is less informative, but also less "noisy". To put it simply: Swedish party elites may learn much more from observing Norwegian than Irish parties; similarly, Irish party elites may find the insights gained from the UK more helpful than looking at Sweden. Hence, for both rational and bounded learners regional experience may provide just the right mix of wealth of information, level of comparability and tolerable variability to produce "satisficing results".

To summarize, it is assumed that party elites learn from four sources of information: they can evaluate their past move (own experience), observe competitors (domestic experience), gain insights from other parties within their own family of nations (regional experience), or observe all other parties in the world (global experience). On the contrary, members on the ground have a limited information horizon restricted to learning from their own and do-

mestic experience. All levels are mutually exclusive, i.e. regional excludes domestic experience; consequently, global excludes both regional and domestic learning. Each source of information has some advantages but also drawbacks with respect to the quantity of interest and the quality of information. Furthermore, moving up the ladder from one's own to global experience, gathering information becomes more expensive in terms of inquiry and computational resources. Because the framework is explicitly intended to test whether parties' decisions to move right or left are based on rational learning in contrast to "deterministically" chasing public opinion or simply "emulating" everybody else, it remains an empirical question which sources of information they actually resort to.

One question which originates from the studies of Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b), Williams (2015) and Böhmelt et al. (2016) is whether parties observe and learn from all parties, or if they are more eager to learn from parties of their own family or ideological bloc. The basic idea is that party families group parties which share some origin or core identity (see for example Beyme 1982). In principle then it should be easier for party elites to learn from their own family members (in-group learning)[30] because it increases comparability and reduces transaction costs – above all if they share institutionalized channels of communication within transnational party organizations. This is especially the case because it is a party's own choice which cross-border links are established. Yet, parties may respond to members of the opposite bloc because they have to (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015) or because they actually want to (out-group learning). Apart from that, using membership in transnational federations in the empirical analysis might be misleading though because there is more fluctuation in membership than usually assumed and "federations accept parties too easily, being more interested in the power of numbers than in the power of ideological homogeneity" (Mair and Mudde 1998, 226). The difficulty, thus, is that the party family "remains one of the most undertheorized and least specified approaches to the general classification of parties" and it "tap[s] into what parties are rather than what parties do" (Mair and Mudde 1998, 211). In line with Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b, 834), I therefore distinguish only roughly between a left-wing and right-wing bloc. Notwithstanding that the question of in-group and out-group learning cross-cuts the domestic, regional and global level, it is an empirical question too.

The second task of Chapter 3 was to come up with a measure of learning. This task was fulfilled by presenting the logic of Bayesian updating, justifying necessary assumptions

[30] I refrain from using the term "members of their own family" when talking solely about two ideological blocs encompassing a broad range of party families in the sense of "*familles spirituelles*" (Beyme 1982) as it is misleading. The inflationary but naive use is probably one reason why the term "party family" has a rather bad reputation.

about prior knowledge and adapting sequences of learning and the sources of information from Meseguer's approach to political parties and their organizations. The final step, now, is to relate these measures of learning to policy choices. This is the task of the following section.

Learning and Policy Choices[31]

Parties may pursue several goals – aside from winning votes, gaining office or advocating policies (Strøm 1990; Müller and Strøm 1999), they may strive for (internal) democracy (Harmel and Janda 1994), for example. However, probably parties' most important aim is indeed (still) winning votes. This assumption dates back to Downs, who stated that

> politicians […] never seek office as a means of carrying out particular policies; their only goal is to reap the rewards of holding office per se. They treat policies purely as means to the attainment of their private ends, which they can reach only by being elected. [Hence] parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies. (1957, 28)

Even if one refrains from this notion of vote *maximizing*, winning votes is the ultimate currency in electoral politics as it is the cornerstone for gaining office or pursuing policies.[32] From this point of view, parties can be seen as "investors" who, like any risk-averse actors, prefer to move in the direction that yields the best result with the least volatility (Meseguer 2009, 58). Because uncertainty is a key feature of the environment in which parties act, they can reduce it by learning from their own experience and the experience of others in terms of the effectiveness of one or the other move. The *expected utility* then is the posterior belief about the most likely outcome and its variability where μ_{it}^{j} is the posterior belief about average vote gains/losses of party members *i* at time *t*. s_{it}^{j} is the posterior belief about the variability of results, i.e. the "noise" or quality of information, and ε_{it}^{j} is a stochastic component; formally:

$$EU_{it}^{j}(\mu, s) = \beta_1 \mu_{it}^{j} + \beta_2 s_{it}^{j} + \varepsilon_{it}^{j} \quad ; with\ j = \{Right\ moves, Left\ moves\}$$

This leads to four premises (Meseguer 2009, 59):

1. Expected utility increases in posterior beliefs about an average gain, and decreases with average losses.
2. If parties are risk averse, expected utility decreases in posterior beliefs about the variability of gains. However, they prefer a more volatile gain than a sure loss.

[31] The following section is particularly based on Meseguer 2009, Ch. 2.3.
[32] In addition, winning votes often ensures income derived from public subsidies associated with votes polled (Nassmacher 2009, Ch. 8), and thus economic survival of the organization.

3. Parties favor a move that yields less gain but shows less variability over a move that yields greater gains but is more "noisy".
4. Finally, assuming that the expected utility increases with average gains and decreases with variability, parties will prefer to move in the direction that promises greater gains for a particular level of noise, and for a given level of gains prefer the less volatile move.

These premises are in line with Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) *Prospect Theory*, which found first that "the carriers of utility are gains and losses" (Kahneman 2003, 1456) and second that "people underweight outcomes that are merely probable in comparison with outcomes that are obtained with certainty. This tendency, called the certainty effect, contributes to risk aversion in choices involving sure gains and to risk seeking in choices involving sure losses" (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 263).

Parties now face the decision to either move left or move right, and – in line with rational choice theory – they choose to move in the direction which has a greater expected utility. In other words, party members decide to move right (R) if and only if the expected utility is greater than moving left (L) (Meseguer 2009, 60).[33] Formally,

$$EU_{it}^{R} > EU_{it}^{L}$$

which implies:

$$\beta_1 \mu_{it}^{R} + \beta_2 s_{it}^{R} + \varepsilon_{it}^{R} > \beta_1 \mu_{it}^{L} + \beta_2 s_{it}^{L} + \varepsilon_{it}^{L}$$

This could be rearranged:

$$\beta_1(\mu_{it}^{R} - \mu_{it}^{L}) + \beta_2(s_{it}^{R} - s_{it}^{L}) > -(\varepsilon_{it}^{R} + \varepsilon_{it}^{L})$$

where $\mu_{it}^{R} - \mu_{it}^{L}$ is the difference in posterior beliefs about average gains/losses (hereafter simply μ_{it}) and $s_{it}^{R} - s_{it}^{L}$ is the difference in posterior beliefs about the variance of results under right and left moves (hereafter simply s_{it}).

Finally, the probability of party *i* deciding to move right at time *t* is:

$$P(R_{it}) = P(EU_{it}^{R} > EU_{it}^{L}) = 1 - F[-(\beta_1 \mu_{it} + \beta_2 s_{it})] = F(\beta_1 \mu_{it} + \beta_2 s_{it})$$

[33] I slightly deviate from Meseguer because interestingly she states an "if and only if" qualifier (2009, 59–60), but uses the "greater than or equal to" sign in her formula. In the event of a tie though, there is no clear indication where to move, and decision makers could just as well toss a coin. For this reason, I opt for the "greater than" sign in the formal model. I am aware that technically however, when applying logistic regression models (or probit models like Meseguer), a probability of 0.5 is usually rounded up which may explain the "greater than or equal to" sign.

This way β_1 and β_2 can be estimated and reveal whether rational learning indeed informs parties' decision to move right or left, whereby F is a logit link and β indicates the effect of the independent variable on the probability to move right. Summing up, the following expectations can expressed (Meseguer 2009, 60):

- The greater the difference in posterior beliefs about average results of a right move compared to a left move, the greater the probability that party policy makers decide to turn right. Thus, a positive sign is expected for β_1.
- The greater the posterior beliefs about the variability of results of a right move in comparison to a left move, the less likely the decision to move right will be. Hence, β_2 is expected to be negative.

The primary hypothesis is that rational learning informs party members' decision to move either right or left. However, both expectations are somewhat working hypotheses because it could turn out that they are guided by "miraculous performance": a high variance implies that severe losses can be observed under a left or a right move, but at the same time, that there are quite exceptional vote gains. Depending on decision makers' adventurousness, a high variability could therefore be positively related to the probability to move (Meseguer 2009, 60–61). Similarly, it remains an empirical question whether members of the party rather turn to their own past than learn from observing competitors (domestic experience) or gain insights from other parties abroad (regional and global learning). Furthermore, it is an open question whether information obtained from in-group members is more useful than evidence collected from other parties.

Discussion

For the time being, a preliminary answer to the research question of this thesis – why and when do parties move to the right, and when to the left? – can be formulated: party elites reduce the inherent uncertainty surrounding their decision by learning from observed experience about the effectiveness of right and left moves. Yet, members on the ground may come to a different decision given what they know, and – based on the internal balance of power – may thus condition party elites' strategies. It is assumed that party members learn by evaluating the available information with respect to the expected vote gain or loss and take the quality (or "noise") of the information into account. The updated beliefs inform the choice between two alternatives and they are supposed to move in the direction which promises a greater expected utility. From this point of view, party members are rational learners, albeit potentially bounded, and rational decision makers.

Table 3.1 A Hypothetical Example of Decision Making

	EU of Right Moves	EU of Left Moves	Difference of Movers	Learning implies to move…	Emulation implies to move…	Rational Elites	Rational Activists
Own Experience	2.5	.	.	Right	.	Right	Right
Domestic Experience	1.8	-0.6	-2	Right	Left	Right	Right
Regional Experience	-0.8	1.7	-1	Left	Left	Left	.
Global Experience	0.1	0.4	4	Left	Right	Left	.
Public Opinion	Shifts to the Left		.	.	.	Left	.
Decision to move…				*Tie*	*Left*	*Left*	*Right*

Notes: EU is the expected utility in terms of vote gains/losses; "." denotes "not applicable". Difference of movers indicates whether more parties moved to the right than to the left (positive values), and vice versa.

To exemplify the argument Table 3.1 shows a hypothetical information horizon available to party members and how the final decision may arise. To make it more intuitive it is a stripped-down example leaving the variability of results and the division of in-group and out-group learning aside, focusing solely on effectiveness in terms of average results.

Suppose a party gathered information about the expected utility of right and left moves. In addition, they observed how many other parties moved to the left and how many to the right (information not available is indicated by a full stop). The party's last move brought about a vote gain of 2.5%, so learning from own experience tells both party elites and activists to move right. As implied in decision rule #3 one can thus hypothesize:

> *The probability of a right move is higher, if the party's last move to the right yielded a vote gain or a left move resulted in losses, and vice versa.*

Looking at the past performance of domestic competitors they see that the rivals that moved right gained 1.8% on average, while those that moved left lost votes (-0.6%). Balancing the information, a rational learner would choose to move right again, hence:

> *The probability of a right move is higher if the difference in posterior beliefs after obtaining domestic experience signals a right move to be more rewarding, and vice versa.*

Because rational learning entails convergence in the sense that learners "would scan all available information […] and interpret all of it in exactly the same manner, drawing the same conclusions about the relative merits" (Meseguer 2005, 72), up to this point party elites and activists would not differ in their decision where to move. However, party elites have a broader information horizon. Gathering information from other parties within the same family of nations, party elites witness an average vote loss under right moves and

successful left moves (-0.8% compared to 1.7%). For this reason, this time a rational learner favors a left move, consequently:

> *The probability of a right move is higher if the difference in posterior beliefs after obtaining regional experience signals a right move to be more rewarding, and vice versa.*

Finally, abundant data from the global level is processed yielding an average vote gain for both right and left moves. Due to the difference in posterior beliefs this nevertheless signals that the rational choice is to move left, thus:

> *The probability of a right move is higher if the difference in posterior beliefs after obtaining global experience signals a right move to be more rewarding, and vice versa.*

Regarding the variability of results, the "noise" attached to the information, the hypotheses may be reversed, i.e. the probability decreases with increasing posterior beliefs if party elites are rather risk-averse; yet, if they are adventurous, it may be equally signed because a high variance implies severe losses, but also exceptional vote gains for other parties elsewhere. Each hypothesis, in turn, can be subdivided into the question of whether parties are more eager to learn from members of their own group or not. Based on previous findings one may expect that

> *the probability of a right move is higher, if the difference in posterior beliefs after obtaining experience from members of their own bloc* (in-group) *signals a right move to be more rewarding, and vice versa. At the same time, the difference in posterior beliefs after obtaining experience from* out-group *members does not have any impact on the probability of a right move.*

To return to the example, assume for a moment that no weights are given to any source and that parties simply "count" the signals when faced with the decision to move either left or right. Solely based on what they learned by observing their own past and other parties (elsewhere), party elites face a tie, so they would have to toss a coin (of course, a tie may also be dissolved by taking the variability of results into account). If, however, activists have some influence over policy formation, the tie would be dissolved in favor of a right move (4:2).

Vote- and office-seeking party elites could overcome the tie by taking "electoral preferences and support", i.e. information obtained from tracing public opinion, into account. Suppose public opinion shifts to the left so, in line with Adams et al.'s (2004) finding that parties move in accordance, this entails a left move. Unconstrained party elites would therefore choose to move left (2:3). The rate slightly increases to 4:3 (instead of 4:2) when

activists have a say, but this does not reverse the decision in favor of a left move. Thus, one may formulate an interactive hypothesis, namely:

> *The internal life of a party in terms of activist-orientation vs. leadership-domination over the formation of party policy conditions the information taken into account in the final decision to either move left or move right.*

Like a balance scale, the decision is altered by the information taken into account, and whether party members rationally learn, emulate others or apply some combination. Suppose unconstrained party elites rationally learn from their own and domestic experience and take public opinion into account, but simply emulate other parties abroad. Positive values in the difference of movers indicate that more parties moved right than left, and vice versa. Own and domestic experience favors a right move over public opinion suggesting to move left (2:1). Emulation adds weight to both sides, so the final decision is to move right (3:2); note that this is in contrast to fully rational elites. It is an empirical question, though, which sources of information parties consider, and whether more weight is given to some pieces of information than others.

Summing up, the learning framework explicitly focuses on party elites and activists (rather than assumed factions) because as Harmel and Janda (1994, 261) remind us, "decisions to change a party's organization, issue positions or strategy face a wall of resistance common to large organizations". Party elites are therefore regarded as the ultimate decision makers which have access to a broad set of information on which to rest their decision. Contrarily, the party on the ground has a rather restricted information horizon. Depending on its strength in internal politics it conditions party elites' strategy. Constrained elites may thus find themselves in a situation where they have to make a compromise deviating from the decision they would make if they were free from constraints.

In conclusion, Chapter 3 tackled three tasks: the first was to overcome the implicit notion in almost all studies of parties as unitary actors. Taking party organizations seriously, the functional division of Katz and Mair (1993) helped to identify the agents of change. Shifts in the internal power relations, the obvious fusion of the party central office and party in public office, and professionalization of party central offices indicate the increasing relevance of party elites and the decreasing role of the party on the ground. Whereas party elites are merely vote-seeking, they may face constraints stemming from the party on the ground. Yet, it is mostly party elites that learn and decide. By reviewing several notions of learning I argued that party elites can be viewed as (bounded) rational learners who engage in a purposive search for information in order to reduce their uncertainty when faced with

the decision where to move next, while activists can be regarded as bounded learners due to their comparatively restricted information horizon. By observing experience in the past and elsewhere party members draw their lessons based on an improved understanding of cause-and-effect relationships. This prepared ground for the second task in adapting Meseguer's framework, i.e. to come up with a measure of learning. Bayes' rule provided a simple, intuitive and appealing mechanism to describe *how* members of the party organization learn. Bayesian analysis also lent itself to operationalizing learning about the effectiveness of policy moves as posterior beliefs by means of two descriptive statistics, namely average vote gains/losses and the variance of the information. By gathering information from parties' own, domestic, regional and global experience and by balancing the observed evidence, parties ultimately favor to move in that direction which has a greater expected utility. In other words, the likelihood that parties move right (left) increases with expected vote gains and decreases with the "noise" attached to this information. This is the formal model of learning in a nutshell which has been elaborated in answer to the third task, namely to relate the measure of learning to policy choices. Doubts may be raised whether party members actually apply Bayes' rule and weigh the expected utility as formally expressed. But as Meseguer (2009, 67) points out: "[T]he fact is that the substantive meaning of that rule is pretty simple: Observe all available information and, in evaluating average information, consider also the consistency of what you see. This can be done even by a statistical antihero".

By adapting Meseguer's framework to the analysis of party policy moves this new approach first and foremost overcomes two limitations which are present in the current literature: first, it proposes an actor-centered approach thereby providing a micro-foundation for how party policy makers learn and decide, while at the same time taking party organizations seriously by distinguishing between elites and activists. Second, it sheds light on how parties process conflicting stimuli – a blind spot in current research. This way the framework explicitly touches upon the notion of "party leader's informational environment and/or the perceived risks associated with changing policy direction" (Adams et al. 2004, 609) which is seen as a key for understanding party behavior. The formal model thus is well-suited for answering the research question of this thesis, namely why and when do parties move to the right, and when to the left? The benefit of this approach for better understanding party behavior depends on its empirical applicability though. Therefore, it is put to the test in Chapter 5 after describing the data and method which form the basis of the analysis.

4. Data and Method

The main hypothesis states that parties' decisions to move are informed by rational learning. As the main contenders to learning, "opportunistically" following public opinion and emulating everybody else are taken into account as control variables. Apart from that, three supplementary questions accompany the empirical analysis: first, which source(s) of information party members resort to; second, whether decision makers are more eager to learn from members of their own group or not; and finally, whether the internal life of a party conditions the way learning influences the choice to either move left or right. Ideally, one would have access to abundant (qualitative) data about the strategic nature and considerations of party elites and activists, the precise impact party activists have on the formulation of party policies and above all, both as longitudinal and comparable data for a vast amount of parties. Because this is not the case, and because the research design comprises a macro-quantitative analysis, the aim is to move the empirical analysis as close as possible to the informational environment by carefully operationalizing the independent variables based on observable characteristics.

In order to tackle the primary and secondary research questions the analysis encompasses party policy moves of 137 parties in 22 developed democracies and highly industrialized OECD countries from 1950 to 2013. After justifying the case selection, the operationalizations of the binary dependent variable and the independent variables will be presented. Because the dependent variable is derived from Manifesto data, an excursus is necessary on the data and the criticism it has received. Meyer (2013, Ch. 3; also Budge et al. 2013) has developed a comprehensive and thorough discussion of this topic, to which I will refer. In principle, the formal model already purports the operationalization of the main independent variables, but they will be reconsidered here alongside descriptive statistics. Afterwards, the applied method – fixed effects and random intercept logistic regression – will be detailed. Chapter 4 thus establishes a foundation for the empirical analysis in Chapter 5.

4.1 Case Selection

Analyzing party policy shifts requires dynamic data on parties' ideological positions. For this reason, the case selection is to some extent driven by data availability. Political scientists have come up with several approaches for identifying party positions (Mair 2001): *a priori* judgements or secondary readings, asking survey respondents in mass surveys to locate political parties, conducting elite studies (including interviews with rank-and-file

members or the analysis of voting behavior of members of the parliament), requesting experts to situate parties on several scales, or analyzing political texts and party manifestos – coded both by hand or as computerized content analysis. The first approach is not suited to analyze positional changes because it merely ranks parties on an ordinal scale based on their core identity or genetic origin, most often in terms of party family membership (e.g. Beyme 1982). In the second approach respondents of mass surveys are either asked to locate parties on a pre-defined scale (mostly a general left-right scale) or to locate themselves. Aggregating the individual responses, in the first case perceived party positions are measured, in the second case the position of the constituency (rather than the party) is measured. However, aside from methodological concerns about the cross-country comparability of scales (Lo et al. 2014), mass surveys are good for analyzing party-voter congruence but fall short when it comes to party *policy* positions. A lack of systematic exploitable longitudinal data comparable across several countries is probably the most important reason why the third approach – party elite studies or analyses of actual voting behavior of party members in parliament – is restricted to studies of single countries or specific time-points (see e.g. Poole and Rosenthal 1985 and subsequent analyses for the US, Hix et al. 2006 for the European Parliament or Hug and Schulz 2007 for Swiss parties). In the fourth approach experts, however defined, are asked to participate in a survey explicitly tailored at party policy positions. The first major expert survey by Castles and Mair (1984) triggered more systematic successors (like Huber and Inglehart 1995; Benoit and Laver 2006); however, only the Chapel Hill Expert Survey Series (e.g. Ray 1999; Bakker et al. 2015) provides "longitudinal" data in the sense that they conducted comparable surveys at several time points beginning in the 1980s. Finally, content analysis of political texts and party manifestos has been applied to infer party policy positions. The major distinction of quantitative approaches is whether the texts are coded manually by human coders (as the Manifesto approach) or by computerized content analysis (e.g. Laver et al. 2003).[34]

Extensive discussions, especially between proponents of expert surveys, advocates of computerized content analysis and defenders of the Manifesto approach (see e.g. Laver 2001, the 2007 special issue of *Electoral Studies* [Marks et al. 2007], Hooghe et al. 2010, or the most recent publication of *Mapping Policy Preferences III* [Volkens et al. 2013]) have made it clear that each approach comes with its own advantages and drawbacks with respect to validity and reliability. Depending on the specific research question, some approaches are better suited, but none is superior and in the end party positions – in general – seem to be highly correlated (Gabel and Huber 2000; Benoit and Laver 2007; Keman 2007; Jahn 2011; Budge

[34] Of course, there are also interpretive approaches to political texts, but these are not in the focus.

et al. 2013). Yet, the Manifesto data collection sticks out with respect to coverage: spanning more than 50 countries in the post-World War II period, the Manifesto data collection comprises coded and quantified election manifestos of more than 1000 political parties (Volkens et al. 2015) from which party policy positions – and consequently *changes* of positions – can be derived (for a more thorough discussion of this issue see Section 4.2; for a historical overview of the Manifesto Project see Budge and Meyer 2013a). The Manifesto data thus is well-suited to analyze the impact of learning on policy moves in a systematic and comparative manner. The case selection thus is partly determined by the availability of the Manifesto data. However, not all countries and parties for which Manifesto data are available are included in the analysis. Rather, the sample is limited to 22 developed democracies and highly industrialized OECD countries, namely: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US).

The rationale for limiting the analysis to these countries is the "most similar systems design" (Przeworski and Teune 1970, 32–34). This strategy for selecting cases allows for "controlling" common characteristics (the extraneous variance) while at the same time maximizes the experimental variance of the (in)dependent variable(s) (Peters 1998, 30). The aim, thus, is to focus "the analysis on comparable cases (i.e., cases that are similar in a large number of important characteristics, but dissimilar with regard to the variables between which a relationship is hypothesized), which may be found within a geographical-cultural area" (Lijphart 1975, 159). The countries included are similar in that they all belong to the "Western civilization" (Huntington 1998) and are regarded as very highly developed countries (UNDP 2015, 208). Although Greece, Spain and Portugal only later became democracies in the 1970s, all countries have a long history of competitive and fair elections. These criteria preclude Japan because it "really is a one-off case [...], since it is the only instance of a country of non-European antecedents to become an advanced capitalist democracy" (Castles 1998, 9).

Although the Manifesto team is now constantly updating the dataset (usually twice a year) the analysis is based on the "PIP Collection [Version 2016-03]" (Jahn et al. 2016), which includes the Manifesto dataset 2015a (Volkens et al. 2015). The PIP Collection differs from the Manifesto data first and foremost in that it combines the ideological data with information about governments, first and second chambers, presidents, the European Commission and the European Parliament in a quarterly time-series.

Its main intention is to enable the estimation of policy positions of various actors which could be used, for example, in testing partisan impacts on public policies (for a comprehensive application see Jahn 2016, but also Jahn and Düpont 2015). In order to arrive at complete time-series with as few interruptions as possible, electoral alliances are decomposed where possible and party merges, splits, as well as predecessors and successors are extensively tracked and documented. Therefore, it is possible to estimate policy moves of parties where the Manifesto team would assign a different party code to a party which legitimately can be considered a predecessor or successor. For example, data for the German Greens is present under three different party codes in the Manifesto data, but it is indisputable to conflate the data and estimate consecutive policy changes.[35] This is important because in order to test if the result of the last move has an impact on the focal move (i.e. *two* moves) one needs *three* consecutive policy positions.

This approach thus increases the number of cases compared to what would be available from the original Manifesto data. At the same time, parties which only contested once or twice are dropped from the sample. Despite technical reasons, this is justified because party members' learning requires at least some continuity of a party; in addition, "one-hit wonders" are excluded as well and the focus is rather on lasting parties. Similar to Böhmelt et al. (2016, 403) I limit the analysis to "traditional" mainstream and niche parties and omit regional and special issue parties as they were rather sporadically captured. Finally, the Manifesto data includes "estimates" where missing election programs are imputed or approximated, most often by duplicating the last available information. Estimating changes would thus suggest that no change took place when in fact nothing is known. For this reason, "estimates" were dropped too.

With this treatment in mind, the actual time span of the analysis encompasses the whole post-World War II period from 1950 to 2013 resulting in 1451 policy moves of 137 parties. Table 4.1 summarizes the case selection by detailing the actual time span, how many parties and how many policy moves are included in the analysis (a full list of parties and their abbreviations can be found in Appendix B).

[35] For full details refer to the codebook of the "PIP Collection". Despite its different format for this analysis the quarterly time-series was subsequently reduced to policy changes at consecutive elections.

Table 4.1 Case Selection

Country	Time		No. of Parties	Policy Moves			
	First Year	Last Year	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Total
Australia	1951	2013	5	2	25	25	80
Austria	1956	2008	4	6	17	17	53
Belgium	1950	2010	12	3	12	8	87
Canada	1953	2011	4	2	20	20	58
Denmark	1950	2011	12	3	24	24	167
Finland	1951	2011	8	4	13	11	70
France	1956	2012	6	2	15	15	49
Germany	1957	2013	5	5	16	16	60
Greece	1981	2009	3	5	11	7	23
Iceland	1953	2013	6	3	19	14	54
Ireland	1954	2011	5	3	17	17	58
Italy	1953	2013	11	2	13	11	76
Luxembourg	1951	2013	5	3	14	14	51
Netherlands	1952	2012	10	3	19	13	90
New Zealand	1951	2011	4	3	21	21	49
Norway	1953	2009	7	2	15	15	88
Portugal	1979	2011	7	2	12	12	58
Spain	1982	2011	5	2	9	9	35
Sweden	1952	2010	7	4	19	19	104
Switzerland	1955	2011	6	4	15	15	68
UK	1951	2010	3	11	16	16	43
US	1956	2012	2	15	15	15	30
Total	1950	2013	137	2	25	15	1451

4.2 The Dependent Variable: Right (and Left) Moves

Despite favoring the use of Manifesto data over expert judgments and computerized content analysis, even the measurement of *change* from Manifesto data has triggered considerable discussion. Setting this discussion aside for a moment and with the main hypothesis in mind that learning informs party members' decisions of where to move next, the operationalization is straight forward: the binary dependent variable of the analysis dichotomizes changes on a general left-right scale, the RILE (Budge and Klingemann 2001); formally:

$$y = \begin{cases} 1 \;\; if \;\; Position_t - Position_{t-1} > 0 \;\; , i.e. a \; right \; move \\ 0 \;\; if \;\; Position_t - Position_{t-1} \leq 0 \;\; , i.e. a \; left \; move \end{cases}$$

The dependent variable thus captures the *direction* of change, i.e. whether parties decided to move right compared to the previous election (or to the left, as implied in the coding). In line with the research question, when do parties move to the left or to the right, the focus thus is neither on the magnitude of change (either keeping the sign or solely focusing on the absolute value) nor the position as such (level), as in previous studies. The dependent variable corresponds to the formal model of learning and choice in that it mirrors a "simple" choice between two alternatives, whereas the aforementioned operationalizations imply far more complex decisions. Yet, as a first test of the framework and in line with Achen's (2002) ART approach, for the time being the aim is to keep the model parsimonious by merely considering effectiveness in terms of vote gains/losses, and solely focusing on learning and its two contenders (public opinion and emulation).

