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Abstract	Do political parties respond to shifts in the preferences of their supporters or to shifts in the mean voter position? Also, do electoral systems mediate these crucial citizen-party linkages? The central finding of this chapter is that electoral systems do condition these effects. Parties in proportional systems are systematically responsive to the mean voter position while parties in disproportional systems do not display the same tendency. Additionally, neither system induces parties to systematically respond to their supporters.

Electoral Systems and Party Responsiveness

Lawrence Ezrow

Whether parties respond to the mean voter position or to their core supporters is a question that is at the core of understanding how political representation occurs.[1] Do political parties respond to the ideological shifts of their supporters or to those of the mean voter (or to neither)? Previous theoretical and empirical research highlights the importance of the mean or median voter's policy preference as the starting point for democratic representation (Downs 1957; Powell 2000; Huber and Powell 1994; McDonald and Budge 2005; Stimson et al. 1995; Erikson et al. 2002; Adams et al. 2004, 2006). An alternative and equally compelling vision of policy representation emphasizes the policy preference of the *mean party supporter* in explaining party-citizen linkages (Dalton 1985; Wessels 1999; Weissberg 1978). The first model of political representation is referred to as the *general electorate model*, and the second model as the *partisan constituency model*.

With respect to the general electorate model and the partisan constituency model, the following questions are addressed: First, are shifts in the preference of the mean voter position in the general electorate accompanied by roughly corresponding policy shifts of the parties in a given party system? Alternatively, are shifts in the preferences of the party's supporters accompanied by roughly similar shifts in the party's position? Finally, are these citizen-party linkages mediated by the electoral system in which parties compete?

The empirical analyses examine political parties in 15 Western European democracies from 1973 to 2003.[2] The results reported below support the following three conclusions. First, in systems that feature proportional electoral systems, parties are systematically responsive to the mean voter position. Second, parties in disproportional systems do *not* respond systematically to the preferences of the

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[1]This chapter is based on Ezrow et al. (2011) and Ezrow (2010: Chapter 6). I thank Catherine de Vries, Marco Steenbergen, and Erica Edwards for their ideas, and allowing me to use them here.

[2]The following fifteen countries are included: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

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mean voter position. Finally, neither system induces parties to respond to their supporters.[3] (On first glance, these conclusions may seem alarming for disproportional systems in which parties are neither responsive to their supporters or to the mean voter position. However, as I discuss later, this finding can easily be explained if party strategies vary within these systems, perhaps due to valence considerations).

These conclusions, however, come with several caveats. First, due to measurement issues (discussed below), the empirical analyses are limited to 15 party systems in Western democracies. While the scope of the study thereby covers a significant portion of the population we are attempting to understand (i.e. stable and industrialized democracies), it nevertheless warrants caution about extrapolating these conclusions to political systems outside of the study.

Second, the fluidity of more elegant two-dimensional spatial mappings in a smaller number of countries (see, e.g., Schofield 1997; Dow 2001) has been sacrificed for unidimensional measurements of ideology in order to widen the geographical scope of this study. Nevertheless, the analysis of Left–Right policy responsiveness is still illuminating. With respect to this issue, Ian Budge and Michael McDonald comment that "while the issues involved in Left–Right divisions do not cover the whole spectrum of democratic politics, few would deny they are at the centre of them" (Budge and McDonald 2006, p. 453). There is complementary research that supports these authors' remarks, and suggests that the Left-Right dimension captures an important and meaningful component of political competition across the national settings and time period that are under review here (see, e.g., Powell 2000; Huber and Powell 1994; Powell and Vanberg 2000; Huber 1989; McDonald and Budge 2005). AU1

The third caveat is that while it is assumed that parties *respond* to public preferences, an equally plausible alternative is that parties shape or 'cue' the preferences of the electorate (see Steenbergen, De Vries, and Edwards 2007). The AU2 measurement instruments do not allow parsing out the direction of causality in the empirical analyses. However a similar approach to Steenbergen et al. (2007) is employed to address endogeneity (discussed later), and the results from these analyses suggest that the assumption that parties respond to shifts in public preferences is a reasonable one. Moreover, this endogeneity issue cannot detract from the finding that political parties competing in proportional systems are more responsive to the mean voter position than are parties in disproportional systems. Under either causal scenario, to the extent that patterns are uncovered between the policy preferences of parties and citizens, these findings contribute to our understanding of party competition in Western European democracies.