Note that a party that did not change its position would be coded as a "left move"; however, after having dropped the "estimates" from the sample there is only one case left which does not alter the results.[36] Further note Volkens et al.'s (2013, v) advice that "[t]he original left-right point estimates will not generally give misleading results in comparisons of adjacent party or other policy positions over time or space, providing there is reasonable discounting of small differences". The last part of the sentence in particular points to the discussion of whether changes in the Manifesto data, and subsequently in the RILE, are actual changes or just error – to which I turn in more detail below. For now, dichotomizing changes cancels the problem with very large and dubious shifts, but it comes at the risk of inferring change when a party actually stuck to its position. For this reason Budge et al. (2010) for example used a threshold of ±4 if the party position is in the range [-20;20] and ±10 otherwise. Despite referring to Tavits (2007, 156), who uses a similar threshold – because "[t]he results of the analyses improved when the cutoff point was changed from 1 to 2; [and] the estimates were most efficient for cutoff points between 2 and 4" (!) – this is as arbitrary as not applying any threshold. I thus acknowledge criticism for potentially overestimating the number of policy changes, although I am in good company here (Meyer 2013, 137 & 223 and almost all previous studies, which do not adjust for small differences). Because of the binary nature of the dependent variable, logistic regression models are appropriate to estimate the impact of the independent variables on the *probability* that parties would choose to move right.

At first glance, the operationalization seems to be problem-free. Yet, it involves many unexpressed assumptions to which I will now turn. First, different measures of "ideological

[36] It is the Dutch *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* in 2003, but it is unclear if it actually is an "estimate" or not. Nevertheless, because it is not explicitly marked and does not alter the results, it is kept for the analysis.

change" have been proposed as an alternative to changes on pre-defined policy scales. Second, several authors argued for a different left-right scale, and finally, doubts have been raised over measurement error in Manifesto data which affects the estimation of changes, i.e. whether differences in consecutive positions are actually differences or just "noise". By partly following Meyer (2013, Ch. 3) these issues are tackled in the aforementioned order.

An Excursus: Manifesto Data and its Critique

One can distinguish "external" from "internal" critique of the Manifesto data. The former encompasses the previously mentioned debate especially about the validity of Manifesto-derived party positions compared to other approaches like expert surveys.[37] The focus here, however, is on the "internal" critique and its relevance for the operationalization of the dependent variable.

The dependent variable dichotomizes changes on the pre-defined RILE scale. Nonetheless, some authors suggest to move "beyond policy positions" (Lacewell 2015) because it is debatable if party competition is actually unidimensional (Vries and Marks 2012). They argue that parties have other options than changing their overall ideological position, like (de-) emphasizing issues (Ward et al. 2015) or blurring their positions (Rovny 2012). Likewise, Lacewell (2015), Schumacher et al. (2015) or Greene (2016) suggest measures which – in a broad sense – capture the overall change of a manifesto. In principle, these measures lend themselves to testing the learning framework in the future if it is modeled as the choice to "clarify or obscure". One would probably need a different measure of "effectiveness" though. Yet, in order to connect to the state of the art, for now change is measured in directional terms on a general pre-defined ideological scale.

Despite dispute over if and how many ideological dimensions make up contemporary party competition a general left-right dimension clearly sticks out. It is contested, though, which issues make up this dimension. For this reason Gabel and Huber (2000), Franzmann and Kaiser (2006) and Jahn (2011) proposed their own country- and/or time-specific indices, each based on a different methodological approach to the Manifesto data grounded in differing views of how to (theoretically) identify the issues belonging to the general left-right dimension. In the first case, without any *a priori* assumptions all issues are entered into a principal factor analysis in order to identify the "super issue". In the second case, party family ascriptions are used as a vehicle to determine those issues used by left-wing parties and those used by right-wing parties, while in the third case the scale is made up by refer-

[37] For a "historical" overview of critiques of the Manifesto estimates see also Budge et al. 2013.

ring to political theory to *a priori* define selected issues as being left and right (for a more thorough discussion of the underlying logic and the advantages and drawbacks of these indices see Appendix A). The country- and/or time-specific nature of these indices becomes cumbersome, however, when analyzing party policy moves and learning within the domestic context and across borders, which calls for cross-national *and* longitudinal comparable data. For this reason, I opt for the "standard" – the RILE.

The RILE is made up of 13 left and 13 right issues out of the 56 categories of the basic Manifesto coding scheme (Budge and Klingemann 2001; Budge and Meyer 2013b). Final party scores are derived by summing up the frequency of both blocs and then subtracting the left from the right.[38] Because the topics cover a broad range from political authority to stances on the military, from human rights to traditional morality, or from free enterprise to welfare state expansion, the "RILE reflects tendencies over the whole range of data for parties to be neutral as well as left and right. In this sense the scale is a summary of a party's policy profile over all the issues rather than just a reflection of its stand on left-right ones" (Budge and Meyer 2013b, 86).[39] Acknowledging that the RILE is a valid and "invariant comparative and over-time measure" (Budge and Meyer 2013a, 90), its use is justified in operationalizing the dependent variable.

But even then, voices have been raised as to whether changes in the Manifesto data and subsequently in the RILE are actually changes or just measurement error (Benoit et al. 2009). The critique emerges from the fact that usually party manifestos are coded once, and once only, by a human coder. This does not permit calculating uncertainty attached to the point estimates, and the frequencies provided in the Manifesto data have to be misleadingly viewed as "true" estimates. Because it is not feasible in terms of time and resources to recode all manifestos several times, Benoit et al. (2009) suggest a procedure to *ex post* derive

[38] There has also been some critique, though with a minor impact on the overall discussion, on the additive nature of the RILE scale. Lowe et al. (2011, 130) argue that "the balance between assertions in favour of [an issue] and against it between platforms is usefully summarized not by the differences between sentence counts, but rather by their ratio". The rationale is that the marginal effect of adding one sentence for (or against) an issue depends on the number of sentences already devoted to this issue. However, Meyer (2013, 40–44) convincingly shows that a) the RILE already takes this into account and b) the log ratio approach does not outperform the additive RILE in terms of validity.

[39] Funnily, Jahn's (2011, 747) critique of the RILE as being inductive in nature with regard to the selection of the 26 issues, seems to have disgruntled one of the founding fathers, Budge, as he later put forward probably the most extensive justification to date by going through a list of "highly influential early modern theorists [which] put them together in their political analyses" (Budge and Meyer 2013b, 89). As they proceed, the a priori deductive approach may "have been lost on not only many users but also the methodologists, so habituated are they to scales being inductively derived from a particular dataset" (Budge and Meyer 2013b, 85). Assuming for a moment that these theoretical underpinnings indeed guided the selection from the very beginning, when looking at the genesis of the RILE from Budge et al. (1987) over Laver and Budge (1992), Budge and Klingemann (2001), and Klingemann et al. (2006, Ch. 1), it seems as though even Budge and colleagues had lost it at a very early stage and only recently regained it.

confidence intervals for each data point, i.e. each frequency count of each manifesto by means of bootstrapping. They start out from the assumption that writing a manifesto involves a stochastic process of text generation. To make their point they appeal to intuition:

> [C]onsider what happens when an author's hard disk crashes after a long, hard day of manifesto writing. First, hair is torn out. Then an attempt is made to re-create the day's work. The re-created text is very unlikely to be identical to the lost text, indeed the author may well think of 'better' ways to say the same thing, when given the job of saying it all over again. Now think of different authors, with somewhat different literary styles, all trying to convey precisely the same message. In a nutshell, there are many different versions of [a text] that could be generated with the sincere intention of conveying the same [intended message]. (Benoit et al. 2009, 497)

For this reason, every data point in the Manifesto dataset, the relative frequency of references to the focal issue, comes with a specific level of uncertainty. Drawing 1,000 random samples from the multinomial distribution implies 1,000 slightly different versions of the same manifesto which then enables the generation of standard errors and confidence intervals for each point estimate (Benoit et al. 2009, 503). However, "the resulting uncertainty estimates stand on shaky grounds" (Meyer 2013, 50) as soon as one takes a closer look at the additional assumptions Benoit and colleagues introduce. The first is that one might question the intuition of the stochastic process in writing manifestos, as they are not ordinary texts occasionally written by one or a few authors. Rather they are authorized documents issued by parties themselves often after lengthy discussions and numerous motions at party congresses. It is therefore equally plausible that the wordings went through many revisions and the final text indeed reflects the true message.

A second objective concerns Benoit et al.'s (2009, 503) assumption "that zero categories–for example, zero mentions of the European Union by Australian party manifestos in 1966–reflect a real intention of the text author not to refer to the matter at issue. We thus, for want of better information, take zero categories at face value". Despite that there is no alternative because it is impossible to uncover the real intentions of the author(s), if one takes their subsequent critique regarding errors from coder (un)reliability and misclassification (Mikhaylov et al. 2012) seriously, they thwart their own approach: (quasi-)sentences that are misclassified and would actually belong to a category which now – due to this error – is a zero category, bias the uncertainty estimates generated by their bootstrapping approach. In other words, even their uncertainty measures include uncertainty. Meyer (2013, 44–50) makes two additional points when looking at policy *shifts*: if it is true that marginal changes occur due to error, one runs the risk of inferring a policy move when there is actually none. This is analogous to a Type II error in hypothesis testing. Contrarily, Type I

errors might occur when taking the confidence intervals established by Benoit and colleagues into account if one infers that parties stuck to their position when they actually moved – albeit only slightly. "In other words, they reduce a Type II error (common in CMP data) but simultaneously increase a Type I error" (Meyer 2013, 45).

Lastly, Meyer criticizes the introduction of probably unintended consequences by tackling Benoit et al.'s (2009, 502) assumption, that "[l]onger manifestos provide more information, and we can be more confident about policy positions estimated from them". Using the example of centrist parties which often blend right and left issues, epitomized by an empirical analysis, Meyer (2013, 47) shows that this leads to the counterintuitive expectation, that "the more (quasi-)sentences centrist parties use for left-right issues, the larger are the standard errors of a party's left-right position". Ultimately, the adjusted party positions established by Benoit and colleagues almost perfectly correlate with a regression slope close to one, so "one would be ill-advised to use the BLM left-right mean value in place of the actual Manifesto left-right values" (Budge et al. 2013, 79).

To sum up, dichotomizing right and left moves by means of changes on the RILE is far more controversial than one might expect at first sight. Even though some authors raised reasonable concerns, there is simply "no 'gold standard' how CMP estimates have to be used" (Meyer 2013, 53). In general, it seems worthwhile to apply the learning framework to other measures of change like "reprogramming", but for the time being – with the state of the art in mind – it is better to maintain a parsimonious model. Likewise, it seems fruitful to analyze the changing meaning of left and right from a learning perspective in the future, but a time-invariant policy scale is better suited to analyze party policy moves across space and time in the first place. And finally, procedures to correct for potential errors in the Manifesto data are themselves error-prone, so it is recommended to stick to the original measures and estimates "where no particular research considerations intervene" (Budge et al. 2013, 84) – which is the case in this thesis. By disregarding a threshold for policy moves to be "big" enough to qualify as a "true" shift, I acknowledge potential criticism for overestimating the number of actual changes, although I am in good company here in doing so. To conclude the remarks on the dependent variable, and before moving on to the independent variables, Table 4.2 provides some insight about the empirical nature of the dependent variable by showing the number of right moves as a share of all moves by countries and decades.

Table 4.2 Right and Left Moves in 22 Countries from the 1950s to the 2010s

Country	1950s			1960s			1970s			1980s			1990s			2000s			2010s			Total		
	R	T	p%	R	T	p%	R	T	p%	R	T	p%	R	T	p%	R	T	p%	R	T	p%	R	T	p%
Australia	6	10	60.0	7	14	50.0	10	15	66.7	7	12	58.3	8	12	66.7	3	9	33.3	3	8	37.5	44	80	55.0
Austria	3	6	50.0	1	5	20.0	4	9	44.4	4	6	66.7	8	15	53.3	6	12	50.0	.	.	.	26	53	49.1
Belgium	4	9	44.4	4	8	50.0	7	12	58.3	9	16	56.3	9	18	50.0	7	16	43.8	4	8	50.0	44	87	50.6
Canada	3	9	33.3	7	12	58.3	5	9	55.6	3	9	33.3	4	6	66.7	5	10	50.0	1	3	33.3	28	58	48.3
Denmark	13	20	65.0	10	26	38.5	21	39	53.8	14	32	43.8	10	21	47.6	10	22	45.5	4	7	57.1	82	167	49.1
Finland	7	12	58.3	3	5	60.0	5	10	50.0	4	10	40.0	10	15	66.7	2	12	16.7	2	6	33.3	33	70	47.1
France	2	4	50.0	5	9	55.6	4	6	66.7	6	9	66.7	3	6	50.0	3	10	30.0	2	5	40.0	25	49	51.0
Germany	2	3	66.7	2	9	22.2	3	6	50.0	6	9	66.7	7	13	53.8	7	15	46.7	1	5	20.0	28	60	46.7
Greece	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	9	66.7	2	3	66.7	5	11	45.5	.	.	.	13	23	56.5
Iceland	6	12	50.0	0	4	0.0	5	12	41.7	2	4	50.0	4	8	50.0	5	10	50.0	0	4	0.0	22	54	40.7
Ireland	4	6	66.7	4	9	44.4	3	6	50.0	8	15	53.3	7	8	87.5	3	10	30.0	4	4	100.0	33	58	56.9
Italy	6	10	60.0	2	10	20.0	7	15	46.7	11	14	78.6	6	14	42.9	6	11	54.5	2	2	100.0	40	76	52.6
Luxembourg	6	9	66.7	5	8	62.5	3	8	37.5	5	8	62.5	2	6	33.3	3	8	37.5	2	4	50.0	26	51	51.0
Netherlands	5	12	41.7	4	9	44.4	5	14	35.7	9	15	60.0	4	9	44.4	12	17	70.6	6	14	42.9	45	90	50.0
New Zealand	2	6	33.3	4	8	50.0	4	6	66.7	3	6	50.0	4	8	50.0	5	11	45.5	1	4	25.0	23	49	46.9
Norway	3	12	25.0	5	16	31.3	7	12	58.3	9	18	50.0	9	12	75.0	8	18	44.4	.	.	.	41	88	46.6
Portugal	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	5	80.0	12	22	54.5	4	12	33.3	8	14	57.1	5	5	100.0	33	58	56.9
Spain	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	10	20.0	5	9	55.6	4	12	33.3	1	4	25.0	12	35	34.3
Sweden	10	15	66.7	5	15	33.3	11	20	55.0	7	15	46.7	9	18	50.0	6	14	42.9	4	7	57.1	52	104	50.0
Switzerland	3	7	42.9	2	8	25.0	5	12	41.7	3	8	37.5	11	15	73.3	5	12	41.7	2	6	33.3	31	68	45.6
UK	3	9	33.3	5	6	83.3	7	12	58.3	5	6	83.3	1	4	25.0	0	4	0.0	2	2	100.0	23	43	53.5
US	1	2	50.0	2	6	33.3	2	4	50.0	4	6	66.7	2	4	50.0	3	6	50.0	1	2	50.0	15	30	50.0
Total	89	173	51.4	77	187	41.2	122	232	52.6	139	259	53.7	129	236	54.7	116	264	43.9	47	100	47.0	719	1451	49.6

Notes: R indicates the number of right moves, T the total number of moves and p% the share of right moves per decade.

Empirically, with the common zigzag pattern of parties in mind, policy moves are relatively evenly distributed with 735 left moves and 719 right moves in the sample (50.45% and 49.55% of the observations respectively). Because the dependent variable dichotomizes the direction of change, this does not necessarily imply shifts in the general level of positions, as a country starting from the very left may incorporate many right moves but still maintain a "left coloring". Furthermore, the presentation does not take the importance of parties into account, although – due to the case selection – only parties with some electoral success and continuity have been included. Yet, the sheer number of left and right moves closely mirrors general trends in positions (Kim and Fording 1998; 2003): while the 1960s witnessed a general left-swing, foremost in the Nordic and continental Western European countries, from the 1970s to the 1990s the spread of neo-liberalism left a mark. In every decade in only six out of the 22 countries more parties moved left, while the bulk of parties shifted to the right. This is especially true for the Anglo-Saxon countries where only Canada appears as an exceptional case in the 1980s. With a temporal delay a similar pattern can be found in the Western European countries: apart from Switzerland, within a decade parties swayed from mostly left moves to the right. The Nordic countries, in turn, seemed to be more resistant with either an even number of moves or a slight tendency for changes to the left. After nearly three decades of a "climate of right moves", the dawn of the new millennium saw a general left-swing. This time only three countries – Italy, Portugal, and above all the Netherlands – experienced most parties turning right, while the overwhelmingly majority moved to the left. Both the temporal delay from the Anglo-Saxon to the Western European countries as well as the spatial clustering within families of nations attracts attention. In line with the covariation of the median voter which Kim and Fording (1998) found, this suggests that learning within families of nations, or at least emulation, might be at work.

4.3 Independent Variables

In line with the formal model of learning and policy choice, the dependent variable mirrors the choice between two alternatives where the decision to move right is coded as $y = 1$. In order to assess the impact rational learning in particular might have on this decision, the independent variables mirror the information horizon of party members and the data available to them which informs their decision for (or against) a right move. They are directed to reflect the "signal" decision makers receive by observing experience in the past and elsewhere. For all three "contenders" – public opinion, emulation and learning (operation-

alized as the difference in posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of right moves vs. left moves) – positive values signal to move right, whereas negative values signal that a left move is advisable. The notable exception is the variance reflecting the "noise" of the observed information, which is reversely signed. Theoretically, I thus expect all independent variables to have a positive impact on $\Pr(y = 1)$, whereas the variance should have a negative impact – unless party members are found to be adventurous and adhere to "miraculous performance". In this case, a high variance implies severe losses but also huge vote gains, so it might have a positive sign as well. The internal life of a party in terms of activist- vs. leadership-orientation may condition the effects though.

Public opinion sticks out as it is the only independent variable measured "externally" to the learning framework, whereas learning from parties' own experience, and above all learning from domestic, regional and global experience share the same logic of measurement; emulation in turn is a "by-product" of the observed experience. In principle, the operationalization and the underlying logic has been introduced as part of the formal model in Section 3.3 but will be reconsidered here. Starting with parties' own experience and uniting domestic, global and regional learning along with emulation, finally the operationalizations of public opinion and party organizations are presented. This part closes with descriptive statistics and a synopsis of the expected effects.

Own Experience

Within the learning framework I argued that party policy makers asses the effectiveness of left and right moves in terms of vote gains or losses. Vote gains or losses are measured as the difference in vote share between election_t and election_{t-1}. Because of its extensive treatment of party splits, mergers or electoral alliances, the PIP Collection (Jahn et al. 2016) consequently adjusts the vote share each party received (compared to the vote share provided in the original Manifesto data). To ensure consistency, the data is therefore obtained from the PIP Collection as well.

When assuming a noninformative prior, "frequentist" point estimates resemble Bayesian estimators and the sample mean $\bar{x}$ and sample sum of squares (variance) σ^2 are sufficient statistics to summarize the observed experience. Starting with learning from own experience, Table 4.3 gives a hypothetical example.

Table 4.3 Hypothetical Examples for OWN EXPERIENCE

Gain/loss previous move to the right (R)	Gain/loss previous move to the left (L)	Difference = EU(R) – EU(L)	"Signal" (Expectation)
5	0	5	Move to the right
0	–5	5	Move to the right
–3	0	–3	Move to the left
0	3	–3	Move to the left

Although it might seem trivial at first sight, and OWN EXPERIENCE[40] is not that illustrative for the application of $\bar{x}$ and σ^2 (a more informative example will be given below), it puts the operationalization of the learning variables in a nutshell and shows the direction and logic of the "signal", i.e. the *difference in posterior beliefs*. Suppose a party gained 5 percentage points by moving to the right. Due to lack of immediate experience with a left move and by assessing the effectiveness of each alternative, members learn that a right move is advantageous. Similarly, moving left and loosing votes signals decision makers to move right.The reverse is true when moving right and loosing votes or turning left and gaining votes – in both cases the expected utility of a left move is higher; hence, rational learners are supposed to turn left. In the example, the "signal" is slightly weaker though, so the effect on the probability to move right should be lower. In fact this is the "past election model", i.e. decision rule #3 of the NST in operational terms, which states that a party "continues further in the same policy direction as last time, if it gained votes in the last election; and changes its policy direction from last time, if it lost votes" (Budge 1994, 453–54). Because there is only one single piece of information for right moves and only (n)one for left moves (the zero mirrors the noninformative prior with respect to left moves), both point estimates depict the mean; the variance is zero because there is no uncertainty surrounding the past result. As argued earlier, however, the variance is disregarded for OWN EXPERIENCE as it would be constant for all observations.

Domestic, Regional and Global Learning; well, and Emulation

While the hypothetical example best illustrates the logic of the learning variables regarding the expected direction, an empirical example is conducive in understanding the application of the mean $\bar{x}$ and the variance σ^2 as a measure for domestic, regional and global learning. For this reason, Table 4.4 depicts an example of regional experience for the *Australian Labor Party*.

[40] In order to distinguish the concept from the variables included in the analysis from now on I will use the capitalized notation for the latter.

Table 4.4 Example for Regional Experience – AVERAGE RESULTS, VARIABILITY OF RESULTS, and EMULATION, *Australian Labor Party,* 1977

Country	Party	Election Date	Vote $Share_{t-1}$	Vote Change	Vote $Share_t$	Party moved…	Effectiveness (R)	Effectiveness (L)	"Signal" (R-L)
Canada	New Democratic Party	8 Jul 1974	17.7	-2.3	15.4	left		-40.7	
Canada	Liberal Party of Canada	8 Jul 1974	38.5	4.7	43.2	right	181.0		
Canada	Progressive Conservative Party	8 Jul 1974	35.0	0.4	35.4	right	14.0		
Ireland	Labour Party	16 Jun 1977	13.7	-2.1	11.6	right	-28.8		
Ireland	Fine Gael	16 Jun 1977	35.1	-4.6	30.5	right	-161.5		
Ireland	Fianna Fáil	16 Jun 1977	46.2	4.4	50.6	left		203.3	
New Zealand	Labour Party	29 Nov 1975	48.4	-8.8	39.6	right	-425.9		
New Zealand	National Party	29 Nov 1975	41.5	6.1	47.6	right	253.2		
UK	Labour Party	10 Oct 1974	37.1	2.1	39.2	right	77.9		
UK	Liberal Party	10 Oct 1974	19.3	-1.0	18.3	right	-19.3		
UK	Conservative Party	10 Oct 1974	37.8	-2.0	35.8	right	-75.6		
US	Democratic Party	2 Nov 1976	51.7	3.8	55.5	right	196.5		
US	Republican Party	2 Nov 1976	48.1	-3.4	44.7	right	-163.5		
				AVERAGE RESULTS ≈		Mean	-13.83	81.29	**-95.11**
				VARIABILITY OF RESULTS ≈		Variance	380.72	297.66	**83.07**
				EMULATION ≈		Count	11	2	**9**

Note: For optical reasons the variance was rescaled by dividing by 100.

The table shows the information which is available to *Labor Party* elites from other parties within their own Anglo-Saxon family of nations in the run-up to the election on December 10, 1977. Contrary to members on the ground, which solely take their own and domestic experience into account due to scarcity of time and resources, party elites can resort to recent information about policy moves and election results of 13 parties from Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK und the US. While it seems fruitful to take "time" seriously in the sense that one might look at the importance of recentness (see Somer-Topcu 2009 for some indications that time indeed matters), for the time being I assume that the information from the 1974 Canadian election is as useful as the 1976 election in the US. However, I do take the importance of parties into account by weighing the vote gain or loss with the vote share at the previous election.

The rationale is that (smaller) gains or losses of the biggest parties are more important than small changes of minor parties, not least in terms of visibility across borders. After all, the weighing still captures the amplified impact of smaller parties if they achieve exceptional success. The *effectiveness of right and left moves* is assessed by looking at the direction in which a party moved (column "Party moved…") and weighing the gains/losses (column "Vote Change") with the previous vote share (column "Vote Share$_{t-1}$"). This information can be summarized by estimating the mean $\bar{x}$ and variance σ^2 for each alternative which echoes the posterior beliefs under noninformative priors.

On average moving right brought about losses, most notably the impact of the severe loss of New Zealand's *Labour Party* or Ireland's *Fine Gael*. However, the information about right moves is ambiguous because New Zealand's *National Party*, the US *Democratic Party* and the *Liberal Party of Canada* also represent three parties which moved right and gained. This "noise" is reflected in the large variance for right moves. For left moves, in turn, the information is more consistent: despite the Canadian *New Democratic Party* moving left and loosing votes, *Fianna Fáil*'s victory outweighs the loss of the former, smaller party. On average, moving left thus seems to be advisable because it promises a greater gain and the information comes with less "noise". Assuming a noninformative prior, *Labor Party* elites now can rest their decision on four pieces of information (posteriors) if no other experience would be available: an expected vote loss when moving right, an expected vote gain when moving left, much "noise" attached to the results of right moves, and more consistent information with respect to left moves.

According to the formal model, *learning is operationalized as the difference in posterior beliefs*, i.e. the difference in the effectiveness of right vs. left moves (column "Signal"). The negative value of AVERAGE RESULTS signals party elites to move left, and the VARIABILITY OF RESULTS suggests moving left as well because the average results seems to be more likely. On the contrary, a positive value of AVERAGE RESULTS would imply that a right move is rewarding whereas a negative value of VARIABILITY OF RESULTS would indicate that the information about left moves is "noisier" compared to right moves.

To sum up, positive values of AVERAGE RESULTS should increase the probability that parties chose to move right, i.e. $\Pr(y = 1)$, while negative values decrease the likelihood. Thus, β is expected to have a positive sign. In contrast, β is expected to have a negative sign for VARIABILITY OF RESULTS as positive values indicate more "noise" attached to right moves than to left ones – if the assumption holds that party members are risk averse "in choices involving sure gains and […] risk seeking in choices involving sure losses" (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 263). If *Labor Party* elites are adventurous, however, given the observed experience one would expect them to move right as the high variance of right moves points to severe losses but also remarkable gains.

As a "by-product" EMULATION simply captures *the difference in the number of movers*. Like the learning variables, positive values show that a majority of parties moved right, whereas negative values imply that more parties moved left. It becomes clear, that emulation is "a 'blind' action in that it does not entail an enhanced reflection about the mapping from policies to outcomes" (Meseguer 2005, 79). Instead, by ignoring the effectiveness, it simply predicts "herd behavior". If *Labor Party* elites "drop" their rationality in favor of appropriateness, one would expect them to turn right because (almost) everybody else was doing it.

The measurement, the weighing, the direction and the underlying logic of AVERAGE RESULTS, VARIABILITY OF RESULTS and EMULATION are identical for domestic, regional and global learning. Technically, they are estimated in the same manner as shown in the example. They differ solely with respect to the information which is available to decision makers:

- *Local experience* is easily available to both party elites as well as members on the ground and encompasses all competitors' moves and their results from the previous election (like in Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b; Williams 2015).
- Due to the costs involved in gathering information, only party elites can resort to *regional experience* encompassing all parties and their results within the same family of

nations recently available in the run-up to the focal election (excluding domestic competitors). In line with Castles (1998, 8–9)[41] I distinguish four families:

1. an English-speaking family: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, UK, and US;
2. a Scandinavian or Nordic family: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden;
3. a continental Western European family: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland;
4. a Southern European family: Greece, Portugal, and Spain.

- *Global experience*, again only available to elites, encompasses all remaining parties (excluding domestic and regional parties) and their results recently available in the run-up to the focal election.

There is one exemption which has been mentioned earlier: VARIABILITY OF RESULTS is disregarded for learning from domestic experience for two reasons. First, because vote share is a zero-sum game in national elections, the information is by definition "noisy", and I argued that party members are aware of this fact as they operate within the same setting and "know the rules of the game". Second, empirically the variable turned out to be zero-inflated almost approximating a constant which is problematic from a methodological point of view. Yet, tests revealed that it did not substantially alter the results anyway.

Apart from the main hypothesis that members of a party rationally learn and then decide where to move next, one ancillary question accompanying the empirical analysis is whether they are more eager to learn from other parties of their own family or not (in-group vs. out-group learning). In order to answer this question, I group parties into two ideological blocs – a left-wing bloc comprising ecologist, communist or social democratic parties, and a right-wing bloc encompassing liberal, Christian democratic, conservative, nationalist or agrarian parties. Party family designations are extracted from the third digit of the Manifesto party code which denotes family information. Technically, this avoids too many zeros if applying a more fine-grained scheme of "*familles spirituelles*" (Beyme 1982) when there are no other competitors belonging to the same family (which is rather the case than the exception). Furthermore, party family has been criticized as "the most undertheorized and least specified approaches to the general classification of parties" (Mair and Mudde 1998, 211), so despite that this grouping is a bit rough, I am still in good company in utilizing it

[41] Iceland, Luxembourg and Switzerland have been added according to my own understanding as they were not included or classified in Castles' study.

(Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b, 834; Williams 2015, 16; Böhmelt et al. 2016, 23).[42] Learning from members of one's own or the opposite group cross-cuts domestic, regional and global learning, but it solely alters the available information. In other words, the measurement, the weighing, the direction and the underlying logic of AVERAGE RESULTS, VARIABILITY OF RESULTS and EMULATION are still identical but this time at each level a distinction is made between parties of the same and the opposite group when obtaining $\bar{x}$ and σ^2.

Public Opinion

In their first article Adams et al. (2004) tackled the question of whether parties respond to shifts in public opinion or not. Later, public opinion became probably *the* most important control variable. Chasing public opinion is rational from a Downsian point of view, but I argued that it is different from the kind of rationality underlying learning; rather it can be viewed as "functional opportunism". While learning is based on observable (retrospective) facts, insights gained from polling come with an inherent uncertainty as they are mere prospective expectations. Due to the resources necessary for conducting polls and obtaining information about "electoral preferences and support", this source is restricted to party elites' information horizon.

In the beginning, public opinion was operationalized as (shifts in) the mean voter position obtained from the only comparable cross-country survey conducted on a regular basis, and thus providing longitudinal data (at least to some extent): the Eurobarometer (e.g. Adams et al. 2004; 2006; Adams et al. 2009; Adams and Ezrow 2009; Ezrow et al. 2011; Schumacher et al. 2013). Yet, methodological concerns have been raised about the impact of different scales to the quality of the data (Kroh 2007) or the cross-country comparability of respondent's Left-Right self-placements (e.g. Huber 1989; Lo et al. 2014). Above all, the analyses were restricted to the Western European countries starting in the 1970s. In later studies it was therefore replaced by (shifts in) the median voter (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b; Williams 2015). Based on a "simple application of the Euclidian preference relations" Kim and Fording (1998) suggest measuring the median voter in three steps: first, parties are located on an ideological dimension; second, an interval ranging from midpoint to midpoint between two adjacent parties is drawn, which is then finally attached to the actual vote share of the focal party. This way a "grouped frequency distribution" is ob-

[42] I slightly deviate by assigning liberal parties to the right-wing bloc instead of standing on their own. This possibly does not do them justice (Franzmann 2011), but Swank (2013) or Armingeon et al. (2016) classify most of them as rightist parties in their trichotomy. Furthermore, tests revealed that this does not substantially alter the results.

tained which allows for estimating a simple median (Kim and Fording 1998, 79). This measure has been adjusted slightly by McDonald and Budge (2005, 113–14) by assuming a symmetrical interval around the position of the farthest left and farthest right parties. This way it is possible to estimate the median voter for every election for which data on party positions and electoral turnout is available and thus to extend the sample. While the median voter and the Eurobarometer mean position only weakly correlate, shifts in both measures do correlate, meaning that both are likely to register shifts in the same direction (McDonald and Budge 2005, 201). Applying the adjusted measure to data from the PIP Collection, *shifts in public opinion are measured as differences in the median voter position on the RILE-scale between election$_t$ and election$_{t-1}$*. Positive values of ΔPUBLIC OPINION indicate a shift of the median voter to the right and therefore should increase the probability of party elites turning right, i.e. $\Pr(y = 1)$, while negative values show a left move of the median voter and should be associated with a decreasing likelihood. For this reason, β is again expected to have a positive sign for ΔPUBLIC OPINION.

A final word of caution is necessary though when applying this measure: because the measurement rests on the very same party positions which are used to infer policy moves, and consequently the dependent variable, in a strict sense there is an endogeneity problem. This may bias the regression coefficients in favor of ΔPUBLIC OPINION.[43] However, because public opinion rather serves as a control variable, due to methodological concerns about the validity of survey-based measures and to data availability, I align with Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) and Williams (2015), who did not even mention this potential problem, and stick to this measure for the time being.

The Internal Life of Party Organizations

Meyer (2013) and Schumacher et al. (2013) convincingly argued that a party's ability to move is conditional on its internal life. Furthermore, I argued that party activists have different incentives, are rather policy-seeking and have a restricted information horizon due to their volunteer status, scarcity of time and limited access to resources; party elites in turn are merely vote- and office-seeking (Laver and Hunt 1992, Ch. 4; Katz and Mair 1993; Jun 2010), can devote their efforts to these issues full time and their information horizon con-

[43] As a sensitivity analysis I re-ran the main models with ΔPUBLIC OPINION measured as the mean voter shift based on the "Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File 1970-2002" (Schmitt et al. 2005). Despite the rather limited sample, the results substantially support the conclusions. The large impact of ΔPUBLIC OPINION indeed levels off but remains slightly higher than the learning variables. A notable difference is the impact of learning from out-group competitors which shows a less clear-cut pattern. In addition, for learning from regional and global experience the analysis revealed an even larger impact than that reported indicating that parties are indeed partly guided by miraculous performance.

sists of a broader set of sources. It was therefore hypothesized that the more leadership-oriented the internal decision making, the more eager party elites are to maximize votes. To this end, they tend to favor information about public opinion and may be guided by recent and successful examples rather than looking back in time. On the contrary, in activist-oriented parties members may force party elites to follow a less adventurous route in order to secure a vote share at least similar to the last one. Meyer (2013, 173) describes this connection in terms of a principal-agent relationship, but I prefer the terms agenda setter and veto player. For this reason, rather than being an independent variable on its own, the interactive hypothesis implies the impact of learning as conditional on the party's internal life. This is in line with Schumacher et al.'s (2013) approach.

The biggest obstacle for taking party organizations seriously in macro-comparative time-series analyses is the lack of comparable cross-country and longitudinal data about their internal life. Numerous projects have either focused on one or a few parties or presented just a snapshot of time. Based on this information, Meyer (2013, Ch. 9) compiled some data[44] in order to construct an ordinal variable capturing the inclusion of party members in the selection of candidates ranging from "no say" to "full say". Yet, his sample is restricted to ten Western European countries. Apart from that, the variable is practically time-invariant. Instead, I adopt the measure suggested by Schumacher et al. (2013). Although they are not able to overcome the time-invariance, their measure is metrical and available for 100 parties of the original sample. This implies that due to data availability and party correspondence, the analysis including the interaction is conducted with a smaller sample of 1258 policy moves and excludes Switzerland entirely.

In their expert survey Laver and Hunt (1992, 124) explicitly asked for the impact party leaders and party activists have "over the formation of party policy" on a scale from "have no influence at all (1)" to "have a very great influence (20)". By first subtracting the aggregated party scores of the first question from the second one, and then adding the minimum of that sum to all observations, Schumacher et al. (2013, 468) construct an index ranging from 0 to 30 which captures the degree of activist-dominance (low values) vs. leadership-dominance (high values). Because the expert survey dates back to the early 1990s, one might question the implicit extrapolation; yet, party organizations are rather resistant to change (Poguntke et al. 2016, 669) and this index therefore provides a more "conservative" test. In addition, other measures like member-voter ratios or party centralization measures do not tap into the question of the internal balance of power over policies (Schumacher et

[44] I would like thank Thomas Meyer for sharing his data with me, although in the end I opted for the bigger sample and disregarded his data.

al. 2013, 470). The index INTERNAL BALANCE thus is well-suited to capture the "wall of resistance" which party elites may face when trying to change issue positions or strategies (Harmel and Janda 1994, 261).

To summarize, this chapter set out the operationalization of the binary dependent variable capturing right moves (and, implicitly, left moves). Furthermore, it presented the measurement, the weighing, the direction and underlying logic involved in the operationalization of learning from own, domestic, regional and global experience as the difference in posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of right vs. left moves, and explained the estimation of EMULATION as a by-product by simply subtracting the number of movers. While the measurement is identical for all learning variables, they differ regarding the information which is available. For this reason, a grouping along the lines of families of nations has been discussed and a distinction between two ideological groups, a left-wing and a right-wing one, has been drawn. The operationalization of one of the opponents to rational learning, "functional opportunism" by chasing public opinion, has been introduced as shifts of the median voter. Finally, an index capturing the internal balance of activist- vs. leadership-orientation has been detailed which will be used for testing the interactive hypothesis that party elites might have to make compromises if activists arrive at the opposite decision based on what they know, but of course only if they have a say in internal politics. Before moving on to the introduction of the applied method of analysis, Table 4.5 presents summary statistics for all independent variables.

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Median
ΔPUBLIC OPINION	1451	-0.10	12.99	-47.59	55.25	0.36
OWN EXPERIENCE	1451	0.07	4.36	-27.00	22.80	0.00
Domestic Experience						
AVERAGE RESULTS	1451	1.06	144.55	-1040.43	1002.36	1.28
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	1451	-3.56	121.82	-1262.67	880.68	0.00
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	1451	1.95	136.23	-1040.43	1002.36	0.00
EMULATION	1451	0.04	2.24	-6.00	6.00	0.00
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	1451	0.01	1.37	-4.00	4.00	0.00
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	1451	0.02	1.61	-4.00	5.00	0.00
Regional Experience						
AVERAGE RESULTS	1451	6.52	78.05	-370.14	416.35	6.03
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	1451	7.66	98.15	-496.47	700.13	9.34
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	1451	9.14	107.01	-485.31	700.13	9.22
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	1451	-43.80	450.55	-3071.98	2606.33	-6.50
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: IN-GROUP	1451	-41.11	583.88	-6616.07	5685.50	-0.39
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	1451	-39.96	655.24	-6616.07	5685.50	-7.17
EMULATION	1451	-0.28	5.89	-16.00	18.00	0.00
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	1451	-0.18	3.95	-13.00	13.00	0.00
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	1451	-0.10	3.76	-13.00	13.00	0.00
Global Experience						
AVERAGE RESULTS	1451	6.54	37.88	-94.27	109.29	3.90
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	1451	6.52	54.49	-217.20	194.40	6.44
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	1451	3.89	53.91	-217.20	194.40	5.04
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	1451	-15.21	199.11	-831.72	449.19	28.61
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: IN-GROUP	1451	-17.27	278.78	-1668.57	920.68	7.89
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	1451	-6.71	257.26	-1668.57	920.68	10.96
EMULATION	1451	-0.54	10.82	-27.00	27.00	-1.00
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	1451	-0.33	6.87	-22.00	21.00	0.00
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	1451	-0.21	6.58	-22.00	21.00	0.00
Party Organization						
INTERNAL BALANCE	1258	19.64	4.80	0.00	29.44	20.06

Note: For optical reasons VARIABILITY OF RESULTS was rescaled by dividing by 100.

4.4 Method

Due to the binary nature of the dependent variable, linear regression analysis is not suitable to test the impact rational learning, emulation or "functional opportunism" has on parties' decisions to move right or left. Instead, logistic regression models are superior when analyzing dichotomous outcomes. The main idea of logistic regression is that a latent, unobserved variable y^* is linked to the binary outcome and it is assumed that the event occurs, i.e. $y = 1$, once y_i^* exceeds a certain threshold (Best and Wolf 2015, 154–55). Accordingly, y_i^* represents the amalgamation of the posterior beliefs and the information obtained from public opinion and emulation which informs party members' decision to move right (or left). In turn, y_i^* is a latent response for which a linear regression model can be specified (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 510), formally:

$$y_i^* = \beta_1 + \beta_2 x_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Thus, the probability that an event occurs in the logit model is

$$Pr(y_i = 1|x_i) = logit^{-1}(\beta_1 + \beta_2 x_i) \equiv \frac{\exp(\beta_1 + \beta_2 x_i)}{1 + (\beta_1 + \beta_2 x_i)}$$

where $logit^{-1}$ is the inverse or logistic function and the dependent variable is assumed to follow a Bernoulli distribution (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 503). Logistic regression models are fitted by maximum likelihood.

Specifying an ordinary logistic regression is not appropriate, though, and would lead to biased standard errors because party policy moves have a special hierarchical structure: policy moves (observations) are nested in parties, which are nested in countries, but policy moves are also nested in elections and countries. For this reason Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b, 836) for example used robust standard errors clustered by elections and Schumacher et al. (2013, 471) employed a Prais-Winsten regression with panel-corrected standard errors to further control for autocorrelation. Meyer (2013, 225–28) nicely summarized the three problems arising from this particular structure: first, cases may differ due to unobserved heteroscedasticity across countries, parties and elections which leads the variance of the error terms to vary across countries, parties and elections (against the assumption that the error terms should be independently distributed and homoscedastic). Second, because parties constantly interact in electoral competition and may be influenced by (unobserved) country- or election-specific factors, contemporaneous correlation might exist. Third, serial correlation occurs because policy moves depend on previous decisions. Multilevel analysis is able to tackle some of these issues, and Meyer therefore suggests mak-

ing use of at least two three-level random intercept models, once with parties and once with elections at level 2. However, similar to Lacewell's (2015, 4) surprise, fitting these models very often revealed an intra-class correlation close to zero meaning that grouping at these levels is of no use because there are no differences between the groups (Hox and Wijngaards-de Meij 2015, 135). Backed by likelihood-ratio tests that failed to reject the null hypothesis that the between-cluster variance is zero, this indicates that a multilevel model is not required (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 536). For this reason, I ran multilevel models and ordinary logistic models with standard errors clustered by countries, parties and elections rather as robustness checks. Nonetheless, in order to take the longitudinal character of the data into account I report the results for fixed effects (also called conditional logistic regression) and random intercept logistic regression models.[45] Unsurprisingly, in general the multilevel models resemble the results obtained from random intercept models, whereas the logistic regressions with clustered standard errors mirror the fixed effects models.

The rationale for using fixed effects (FE) models by including a dummy variable for each party (and suppressing the constant) is that they capture unobserved unit heterogeneity stemming from time-invariant or slowly changing features of each party, and to circumvent an omitted variable bias when the differences are not explained by the independent variables included in the model (Fortin-Rittberger 2015, 394). In other words, "[t]he fixed effects model controls for all time-invariant differences between [parties], so the coefficients of the fixed effects model cannot be biased due to omitted time-invariant characteristics"; hence the focus is on "causes of changes within a [party]" (Kohler and Kreuter 2005, 240). Adding FEs, however, comes at costs: first, time-invariant features cannot be analyzed because "[f]rom a technical point of view, […] time-invariant characteristics are perfectly collinear with the […] dummies" (Kohler and Kreuter 2005, 240); and second, it suppresses level effects, i.e. "unit dummies *completely absorb* [sic] differences in the level of independent variables across units" (Plümper et al. 2005, 331).

As an alternative one might "relax the assumption of conditional independence among the responses for the same [party] given the covariates" (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 520) by including a party-specific random intercept (RE) in the linear predictor. One of the differences is that in the former case FEs allow for the unobserved differences to be correlated with the independent variables, while random intercept models assume strict exogeneity on the covariates (Wooldridge 2002, 257). In principal, both strategies reveal

[45] To some extent, election-specific factors are implicitly controlled for by including ΔPUBLIC OPINION, as it is constant for all observations at the focal election but varies between elections.

quite similar estimates, but if the assumptions for the random intercept model are met, "the latter estimator is more efficient and tends to yield smaller standard errors" (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 558). The drawback, however, is that the regression coefficients now capture both within- *and* between-party effects and it is no longer possible to control for unobserved characteristics (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 530); in other words, one runs into the risk of omitted variable bias again.

Both FE and RE models have their advantages and drawbacks, and it is suggested that one should opt for random effects if the units or their names are exchangeable, like survey respondents for example (Fortin-Rittberger 2015, 396); this however, is not the case for parties. In addition, all independent variables but one vary more within parties than between them; INTERNAL BALANCE is the exception as it is a time-invariant measure but varies between parties. In the end, conducting a Hausman test provides assistance in reaching a decision for or against one model. It tests the null hypothesis that the difference in coefficients obtained from a FE and RE-model is not systematic, and a statistically significant difference can be viewed as evidence against the random-effect model (and for the fixed effects estimators), although, as with any statistical inference, one has to be aware of committing a Type I or II error (Wooldridge 2002, 288–91). In sum, because there is no "gold standard", I report the results for both fixed effects and random intercept models alongside the Hausman test statistics, and interpret the robustness of the coefficients across several model specifications as a backing of the findings.[46]

To conclude, Chapter 4 laid the foundation for the empirical test of the applicability and usefulness of the learning approach. Based on a sample of 1451 policy moves from 137 parties in 22 democratic and highly developed Western countries, the analysis employs fixed effects and random intercept logistic regression models to test the impact of the independent variables on the binary dependent variable, i.e. the impact of learning in contrast to "functional opportunism" and emulation on parties' decision to move right or left. Learning is operationalized as the difference in posterior beliefs about the effectiveness of right vs. left moves and the corresponding quality, or "noise" of the information. Yet, it is an empirical question whether party members rather learn from their own, domestic, regional or global experience, and whether they are more open to learning from members of their own ideological group or from the opposite group. "Functional opportunism" by chasing public opinion and emulating everybody else account for alternative explanations

[46] In addition, apart from running the fixed effects and random intercept models using jackknife procedure, regression diagnostics for outliers and influential cases were carried out based on the ordinary logit models (cf. Long and Freese 2001, Ch. 4.4) to further check the robustness of the findings. Replication material including robustness checks and sensitivity analyses can be found on the supplementary CD-ROM.

of party policy moves alongside the question of how the internal balance of power fosters or hampers the way learning influences the decision to move. Thus, the main ingredients – the theoretical framework adapted from Meseguer to fit the insights from previous studies and theoretical attempts to explain policy moves, the data and the method – have now been prepared to assess the main hypothesis that party policy makers rationally learn and then decide in which direction to move.

5. Are Party Policy Makers Rational Learners?

The main hypothesis is that (bounded) learning influences party members' decision where to move, albeit constraints emerging from the internal "wall of resistance" might hamper or foster a chosen strategy. Alternative explanations include "functional opportunism" by chasing public opinion or simply emulating everybody else. Likewise, two ancillary questions accompanying the empirical analysis have to be dealt with. First, which source(s) of information decision makers resort to, and second, whether they are more eager to learn from members of their own ideological group or not. Modeled as a decision between the alternative to either move right or to move left, the formal model of learning postulates that the expected utility after observing experience in the past and elsewhere – the posterior beliefs – have an impact on this decision. This way, the empirical analysis mirrors the decision making of the formal model, and should answer the research question of when and why parties move to the right, and when to the left.

The analysis is split into two parts: the first part deals with national party competition and the impact learning from one's own and domestic experience has on the decision, as the state of the art suggests that the primary explanatory effects will be found at this level. This encompasses both the question of learning from other parties from one's own or the opposite group as well as the question of whether the internal balance conditions party elites' strategies. The second part mimics the first one but looks beyond borders and deals with the effect of learning from regional and global experience. The two parts thus correspond to the distinction drawn in Chapter 2 when summarizing previous research between the domestic level and the international level. While the first part points to effects resulting from national party competition, the latter refers to diffusional impacts.

The main findings are, first, that party members rationally learn from their own experience and from the experience of competitors of the opposite ideological group; second, that public opinion is a very strong pull factor; and third, that party elites adhere to the regional "climate of opinion" by emulating other parties within their own family of nations. Regarding the supplementary questions, the internal balance of power within a party's organization indeed conditions the way information from different sources shapes decisions. Less constrained party elites (can) more easily follow an opportunistic vote-seeking strategy and rest their decision primarily on public opinion and emulating regional parties, whereas activist-oriented parties are more "introverted" in gathering information and resort to their own experience and to rivals' previous moves.

5.1 The National Arena – Learning from Own and Domestic Experience

Before starting, some words on the nomenclature and (technical) assumptions are necessary because they affect the presentation of the results: when fitting logistic regression models there are several ways to present the effects of the independent variables. Reporting the raw coefficients has the advantage that the log odds are linear as they refer to the latent response y^*. This way they indicate above all the direction of the effect: a positive coefficient points to a positive effect, i.e. the larger x, the larger y^*; reversly, a negative coefficient implies that the larger x, the smaller y^*. The latent response in turn is linked to the probability of the event occurring – in other words, the decision to move right – in a non-linear way (Best and Wolf 2015, 156). For this reason, "[t]he predominant interpretation of the coefficients in logistic regression models is in terms of odds ratios" (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 504) which are obtained by exponentiating the coefficients. *Odds* are defined as the ratio of the probability of the event occurring over the probability of failure, i.e. $Pr(y = 1)/\big(1 - Pr(y = 1)\big)$. For example, in tossing a fair coin the probability of the coin turning up heads is .5, so the odds of heads is 1 to 1. When throwing a manipulated coin favoring heads and the probability of heads is say .6, the odds of heads is 1.5 to 1; in other words, the odds for heads is 50% higher than the odds for tails. By simple transformation one can go from probability to log odds and back again. *Odds ratios* now have been criticized because they are the "*ratios of ratios of probabilities* [sic]" (Best and Wolf 2015, 156), but they allow for expressing the increase or decrease in the odds as a result of a one-unit change of the independent variable. Each table therefore reports the raw coefficients and their standard errors together with the point estimate of the percent change in the odds ratio (ΔOR) for a one-unit change of the focal variable.[47]

Taking the critique seriously, I will also follow Best and Wolf's (2015, 157) advice and plot predicted probabilities which add to the understanding of the effect size beyond mere direction and statistical significance. Predicting probabilities is not an easy task though when operating with random intercept and fixed effects models: because the random intercepts are not estimated parameters of the model they could "not be used to obtain cluster-specific predicted probabilities" (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 544). Likewise, "subject-specific predictions are not possible in conditional logistic regression because no inferences are made regarding the subject-specific intercepts" (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal

[47] I would like to thank Jan Helmdag for pointing me to Craig Volden's (2006) paper from whom this kind of presentation is borrowed.

2012, 559). One way to cope with this problem is to assume the intercept is zero (the mean of the fixed or random effects distribution), which is equivalent to the probability of an "average party" (but not the average marginal effect).[48] The percentage of correctly classified observations included in the tables as a measure of the goodness of model fit is based on this assumption, and is therefore a rather conservative measure. For this reason, I also report the classification results obtained from the corresponding ordinary logit model with clustered standard errors including party dummies in parentheses which may be viewed as the "upper boundary".

Learning from Own Experience

This said, Table 5.1 starts with the results for learning from parties' own experience. The coefficient for OWN EXPERIENCE is positive and statistically different from zero at the 5% significance level in models M1a and M1b. The metric for OWN EXPERIENCE is based on vote gains and losses in percentage points, and is thus straightforward: if the party moved right and gained one percentage point of votes (or moved left and lost votes) the odds for moving right (again) are about 2.54% higher.[49] Looking back to their previous move, members of the British *Labour Party* in 2010 for example were confronted with a vote loss of 5.5% after moving left, so the odds for changing direction in 2010 were 13.97% higher. Contrarily, the Austrian *FPÖ* moved right in 1994 and gained 5.9%, so the odds for a further right move at the 1995 election were 14.98% higher than moving left.

Models M2a and M2b assess the sole impact of the major opponent to the rational learning framework entitled "functional opportunism". As expected ΔPUBLIC OPINION has a positive sign as well and is statistically significant at the 1% level. Because the metric for ΔPUBLIC OPINION rests on the RILE scale which ranges from -100 to +100, a one-unit shift of the median voter to the right increases the odds for a right move by 6.45%. Shifts of the median voter of more than five units are not rare events (the 25th and 75th centiles in the sample are -6.64 and 7.25 respectively), so public opinion indeed has a major impact on the decision where to move. To better compare the impact of OWN EXPERIENCE and ΔPUBLIC OPINION *within* models, M3 I re-estimated all models with x-standardized coefficients (Long and Freese 2001, 74-75) which are shown in Appendix B, and to which I will refer where illustrative.

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[48] On the differences between subject-specific and population-averaged effects see Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012, 529–32.

[49] When reporting coefficients, (changes in) odds or (predicted) probabilities in the text I will refer to the preferable FE or RE model according to the Hausman test.

Table 5.1 Results – Learning from Own Experience

	(1a) FE		(1b) RE		(2a) FE		(2b) RE		(3a) FE		(3b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.0286*	2.90	0.0250*	2.54					0.0228+	2.31	0.0206	2.08
	(0.0125)		(0.0122)						(0.0132)		(0.0130)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION					0.0625**	6.45	0.0653**	6.75	0.0621**	6.41	0.0651**	6.72
					(0.0052)		(0.0053)		(0.0052)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0003				0.0013				0.0004	
AIC	1587.88		2011.23		1408.49		1819.67		1407.48		1819.12	
BIC	1593.16		2021.79		1413.77		1830.23		1418.04		1834.96	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified in p%			52.58 (57.13)				66.44 (69.12)				67.61 (69.68)	
Hausman: Chi^2			1.59				11.51				10.05	
Hausman: p			0.207				0.001				0.007	

Notes: Raw coefficients with standard error in parentheses; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01; ΔOR displays the percent change in odds ratios for a one-unit change of the independent variable; FE indicates fixed effects, RE random intercept logistic regression; Hausman statistics refer to the corresponding FE and RE models; classification based on the assumption of FE=0 or RE=0, with classification results from ordinary logistic regression with clustered standard errors including party dummies in parentheses.