These above limitations notwithstanding, the result that parties across all Western European democracies, regardless of electoral system, tend to respond to the mean voter position (and not their supporters) has important implications for

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[3]Following Ezrow et al. (2011), I also report that mainstream parties (i.e. parties belonging to the Social Democratic, Conservative, Christian Democratic, or Liberal party families) tend to respond to shifts in the mean voter position as opposed to the policy shifts of their supporters, and that the opposite holds for niche parties.

political representation and for our understanding of electoral system effects. The study relates to political representation and specifically the model of dynamic representation developed by Stimson et al. 1995 (see also Erikson et al. 2002), which identifies party responsiveness to shifts in public opinion as a key component to political representation.[4] Similarly, I assess the empirical validity of a partisan constituency model that is based on several influential studies which emphasize the importance of party-constituency agreement (see Dalton 1985; Weissberg 1978; Wessels 1999).[5]

Finally, the study contributes to our understanding of electoral system effects. There are several prominent representation studies that articulate persuasive arguments, which are summarized in the next section, that suggest that electoral systems affect which groups of citizens to which parties respond. I present empirical evidence that examines these claims, and conclude that parties in PR systems tend to respond to the mean voter position. Furthermore, parties are not responsive to their supporters across systems.

1 Electoral Systems and Party Responsiveness

Do electoral systems help determine whether parties respond to the mean voter position or to their core supporters? Theory leads to conflicting answers. One reasonable expectation is that:

> H1a: Parties in disproportional systems are responsive to the mean voter position, and parties in proportional systems are responsive to their supporters.

The first argument that underlies this expectation is that less proportional voting systems – like plurality systems – plausibly motivate political parties to emphasize vote-seeking objectives, so that the parties competing in these systems can be expected to be more responsive to changes in the mean voter position. The reason that disproportional systems plausibly promote vote-seeking behavior by parties is because of the well-known fact that such voting systems tend to "punish" smaller parties and reward larger parties when national vote returns are converted into parliamentary seats (Cox 1997, see also Taagepera and Shugart 1989). Disproportional systems, for this reason, motivate parties to place a premium on gaining

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[4]We note that mean voter representation and dynamic representation do differ conceptually. While the former concerns the party-citizen linkage and "giving voice" to electors, the latter refers to responsiveness of governing institutions in terms of policy outputs.

[5]Indeed this study reinforces the findings of Ezrow et al. (2011) that highlight the applicability of the partisan-constituency model to the policy shifts of niche parties. Furthermore, the results corroborate and expand upon the conclusions of recent studies by Adams et al. (2006) and Meguid (2005, 2008) who present theoretical and empirical arguments suggesting that spatial theories of electoral competition (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984) should account for the party families competing in elections.

substantial vote shares, so that they can be among the large parties that benefit from this effect.

Jay Dow (2001, 2011) offers a related argument that in disproportional systems the major parties may reasonably aspire to win a single-party parliamentary majority, which gives these major parties added incentives to maximize votes. For instance, the plurality-based postwar elections held in Britain and New Zealand (the latter country featured plurality until its switch to PR in 1996) returned single-party parliamentary majorities in over 80% of the cases.[6] Dow (2001) argues that this "winner-take-all" feature of disproportional, plurality-based elections motivates political parties to be highly responsive to voters' policy preferences.

By contrast the lower effective seat thresholds associated with highly proportional voting systems plausibly motivate the parties in these systems to emphasize policy objectives and to thereby be more ideologically "rigid" in the face of mean voter shifts, because these parties are assured of at least some parliamentary representation when they are confident that their vote shares will exceed the relatively low national thresholds that are necessary to obtain legislative seats in highly proportional systems. Thus, parties in proportional systems are freer to respond to their core supporters' ideological preferences because they do not have to compete for marginal voters at the 'center' in order to gain representation in the legislature.

An additional set of considerations is that parties in PR systems – which should be smaller, on average, because there are more of them – should have more information about their supporters, and, furthermore, these parties are more flexible in terms of responding to shifts in their supporters' positions. In contrast, the large parties associated with electoral competition in disproportional systems should have more difficulty collecting information about their supporters, and their correspondingly larger organizational structures should make it more difficult to respond to their supporters' ideological shifts.[7]

While the above considerations suggest that the general electorate model applies to disproportional systems and that the partisan constituency model applies to proportional systems, there are another set of theoretical considerations which suggest the opposite holds; specifically, that:

> H1b: Parties in disproportional systems are responsive to their supporters, and parties in proportional systems are responsive to the mean voter position.

Arguments on this side of the ledger refer to research on valence, party activists, and coalitions. The strategic implications of "valence" dimensions of party evaluation (i.e. dimensions related to voters' impressions of party elites' competence, honesty, or charisma) suggest that "valence-disadvantaged" parties in disproportional systems would not be oriented towards the mean voter position; instead, they

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[6] 15 out of 17 postwar British elections have returned single-party parliamentary majorities, while in New Zealand each of the postwar elections held under plurality through the mid-1990 s returned parliamentary majorities.