In this case a standard deviation increase in OWN EXPERIENCE increases the odds of a right move by 10.46%, while it increases by 124.13% for a standard deviation increase of ΔPUBLIC OPINION, which shows that despite the NST's and IDT's claim that nothing can be learned from polls, "electoral preferences and support" account for a large share in explaining party policy moves.

Some recent examples may illustrate the point: between the 2005 and the 2007 elections the Danish median voter shifted to the left by -6.29 units, which means that in principle the odds for all Danish parties to move right in 2007 were 40.57% lower; on the contrary, the Finnish median voter shifted to the right by 10.55 points between 2007 and 2011, so the odds for parties moving right in 2011 were 68.05% higher. Accordingly, one would expect the majority of Danish parties to choose to move left, while their Finish counterparts should favor a right move – if public opinion would be the only source of information. In the Danish case four out of seven parties included in the analysis indeed shifted to the left, while in the Finish case only two out of six parties moved right.

When looking at the model fit and the ability to correctly predict the observed outcomes models M2 outperform models M1. Three readings come to mind: first, one could question that rational learning informs parties' decisions at all; second, from a methodologist's point of view there may be a bias due to the endogeneity problem involved in estimating the median voter position;[50] or third, that shifts of the median voter actually capture much more information for party elites regarding "electoral preferences and support" than was initially assumed, and therefore needs to be "rayed and disaggregated" in order to incorporate it more smoothly into the framework in future studies rather than as an opponent to learning. The friendlier view, however, is that although decision makers seem to be driven by public opinion, there is room for learning as the impact of OWN EXPERIENCE remains robust even when controlling for public opinion in models M3. In both models the variable is no longer statistically different from zero at the 5% level but still at the 10% level; furthermore, the effect on the odds diminishes only slightly.

In the random intercept model M3b OWN EXPERIENCE becomes insignificant, but sensitivity analysis revealed that two parties stand out: the Canadian *Conservative Party*, which emerged out of a fusion of the *Progressive Conservative Party* and the *Canadian Alliance* in 2003, and the Australian *Greens*. Each party contributes only two policy moves, yet these four observations have extremely high residuals and leverage effects. When excluding them

[50] Sensitivity analyses relying on the Eurobarometer mean voter shift indeed suggest that the impact of public opinion is almost on par with the effect size of the learning variables and thus is slightly overestimated.

from the analysis OWN EXPERIENCE remains statistically different from zero at the 10% level again ($p = 0.089$). The high residuals derive from the fact that both parties behaved completely counterintuitive to what one would expect from the formal model of policy choices. Public opinion *and* learning from own experience strongly signaled to move left, but the *Greens* chose to move right in 2010 and the *Conservative Party* in 2011. The reverse is true for the *Greens* in 2013 and the *Conservative Party* in 2008: this time both OWN EXPERIENCE and ΔPUBLIC OPINION firmly suggested moving right, but both moved left. Neither party stands out as being very different in terms of radicalness of their right-left position nor is there an obvious reason in terms of the internal life. One possible explanation might be that they competed more on secondary issue dimensions than the general left-right one, or that there were exceptional circumstances regarding the personnel; unfortunately, within the limits of this thesis, no satisfactory explanation can be offered. Obviously, the peculiarity of both parties is captured by the party-specific fixed effects but turns out to be problematic in the random intercept models. Because this is an issue which runs through many of the models still to come, I will report the full models anyway but present the corresponding models excluding influential observations in Appendix B.

To complete the picture for learning from own experience and the impact of public opinion, and because the odds are still somehow tricky to grasp, graphs are more appealing for understanding the actual size of effects. In order to visualize the effect size of an independent variable beyond mere statistical significance, one may adjust for the covariates to obtain average marginal effects (AMEs), marginal effects at the means (MEMs), or marginal effects at representative values (Bartus 2005; Mitchell 2012). While AMEs and MEMs are rather common (keeping in mind the difficulties in obtaining AMEs with fixed effects or random intercept models), the learning framework is especially suited for marginal effects holding all other covariates at zero. Recall that all independent variables are scaled so as to signal party members where to move, whereby positive values indicate that a right move is rewarding, while negative values suggest that left moves are advantageous. Setting these variables to zero thus implies that either no information is available from this source, or that the expected utility of left vs. right moves is balanced. In this case, own experience, public opinion, or the observed experience of others does not give decision makers any clue where to move, and they could just as well toss a coin.

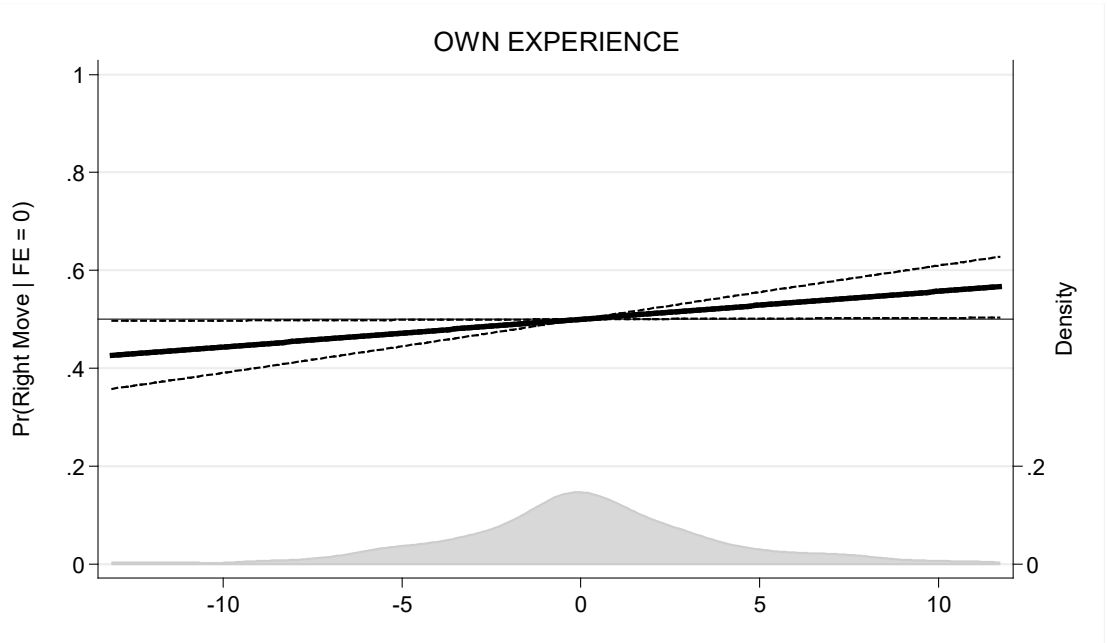

Figure 5.1 Predicted Probabilities for OWN EXPERIENCE

Notes: Predictions with 90% CIs based on model M3a adjusting for all other covariates and assuming FE=0 for observed values from the 1st to the 99th centile; the right y-axis shows the appropriate kernel density of observed data.

The predicted probabilities shown in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 thus resemble the effect under *ceteris paribus* conditions if no information is available to members except for learning from their own past or public opinion respectively. Due to the operationalization of the dependent variable, the complementary probability of the event (i.e. $y = 0$) is the probability of a left move; that is, a predicted probability for a right move of say .4 entails a probability of a left move of .6.

Although the curve looks like a linear relationship for OWN EXPERIENCE at first sight, the predicted probabilities in fact follow a logistic function. If no information from polling would be available or the information is useless giving no hint where to move, the probability of parties deciding to move right is only .43 (or .57 to move left) if the previous move to the right resulted in a vote loss of 10%, which is roughly the signal decision makers of the Dutch *VVD* got in 2003, or the previous left move brought about a vote gain of the same size. All else being equal, witnessing a vote loss of 5% under a right move or a similar vote gain under a left move, like the Dutch *PvDA* in 2002, the probability for a right move increases to .47. Likewise, for parties whose former left move was an unsuccessful endeavor or who gained by moving right, the probability of a right move is .53 for a 5% change of votes (like the German *CDU* in 1962), and .57 for a 10% change of votes (as the Icelandic *Independence Party* in 1979).

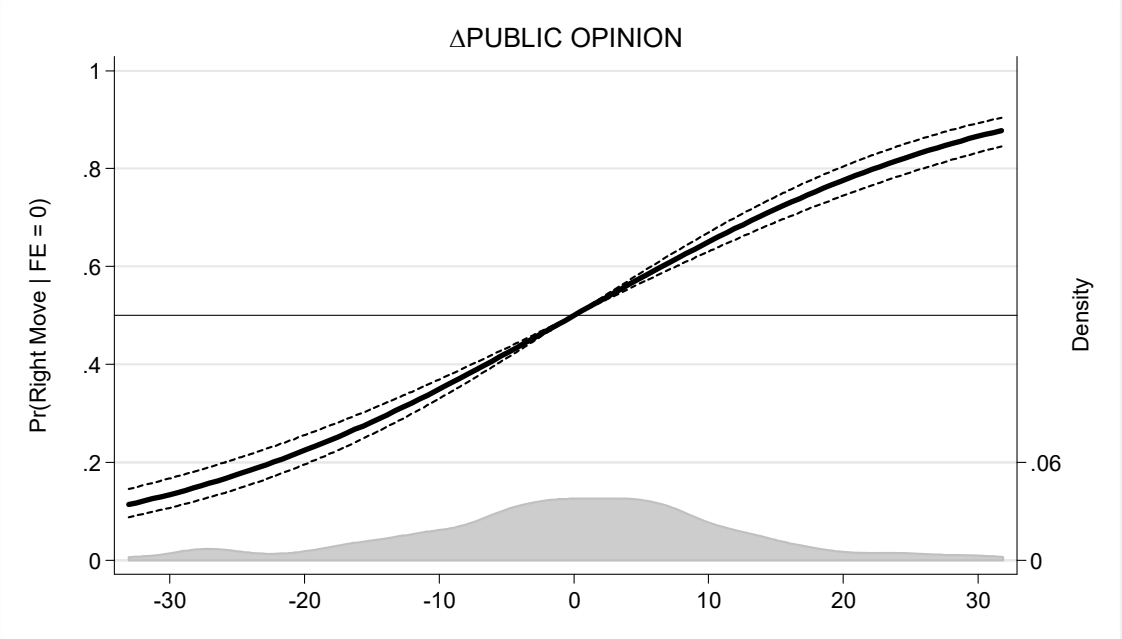

Figure 5.2 Predicted Probabilities for ΔPUBLIC OPINION

Notes: Predictions with 90% CIs based on model M3a adjusting for all other covariates and assuming FE=0 for observed values from the 1st to the 99th centile; the right y-axis shows the appropriate kernel density of observed data.

In line with the apparently larger effect size on the odds, the predicted probabilities for ΔPUBLIC OPINION show a steeper curve. The probability that party elites decide to move right when they cannot resort to experience from their own past but notice a 20-unit shift of the median voter to the left on the RILE scale (which is close to the drift of the Danish median voter between 2001 and 2005) is as low as .22, meaning quite a strong probability of .78 for left moves. In fact, during the 2005 Danish election six out of eight parties moved left and the remaining two shifted in line with what one would expect from the learning framework because their own experience signaled them to move right. Between 2005 and 2009 the German median voter moved round about 10 units to the left, so *ceteris paribus* the probability for German parties to move left is .65. On the contrary, a shift of the median voter of 10 or 20 units to the right increases the probability of a right move to .65 and .78 respectively. Recent examples for such shifts are the 2009 elections in Portugal and Norway, or the Swiss election 1995. Public opinion hence exerts a strong pull, which is broadly in line with the findings of Adams et al. (2004), and all subsequent studies examining policy moves where ΔPUBLIC OPINION turns out to have a major impact and is statistically highly significant every time it is taken into account. On the one hand, this indeed calls for a further inspection of the informational substance of public opinion in future research. On the other hand, it shows that votes are obviously the ultimate currency

and goal of parties, not least in terms of economic survival of the organization due to public subsidies' dependency on the number of votes polled (Nassmacher 2009, Ch. 8).

The fact that OWN EXPERIENCE has the expected sign and is statistically different from zero is in line with Somer-Topcu's (2009) findings and supports decision rule #3 of Budge's (1994) NST that decision makers rationally learn from their own past. The basic idea thus was not new, but it is spelled out within the learning framework in a much more rigorous fashion than initially stated. As such, this result stands opposed to the early finding of Adams et al. (2004, 608), who did not find support "for the Past Election Results Hypothesis, that parties adjust their ideologies in response to the electoral outcomes […] in the last election"; despite that there has been some evidence in favor of this decision rule later on (Ezrow et al. 2011, 285). In addition to learning from parties' own experience and "functional opportunism", the works of Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) and Williams (2015) suggest that parties observe each other and respond to rivals' previous moves. For this reason, I will now turn to the question of learning from domestic experience.

Learning from Domestic Experience

Table 5.2 presents the results for learning from competitors. Before focusing on the impact of AVERAGE RESULTS and EMULATION a quick note on the impact of the aforementioned variables is sufficient: learning from one's own experience and following public opinion maintain their impact regarding the direction, their statistical significance and their effect size in terms of percent change of the odds. As has already been noted, the coefficient of OWN EXPERIENCE failing to become statistically different from zero in the random intercept model M6b is driven by the Canadian *CP* and the Australian *Greens*.

The analysis of AVERAGE RESULTS and EMULATION produces some interesting insights which shed light on the findings of Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b, 836), who stated that their "estimates provide strong evidence that political parties shift their policies in the current election in the same direction that other parties shifted their policies in the previous election". First of all, decision makers seem to *not* respond to their rival's move in general as a result of the evaluation of its effectiveness, because AVERAGE RESULTS is not statistically different from zero and the effect size on the odds is small across all models, including those run as robustness checks. EMULATION in turn has a negative impact on the odds and is statistically significant at the 10% level but only in models M4 and M5. This implies that the more competitors moved to the left in the previous election, the higher the probability of a countermove to the right in the focal election (and vice versa).

Table 5.2 Results – Learning from Domestic Experience

	(4a) FE		(4b) RE		(5a) FE		(5b) RE		(6a) FE		(6b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.0289*	2.94	0.0253*	2.56	0.0227+	2.30	0.0206	2.08
					(0.0125)		(0.0122)		(0.0132)		(0.0130)	
Domestic Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0006	0.06	0.0006	0.06	0.0006	0.06	0.0006	0.06	0.0002	0.02	0.0003	0.03
	(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
EMULATION	-0.0390+	-3.82	-0.0411+	-4.03	-0.0401+	-3.93	-0.0419+	-4.10	0.0057	0.57	-0.0036	-0.36
	(0.0234)		(0.0235)		(0.0234)		(0.0236)		(0.0254)		(0.0252)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.0621**	6.41	0.0648**	6.69
									(0.0053)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0000				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1589.74		2011.74		1586.34		2009.39		1411.13		1822.43	
BIC	1600.30		2027.58		1602.18		2030.51		1432.25		1848.83	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			52.58 (59.61)				53.62 (58.44)				67.13 (69.54)	
Hausman: Chi^2			0.68				0.68				8.30	
Hausman: p			0.711				0.878				0.081	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Despite the effect not being very robust across alternative model specifications, it disappears once one controls for ΔPUBLIC OPINION. There is hardly any multicollinearity in models M6, although ΔPUBLIC OPINION is negatively correlated to the number of movers. Because parties exhibit a zigzag pattern of moves, the median voter – as the aggregate measure of policy moves and election results – tends to see-saw as well. For this reason, EMULATION captures the tendency for alternation of both individual parties as well as the median voter, unless ΔPUBLIC OPINION is controlled for. Again, this indicates that public opinion exerts a strong pull. Generally then, party members thus seem to *not* learn from their competitors, but there is a more nuanced answer to one of the accompanying questions of the analysis, whether decision makers are more eager to learn from members of their own or the opposite ideological group.

For this reason, Table 5.3 presents the results of learning from domestic experience split into in-group vs. out-group learning. The coefficients of EMULATION both within a party's own as well as the opposite group do not substantially differ and show a similar pattern as before in that they capture the alternating pattern of policy moves unless ΔPUBLIC OPINION is introduced to the model. Likewise, learning from own experience and "functional opportunism" retain their impact. Although this time there is an interesting story behind OWN EXPERIENCE becoming statistically insignificant in models M9 beyond the two outlier parties to which I will turn shortly.

At first sight rationally learning from competitors did not seem to influence the decision where to move, but "disaggregating" the effect uncovers a pattern. AVERAGE RESULTS of rivals of one's own group has a negative sign, and is statistically different from zero at the 10% level in model M9a. Sensitivity analyses revealed that this effect is not very robust however, although they indicate that "something's going on". The negative sign implies that parties tend to irrationally move in the opposite direction than their competitors at the previous election. Depending on their initial positions, for two parties this hypothetically results either in cycles of convergence and divergence (Bækgaard and Jensen 2012), where both drift apart at one election but move closer together at the next one, or it results in both parties paralleling each other. Contrary to the findings of Williams (2015, 155) and regardless of the actual pattern, a simple mechanism is at the foundation: counterintuitive to the signal of effectiveness and by *not* doing what competitors did, parties competing on the same ground try to set themselves apart in order to be distinguishable and avoid an image of a copycat.

Table 5.3 Results – Learning from Domestic Experience (In-Group and Out-Group)

	(7a) FE		(7b) RE		(8a) FE		(8b) RE		(9a) FE		(9b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.0276*	2.80	0.0247*	2.50	0.0206	2.08	0.0195	1.97
					(0.0126)		(0.0123)		(0.0134)		(0.0131)	
In-Group												
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0006	-0.06	-0.0004	-0.04	-0.0005	-0.05	-0.0003	-0.03	-0.0009+	-0.09	-0.0005	-0.05
	(0.0005)		(0.0004)		(0.0005)		(0.0004)		(0.0005)		(0.0005)	
EMULATION	-0.0460	-4.49	-0.0488	-4.76	-0.0481	-4.70	-0.0511	-4.99	-0.0037	-0.37	-0.0147	-1.46
	(0.0389)		(0.0388)		(0.0390)		(0.0388)		(0.0416)		(0.0411)	
Out-Group												
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0012**	0.12	0.0011**	0.11	0.0012**	0.12	0.0011**	0.11	0.0009*	0.09	0.0008+	0.08
	(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
EMULATION	-0.0346	-3.40	-0.0355	-3.49	-0.0348	-3.42	-0.0351	-3.45	0.0109	1.09	0.0033	0.33
	(0.0325)		(0.0329)		(0.0326)		(0.0330)		(0.0349)		(0.0350)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.0621**	6.40	0.0646**	6.68
									(0.0053)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0003				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1585.86		2010.32		1583.03		2008.23		1408.44		1822.45	
BIC	1606.98		2036.72		1609.43		2039.91		1440.12		1859.41	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			53.76 (58.79)				54.10 (58.03)				67.06 (69.71)	
Hausman: Chi^2			21.54				11.22				21.92	
Hausman: p			0.000				0.047				0.001	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

On the contrary, the coefficient for AVERAGE RESULTS of rivals of the opposite group has a positive sign and is statistically different from zero at the 5% level. This finding is robust across all specifications carried out as robustness checks. This means that party members learn about the effectiveness of rivals' moves and rationally draw their conclusions: that is, if – on average – competitors of the opposite group gained by moving right, or lost by moving left at the previous election, the likelihood for a right move at the focal election increases. The metric for AVERAGE RESULTS is not that straightforward as it contains the weighing by vote share, i.e. it takes the size or "importance" of parties into account. If there is only one party in a group, a signal of -50 for example is equivalent to the party starting from a vote share of 20% at the last election and losing -2.5% compared to the actual election. For this reason, looking at the standardized coefficients is more appealing: besides the robustness, the effect size looks relatively small at first sight as a one-unit shift of AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP increases the odds of a right move by only 0.12%. Yet, the standardized coefficient is about 1.33 times larger than for OWN EXPERIENCE, i.e. a standard deviation increase of AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP raises the odds of a right move by 12.51% but "only" 9.38% for OWN EXPERIENCE respectively.

An illustrating example is the German left-wing parties *Bündnis ´90/Die Grünen*, *SPD* and *Die Linke* whose members witnessed a signal of -54.65 in 2009. At the previous election both parties of the opposite group, the *FDP* and the *CDU*, moved right. Although the *FPD* raised their vote share from 7.4% in 2002 by 2.4% (signal = 17.76), the *CDU* has a larger weight (38.5% in 2002) and lost -3.3%, i.e. the signal was -127.05. On average ([17.76-127.05]/2=-54.65) experience from the right-wing parties therefore signaled left-wing decision makers that a right move is dangerous, and that a left move is advisable instead. Both *Bündnis ´90/Die Grünen* and *Die Linke* indeed shifted to the left in 2009.

The effect size is slightly bigger than OWN EXPERIENCE which becomes apparent when looking at the predicted probabilities under *ceteris paribus* conditions (Figure 5.3): if the effectiveness of out-group competitors' moves is the sole source of information available to party members, the probability of a right move is .48 for a signal of -100, .49 for a signal of -50, .51 for a signal of 50, and .52 for a signal of 100. At the most general level, these results support the basic idea of Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) and Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2015) that parties observe and respond to each other. Yet, they are in contrast to both theirs and Williams' (2015) findings that parties care more about competitors of their own ideological group; the analysis here suggests that decision makers tend to "irrationally" respond to their own group members by doing the opposite of what they did but tend to rationally follow the signal they receive from out-group competitors.

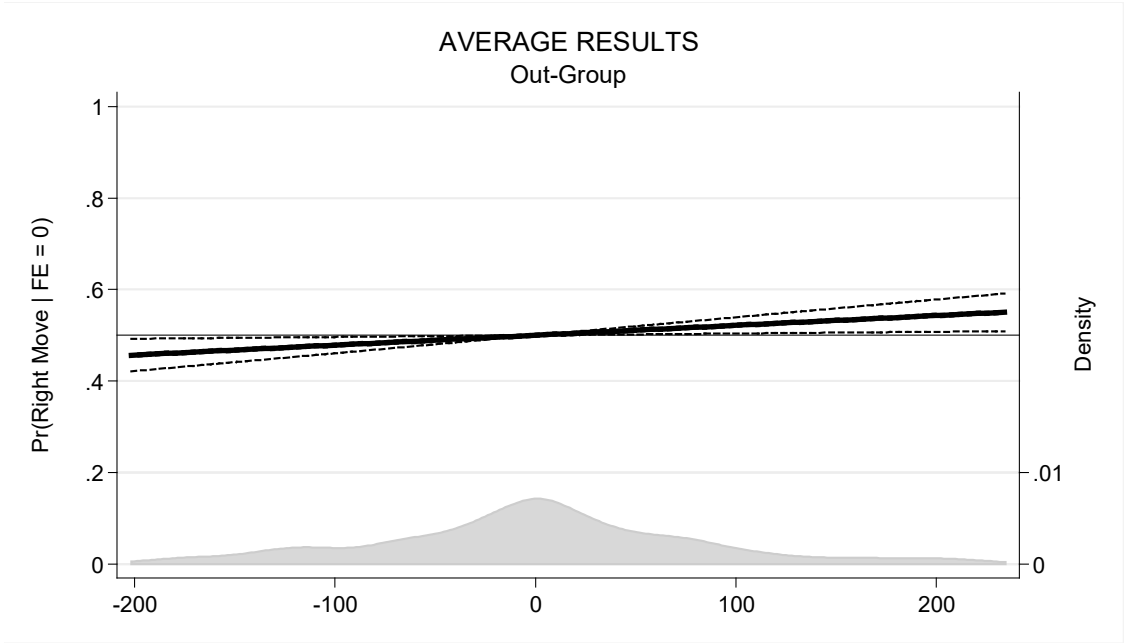

Figure 5.3 Predicted Probabilities for AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP

Notes: Predictions with 90% CIs based on model M9a adjusting for all other covariates and assuming FE=0 for observed values from the 5th to the 95th centile; the right y-axis shows the appropriate kernel density of observed data.

Interestingly, party policy makers rest their decision to a slightly larger extent on information gathered from the domestic context than their own experience. Obviously, the similarity of the context and the awareness of the "rules of the game" make it easy to draw lessons from the national arena while at the same time domestic experience is more abundant than one's own past alone. Up to now there is robust support for the hypothesis that decision makers rationally learn from their own past; the hypothesis that learning from domestic experience influences the decision where to move has to be rejected at the most general level though. Yet, the more nuanced answer is that rational learning does take place, but parties tend to pay more attention to the information obtained from out-group members. This is in contrast to the expectation that in-group learning has a more profound impact on the decision due to ideological and/or structural similarities which should render it easier to transfer the insights gained from observing competitors, whereas out-group learning was expected to have no impact at all.

Moving on, OWN EXPERIENCE maintains its effect size on the odds once again but becomes statistically insignificant in models M9. Despite the Canadian *CP* and the Australian *Greens* repeatedly altering the effect to some extent, a re-analysis of the models presented thus far reveals a pattern of different dynamics for left-wing and right-wing parties – and Liberals.

Same Signal, Different Response – The Peculiarity of Liberal Parties

Some party families have received much more attention in academic discourse than others, the liberal party family being a case in point. Using Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) nomenclature, liberal parties in general can be located in opposition to conservative and Christian democratic parties on the state-church cleavage and in opposition to socialist and social democratic parties on the owner-worker cleavage. Depending on a nations trajectory liberal parties thus can be distinguished into four types (Fleck 2006): left-liberalism, social-liberalism, economic liberalism, and national liberalism. This supports the view that liberal parties rather compete in a two-dimensional space than a general left-right one and that the one-dimensional RILE scale does not do them justice (Franzmann 2011). Empirically, liberal parties (as classified by the Manifesto Project) on average indeed occupy a middle position between left-wing and right-wing parties (the unweighted mean positions taking all parties of the analysis into account are -19.11 for left-wing parties, 9.97 for right-wing parties and 4.34 for the Liberals). Furthermore, Liberals on average show the least distance to the median voter (the mean is located at -4.44 for the entire sample). Squeezed between the blocs, liberal parties have to compete with both wings which fundamentally alters their strategies because "centre parties, carrying sufficient weight in a multiparty system with considerable centre-space, are in a position to develop and execute a strategy that pays off in terms of an optimal relation between votes, offices and policy seeking" (Keman 1994, 135).

This becomes apparent when separating the Liberals out in the analysis. Table 5.4 shows the results for learning from own and domestic experience split by Liberals and Others, i.e. all remaining left- and right-wing parties. Models M10 and M11 are "fully dummy-interactive" models in which all independent variables are interacted with a moderator g_f (instead of entering all variables unmodified plus all variables times the dummy). Despite producing the same substantial results, the former approach is superior because it already provides the correct information regarding the estimated coefficients (Kam and Franzese 2007, 103–11).