[7] I thank Gary Marks for raising several points in this paragraph.

have electoral incentives to differentiate themselves on policy grounds: if these parties present centrist policies that are similar to those advocated by valence-advantaged parties, then voters will choose based on the valence dimension – that is, they will choose parties that have superior valence images (Schofield and Sened 2005, 2006; Adams and Merrill 1999, see also MacDonald and Rabinowitz 1998). To the extent that Schofield's argument captures real-world parties' electoral strategies, we should not expect all vote-seeking parties to appeal to the mean voter position. Even if plurality systems motivate parties to attach greater weight to vote-seeking, this will not in turn imply plurality elections motivate policy convergence.[8]

While the arguments in the paragraph above suggest that parties in plurality (or disproportional) systems are not always motivated to respond to the mean voter position, these arguments however do not suggest that parties would be responsive to their core supporters. Miller and Schofield (2003), building on Aldrich (1983a, b, 1995), develop a second, related, motivation for vote-seeking parties which revolves around strategic incentives related to *party activists*. The Miller–Schofield argument is that parties can enhance their vote shares by appealing to party activists who provide scarce campaign resources (i.e. time and money). Specifically, the authors argue that parties can use the added campaign resources they acquire via their policy appeals to activists to enhance their images along valence dimensions such as competence and integrity – and that this in turn will increase the parties' electoral support among rank-and-file voters. If campaigns are more important in elections in disproportional systems, given the above considerations on valence and activists, we might expect the partisan constituency model to apply to disproportional systems.

By contrast, party responsiveness to the mean voter position in proportional systems may not be so surprising if parties are concerned with maximizing their likelihood of being included in the governing coalition. If this is the case then appealing to the center may be a viable strategy. Schofield et al. (1998) examine Dutch and German elections and determine that parties try to put themselves in good positions for the post-coalition negotiations. This entails presenting policies that are acceptable to potential coalition partners, which may provide incentives for policy moderation. If proportional systems motivate parties to present policies that are acceptable to coalition partners then these parties may well present centrist positions. This finding is also in line with that of the other prominent coalition scholars who present theoretical and empirical results that support the claim that in proportional systems, gaining membership in the governing coalition is closely linked with centrist positioning (Axelrod 1970; Laver and Shepsle 1996; Powell 2000; Huber and Powell 1994). When facing the decision to respond to core supporters or the mean voter, parties may choose the latter option with the

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[8]Adams and Merrill (1999, 2000) present an alternative argument that voters' partisan loyalties can motivate vote-seeking parties to diverge from the center, in the direction of the policies favored by the members of their partisan constituencies (see also Adams et al. 2005).

expectation that this will enhance the possibility of joining the governing coalition after an election.

There are of course, additional possibilities: that is, that neither model of party responsiveness applies uniformly to either type of electoral system. The arguments above on party positioning incentives might counterbalance leading to the unremarkable yet plausible conclusion that sometimes parties respond to their core supporters; sometimes to the mean voter position; sometimes to both (if they shift in the same direction); and sometimes to neither – and that electoral systems do not apply incentives uniformly to the parties that compete within them.

2 Data and Measurement

2.1 *Measuring Parties' Policy Positions and Public Policy Preferences*

Each hypothesis posits that the changes in the voters' ideological preferences are somehow linked to parties' policy positions. Thus, to test this proposition it is necessary to develop longitudinal, cross-national measures of parties' policy programs as well as measures of voters' policy preferences.

To measure party policy positions over time, I use estimates that are reported by Budge et al. (2001) from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). These data are comprised of party manifestos from the main political parties in 25 democracies in the postwar period and provide the only longitudinal and cross-national estimates of party policies. The analytical payoff of the CMP data is that it allows party positions to be mapped over the entire time period and in all of the countries under investigation.[9] Moreover, as the content of these manifestos is often the result of intense intra-party debate, the CMP estimates should be reliable and accurate statements about parties' positions at the time of elections. Indeed, these measures are generally consistent with those from other party positioning studies, such as those based upon expert placements, citizen perceptions of parties' positions, and parliamentary voting analyses. This provides additional confidence in the longitudinal and cross-national reliability of these estimates (see Hearl 2001; McDonald and Mendes 2001; Laver et al. 2003).

While the methods used by the CMP to map party policy positions based on election programs are described at length elsewhere, I briefly review them here.[10] Under the CMP framework, policy preferences are characterized by systematic examination of party stances on policies based on content analysis of election

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[9]In *Mapping Policy Preferences II* the CMP updates their estimates of parties' policy positions through 2003 and expands the number of countries for which they place parties (Klingemann et al. 2006).