Table 5.4 Results – Different Strategies in Learning from Domestic Experience

	(10a) FE		(10b) RE		(11a) FE		(11b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE								
Others	0.0382**	3.89	0.0352*	3.59	0.0365*	3.72	0.0344*	3.50
	(0.0146)		(0.0143)		(0.0148)		(0.0144)	
Liberals	-0.0612+	-5.93	-0.0602+	-5.84	-0.0716*	-6.91	-0.0682*	-6.59
	(0.0342)		(0.0338)		(0.0352)		(0.0344)	
In-Group								
AVERAGE RESULTS								
Others					-0.0008	-0.08	-0.0004	-0.04
					(0.0006)		(0.0006)	
Liberals					-0.0014	-0.14	-0.0013	-0.13
					(0.0009)		(0.0009)	
EMULATION								
Others					0.0104	1.05	-0.0013	-0.13
					(0.0484)		(0.0475)	
Liberals					-0.0376	-3.69	-0.0420	-4.11
					(0.0844)		(0.0846)	
Out-Group								
AVERAGE RESULTS								
Others					0.0009*	0.09	0.0008+	0.08
					(0.0005)		(0.0004)	
Liberals					-0.0000	-0.00	-0.0000	-0.00
					(0.0014)		(0.0014)	
EMULATION								
Others					0.0079	0.79	0.0021	0.21
					(0.0380)		(0.0381)	
Liberals					0.0053	0.53	-0.0106	-1.06
					(0.0903)		(0.0916)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION								
Other	0.0585**	6.02	0.0612**	6.31	0.0582**	5.99	0.0606**	6.25
	(0.0056)		(0.0056)		(0.0056)		(0.0057)	
Liberals	0.0876**	9.16	0.0921**	9.65	0.0903**	9.45	0.0941**	9.87
	(0.0149)		(0.0153)		(0.0152)		(0.0155)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0008				0.0009	
AIC	1401.37		1812.95		1408.32		1822.28	
BIC	1422.49		1839.35		1471.68		1890.92	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			67.13 (69.18)				67.68 (69.95)	
Hausman: Chi^2			11.43				1.56	
Hausman: p			0.022				1.000	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

In models M10 OWN EXPERIENCE and ΔPUBLIC OPINION once again are statistically different from zero at least at the 5% level and 10% level for OWN EXPERIENCE and liberal parties respectively. The impact of learning from own experience is higher compared to models M1 to M3, and it reveals a different response of liberal party decision makers to the same signal compared to their left- and right-wing parties' counterparts. For a one-unit increase in OWN EXPERIENCE the odds of a right move increase by 3.89% while they decrease by -5.93% for liberal parties. All else being equal, processing the same signal party members of left- and right-wing parties rationally draw their conclusion and shift in the most promising direction, while their liberal equivalents act counterintuitive to what one would expect from the learning framework. Instead, they are much more prone to "functional opportunism" as the odds for a one-unit shift of the median voter to the right increase by 9.16% for liberal parties compared to 6.02% of all other parties.

This pattern continues when adding out-group learning. Like in models M7 to M9, AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP emerges as statistically significant. Liberal parties, however, seem to *not* take this information into account, while all other parties do pay attention to their competitors. Note that liberal parties have been assigned to the right group, so beyond statistical significance, at least for the sample there is also an indication that members of liberal parties tend to do the opposite of what the majority of the other parties did: for every additional party moving right within the right group, the odds of moving right decrease by -4.11% and by -1.06% for every party of the left bloc. Squeezed between the two blocs and occupying centrist positions, and thus being inherently closer to the median voter, public opinion as a source of information seems to be more important than lessons drawn from their own experience. As in decision rule #5 of the NST, by doing the opposite of everyone else, liberal parties uphold the impression of "being different" in order to ensure their distinctiveness in-between the two blocs.

For all remaining parties, once the peculiarity of the Liberals is accounted for, the standardized coefficients reveal a reverse pattern of the information taken into account in that a standard deviation increase of OWN EXPERIENCE raises the odds for a right move by 16.25% while they increase "only" by 12.33% for AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP. For an easier understanding of the different information taken into consideration by left- and right-wing parties (Others) and Liberals, Figure 5.4 plots the predicted probabilities under *ceteris paribus* conditions.

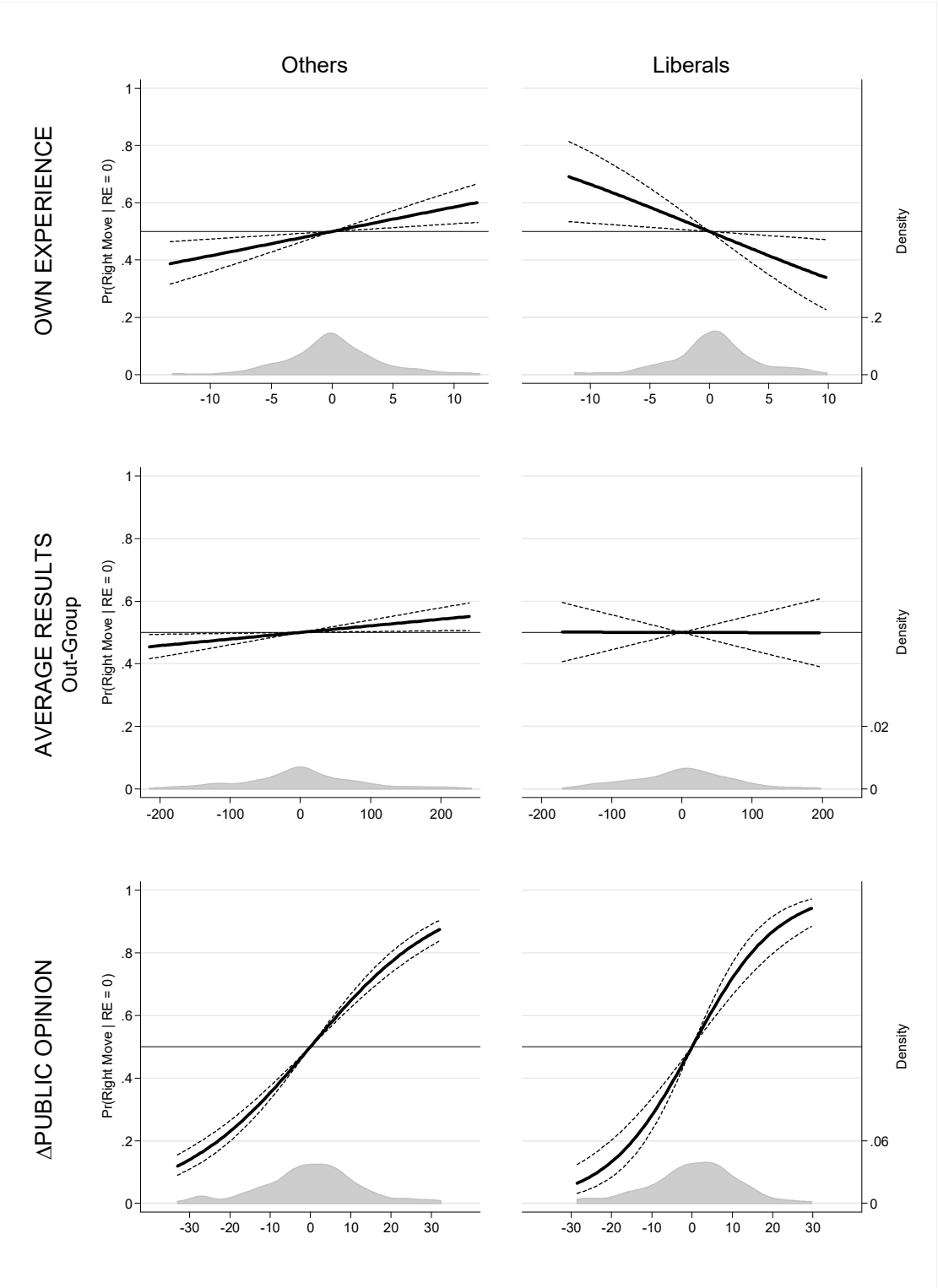

Figure 5.4 Predicted Probabilities for Other Parties and Liberals

Notes: Predictions with 90% CIs based on model M11b adjusting for all other covariates and assuming RE=0 for observed values from the 1st to the 99th centile (OWN EXPERIENCE and ΔPUBLIC OPINION) and 5th to the 95th centile (AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP) respectively; the right y-axis shows the corresponding kernel density of observed data.

If no other information is available, under a vote change of -5% after moving right (or gaining the same amount under a left move) other parties are more likely to turn left as the probability of a right move is .46, but .58 for liberal parties. Reversely, other parties respond to a signal of 10 with a higher probability (.59) to move right, while the probability that liberal parties move right – instead of left – is quite low (.34). A slightly different pattern emerges when looking at the effect of out-group learning: while liberal decision makers do not consider the average results of their rivals, members of all other parties are aware of the effectiveness of their out-group competitors' moves. For a signal of -200 the probability to move left is .46 for other parties, but .5 for Liberals. In the same way, a signal of 100 increases the probability of a right move of other parties to .52 compared to a neutral .5 again. Decision makers in general respond to public opinion, but liberal parties' longing for the median voter sticks out regarding the impact of ΔPUBLIC OPINION as the curve shows a much steeper progression and the standardized coefficient is 1.55 times higher for Liberals. If no other information is available, and in the case that public opinion is constant for all parties in the run-up to the election, i.e. all decision makers receive the same signal (!), the probability to move left is .65 for left- and right-wing parties but even higher (.72) for liberal parties if the median voter shifts to the left by 10 points. Reversely, if the median voter shifts to the right by 5 units, the probabilities that parties decide to move in accordance are .58 and .62 for other and liberal parties respectively. This underlines liberal parties' inclination to public opinion and the relative irrelevance of rational learning for decision makers within liberal parties.

Thus far, three findings appear as robust: first, party members rationally learn from their own experience; second, the effectiveness of rivals' moves of the opposite group informs the decision where to move; and finally, public opinion exerts a strong pull. Yet, party elites may face an internal "wall of resistance" if the party on the ground has an influence in the formation of party policies which may alter the weight given to the information provided by their own past, the lessons drawn from observing competitors, or shifts in public opinion.

How Activists Shape the Decision Where to Move

The works of Schumacher et al. (2013) and Meyer (2013) suggest that the internal structure of parties conditions policy moves. Due to different incentives members of the party on the ground are rather policy-seeking, whereas members of the party in public office and the party central office respectively can be viewed as merely office- and vote-seeking. The more leadership-oriented the internal decision making, the more eager party elites may

therefore be to maximize votes whilst being less constrained at the same time. Following public opinion and more recent and successful examples of others hence provide "better" information than looking back in time – both at their own experience as well as rivals' previous moves – as the information can be viewed as outdated. On the contrary, in activist-oriented parties members may force party elites to follow a less opportunistic and adventurous route in order to secure a vote share at least similar to the last one. In addition, information about their own experience as well as competitors' moves is easily accessible even for ordinary party members because simple media coverage surrounding elections provides the necessary basics. At the same time, results from polling, in-depth voter studies, or extended media analyses, especially when commissioned by the party central office, may be available to selected bodies of the party organization or rank-and-file members only. Due to their volunteer status and scarcity of time and resources, activists thus have a rather restricted information horizon compared to party elites and may arrive at the opposite decision based on what they learned.

In order to tackle the accompanying question regarding which way the internal life of parties conditions or constrains party elites' strategies, I specify a model in the style of "Ockham's razor" solely including OWN EXPERIENCE, AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP, and ΔPUBLIC OPINION as the constitutive terms and the corresponding interactive terms with INTERNAL BALANCE (Brambor et al. 2006, 66). In principle, interactive terms are symmetrical (Berry et al. 2012), but looking at the effect of the internal structure conditional on the values of the signal does not make sense, so the focus is on the way the "wall of resistance" fortifies or attenuates the impact of the signals on the decision where to move. For interaction terms, it is even more advisable to visualize the effects over values of the conditioning variable because the regression coefficients "*must not* [sic] be interpreted as the average effect of a change in X on Y as […] in a linear-additive regression model" (Brambor et al. 2006, 72). Despite this, a difficulty arises when estimating non-linear models because logistic regression inherently includes interaction effects even without an explicit multiplicative term due to the effect of one independent variable on $\Pr(y = 1)$ being dependent on the level of all other covariates. For this reason, the interpretation is valid regarding the latent response y^* but not the probabilities (Best and Wolf 2015, 164–65). I therefore relegate the regression table to Appendix B and instead show the marginal effect on the linear response alongside the predicted probabilities under *ceteris paribus* conditions for selected values of the signal over levels of INTERNAL BALANCE.

INTERNAL BALANCE ranges from 0 to 30 measuring the degree of activist-dominance (low values) vs. leadership-dominance (high values). Empirically, it ranges from 0 to 29.44 with a

mean equal to 19.64 and shows some variation when looking at different party families (cf. Schumacher et al. 2013, 470). The rank order of party families solely based on the party family average and the parties included in the analysis is as follows: the most activist-dominated parties are ecologist parties, followed by far by communist, social democratic, and agrarian parties; parties of the liberal, conservative and Christian democratic party family are slightly more leader-oriented, with nationalist parties representing the upper endpoint. Interestingly, though, communist parties not only have the highest standard deviation (followed by social democratic and liberal parties) but also constitute both endpoints of the scale. On the one end the Danish *Enhedslistan* represents the most activist-dominated party. Emerged as a fusion of several minor parties in 1989, it views itself as a socialist grassroots party, has a collective leadership and even implements a rotation order to prevent career politicians ("*levebrødspolitikere*") (Enhedslistan n.a.). On the other side, the Portuguese *Partido Comunista* constitutes the most leadership-dominated party within the sample. Formally, it pursues the idea of democratic centralism that members are free to discuss any issue, but once a decision is made, all members obey; yet, in practice it is strictly tailored towards the leadership and party leaders have effectively suppressed internal critiques or reformist movements (Keith 2010). In sum, there is a huge variation even within party families, but a slight pattern emerges in that parties of the left-wing are rather activist-oriented, while right-wing parties are slightly more leader-oriented. To make the following interpretation a bit more appealing, note that the German or Austrian Greens have a score of round about 10, the Australian *Labor Party* or the Canadian *New Democratic Party* are located in the middle (≈15). In the German *CDU* or New Zealand's *National Party* leader-orientation is more pronounced (≈20), while the Belgian *Parti Socialist* or the Dutch *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* are examples of rather leader-dominated parties (≈25). These are the scores and parties used to illustrate the effects and I will refer to them as low to medium (10-15) or strong (20-25) types of leadership-orientation at times.

The left graph in Figure 5.5 shows the decreasing relevance of learning from parties' own experience with increasing levels of leadership-orientation. The effect on the log odds is positive, meaning that decision makers rationally translate the signal into a decision, but it becomes statistically insignificant at a level of about 21. Regarding the effect size a thought experiment is more illustrating though. Suppose that no other information is available to party members except for learning from their own experience which signals that a left move is rewarding (i.e. signal = -5). The probability to move right now depends on the internal "wall of resistance": given the information rational activists would urge for a left move, but the probability to move left decreases with every step towards more centralized

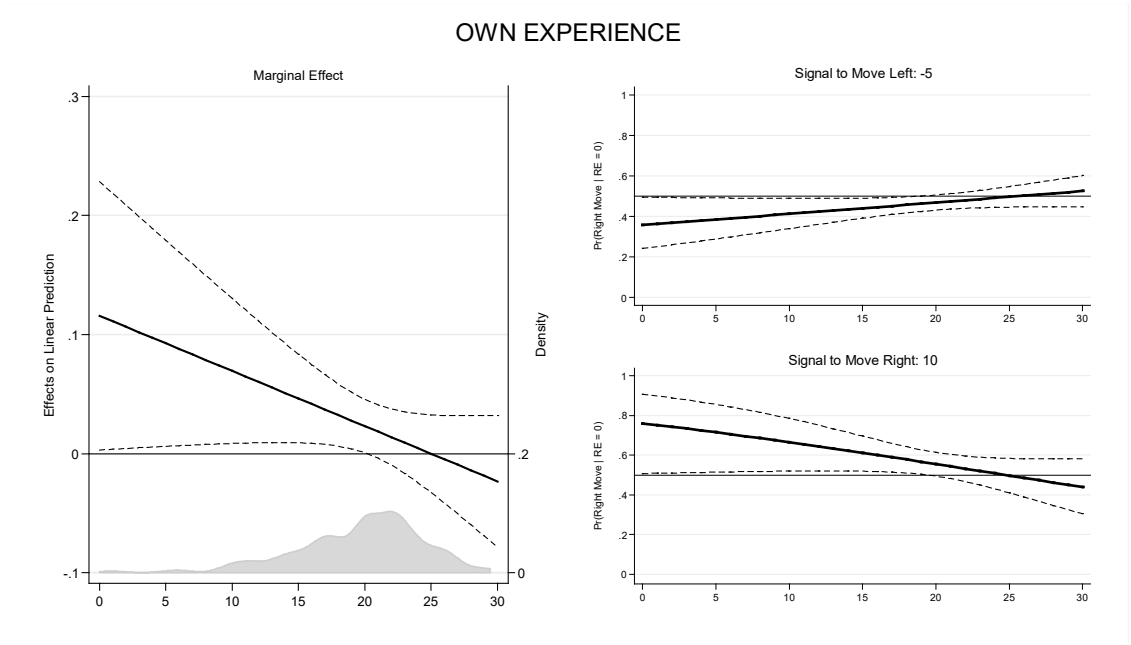

Figure 5.5 Marginal Effect and Predicted Probabilities of OWN EXPERIENCE Over Levels of INTERNAL BALANCE

Notes: Marginal Effect and Predictions with 90% CIs adjusting for all other covariates and assuming RE=0; the right y-axis shows the kernel density of observed data for INTERNAL BALANCE.

policy making within the party (as illustrated in the upper right graph). All other things being equal, the probability for the *Enhedslistan* to move left is .64, for both green parties it would be .59, and the likelihood of a left move of the *Labor Party* or the *New Democratic Party* is .56.

Party elites who can largely ignore activists, like in the *CDU* or the *National Party*, however, do not draw their lessons from their own past as the probability of a left and a right move start balancing. A similar picture emerges if the sole information available is the past election result, and members recall that they gained 10% by a right move (or lost an equal amount by moving left). The likelihood to move right is .76 for activist-dominated parties, but decreases with increasing leadership-orientation (lower right graph). The likelihood that the German and Austrian Greens move right is .67, and for *Labor* it is .61; the less constrained Belgian or Dutch party elites in contrast would not take their past result into account, as the odds of a right move converges to 1:1.

A similar pattern emerges when looking at the impact of learning from competitors of the opposite group conditional on the internal life (Figure 5.6). As before, AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP has a positive impact on the log odds, meaning that parties rationally draw their lessons about the effectiveness of their rivals' moves, but the effect decreases, the

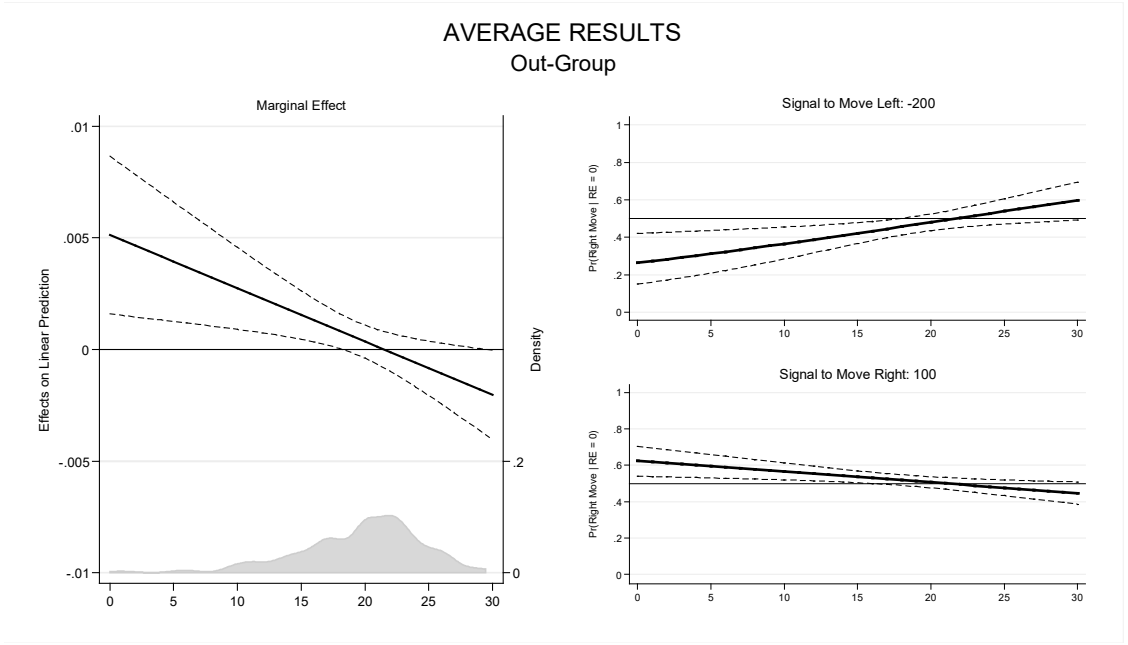

Figure 5.6 Marginal Effect and Predicted Probabilities of AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP Over Levels of INTERNAL BALANCE

Notes: Marginal Effect and Predictions with 90% CIs adjusting for all other covariates and assuming RE=0; the right y-axis shows the kernel density of observed data for INTERNAL BALANCE.

fewer constraints party elites face, before becoming statistically insignificant at a level of around 19. Suppose anew that all party members have only one single piece of information, which is the expected utility after observing rivals of the opposite group strongly signaling to move left (signal = -200). Activist-dominated parties again show a strong inclination to learn from domestic experience as the probability of a right move is as low as .26; in other words, they are more likely to move left than both green parties, for whom the probability of a right move is .37, or the *New Democratic Party* (.42). For leadership-dominated parties the probabilities align, indicating that leader-dominated parties do not take this type of information into account. Similarly, a signal of 100 results in a probability to move right of .63 for activist-dominated parties, of .57 and .53 for parties with a low to medium-level of leadership-domination.

For now, a pattern emerges: in parties where activists constitute a strong "wall of resistance" and have an influence on party policies, party elites have to find a compromise between their strategy and activists' reasoning. Learning from one's own and domestic experience therefore informs the decision where to move to a greater extent compared to more leadership-oriented parties. On the one hand, this may be the result of policy-seeking members that are rather risk-averse, who "force" party elites to refrain from "functional opportunism" and to follow a less adventurous route in order to secure a similar vote share

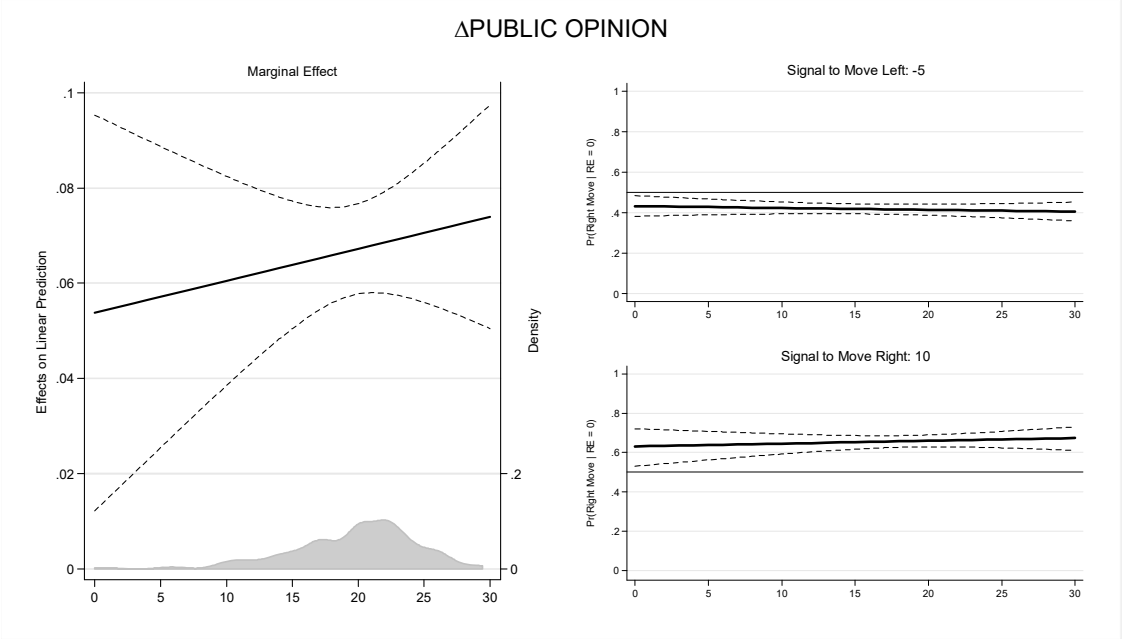

Figure 5.7 Marginal Effect and Predicted Probabilities of ΔPUBLIC OPINION Over Levels of INTERNAL BALANCE

Notes: Marginal Effect and Predictions with 90% CIs adjusting for all other covariates and assuming RE=0; the right y-axis shows the kernel density of observed data for INTERNAL BALANCE.

as the last time if the latter actually would like to move in another direction. On the other hand, based on the limited information that is available activists may either bolster the decision because they arrived at the same conclusion or dissolve a tie in favor of their decision if party elites are undecided. It is also conceivable that in parties where members have more say – and these are especially ecologist and socialist, and to some extent social democratic parties – even party elites are less opportunistic and a bit more policy- than vote-seeking. For them retrospective facts like their own and domestic experience is easily accessible and can be taken as certain, so there is either no reason to change the direction if it worked out last time; or conversely, change the direction, if it resulted in vote losses. This is what one would expect from the learning framework. The question, however, is which kind of information party elites resort to when they are less constrained and may therefore follow a mere vote-seeking strategy?

Figure 5.7 plots the marginal effect and the predicted probabilities for ΔPUBLIC OPINION, which complements the picture. The effect on the log odds is positive, statistically different from zero over the whole range of INTERNAL BALANCE and increases slightly with increasing leadership-orientation. On the one hand, this underlines the importance of winning votes regardless of the internal life. Even for the most policy-oriented activists it must be clear that a political party has to strive for votes in order to gain influence over policies;

otherwise there is no sense in joining a party if e.g. a grassroots movement could serve the same policy goal. On the other hand, this indicates that party elites which face fewer constraints (can) pay more attention to the signal of public opinion. If the median voter shifting 5 units to the left would be the only information available to decision makers, the probability to move left is .57 for activist-dominated parties, and .59 for more leader-oriented parties. Likewise, if the median voter shifts 10 units to the right, the probability to move right is .63 for the *Enhedslistan*, ≈.65 for low to medium levels of INTERNAL BALANCE, and .67 for parties like the Belgian *PS* or Dutch *CDA*.

In sum, these results corroborate the findings of Schumacher et al. (2013) and Meyer (2013) that the internal balance of power within a party conditions its behavior. It also sheds light on the informational environment of party elites: if there is no serious "wall of resistance" stemming from members of the party on the ground, party elites can more easily pursue a vote-maximizing strategy. To this end, even if polls are flawed with uncertainty, public opinion provides more recent and obviously "better" information. On the contrary, activist-dominated parties are more likely to draw their lessons from their own past and take the information obtained from competitors' moves into account. Other than polling, this information is easily accessible for both activists and elites, and can be taken for granted.

If the party gained votes, and in line with Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) *Prospect Theory* that suggests people are rather risk averse in choices involving gains, rationally learning from one's own and domestic experience means to provide "more of the same" which promises to obtain a vote share at least similar to the previous one. Likewise, because rationally processing the information also implies moving in the opposite direction if previous moves brought about losses, learning from one's own experience promises to prevent making the same mistake twice, and learning from domestic experience promises to avoid the mistake competitors already made. This is also in line with the *Prospect Theory* that people are more risk-seeking in choices involving losses. Although I initially argued that this behavior is a result of members of the party on the ground constraining party elites because they are more risk-averse and have a restricted information horizon, the analysis revealed another possible explanation: party elites of more activist-oriented parties may per se be less opportunistic, more policy-seeking and risk-averse than assumed and therefore tend to favor retrospective facts over prospective but uncertain expectations. However, tackling this question needs to be remitted to a completely different research design.

Summing up the findings thus far, three points can be established: first and unsurprisingly, public opinion exerts a strong pull, but "functional opportunism" is more common the more leader-oriented parties are. In addition, especially liberal parties, competing in-between the left- and the right-wing bloc show a strong inclination to follow shifts of the median voter which is usually located close to them anyway. Second, decision makers take the effectiveness of their last move into account, i.e. there is support for the hypothesis that the probability of a right move is higher if the party's last move to the right yielded a vote gain or a left move resulted in losses. Rationally learning from their own experience is even more pronounced when members of the party on the ground have a strong voice in internal politics. Third and finally, parties observe each other. On the one hand, the more general hypothesis that learning from domestic experience informs the decision where to move has to be rejected, i.e. there was no indication that the probability of a right move is higher if posterior beliefs after evaluating competitors' moves signals a right move to be rewarding. Yet, there is a more nuanced answer to this: contrary to the hypothesis that learning from in-group members is more likely while learning from out-group members should not have any impact, and contrary to previous studies, I did not find evidence that decision makers are more eager to learn from members of their own group. Instead, the analysis suggests that party members to some extent irrationally respond to their in-group competitors in order to set themselves apart, but mostly rationally learn from members of the opposite bloc. Learning from out-group members is again more important the more activist-oriented a party is. The deviation might be explained by the fact that neither Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009b) nor Williams (2015) take the effectiveness of rivals' moves into account, although it is obviously irrational to move in accordance with one's rivals if their strategy failed. Yet, on the most abstract level the findings indicate that parties indeed (have to) respond to *any* competitor (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2015).

Up to this point, the focus was solely on the national arena of party competition, but few studies found evidence that "something's going on" beyond the borders of nation states. For this reason, I will now turn to the question of if and in which way learning from regional or global experience affects parties' decisions where to move.

5.2 Beyond Borders – Learning from Regional and Global Experience

Those studies that took a look beyond the national arena can be divided into two strands: in the beginning the focus was on the functional impact economic globalization has on party policy positions (Adams et al. 2009; Haupt 2010; Ward et al. 2011). These aspects may well be integrated in future studies applying the learning framework if one is able to carve out the way considerations of economic feasibility affect the expected utility of a policy move, and the role these considerations play within party elites' informational environment. This, however, is beyond the parsimonious approach of this thesis. Furthermore, as becomes apparent in Kayser's (2007) review, it seems more plausible that economic globalization affects policy positions and moves rather indirectly by way of voters' demands and hence a detour via the domestic arena. In turn, those studies hinting at diffusional impacts are more closely connected to the idea of an information horizon as they depict possible channels of communication, e.g. via membership in Europarties or regular attendance of rank-and-file members at intergovernmental meetings. In this sense, the only study thus far which explicitly addressed the diffusion of party policy positions was conducted by Böhmelt et al. (2016). They found support for their "*Foreign Incumbent Hypothesis* [sic] that political parties respond to the left-right positions of political parties that recently were governing coalition members in foreign countries" (Böhmelt et al. 2016, 407). Aside from looking at policy positions (i.e. levels and not moves), this finding is in line with what one would expect from rational learners taking the effectiveness of policy moves into account. In other words, the probability of a right move should be higher if posterior beliefs after taking regional or global experience into account signal a right move to be preferable over a left move, as they proceed "that parties are motivated to learn from and emulate the policies of successful political parties in other countries" (2016, 407).

Regional Experience and Herd Behavior

Other than their approach, the learning framework is suited to disentangle emulation and rational learning. The results in Table 5.5 indeed show that it is worth distinguishing both concepts. Due to the operationalization of their spatial lag they implicitly assume that being in government is a sufficient indicator for success (Böhmelt et al. 2016, 403), but it may well be the case that a party faced a severe loss but still managed to become part of the government. Considering this, the results here show that parties do *not* rationally learn from the experience of other parties within their family of nation.

Table 5.5 Results – Learning from Regional Experience

	(12a) FE		(12b) RE		(13a) FE		(13b) RE		(14a) FE		(14b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.0278*	2.82	0.0246*	2.49	0.0221+	2.24	0.0202	2.04
					(0.0126)		(0.0122)		(0.0133)		(0.0130)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)					0.0012**	0.12	0.0011**	0.11	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08
					(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
Regional Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0006	-0.06	-0.0004	-0.04	-0.0005	-0.05	-0.0003	-0.03	-0.0006	-0.06	-0.0003	-0.03
	(0.0008)		(0.0008)		(0.0008)		(0.0008)		(0.0009)		(0.0008)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0001	0.01	0.0000	0.00	0.0001	0.01	0.0001	0.01	-0.0000	-0.00	-0.0001	-0.01
	(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0002)		(0.0001)	
EMULATION	0.0112	1.13	0.0130	1.31	0.0120	1.21	0.0138	1.39	0.0167+	1.68	0.0180+	1.81
	(0.0089)		(0.0089)		(0.0090)		(0.0090)		(0.0097)		(0.0096)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.0616**	6.35	0.0647**	6.68
									(0.0052)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0003				0.0006				0.0004	
AIC	1593.75		2016.60		1583.67		2008.88		1408.20		1820.12	
BIC	1609.59		2037.72		1610.07		2040.56		1439.88		1857.08	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			51.48 (56.65)				55.69 (57.00)				66.92 (68.37)	
Hausman: Chi^2			43.04				24.25				2.29	
Hausman: p			0.000				0.000				0.892	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Neither AVERAGE RESULTS nor VARIABILITY OF RESULTS are close to becoming statistically different from zero throughout models M12 to M14, and the percent changes in the odds ratio for a one-unit increase of both independent variables are relatively small. On the contrary, sensitivity analyses of models M12 and M13 revealed that EMULATION is on the edge of becoming statistically significant at the 10% level, and its impact in models M14 is robust across all specifications run as robustness checks. The positive sign implies that parties tend to do what the majority of other parties abroad did – regardless of the effectiveness. The metric of EMULATION is easy: a signal of 1 indicates that in sum one more party moved right than left, so for each additional party moving right the odds for a right move increase by 1.81%. Looking at the standardized coefficients this impact is not marginal: an increase by one standard deviation of EMULATION (REGIONAL), OWN EXPERIENCE or AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC) raises the odds for a right move by 11.08%, 9.22% and 10.99% respectively. In other words, the simple information of whether a majority of other parties abroad moved left or right informs party policy makers' decisions to an equal extent as rational reasoning about the effectiveness of moves observed within the domestic context. From this point of view, domestic politics is indeed no longer domestic, but gathering more profound information and adapting insights gained from abroad to one's own context, i.e. rationally learning from other parties elsewhere, seems to require much more resources.

The effect size also becomes apparent when looking at the predicted probabilities in Figure 5.8. If no other information is available except for the number of movers within a family of nations, the probability to move right is .47 if party members observe that five more parties moved to the left. If only two more parties moved left, the probability is .49. Similarly, if decision makers observe three or ten more parties moving right, *ceteris paribus* the probabilities that they equally choose to move right are .51 and .54 respectively. Despite similarities in cleavage structures, institutions, or electoral and party systems which would facilitate the adaptation, and despite regional information being more recent and abundant compared to the information of the last election, the costs involved in rational learning seem to outweigh the insights gained from experience abroad. Party policy makers do not even apply cognitive biases, namely the representativeness and availability heuristics, which state that bounded rational learners process "what they happen to see at a given moment" (Kahneman 2003, 1469) by referring to experience which is nearby and by overemphasizing initial success. Instead parties adhere to the "climate of opinion in favor of [a] policy" (Meseguer 2009, 28) by simply emulating other parties' shifts abroad.

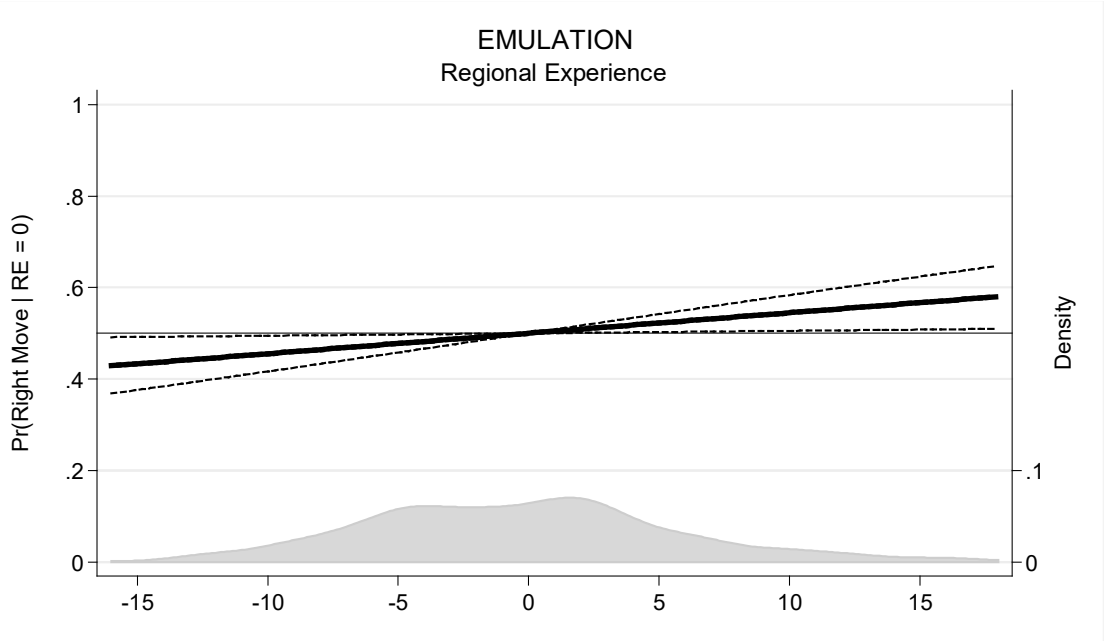

Figure 5.8 Predicted Probabilities for EMULATION (REGIONAL)

Notes: Predictions with 90% CIs based on model M14b adjusting for all other covariates and assuming RE=0 for observed values from minimum to maximum; the right y-axis shows the appropriate kernel density of observed data.

It seems worthwhile to study possible triggers in future research because the trigger may fulfill the above-mentioned criteria in terms of availability and representativeness if it is set e.g. by an exceptional vote gain or loss of a party which gains significance beyond borders.[51] Once in place however, a self-reinforcing process starts, leading to the famous S-shaped curve of numbers of adopters common to the diffusion of innovations. This type of analysis is beyond the focus of this thesis though. EMULATION thus partly explains the spatiotemporal clustering of policy moves which became apparent in the descriptive analysis of the dependent variable and the number of right and left moves in Table 4.2 (page 75). Yet, apart from emulation nothing interesting emerged regarding learning from regional experience; instead the included controls reflecting the insights from the national arena continue to support the previous findings: both OWN EXPERIENCE and AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP as well as ΔPUBLIC OPINION maintain their impact regarding statistical significance and effect size (including the effect of the two outlier parties on OWN EXPERIENCE in model 14b again). This supports the notion that international factors influence party policy positions and moves to some extent, but their direct impact should not be overestimated. This does not preclude an indirect impact by detour via the national elec-

[51] Sensitivity analyses using the Eurobarometer mean voter shift as a measure for ΔPUBLIC OPINION indeed suggest that parties are partly guided by miraculous performance as the coefficient of VARIABILITY OF RESULTS is positive, statistically significant and of discernible effect size.

torate, but this is beyond the focus of the learning framework. The hypothesis that learning from regional experience informs parties' decisions where to move can be rejected though, as there is no indication that the likelihood of a right move increases if the difference in posterior beliefs signals a right move to be rewarding.

The non-result for learning – which is a finding in itself – extends to the question of whether decision makers are more eager to learn from members of their own group or not; for this reason, I relegate the table to Appendix B. Contrary to Böhmelt et al.'s (2016, 407) (non-)finding, that "joint ideological bloc membership could matter, but more likely at the domestic level than internationally", however, there is slight indication that parties tend to emulate not only members of the opposite group but rather members of the own bloc. Membership in Europarties, transnational party federations or regular attendance of rank-and-file members at intergovernmental meetings may not promote exchange of effective strategies but may make decision makers simply aware of other parties' moves – regardless of the results. From this point of view, it seems promising to have a closer look at joint membership in international federations, factions in the European Parliament or similar institutions in future studies which provide institutionalized platforms for an exchange of ideas and strategies. Yet, given that the costs involved in processing information already exceed the utility for learning from regional experience, it is no surprise that the analysis for learning from global experience complements the picture.

The Irrelevance of the Global Level

For fully rational actors experience from the global level would be ideal: together with the information from regional experience the information is abundant, up to date and – in contrast to polling for example – can be taken for sure. Due to similarities in context, the information from regional experience might be less noisy than information from the global level. Taking the diversity of electoral systems, cleavage structures, party systems and the like into account, the global level entails a much higher level of variability in the information, and processing and adapting the information to the national context might involve even more costs than from the regional level. Yet, this still would not outweigh the advantages if party policy makers were indeed fully rational actors who "would scan all available information regardless of its origin and interpret all of it in exactly the same manner, drawing the same conclusions about the relative merits of different policies and marginalizing prior beliefs about policies in the light of mounting evidence" (Meseguer 2005, 72). The results for learning from global experience in Table 5.6, however, indicate that decision makers are not fully rational learners.

Table 5.6 Results – Learning from Global Experience

	(15a) FE		(15b) RE		(16a) FE		(16b) RE		(17a) FE		(17b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.0284*	2.88	0.0254*	2.57	0.0226+	2.28	0.0206	2.08
					(0.0126)		(0.0122)		(0.0133)		(0.0130)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)					0.0012**	0.12	0.0011**	0.11	0.0009*	0.09	0.0008+	0.08
					(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
Global Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0012	0.12	0.0011	0.11	0.0013	0.13	0.0012	0.12	0.0021	0.21	0.0019	0.19
	(0.0015)		(0.0014)		(0.0015)		(0.0015)		(0.0016)		(0.0016)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0004	0.04	0.0004	0.04	0.0005+	0.05	0.0005+	0.05	0.0003	0.03	0.0003	0.03
	(0.0003)		(0.0003)		(0.0003)		(0.0003)		(0.0003)		(0.0003)	
EMULATION	0.0031	0.31	0.0029	0.29	0.0039	0.39	0.0037	0.37	0.0006	0.06	0.0001	0.01
	(0.0050)		(0.0049)		(0.0050)		(0.0050)		(0.0054)		(0.0053)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.0614**	6.33	0.0643**	6.65
									(0.0053)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0009				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1594.13		2016.60		1583.39		2008.28		1409.20		1821.56	
BIC	1609.97		2037.72		1609.79		2039.96		1440.88		1858.52	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			50.72 (57.06)				54.38 (58.79)				67.61 (69.12)	
Hausman: Chi^2			2066.22				9.58				7.99	
Hausman: p			0.000				0.088				0.239	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Throughout models M15 to M17 the coefficients for AVERAGE RESULTS, VARIABILITY OF RESULTS and even EMULATION are statistically not different from zero. The only exception is VARIABILITY OF RESULTS in models M16a and M16b. Sensitivity analysis revealed that this result is not very robust across several model specifications, though. Beyond statistical significance, at least for the sample the positive sign is counterintuitive to the expectation that the expected utility increases with decreasing variability. It was hypothesized that the greater the posterior beliefs about the variability of results of a right move compared to left moves, the less likely the decision to move right will be (and hence a negative sign). The positive sign in contrast implies that party members are rather guided by "miraculous performance" because a high variance comes about if at roughly the same time one or a few parties extraordinarily gain but also remarkably lose.[52] This again suggests that an analysis of possible triggers of the diffusion of party policies at the international level seems worthwhile because landslide victories, like Tony Blair's in 1997, or defeats often evoke attention beyond borders and even regions and may initiate a process of party policy diffusion.

The results for learning from in-group or out-group members resemble the results for the regional level in that decision makers do not substantially differ in their search for information (that is why the results are relegated to Appendix B again), and – if at all – they only slightly privilege information from in-group members. Beyond statistical significance and effect size this repeatedly suggests that due to membership in international party organizations or due to other institutionalized channels of communication (rudimentary) information from own members might be accessible a bit more easily compared to information from other parties. Finally, it is worth noting that the "controls" from the national arena still retain their impact and roughly their effect size, which puts further confidence in the findings presented thus far.

Summing up the evidence presented, non-findings rather than robust conclusions can be listed for learning from regional or global experience: first, party elites do *not* rationally learn from either regional or global experience. For this reason, both hypotheses – that the probability of a right move should be higher if learning from regional or global experience signals a right move to be rewarding – can be rejected. The costs involved in gathering more substantial information than the mere number of movers and the costs for adapting and "localizing" the information obviously outweigh the possible insights gained from abundant experience. Second, decision makers disregard the question of effectiveness; in other words, they drop rationality and emulate other parties abroad, especially within their

[52] This result is backed by the sensitivity analysis applying a different measure for ΔPUBLIC OPINION.

own family of nations. They thus "comply" with the predominant ideological climate which at times suggests to move right, at times to move left. This indicates that domestic party competition is indeed no longer domestic (Kayser 2007), but that the impact of the global level should not be overemphasized. Finally, if at all, there are some vague clues of parties gathering not only information from parties of the opposite bloc but rather from members of their own group which may be due to easier access. This suggests that it is worth looking at possible triggers of the self-reinforcing process of diffusion *or* emulation, but this remains beyond the focus of this thesis. Before finalizing the analysis by looking at some fully-fledged models, there is still one supplementary question left regarding the regional and global level: if parties emulate each other, is the impact conditional on the internal life of a party?

Emulating Other Parties Abroad – The Stifling Effect of the Internal Life

Because emulating other parties within the same family of nations emerged as the sole factor of the global level having a robust impact on parties' decisions where to move, I will pick up the former analysis of the conditioning effect of a party's internal life, and add EMULATION (REGIONAL) to the model. The "Ockham's razor"-style model thus encompasses OWN EXPERIENCE, AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC), ΔPUBLIC OPINION and EMULATION (REGIONAL) alongside the corresponding interactive terms with INTERNAL BALANCE. As before, the regression table is consigned to Appendix B and the focus is on the effect on the linear prediction and selected values of the signal over levels of INTERNAL BALANCE. For illustrative purposes, recall that the Austrian and German Greens are activist-oriented (≈10), the Australian *Labor Party* or the Canadian *New Democratic Party* are located in the middle (≈15), while the German *CDU* and New Zealand's *National Party* (≈20), or the Belgian *PS* and the Dutch *CDA* (≈25) represent rather leader-oriented and -dominated parties respectively.

The left graph in Figure 5.9 shows the increasing impact of emulating other parties abroad over levels of leadership-orientation. The effect on the log odds is negative but statistically insignificant up to a level of medium leadership-orientation. It turns positive and is statistically different from zero at the 10% level for values greater than ≈20. In other words, less constrained party elites are more likely to emulate other parties within their own family of nations, while activist-dominated parties do not adhere to the "climate of opinion". This becomes even more evident when looking at the predicted probabilities shown in the graphs on the right-hand side for two selected signals.

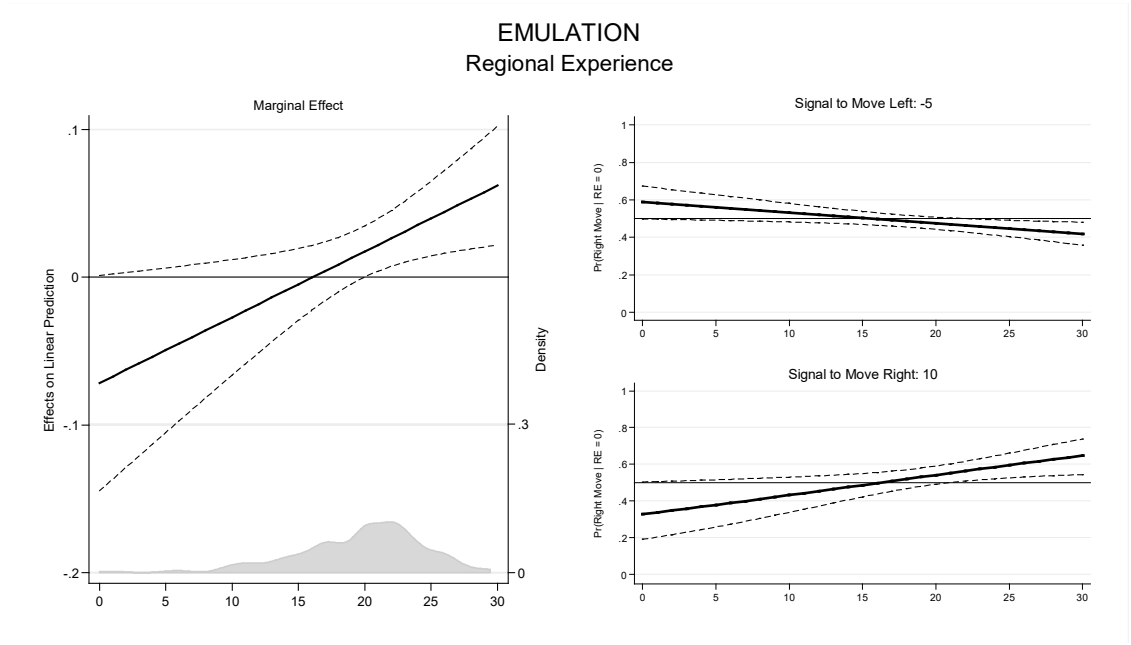

Figure 5.9 Marginal Effect and Predicted Probabilities of EMULATION (REGIONAL) Over Levels of INTERNAL BALANCE

Notes: Marginal Effect and Predictions with 90% CIs adjusting for all other covariates and assuming RE=0; the right y-axis shows the kernel density of observed data for INTERNAL BALANCE.

Given that no other information is available except for the signal that five more parties moved left (than right) within one's own family of nations, parties like the *Enhedslistan*, the Greens, the *Labor Party* or the *New Democratic Party* are equally likely to move right or move left, i.e. the available information does not inform the decision where to move (one may even question if they gather this information at all, or at least, if party members are aware of it). Yet, *ceteris paribus* the probability to move left is .53 for more leader-oriented parties like the *CDU*, .55 for leader-dominated parties like the *PS* or the *CDA*, and .57 for the Portuguese *Partido Comunista* on the other side of the spectrum. Reversely, if party elites receive the signal that on average there has been a swing to the right and ten more parties moved right than left the likelihood that activist-oriented parties emulate the swing is undetermined. The probability that more leader-oriented parties assimilate to the predominant ideological climate within their own family of nations, though, ranges from .54 to .60 for medium to strong types of leadership-orientation respectively, and up to .65 for leader-dominated parties.

This finding is intriguing per se, but it seamlessly fits into the picture previously sketched: activist-oriented parties tend to favor easily accessible information which can be taken for sure and rest their decision where to move first and foremost on retrospective evaluations of their own and domestic experience. The less constrained party elites are, the more prone

they are to opportunistic behavior favoring more recent information like public opinion or the regional "climate of opinion". Calling to mind the rank-ordering of party families regarding their internal life, it is fair to say that – generally speaking – left-wing parties are rather "introverted" when gathering information, while right-wing parties are more "outgoing". This is broadly in line with Adams et al.'s findings about left parties, and their conclusion neatly resembles the presented results:

> "[W]e find that parties of the left are markedly different from their competitors: They appear unresponsive to short-term public opinion shifts and less responsive to short-term changes in the global economy. […] These findings support the arguments of Przeworski and Sprague (1986) and Kitschelt (1994), that parties of the left are ideologically inflexible relative to their competitors due to their policy-seeking orientation, ties to social groups, and organizational structures." (2009, 630)

To summarize the analysis up to this point, party policy makers are not rational learners with respect to observed experience from the regional or the global level – not even bounded rational learners. Instead they tend to emulate other parties of their own family of nations which entails a spatiotemporal clustering of policy moves and a self-reinforcing process leading to the famous S-shaped curve in the number of adopters known from studies of diffusion of innovations. The analyses suggested, however, that analyzing possible triggers is desirable in future studies in order to understand the occasional shifts of the "climate of opinion" within families of nations. Furthermore, it complemented the picture about the conditioning effect of a party's internal life and thus supports the works of Schumacher et al. (2013) and Meyer (2013) that party organizations have to be taken seriously to better understand party dynamics.

To finalize the empirical analysis all jigsaw pieces are put together in a comprehensive model (models M18), and afterwards in a parsimonious model, which solely features those independent variables that have been found to be (very) robust across the presented models and sensitivity analyses. Overall, Table 5.7 does not entail any surprises and puts further confidence in the findings presented thus far as the main contenders maintain their impact.

OWN EXPERIENCE is always on the edge of becoming statistically significant at the 10% level in models M18, but once the Australian *Greens* and the Canadian *Conservative Party* are excluded from the analysis, its impact remains robust, statistically different from zero and with discernible effect size. Throughout all models presented thus far the odds for a right move are about 2 to 2.5% higher for a gain of one percentage point of votes under a right move (or an equal vote loss after moving left).

Table 5.7 Results – Comprehensive and Parsimonious Models of the Framework

	(18a) FE		(18b) RE		(19a) FE		(19b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.0213	2.15	0.0201	2.03	0.0221+	2.23	0.0202	2.04
	(0.0134)		(0.0131)		(0.0133)		(0.0130)	
Local Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	-0.0008+	-0.08	-0.0005	-0.05				
	(0.0005)		(0.0005)					
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	-0.0081	-0.81	-0.0189	-1.87				
	(0.0419)		(0.0415)					
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	0.0009*	0.09	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08
	(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	0.0054	0.54	-0.0021	-0.21				
	(0.0352)		(0.0354)					
Regional Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0006	-0.06	-0.0004	-0.03				
	(0.0009)		(0.0008)					
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	-0.0001	-0.01	-0.0001	-0.01				
	(0.0002)		(0.0001)					
EMULATION	0.0151	1.52	0.0172+	1.74	0.0168+	1.70	0.0180+	1.82
	(0.0102)		(0.0101)		(0.0097)		(0.0096)	
Global Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0013	0.13	0.0012	0.12				
	(0.0017)		(0.0016)					
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0004	0.04	0.0004	0.04				
	(0.0003)		(0.0003)					
EMULATION	0.0013	0.13	0.0006	0.06				
	(0.0056)		(0.0055)					
ΔPUBLIC OPINION	0.0618**	6.38	0.0644**	6.65	0.0616**	6.35	0.0646**	6.67
	(0.0053)		(0.0053)		(0.0052)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0004				0.0004	
AIC	1415.40		1829.01		1404.63		1816.33	
BIC	1478.76		1897.65		1425.75		1842.73	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			67.47 (69.47)				67.26 (68.30)	
Hausman: Chi^2			8.85				6.21	
Hausman: p			0.716				0.184	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP (DOMESTIC) appears to be statistically significant, but the effect is – once again – not very robust across alternative model specifications. The negative sign implies though, that parties try to set themselves apart from members of their own bloc by behaving "differently". The effect size of AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC) is modest at first sight, as a one-unit change in the independent variable increases the odds for a right move by roughly .08 to .10% throughout all models; yet, the effect is very robust, statistically different from zero most often at the 5% or even the 1% level and not trivial if one looks at the standardized coefficients, as the metric of AVERAGE RESULTS is tricky to grasp due to the weighing. Within a comprehensive setting, EMULATION (REGIONAL) maintains its effect too: for every additional party moving right within a family of nations the odds for a right move increase by ≈1.5 to 1.8%. "Functional opportunism" (ΔPUBLIC OPINION) unsurprisingly emerged as the main opponent to rational learning as a one-unit shift of the median voter to the right raises the odds for a right move by about 6.4 to 6.8%. Looking at the standardized coefficients for Models M18 and M19 no clear pattern emerges regarding the importance of learning from parties' own experience, out-group competitors from the domestic context or emulating other parties abroad. The increase in the odds of a right move raising each variable by one standard deviation is roughly of equal amount. Altogether, the models presented throughout the empirical analysis are able to correctly predict two out of three observed policy moves, which can be seen as reasonable success considering that the framework conceptually mirrored Achen's (2002) ART approach by solely looking at learning, emulation and chasing public opinion and further relied on a parsimonious definition of effectiveness by referring to the most obvious ingredients, namely vote gains and losses.

5.3 Discussion

The thesis took its point of departure from the fact that despite initial calls to focus on "party leader's informational environment and/or the perceived risks associated with changing policy direction" (Adams et al. 2004, 609) for a better understanding of party dynamics, subsequent studies analyzing party policy moves produced a broad range of stimuli that seemed to affect *how* parties behave. Yet, they undertheorized *why* parties decide the way they do, especially when it comes to conflicting signals decision makers might receive. Therefore, the learning framework adapted from Meseguer's work (2005; 2006; 2009) about the diffusion of public policies seemed especially suited to both provide a mi-

cro-foundation for how parties arrive at "rational choices" where to move *and* explain how conflicting stimuli are processed.

Generally, the learning framework has proved itself to be applicable to party policy moves reasonably well, particularly if one takes its formalized and parsimonious approach into account. At the same time, it was easy to tie the framework to the most important findings of the empirical studies, namely, that parties tend to move in accordance with public opinion, observe each other, are affected by "globalization" (in the broadest sense) and that their behavior is conditional on their internal life. Simultaneously, key aspects of the "New Spatial Theory" and the "Integrated Dynamic Theory" like uncertainty, basic decision rules or the internal life of a party have been integrated as well. Because of the way the formal model of learning and policy choices is spelled out, it comes much closer to the informational environment of party policy makers than previous studies, and helps to better understand *why* and *when* parties move to the right, and when to the left. For this reason, the pilot experiment to adapt the framework and to test the potential of this approach for explaining party policy moves succeeded.

When looking at the empirical findings, learning can be regarded as a robust factor informing party policy makers' decisions where to move. Yet, it is just one explanatory variable among others as "functional opportunism" by chasing public opinion and emulating other parties abroad emerged as persuasive opponents to rational learning. A friendlier reading though is that despite controlling for the most important pull factor, shifts of the median voter, rationally learning from one's own experience and from domestic experience of rivals of the opposite bloc turned out to be robust and statistically significant factors affecting party members' decision to either move right or left. This is even more remarkable given the wide range of model specifications including different settings of the independent variables, fixed effects or random intercepts, or ordinary logit or multilevel analysis run as robustness checks. All considered, the analysis found support for some of the findings already present in the literature about party policy moves, but also revealed some notable exceptions. On the one hand, this puts confidence in the results – both of this thesis, and of existing studies; on the other hand, it shows that there is still much research needed for to better understand party behavior in general and policy moves in particular.

The learning framework thus provides a new and promising *theoretical* approach to be *empirically* applied and refined in future studies because it starts from very few basic assumptions which are all in line with previous research and spells out decision making in a formalized

and rigorous fashion. Yet, it is open for new insights if one is able to "translate" the determinants of interest (or the existing ones) into more concrete signals actors can process. This would move even existing studies, which practically assume a functional and symmetrical impact of the focal variable, closer to the informational environment of party policy makers.

The theoretical model of learning and policy choices in conjunction with the empirical results produced some interesting answers to the initial questions guiding the analysis. One part of the research question of this thesis was *why* parties move to the right or to the left. The short answer is: because party policy makers are rational actors and choose to move in the direction which promises the highest expected utility. The long answer is: members of the party make "rational choices", but this does not entail that they are fully rational learners. From a Downsian perspective "functional opportunism" is rational, too, but it is a different kind of rationality than observing policy moves in the past and elsewhere, drawing lessons and updating initial beliefs about the effectiveness of alternatives. The former is based on prospective expectations flawed with uncertainty, the latter is retrospective, evidence-based and the information can be taken as certain. The fact, that parties also tend to simply emulate other parties abroad and thus adhere to the regional "climate of opinion" – possibly due to the availability and representativeness heuristic – shows that the decision where to move is a blend of rational behavior, beliefs and intuition. As such, party policy makers are better characterized by "psychological rationality" rather than "economic rationality". The latter predicts that policy makers choose the solution which maximizes their utility (Simon 1993, 395–96), whereas the former assumes that because of limits in knowledge and limited abilities to compute information, people resort to "satisficing decisions": they oversimplify the problem to the extent that it can be processed within the bounds of computational resources and information available to them. By optimizing the approximate problem parties produce satisficing solutions (Simon 1993, 397–98). To lead the long answer back to the initial question of why parties behave the way they do: acting in an uncertain environment with limited resources the mixture of prospective expectations, evidence-based learning, and beliefs and intuition leads to satisficing decisions.

The second part of the research question asked *when* do parties move to the left and when to the right. The short answer is: when available information signals that either a left move or a right move is rewarding. The long answer summarizes the main findings of the empirical analysis regarding the question of which sources of information party elites exploit. Comparing the x-standardized coefficients from the main models, Table 5.8 depicts a rank-order of the sources of information party policy makers resort to.

Table 5.8 Rank-Order of Information Party Policy Makers Resort To

Priority	M9a	M11b Liberals	M11b Other	M14b	M18b	M19b	*Activist-Oriented Parties*	*Leadership-Oriented Parties*
1st	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	*PO*	*PO*
2nd	Out-Group	Own (-)	Own	Emu (R)	Out-Group	Emu (R)	*Own*	*Emu (R)*
3rd	In-Group (-)		Out-Group	Out-Group	Emu (R)	Out-Group	*Out-Group*	
4th	Own			Own	Own	Own		

Notes: - indicates behavior counterintuitive to the expected rationality; the model number refers to the corresponding model as presented in the text; empirical rank-order based on x-standardized coefficients; Own=OWN EXPERIENCE, Out-Group=AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC), In-Group=AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP (DOMESTIC), Emu (R)=EMULATION (REGIONAL), and PO=ΔPUBLIC OPINION.

At the most general level regardless of the inherent uncertainty and contrary to the NST's and IDT's claim that polls do not provide guidance, "electoral preferences and support" are the main driving forces of party policy moves. On the one hand, this calls for "disaggregating" the informational substance of public opinion in future research in order to bring the analysis even closer to the information horizon of party policy makers. On the other hand, votes are still the ultimate currency and goal of parties, as they determine if a party will gain access to office and/or influence over policies, while at the same time ensuring the economic survival of the organization if public subsidies depend on the number of votes polled. Rationally learning from out-group competitors and one's own experience often switch ranks although there is a slight tendency for decision makers to favor easily accessible but more abundant data from the domestic context over the single piece of information from their own past. Emulating other parties within their family of nations (regional experience) emerged as the second opponent to rational learning having a slightly higher impact than learning from out-group members at times. This indicates that party competition is indeed no longer domestic and decision makers are aware of what happens around them; yet, the costs involved in gathering information, rationally processing a vast amount of information and "localizing" them seem to outweigh the insights which could be gained. Instead party members rather resort to "satisficing" solutions by simply looking at what the majority of other parties did, regardless of whether it paid out in terms of votes or not.

The analysis further revealed that the type of party alters the way observed experience informs the decision: competing in between both blocs, liberal parties are much more

inclined to public opinion and ensure their distinctiveness by setting themselves apart from their competitors. Regarding the accompanying question of whether the internal life conditions the way learning influences policy choices, the analysis revealed that public opinion is taken into account by party elites heading either an activist-oriented or a leadership-dominated party, but is a bit more pronounced for leadership-oriented ones. Parties with a larger "wall of resistance" where members of the party on the ground have a strong voice in internal politics prioritize retrospective information, while less constrained party elites (can) more easily follow a vote-seeking strategy preferring prospective expectations and adhering to the regional "climate of opinion". Unfortunately, within the limits of this thesis and the research design applied it remains unanswered if this is the result of risk-averse and policy-driven activists urging party elites to refrain from an "opportunistic" strategy and to follow a less adventurous route, or if this is the result of the compromise between elites and activist. Based on their restricted information horizon activists may bolster the decision because they arrived at the same conclusion or they may dissolve a tie in favor of their decision if party elites were undecided. Yet, a third explanation emerged: because parties where members have more say are mostly ecologist, socialist, and to some extent social democratic parties, their party elites may per se be less opportunistic favoring retrospective facts over prospective but uncertain expectations.

Depending on the strength of the signals party policy makers receive they intensify or balance each other, but they need a stronger signal to move left from their own experience, out-group competitors at the domestic level or many parties moving left in the region to eventually override a signal from public opinion to move right. Ultimately, from the point of the formal model of learning and policy choices, the actual decision to move in one direction or the other is the amalgamation of prospective expectations, posterior beliefs about effectiveness, and intuition and – like a balance scale – sometimes points to the right, sometimes to the left.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to put forward a new approach for explaining party policy moves which is theoretically sound and well-grounded in the previous literature as well as empirically applicable and relevant for the understanding of party dynamics. The point of origin was the rather simple and intuitive assumption that party policy makers learn about the effectiveness of policy moves by updating their prior beliefs in light of observed experience, and finally arrive at the decision to move in the most promising direction. In order to learn about the effectiveness of available options, they evaluate policy moves in the past and elsewhere in terms of vote gains or losses. Their own experience combined with observing competitors, public opinion and other parties abroad have been found to provide the information decision makers employ when choosing to move either right or left. Therefore, the thesis adds to existing knowledge about party policy moves in particular and succeeded in answering the research question, why and when do parties move to the right, and when to the left.

As such there is hope that it does not remain "yet another study about party policy moves", because the empirical analysis in conjunction with the formal model of learning and policy choices moved the focus much closer to the "party leader's informational environment and/or the perceived risks associated with changing policy direction" (Adams et al. 2004, 609) which is key for understanding party dynamics. The thesis showed that party members make "rational choices", but they are neither fully rational actors nor fully rational learners; instead they are better characterized by "psychological rationality" which implies that they rather arrive at *satisficing* decisions given the information they are able to process. The analysis also gave allusion to the sources of information parties employ, and there has been some indication that, depending on the context, decision makers differ in their perception of information and the weight they give to different sources.

Considering that many empirical studies focused merely on single factors and both theoretical approaches to merge existing knowledge failed to explain decision making in a rigorous fashion, the actor-centered approach adapted from Meseguer's (2005; 2006; 2009) analyses of diffusion of public policies provides a micro-foundation *why* and *when* parties choose to move. Therefore, it is directly in line with Montero and Gunther's (2002, 22–23) suggestion that "[a]nalyses of policy stands or electoral appeals can only be based upon a study of decisions made by political elites, acting within particular historical contexts and weighing conflicting considerations of trade-offs among […] various dimensions of party competi-

tion". At the same time, the framework is also linked to the broader literature about parties in general by taking party organizations seriously. Rather than atheoretically discriminating mainstream and niche parties, I agree with Schumacher et al.'s claim "that party organization may have more explanatory power than the mainstream/niche dichotomy" (2013, 470) as the results indicate that it is fruitful to "disaggregate" a party into three faces – or at least two. Due to different incentives, access to information and the logic of action they have to obey, the party on the ground and the party central office/party in public office are best viewed in terms of a "veto player" and an "agenda setter": the former conditions the behavior of the party elites. In sum, the formal model of learning and policy choice hence produced new insights, opened a new perspective on party policy moves from an actor-centered point of view, while at the same time maintaining its capability to tie in with the previous literature.

Avenues for Future Research

First and foremost, the framework thus fills a research gap currently present in the literature about party policy positions and moves but hopefully stands to the test to fruitfully guide and stipulate future research.

First, it is well-suited to be *extended* by re-evaluating existing studies: on the one hand, the sole focus on vote gains/losses has been a parsimonious starting point, but the concept of "effectiveness" may be extended by including information about the signal party voters and supporters send (Schwennicke 2007; Adams and Ezrow 2009), or the way considerations of economic feasibility affect the expected utility of a policy move (Adams et al. 2009; Haupt 2010). On the other hand, it would be interesting to see if the framework "travels" to other operationalizations of the dependent variable, namely the magnitude of change or party positions, i.e. levels. In principle, the framework seems to be applicable to the question of whether rational learning informs party elites' decision to either obscure or clarify (Lacewell 2015), or (de-) emphasize some issues (van de Wardt 2014; Ward et al. 2015) too.

Second, the framework may be *refined*: the way the signals are technically estimated allows for addressing questions regarding the importance of time and timing: one may assess the importance of "recentness" of the information (Somer-Topcu 2009), but one may also look at the effects of timing. I assumed that all information available up to the focal election is taken into account, but admitting that writing party manifestos is a time-consuming endeavor "which typically takes place over a two–three year period during which party-affiliated research departments and committees draft sections of this manuscript, which are

then circulated for revisions and approval upward to party elites and downward to activists" (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009b, 832), the timing of elections at the regional or global level might alter whether the information is exploited or not. Curvilinear relationships resembling a normal distribution or an S-shaped function come to mind which could be reinterpreted as the weight attached to the information. It further allows testing different weights parties may have beyond their vote share. This touches upon the question of importance or visibility of parties. Intuitively, the US-American *Democrats* and *Republicans* emanate far beyond their borders.

Third, "learning" might be *reinterpreted*: although I presented arguments for applying a non-informative prior, one can think of using the past result as the prior. At the same time, instead of treating public opinion as the major opponent to rational learning, it may be integrated as a source of information used to update the prior beliefs. Returning to cross-country surveys for measuring shifts in public opinion comes at the cost of a reduced scope but is a bit closer to the informational environment than the median voter applied in this thesis. Circumventing the endogeneity problem is a nice side effect. Likewise, "midterm elections" like those to the European Parliament (Somer-Topcu and Zar 2014) or elections at the federal level might be included as further sources of information.

Finally, alongside the empirical analysis the framework raised some issues worth addressing in future research: the self-reinforcing process underlying emulation of other parties abroad must have its root at some point, and uncovering possible triggers might add a great deal to understanding diffusional processes at the party level. Similarly, quantitative research dealing with the importance of possible channels of communication like joint membership in Europarties is still in its infancy. And lastly, the macro-quantitative research design implied a rather remote view on parties, both in terms of the assumed behavior of party elites as well as the "veto player potential" of members of the party on the ground. Carefully conducted case studies seem appropriate to complement the argument that party policy makers learn while activists condition their behavior. Yet, to conclude the thesis, it is fair to once again quote Meseguer, from whom the framework was originally adapted: "Note that my analysis has been deductive but also exploratory. Starting with a specific hypothesized model of policy learning and policy choice the question asked was how well this model predicts what we observe" (Meseguer 2009, 217). She proceeds: "I addressed this question with a particular model of learning that allowed me to test the role of rational learning [in party policy moves]. This empirical strategy provided new insights, and above all, posed new questions and challenges that should motivate additional research" (Meseguer 2009, 231). There is nothing more to add.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Alternative Left-Right Indices – A Short Review

In addition to the RILE of the Manifesto Project itself (Budge and Klingemann 2001), three major contributions[53] have been made to infer left-right policy positions from Manifesto data: the "vanilla approach" (Gabel and Huber 2000), Franzmann and Kaiser's (2006) country-specific index and the time- and country-specific LR by Jahn (2011).

Gabel and Huber (2000, 96) start out from the assumption that "no basis exists for establishing, *a priori* [sic], either the policy categories that define left-right ideology or the manner in which left-right ideology varies over time and space". Applying principal factor analysis, they inductively identify a "super-issue" then entitled left-right. Despite concerns over whether the dimension actually captures ideas central to left or right ideology, the problem is that factor analysis is sensitive to the input, i.e. depending on the sample of countries, parties or actually manifestos, the final party scores (even for the past) would differ each time new data becomes available. This is probably why this approach is not widely used nowadays.

Franzmann and Kaiser's (2006, 166) starting point is the "axiom […] that left issues will generally be emphasized by left-wing parties and vice versa". Furthermore, they distinguish between positional and valence issues. The former are issues where parties take (opposing) views or favor a certain alternative of action, while the latter are issues where all parties more or less agree. Applying party dummy-regressions they first identify country-specific positional issues and then sort them out based on the assumption that "a party to the right of the ideological center will emphasize certain right position issues and vice versa for parties on the left" (Franzmann and Kaiser 2006, 171). Summing up the identified issues, they finally arrive at left-right party positions. By returning to the classification of party families, they thus introduce bias and favoritism through the backdoor (Jahn 2011, 747; Meyer 2013, 39; Jahn 2014, 298). Franzmann (2015) justified this approach, however, as being "a cause indicator", i.e. "favouring the extension of welfare state expenditure causes a party to be seen as being Left", while the RILE and Jahn's LR are "effect indicators" where "favouring welfare state expansion is the effect of a party being left" (Franzmann 2015, 823). Apart from these concerns the data unfortunately have never been updated to keep pace with the Manifesto updates. The strength of Franzmann and Kaiser's index is its country-specific nature, but exactly this strength becomes cumbersome when analyzing party policy moves which call for cross-national comparability. This is also true for Jahn's "LR".

[53] Unfortunately, there is an increasing tendency in public policy studies to atheoretically pick up a few categories out of the 56 included in the Manifesto data to be later used as an explanatory variable, but these are mostly derived ad-hoc.

Jahn's (2011) point of origin is Bobbio's (1996) work on the political-philosophical foundations of left and right. Jahn proceeds by carefully selecting ten categories of the Manifesto coding scheme which relate to Bobbio's remarks before empirically determining the radicalness of each issue. This time-invariant "LR_core" is then used as a dependent variable in subsequent regressions to identify additional, country- *and* time-specific issues which belong to the left-right dimension. Assessing the radicalness of these issues, too, the final party scores are derived by multiplying the frequency of each issue with its radicalness score (Jahn 2011, 750–56). One advantage of this approach are its "by-products" which no other approach can offer because it allows for assessing the importance of the left-right (core) dimension and for analyzing the changing meaning of left and right by looking at the additional statements (Jahn 2014), but also for estimating the cohesion of political parties (Jahn and Oberst 2012). With some inside knowledge about the genesis and the aim of this approach, the LR is well-suited for analyzing partisan impacts on public policy, but again, comparability across space and time is more important when analyzing policy moves. The LR_core would satisfy this criterion, but Jahn himself stated that "[f]or all countries with an uninterrupted time-series from around 1950-2011 the LR_core declines in importance when parties refer to the left-right dimension", whereas "the additional issues have been more frequently mentioned over time" (Jahn 2014, 299). From this point of view, it is questionable if changes on the LR_core are meaningful. It seems interesting though to apply the learning framework in future research addressing questions regarding the emergence of additional statements – some issues may functionally pop up as a result of national problem pressure, but it seems worthwhile to explore the idea of party elites learning from other parties (abroad) that including a new issue might bring an electoral advantage. Yet, for this thesis I refrain from pursuing time- and/or country-specific left-right indices and opt for the "standard" in the policy move literature, the RILE.

Appendix B: Additional Tables

Table A1 Models M3b, M6b, M9a, M9b, M14b and M17b Excluding the Australian *Greens* and the Canadian *CP*

	(3b) RE		(6b) RE		(9a) FE		(9b) RE		(14b) RE		(17b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.0222+	2.24	0.0221+	2.24	0.0224+	2.27	0.0210	2.12	0.0217+	2.19	0.0221+	2.23
	(0.0130)		(0.0130)		(0.0134)		(0.0131)		(0.0131)		(0.0131)	
Domestic Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS			0.0003	0.03								
			(0.0004)									
EMULATION			-0.0049	-0.48								
			(0.0253)									
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP					-0.0009+	-0.09	-0.0006	-0.06				
					(0.0005)		(0.0005)					
EMULATION: IN-GROUP					-0.0060	-0.60	-0.0167	-1.65				
					(0.0417)		(0.0412)					
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP					0.0009*	0.09	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08
					(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP					0.0103	1.03	0.0026	0.26				
					(0.0350)		(0.0351)					
Regional Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS									-0.0002	-0.02		
									(0.0008)			
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS									-0.0000	-0.00		
									(0.0001)			
EMULATION									0.0174+	1.75		
									(0.0096)			

	(3b) RE		(6b) RE		(9a) FE		(9b) RE		(14b) RE		(17b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
Global Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS											0.0020	0.20
											(0.0016)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS											0.0003	0.03
											(0.0003)	
EMULATION											-0.0003	-0.03
											(0.0053)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION	0.0667**	6.89	0.0664**	6.86	0.0638**	6.59	0.0662**	6.85	0.0662**	6.84	0.0660**	6.82
	(0.0054)		(0.0054)		(0.0054)		(0.0054)		(0.0054)		(0.0054)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$	0.0004		0.0004				0.0004		0.0004		0.0004	
AIC	1807.04		1810.45		1398.45		1810.22		1808.44		1809.56	
BIC	1822.87		1836.84		1430.11		1847.17		1845.38		1846.50	
Observations	1447		1447		1447		1447		1447		1447	
Correctly Classified	67.54		67.33		66.85		66.85		67.33		67.54	

Notes: The model number refers to the corresponding model in the main text; raw coefficients with standard error in parentheses; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01; ΔOR displays the percent change in odds ratios for a one-unit change of the independent variable; FE indicates fixed effects, RE random intercept logistic regression; classification based on the assumption of FE=0 or RE=0.

Table A2 Models M18 and M19 Excluding the Australian *Greens* and the Canadian *CP*

	(18a) FE		(18b) RE		(19a) FE		(19b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.0230+	2.33	0.0216	2.18	0.0239+	2.42	0.0218+	2.20
	(0.0135)		(0.0132)		(0.0134)		(0.0131)	
Domestic Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	-0.0009+	-0.09	-0.0005	-0.05				
	(0.0005)		(0.0005)					
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	-0.0101	-1.00	-0.0206	-2.04				
	(0.0421)		(0.0416)					
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	0.0009*	0.09	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08	0.0008+	0.08
	(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	0.0052	0.52	-0.0025	-0.25				
	(0.0354)		(0.0355)					
Regional Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0005	-0.05	-0.0002	-0.02				
	(0.0009)		(0.0009)					
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	-0.0000	-0.00	-0.0000	-0.00				
	(0.0002)		(0.0002)					
EMULATION	0.0141	1.42	0.0165	1.66	0.0161+	1.62	0.0174+	1.76
	(0.0103)		(0.0102)		(0.0097)		(0.0096)	
Global Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0014	0.14	0.0012	0.12				
	(0.0017)		(0.0016)					
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0003	0.03	0.0004	0.04				
	(0.0003)		(0.0003)					
EMULATION	0.0005	0.05	-0.0000	-0.00				
	(0.0056)		(0.0055)					
ΔPUBLIC OPINION	0.0636**	6.57	0.0660**	6.82	0.0633**	6.54	0.0662**	6.84
	(0.0054)		(0.0054)		(0.0053)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0008				0.0004	
AIC	1405.92		1817.21		1395.11		1804.55	
BIC	1469.25		1885.81		1416.22		1830.94	
Observations	1447		1447		1447		1447	
Correctly Classified	67.40		67.40		67.61		67.61	

Notes: See

Table A1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A3 Results – Learning and the Conditioning Effect of a Party's Internal Life

	"Ockham's razor" I	"Ockham's razor" II
	β (se)	β (se)
INTERNAL BALANCE	-0.0004	0.0000
	(0.0030)	(.)
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.1158+	0.1141+
	(0.0685)	(0.0688)
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)	0.0051*	0.0053*
	(0.0021)	(0.0022)
EMULATION (REGIONAL)		-0.0716
		(0.0443)
ΔPUBLIC OPINION	0.0538*	0.0514*
	(0.0253)	(0.0253)
INTERNAL BALANCE * OWN EXPERIENCE	-0.0046	-0.0046
	(0.0033)	(0.0033)
INTERNAL BALANCE * AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)	-0.0002*	-0.0002*
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
INTERNAL BALANCE * EMULATION (REGIONAL)		0.0045*
		(0.0022)
INTERNAL BALANCE * ΔPUBLIC OPINION	0.0007	0.0008
	(0.0013)	(0.0013)
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$	0.0008	0.0009
AIC	1565.34	1562.49
BIC	1606.44	1613.86
Observations	1258	1258

Notes: Raw coefficients with standard error in parentheses; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A4 Results – Learning from Regional Experience (In-Group and Out-Group)

	(A1a) FE		(A1b) RE		(A2a) FE		(A2b) RE		(A3a) FE		(A3b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.0282*	2.86	0.0247*	2.50	0.0228+	2.31	0.0206	2.08
					(0.0126)		(0.0123)		(0.0133)		(0.0131)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)					0.0012**	0.12	0.0011**	0.11	0.0008+	0.08	0.0007+	0.07
					(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
Regional Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0002	-0.02
	(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0007)		(0.0006)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: IN-GROUP	0.0001	0.01	0.0001	0.01	0.0001	0.01	0.0001	0.01	0.0001	0.01	0.0001	0.01
	(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)	
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	0.0202	2.04	0.0221	2.24	0.0196	1.98	0.0218	2.20	0.0268+	2.72	0.0289*	2.93
	(0.0136)		(0.0136)		(0.0137)		(0.0136)		(0.0146)		(0.0145)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	-0.0003	-0.03	-0.0003	-0.03	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0004	-0.04	-0.0003	-0.03
	(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0006)		(0.0006)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	0.0000	0.00	-0.0000	-0.00	0.0000	0.00	-0.0000	-0.00	0.0000	0.00	0.0000	0.00
	(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)	
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	0.0012	0.12	0.0031	0.31	0.0033	0.33	0.0050	0.50	0.0042	0.42	0.0049	0.49
	(0.0144)		(0.0142)		(0.0145)		(0.0143)		(0.0155)		(0.0152)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.0616**	6.35	0.0647**	6.68
									(0.0052)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0003				0.0006				0.0004	
AIC	1598.59		2020.98		1588.71		2013.52		1411.81		1823.88	
BIC	1630.27		2057.94		1630.95		2061.04		1459.33		1876.68	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			51.14 (56.93)				54.51 (58.17)				67.82 (69.47)	
Hausman: Chi^2			17.07				2.17				13.72	
Hausman: p			0.009				0.975				0.133	

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A5 Results – Learning from Global Experience (In-Group and Out-Group)

	(A4a) FE		(A4b) RE		(A5a) FE		(A5b) RE		(A6a) FE		(A6b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.0291*	2.95	0.0259*	2.63	0.0235+	2.38	0.0215+	2.17
					(0.0126)		(0.0123)		(0.0133)		(0.0131)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)					0.0012**	0.12	0.0011**	0.11	0.0008+	0.08	0.0007+	0.07
					(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	
Global Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	-0.0003	-0.03	-0.0001	-0.01	-0.0002	-0.02	0.0001	0.01	-0.0002	-0.02	-0.0001	-0.01
	(0.0011)		(0.0011)		(0.0011)		(0.0011)		(0.0012)		(0.0012)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: IN-GROUP	0.0003	0.03	0.0003	0.03	0.0003	0.03	0.0004+	0.04	0.0002	0.02	0.0003	0.03
	(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)	
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	0.0081	0.81	0.0076	0.76	0.0096	0.96	0.0089	0.89	0.0074	0.75	0.0070	0.70
	(0.0082)		(0.0082)		(0.0083)		(0.0083)		(0.0089)		(0.0088)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	0.0012	0.12	0.0009	0.09	0.0012	0.12	0.0009	0.09	0.0019	0.19	0.0016	0.16
	(0.0011)		(0.0011)		(0.0011)		(0.0011)		(0.0012)		(0.0012)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	0.0001	0.01	0.0000	0.00	0.0001	0.01	0.0000	0.00	0.0001	0.01	-0.0000	-0.00
	(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0003)		(0.0002)	
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	-0.0016	-0.16	-0.0015	-0.15	-0.0018	-0.18	-0.0014	-0.14	-0.0060	-0.60	-0.0063	-0.63
	(0.0086)		(0.0085)		(0.0087)		(0.0085)		(0.0093)		(0.0091)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.0615**	6.34	0.0646**	6.67
									(0.0053)		(0.0053)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0000				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1598.50		2020.38		1587.89		2012.19		1413.41		1824.86	
BIC	1630.18		2057.34		1630.13		2059.71		1460.93		1877.66	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified	51.69				55.69				68.09			
Hausman: Chi^2	3.89				5.41				10.64			
Hausman: p	0.692				0.713				0.302			

Notes: See Table 5.1 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A6 Models M1 to M3 with $\boldsymbol{x}$-Standardized Coefficients

	(1a) FE		(1b) RE		(2a) FE		(2b) RE		(3a) FE		(3b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.1246*	13.26	0.1095*	11.57					0.0995+	10.46	0.0902	9.44
	(0.0544)		(0.0531)						(0.0576)		(0.0565)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION					0.8111**	125.05	0.8475**	133.38	0.8071**	124.13	0.8446**	132.70
					(0.0678)		(0.0687)		(0.0679)		(0.0687)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0003				0.0004				0.0004	
AIC	1587.88		2011.21		1408.49		1819.77		1407.48		1819.20	
BIC	1593.16		2021.77		1413.77		1830.33		1418.04		1835.04	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified in p%	52.72				66.44				67.40			
Hausman: Chi²	1.54				11.73				10.18			
Hausman: p	0.215				0.001				0.006			

Notes: Standardized coefficients with standard error in parentheses; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01; ΔOR displays the percent change in odds ratios for a one-standard deviation increase; FE indicates fixed effects, RE random intercept logistic regression; Hausman statistics refer to the corresponding FE and RE models; classification based on the assumption of FE=0 or RE=0.

Table A7 Models M4 to M6 with ***x***-Standardized Coefficients

	(4a) FE		(4b) RE		(5a) FE		(5b) RE		(6a) FE		(6b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.1261*	13.44	0.1106*	11.70	0.0989+	10.40	0.0901	9.43
					(0.0546)		(0.0532)		(0.0576)		(0.0566)	
Domestic Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0898	9.39	0.0866	9.04	0.0893	9.34	0.0860	8.98	0.0316	3.21	0.0461	4.72
	(0.0551)		(0.0531)		(0.0553)		(0.0532)		(0.0585)		(0.0563)	
EMULATION	-0.0873+	-8.36	-0.0918+	-8.77	-0.0898+	-8.59	-0.0935+	-8.93	0.0128	1.29	-0.0078	-0.77
	(0.0524)		(0.0527)		(0.0525)		(0.0528)		(0.0569)		(0.0565)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.8063**	123.97	0.8407**	131.80
									(0.0686)		(0.0691)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0000				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1589.74		2011.75		1586.34		2009.38		1411.13		1822.50	
BIC	1600.30		2027.59		1602.18		2030.50		1432.25		1848.90	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			52.52				53.82				67.26	
Hausman: Chi^2			0.59				0.73				8.30	
Hausman: p			0.743				0.866				0.081	

Notes: See Table A6 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A8 Models M7 to M9 with ***x***-Standardized Coefficients

	(7a) FE		(7b) RE		(8a) FE		(8b) RE		(9a) FE		(9b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.1204*	12.80	0.1080*	11.41	0.0897	9.38	0.0853	8.91
					(0.0551)		(0.0535)		(0.0582)		(0.0569)	
In-Group												
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0695	-6.71	-0.0448	-4.38	-0.0631	-6.12	-0.0405	-3.97	-0.1068+	-10.13	-0.0647	-6.26
	(0.0562)		(0.0529)		(0.0566)		(0.0531)		(0.0608)		(0.0560)	
EMULATION	-0.0630	-6.11	-0.0668	-6.46	-0.0659	-6.38	-0.0700	-6.76	-0.0050	-0.50	-0.0200	-1.98
	(0.0533)		(0.0532)		(0.0534)		(0.0532)		(0.0570)		(0.0563)	
Out-Group												
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.1666**	18.12	0.1466**	15.79	0.1637**	17.79	0.1451**	15.62	0.1178*	12.51	0.1062+	11.20
	(0.0555)		(0.0541)		(0.0556)		(0.0542)		(0.0590)		(0.0576)	
EMULATION	-0.0558	-5.42	-0.0570	-5.54	-0.0561	-5.46	-0.0563	-5.47	0.0175	1.77	0.0057	0.57
	(0.0525)		(0.0531)		(0.0526)		(0.0532)		(0.0563)		(0.0565)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.8062**	123.93	0.8390**	131.40
									(0.0687)		(0.0691)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0003				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1585.86		2010.29		1583.03		2008.18		1408.44		1822.47	
BIC	1606.98		2036.69		1609.43		2039.86		1440.12		1859.43	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified		53.76				54.31				67.13		
Hausman: Chi^2		22.03				11.09				19.01		
Hausman: p		0.000				0.050				0.004		

Notes: See Table A6 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A9 Models M10 and M11 with ***x***-Standardized Coefficients

	(10a) FE		(10b) RE		(11a) FE		(11b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE								
Others	0.1666**	18.13	0.1543*	16.69	0.1593*	17.27	0.1506*	16.25
	(0.0638)		(0.0624)		(0.0644)		(0.0628)	
Liberals	-0.2667+	-23.41	-0.2644+	-23.23	-0.3120*	-26.81	-0.2991*	-25.85
	(0.1493)		(0.1477)		(0.1534)		(0.1503)	
In-Group								
AVERAGE RESULTS								
Others					-0.1016	-9.66	-0.0451	-4.41
					(0.0747)		(0.0673)	
Liberals					-0.1740	-15.97	-0.1609	-14.86
					(0.1122)		(0.1082)	
EMULATION								
Others					0.0143	1.44	-0.0015	-0.15
					(0.0664)		(0.0652)	
Liberals					-0.0515	-5.02	-0.0573	-5.57
					(0.1157)		(0.1160)	
Out-Group								
AVERAGE RESULTS								
Others					0.1288*	13.74	0.1163+	12.33
					(0.0626)		(0.0610)	
Liberals					-0.0023	-0.23	-0.0050	-0.50
					(0.1905)		(0.1858)	
EMULATION								
Others					0.0128	1.29	0.0040	0.40
					(0.0614)		(0.0615)	
Liberals					0.0085	0.85	-0.0187	-1.85
					(0.1457)		(0.1478)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION								
Other	0.7592**	113.66	0.7940**	121.22	0.7553**	112.83	0.7865**	119.58
	(0.0724)		(0.0730)		(0.0733)		(0.0735)	
Liberals	1.1380**	212.05	1.1964**	230.82	1.1724**	222.99	1.2218**	239.34
	(0.1940)		(0.1981)		(0.1974)		(0.2007)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0008				0.0009	
AIC	1401.37		1812.94		1408.32		1822.24	
BIC	1422.49		1839.34		1471.68		1890.88	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			66.85				67.68	
Hausman: Chi²			11.46				1.54	
Hausman: p			0.022				1.000	

Notes: See Table A6 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A10 Models M12 to M14 with $\boldsymbol{x}$-Standardized Coefficients

	(12a) FE		(12b) RE		(13a) FE		(13b) RE		(14a) FE		(14b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.1212*	12.88	0.1074*	11.34	0.0964+	10.12	0.0882	9.22
					(0.0548)		(0.0534)		(0.0581)		(0.0569)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)					0.1622**	17.61	0.1460**	15.72	0.1138+	12.06	0.1043+	10.99
					(0.0554)		(0.0541)		(0.0588)		(0.0575)	
Regional Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0458	-4.48	-0.0299	-2.95	-0.0400	-3.92	-0.0240	-2.37	-0.0437	-4.27	-0.0248	-2.45
	(0.0618)		(0.0592)		(0.0622)		(0.0595)		(0.0668)		(0.0634)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0365	3.71	0.0189	1.91	0.0419	4.28	0.0222	2.24	-0.0212	-2.10	-0.0263	-2.60
	(0.0594)		(0.0593)		(0.0602)		(0.0596)		(0.0684)		(0.0671)	
EMULATION	0.0663	6.85	0.0761	7.91	0.0708	7.33	0.0806	8.40	0.0982+	10.32	0.1051+	11.08
	(0.0527)		(0.0527)		(0.0530)		(0.0529)		(0.0569)		(0.0567)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.7999**	122.54	0.8394**	131.51
									(0.0681)		(0.0688)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0002				0.0006				0.0004	
AIC	1593.75		2016.68		1583.67		2008.93		1408.20		1820.23	
BIC	1609.59		2037.80		1610.07		2040.61		1439.88		1857.19	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			50.65				55.20				67.33	
Hausman: Chi^2			38.91				24.86				1.72	
Hausman: p			0.000				0.000				0.943	

Notes: See Table A6 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A11 Models M15 to M17 with x-Standardized Coefficients

	(15a) FE		(15b) RE		(16a) FE		(16b) RE		(17a) FE		(17b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE					0.1236*	13.16	0.1109*	11.73	0.0984+	10.34	0.0902	9.44
					(0.0548)		(0.0534)		(0.0580)		(0.0568)	
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP (DOMESTIC)					0.1668**	18.15	0.1497**	16.14	0.1169*	12.40	0.1063+	11.21
					(0.0556)		(0.0542)		(0.0589)		(0.0576)	
Global Experience												
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0458	4.68	0.0464	4.75	0.0496	5.08	0.0507	5.20	0.0793	8.26	0.0782	8.13
	(0.0565)		(0.0557)		(0.0568)		(0.0559)		(0.0607)		(0.0599)	
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0835	8.71	0.0821	8.55	0.0933+	9.77	0.0915+	9.58	0.0691	7.16	0.0688	7.12
	(0.0555)		(0.0550)		(0.0560)		(0.0553)		(0.0606)		(0.0595)	
EMULATION	0.0339	3.45	0.0301	3.06	0.0419	4.28	0.0380	3.88	0.0063	0.63	-0.0014	-0.14
	(0.0538)		(0.0535)		(0.0543)		(0.0539)		(0.0581)		(0.0577)	
ΔPUBLIC OPINION									0.7974**	121.98	0.8358**	130.66
									(0.0682)		(0.0689)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0009				0.0003				0.0004	
AIC	1594.13		2016.60		1583.39		2008.23		1409.20		1821.48	
BIC	1609.97		2037.72		1609.79		2039.91		1440.88		1858.44	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			50.86				54.51				67.47	
Hausman: Chi^2			-0.56				2.49				8.58	
Hausman: p			1.000				0.778				0.199	

Notes: See Table A6 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A12 Models M18 and M19 with ***x***-Standardized Coefficients

	(18a) FE		(18b) RE		(19a) FE		(19b) RE	
	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR	β (se)	ΔOR
OWN EXPERIENCE	0.0927	9.71	0.0878	9.18	0.0963+	10.11	0.0885	9.25
	(0.0585)		(0.0571)		(0.0581)		(0.0569)	
Domestic Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS: IN-GROUP	-0.1029+	-9.77	-0.0612	-5.94				
	(0.0609)		(0.0562)					
EMULATION: IN-GROUP	-0.0111	-1.11	-0.0261	-2.58				
	(0.0575)		(0.0568)					
AVERAGE RESULTS: OUT-GROUP	0.1223*	13.01	0.1105+	11.68	0.1148+	12.17	0.1052+	11.09
	(0.0593)		(0.0579)		(0.0587)		(0.0575)	
EMULATION: OUT-GROUP	0.0087	0.87	-0.0033	-0.33				
	(0.0569)		(0.0571)					
Regional Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS	-0.0467	-4.56	-0.0257	-2.53				
	(0.0702)		(0.0663)					
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	-0.0270	-2.66	-0.0307	-3.03				
	(0.0689)		(0.0676)					
EMULATION	0.0891	9.32	0.0990+	10.40	0.0991+	10.42	0.1054+	11.12
	(0.0603)		(0.0600)		(0.0569)		(0.0567)	
Global Experience								
AVERAGE RESULTS	0.0500	5.13	0.0489	5.01				
	(0.0641)		(0.0633)					
VARIABILITY OF RESULTS	0.0702	7.27	0.0717	7.43				
	(0.0614)		(0.0602)					
EMULATION	0.0141	1.42	0.0042	0.42				
	(0.0608)		(0.0601)					
ΔPUBLIC OPINION	0.8029**	123.21	0.8367**	130.87	0.7998**	122.51	0.8382**	131.21
	(0.0690)		(0.0693)		(0.0678)		(0.0686)	
Random Part $\sqrt{\varphi}$			0.0004				0.0004	
AIC	1415.40		1829.07		1404.63		1816.45	
BIC	1478.76		1897.71		1425.75		1842.85	
Observations	1451		1451		1451		1451	
Correctly Classified			67.47				67.20	
Hausman: Chi^2			12.99				4.92	
Hausman: p			0.370				0.296	

Notes: See Table A6 for further explanations; levels of significance: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Table A13 List of Parties Included in the Analysis

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
Australia								
Greens	63110	Australian Greens	Ecology party	2	2010q3	2013q3	1	1
ALP	63320	Australian Labor Party	Social Democratic	25	1951q2	2013q3	16	9
DLP	63330	Democratic Labor Party	Social Democratic	7	1961q4	1975q4	3	4
LPA	63620	Liberal Party of Australia	Conservative	25	1951q2	2013q3	13	12
NPA	63810	National Party of Australia	Agrarian	21	1951q2	2013q3	11	10
Austria								
Grüne	42110	Die Grünen	Ecology party	6	1994q4	2008q3	3	3
SPÖ	42320	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Social Democratic	17	1956q2	2008q3	8	9
FPÖ	42420	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Liberal	13	1956q2	2008q3	8	5
ÖVP	42520	Österreichische Volkspartei	Christian Democratic	17	1956q2	2008q3	7	10
*Belgium**								
Ecolo	21111	Écologistes Confédérés pour l'Organisation de Luttes Originales (w)	Ecology party	4	1999q2	2010q2	2	2
Groen	21112	Groen! (f)	Ecology party	4	1999q2	2010q2	2	2
BSP/PSB	21320	Belgische Socialistische Partij/Parti Socialiste Belge	Social Democratic	8	1950q2	1974q1	3	5
SP	21321	Socialistische Partij (f)	Social Democratic	8	1985q4	2010q2	4	4
PS	21322	Parti Socialiste (w)	Social Democratic	8	1985q4	2010q2	5	3
PVV/PLP	21420	Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang/Parti de la Liberté et du Progrès	Liberal	6	1950q2	1968q1	3	3
VLD	21421	Vlaamse Liberalen en Demokraten (f)	Liberal	11	1977q2	2010q2	5	6
PRL	21422	Parti Réformateur Libéral (w)	Liberal	6	1977q2	1991q4	2	4
MR	21426	Mouvement Réformateur (w)	Liberal	3	2003q2	2010q2	2	1
PSC/CVP	21520	Parti Social Chrétien/Christelijke Volkspartij	Christian Democratic	5	1950q2	1965q2	2	3
CVP	21521	Christelijke Volkspartij (f)	Christian Democratic	12	1974q1	2010q2	8	4
PSC	21522	Parti Social Chrétien (w)	Christian Democratic	12	1974q1	2010q2	6	6

** (w) Walloon party, (f) Flemish party*

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
Canada								
NDP	62320	New Democratic Party	Social Democratic	20	1953q3	2011q2	10	10
LP	62420	Liberal Party of Canada	Liberal	20	1953q3	2011q2	10	10
PCP	62620	Progressive Conservative Party	Conservative	16	1953q3	2000q4	7	9
CP	62623	Conservative Party of Canada	Conservative	2	2008q4	2011q2	1	1
Denmark								
VS	13210	Venstresocialisterne	Communist	6	1973q4	1984q1	2	4
DKP	13220	Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti	Communist	15	1950q3	1984q1	7	8
EL	13229	Enhedslisten – De Rød-Grønne	Communist	4	2001q4	2011q3	2	2
SF	13230	Socialistisk Folkeparti	Communist	18	1966q4	2011q3	8	10
SD	13320	Socialdemokraterne	Social Democratic	24	1950q3	2011q3	13	11
CD	13330	Centrum-Demokraterne	Social Democratic	9	1977q1	1998q1	4	5
RV	13410	Det Radikale Venstre	Liberal	24	1950q3	2011q3	13	11
V	13420	Venstre, Danmarks liberale parti	Liberal	24	1950q3	2011q3	11	13
DU	13421	De Uafhængige	Liberal	4	1960q4	1968q1	2	2
KrF	13520	Kristeligt Folkeparti	Christian Democratic	12	1975q1	2005q1	4	8
KF	13620	Det Konservative Folkeparti	Conservative	24	1950q3	2011q3	14	10
DF	13720	Dansk Folkeparti	Nationalist	3	2005q1	2011q3	2	1
Finland								
VIHR	14110	Vihreä Liitto	Ecology party	4	1999q1	2011q2	2	2
SKDL	14221	Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto	Communist	11	1951q3	1987q1	6	5
VAS	14223	Vasemmistoliitto	Communist	4	1999q1	2011q2	1	3
SSDP	14320	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue	Social Democratic	13	1951q3	2011q2	7	6
SKL	14520	Kristillisdemokraatit	Christian Democratic	10	1975q3	2011q2	3	7
KK	14620	Kansallinen Kokoomus	Conservative	10	1951q3	2011q2	6	4
SK	14810	Suomen Keskusta	Agrarian	13	1951q3	2011q2	6	7
SMP	14820	Soumen Maaseudun Puolue	Agrarian	5	1975q3	1991q1	2	3

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
France								
VEC	31110	Les Verts	Ecology party	3	2002q2	2012q2	1	2
PCF	31220	Parti Communiste Français	Communist	15	1956q1	2012q2	10	5
PS	31320	Parti Socialiste	Social Democratic	15	1956q1	2012q2	7	8
MRP	31521	Mouvement Républican Populaire	Christian Democratic	2	1967q1	1968q2	1	1
GAUL	31621	Gaullists	Conservative	11	1968q2	2012q2	5	6
UDF	31624	Union pour la Démocratie Française	Conservative	3	2002q2	2012q2	1	2
Germany								
90/Greens	41113	Bündnis '90/Die Grünen	Ecology party	7	1990q4	2013q3	4	3
PDS	41221	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus	Communist	5	1998q3	2013q3	3	2
SPD	41320	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Social Democratic	16	1957q3	2013q3	6	10
FDP	41420	Freie Demokratische Partei	Liberal	16	1957q3	2013q3	8	8
CDU/CSU	41521	Christlich-Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union	Christian Democratic	16	1957q3	2013q3	7	9
Greece								
KKE	34210	Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas	Communist	5	1981q4	2009q4	4	1
PASOK	34313	Panellinio Sosialistikó Kínima	Social Democratic	11	1981q4	2009q4	6	5
ND	34511	Néa Dēmokratía	Christian Democratic	7	1981q4	2009q4	3	4
Iceland								
VGF	15111	Vinstrihreyfingin - grænt framboð	Ecology party	3	2007q2	2013q2	1	2
AB	15220	Alþýðubandalagið	Communist	4	1953q2	1995q2	2	2
A	15320	Alþýðuflokkurinn	Social Democratic	14	1953q2	1995q2	6	8
S	15328	Samfylkingin	Social Democratic	3	2007q2	2013q2	1	2
Sj	15620	Sjálfstaedisflokkurinn	Conservative	19	1953q2	2013q2	9	10
F	15810	Framsóknarflokkurinn	Agrarian	11	1953q2	2013q2	3	8

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
Ireland								
Greens	53110	Comhaontas Glas	Ecology party	3	2002q2	2011q1	2	1
LP	53320	Páirtí Lucht Oibre	Social Democratic	17	1954q2	2011q1	9	8
PD	53420	Progressive Democrats	Liberal	4	1992q4	2007q2	3	1
FG	53520	Fine Gael	Christian Democratic	17	1954q2	2011q1	9	8
FF	53620	Fianna Fáil	Conservative	17	1954q2	2011q1	10	7
Italy								
RC	32212	Rifondazione Comunista	Communist	3	1996q2	2006q2	1	2
DS	32220	Democratici di Sinistra	Communist	13	1953q2	2001q2	7	6
PSI	32320	Partito Socialista Italiano	Social Democratic	6	1953q2	1992q2	4	2
PSDI	32330	Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano	Social Democratic	5	1958q2	1992q2	2	3
PRI	32410	Partito Republicano Italiano	Liberal	6	1972q2	1992q2	3	3
PLI	32420	Partito Liberale Italiano	Liberal	10	1953q2	1992q2	5	5
PPI	32520	Partido Populare Italiano	Christian Democratic	12	1953q2	1996q2	7	5
UDC	32530	Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro	Christian Democratic	2	2008q2	2013q1	1	1
FI	32610	Forza Italia	Conservative	2	2001q2	2006q2	1	1
AN	32710	Alleanza Nazionale	Nationalist	13	1958q2	2006q2	6	7
LN	32720	La Lega Nord	Nationalist	4	2001q2	2013q1	3	1
Luxembourg								
GLEI/GAP	23113	Greng Lëscht Ekologesch Initiativ/Di Grëng Alternativ	Ecology party	3	2004q2	2013q4	1	2
KPL/PCL	23220	Kommunistesch Partei Lëtzebuerg/Parti Communiste Luxembourgeois	Communist	8	1954q2	1989q2	4	4
LSAP/POSL	23320	Lëtzebuerger Sozialistesch Arbechterpartei/Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Luxembourgeois	Social Democratic	14	1951q2	2013q4	7	7
DP/PD	23420	Demokratesch Partei/Parti Démocratique	Liberal	12	1959q1	2013q4	7	5
CSV/PCS	23520	Chrëschtlech Sozial Volleкspartei/Parti Populaire Chrétien Social	Christian Democratic	14	1951q2	2013q4	7	7

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
Netherlands								
GL	22110	Groen Links	Ecology party	6	1998q2	2012q3	3	3
SP	22220	Socialistische Partij	Communist	3	2006q4	2012q3	1	2
PvdA	22320	Partij van de Arbeid	Social Democratic	19	1952q2	2012q3	9	10
D66	22330	Democraten '66	Social Democratic	13	1972q4	2012q3	7	6
VVD	22420	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	Liberal	19	1952q2	2012q3	9	10
CDA	22521	Christen-Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democratic	10	1982q3	2012q3	8	2
KVP	22522	Katholieke Volkspartij	Christian Democratic	7	1952q2	1972q4	3	4
ARP	22523	Anti-Revolutionaire Partij	Christian Democratic	7	1952q2	1972q4	2	5
CHU	22525	Christelijk Historische Unie	Christian Democratic	3	1967q1	1972q4	2	1
CU	22526	Christen Unie	Christian Democratic	3	2006q4	2012q3	1	2
New Zealand								
Greens	64110	Green Party of Aotearoa	Ecology party	3	2005q3	2011q4	2	1
Labour	64320	Labour Party	Social Democratic	21	1951q3	2011q4	11	10
ACT	64420	ACT New Zealand	Liberal	4	2002q3	2011q4	2	2
NP	64620	National Party	Conservative	21	1951q3	2011q4	8	13
Norway								
NKP	12220	Norges Kommunistiske Parti	Communist	2	1953q4	1957q4	1	1
SV	12221	Sosialistisk Venstreparti	Communist	11	1969q3	2009q3	7	4
DNA	12320	Det norske Arbeiderparti	Social Democratic	15	1953q4	2009q3	9	6
V	12420	Venstre	Liberal	15	1953q4	2009q3	8	7
KrF	12520	Kristelig Folkeparti	Christian Democratic	15	1953q4	2009q3	3	12
H	12620	Høyre	Conservative	15	1953q4	2009q3	7	8
SP	12810	Senterpartiet	Agrarian	15	1953q4	2009q3	6	9

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
Portugal								
PEV	35110	Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes"	Ecology party	3	2005q1	2011q2	1	2
UDP	35210	União Democrática Popular	Communist	5	1979q4	1987q3	4	1
PCP	35220	Partido Comunista Português	Communist	12	1979q4	2011q2	7	5
PS	35311	Partido Socialista Portuguêsa	Social Democratic	12	1979q4	2011q2	5	7
PSD	35313	Partido Social Democráta	Social Democratic	12	1979q4	2011q2	9	3
CDS/PP	35520	Partido Popular	Christian Democratic	12	1979q4	2011q2	6	6
PPM	35710	Partido Popular Monárquico	Nationalist	2	1980q4	1983q2	1	1
Spain								
PCE-IU	33220	Izquierda Unida	Communist	9	1982q4	2011q4	4	5
PSOE	33320	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	Social Democratic	9	1982q4	2011q4	2	7
CDS	33512	Centró Democrático y Social	Christian Democratic	2	1989q4	1993q2	1	1
PP	33610	Partido Popular	Conservative	8	1986q2	2011q4	3	5
CiU	33611	Convergència i Unió	Conservative	7	1989q4	2011q4	2	5
Sweden								
Greens	11110	Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Ecology party	5	1994q3	2010q3	4	1
VP	11220	Vänsterpartiet	Communist	19	1952q3	2010q3	11	8
SdaP	11320	Socialdemokratistiska Arbetarepartiet	Social Democratic	19	1952q3	2010q3	7	12
FP	11420	Folkpartiet Liberalerna	Liberal	19	1952q3	2010q3	9	10
KdS	11520	Kristdemokratiska Samhällspartiet	Christian Democratic	4	1998q3	2010q3	2	2
MSP	11620	Moderata Samlingspartiet	Conservative	19	1952q3	2010q3	9	10
CP	11810	Centerpartiet	Agrarian	19	1952q3	2010q3	10	9

Party	Code	Name	Party Family	Obs.	First obs.	Last obs.	No. of right moves	No. of left moves
Switzerland								
GPS/PES	43110	Grüne Partei der Schweiz/Parti Ecologiste Suisse	Ecology party	5	1995q4	2011q4	2	3
SPS/PSS	43320	Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz/Parti Socialiste Suisse	Social Democratic	15	1955q4	2011q4	6	9
FDP/PRD	43420	Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei der Schweiz/Parti Radical-Démocratique Suisse	Liberal	15	1955q4	2011q4	7	8
CVP/PDC	43520	Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz/Parti Démocrate-Chrétien Suisse	Christian Democratic	15	1955q4	2011q4	8	7
EVP/PEP	43530	Evangelische Volkspartei der Schweiz/Parti Populaire Evangelique Suisse	Christian Democratic	4	1999q4	2011q4	2	2
SVP/UDC	43810	Schweizerische Volkspartei/Union Démocratique d u Centre	Agrarian	14	1959q4	2011q4	6	8
UK								
Labour	51320	Labour Party	Social Democratic	16	1951q4	2010q2	9	7
Liberals	51420	Liberal Party	Liberal	11	1951q4	1987q2	6	5
Conserva-tives	51620	Conservative Party	Conservative	16	1951q4	2010q2	8	8
US								
DEM	61320	Democratic Party	Social Democratic	15	1956q4	2012q4	8	7
REP	61620	Republican Party	Conservative	15	1956q4	2012q4	7	8