[10]For a more thorough description of the coding process, see Appendix 2 in Budge et al. (2001).

programmes (Budge et al. 2001). Individual coders isolate "quasi-sentences" in a party's manifesto and pair them with policy categories (e.g. education, defense, law and order, morality, etc.) using a pre-established, common classification scheme. The classification scheme is made up of 56 categories and the percentages of each category provide the basis for estimating the policy priorities of a party. The Left–Right ideological scores for parties' manifestos range from -100 (extreme left) to $+100$ (extreme right).

The measure of public opinion is based on Eurobarometer surveys dating from 1973 (the first year that the Left–Right self-placement item appears on the Euro-barometer survey)[11] until 2002 (the last year for which the "vote intention" item discussed below appears on the survey). In these surveys approximately 2,000 respondents in each country in each year are asked to place themselves on a 1–10 Left–Right ideological scale.[12]

Finally, to estimate the policy position of the mean party supporter, the "vote intention" question on the Eurobarometer surveys is used in combination with the Left–Right self-placement data described above. Specifically, the question asks respondents the following: "If there were a 'general election' tomorrow, which party would you support?" The mean party supporter is calculated as the mean Left–Right self-placement for all respondents that indicated that they would support the party in the upcoming parliamentary elections.[13] Appendix 1 presents the countries, parties, inter-election periods, party family designations, and the mean Left–Right party supporter positions that are used in the empirical analyses.[14]

2.2 Model Specification for the Hypotheses

In order to test the Hypotheses 1a and 1b, I specify the following multivariate regression model (referred to as the core model specification):

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[11]For the public opinion data, the *Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File, 1970–2002* (Schmitt and Scholz 2005) was relied upon, which has compiled the Eurobarometers for the time period under investigation.

[12]Specifically, the Eurobarometer surveys ask, "In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right.' How would you place your views on this scale?"

[13]The mean party supporter estimates are based on at least 50 responses to the Left–Right self-placement item in each country in each year. I note that country-year observations were based on a relatively large number (approximately 2,000) of respondents so that only a few parties did not reach this criterion for inclusion. In addition, only parties that were observed in at least three successive elections are included in the empirical analyses.

[14]Addressing the research question requires aggregating individual-level observations up to party- and country-levels of analysis. Thus while the statistical analyses are based on 309 party-level observations, it should be clarified that these aggregated observations are based on slightly over 800,000 individual responses for the time period and countries under consideration.

Change in party position (t)

$$\begin{aligned}
= \; & B_1 + B_2[\textit{Meanshift} - \textit{allvoters}(t)] \\
& + B_3[\textit{Meanshift} - \textit{partysupporters}(t)] \\
& + B_4[\textit{Disproportionality} \times \textit{Meanshift} - \textit{allvoters}(t)] \\
& + B_5[\textit{Disproportionality} \times \textit{Meanshift} - \textit{partysupporters}(t)] \\
& + B_6[\textit{Disproportionality}] \\
& + B_7[\textit{Changeinpartyposition}(t-1)]
\end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where,

Change in party position (t) = the change in a party's Left–Right policy position in the current election compared to its position in the previous election (election t−1), based on the CMP data.

Change in party position (t−1) = the difference in the CMP Left−Right estimates of a party's policy position between election t−1 and election t−2.

Mean shift − all voters (t) = the change in the mean Left–Right self-placement score of *all* respondents in a country between the year of the current election and the year of the previous election (election t−1), based on the Eurobarometer data.

Mean shift − party supporters (t) = the change in the mean Left–Right self-placements for all of the respondents who indicated that they would vote for the party in the upcoming national election, between the year of the current election and the year of the previous election.

Disproportionality (t) = 1 if a country is categorized as disproportional, based on the Gallagher (1991) Index of Disproportionality is $\sqrt{1/2 \sum (vi - si)^2}$, where v_i an s_i are the vote shares and subsequent seat shares for party i; and 0 if a country is categorized as relatively proportional.[15]

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The dependent variable [*change in party position (t)*] represents the inter-election shift in parties' Left–Right policies. The variable is constructed so that positive scores indicate that the parties' policies are moving "rightward" between elections and negative scores denote "leftward" party shifts. The key independent variables [*mean shift − all voters*] and [*mean shift − party supporters*] are similarly constructed.

Recall that the Hypotheses 1a and 1b state that party-citizen linkages are mediated by the electoral system. To test this proposition, I include two interaction variables in the core model specification, [*disproportionality × mean shift − all voters*] and [*disproportionality × mean shift − party supporters*], which interact public opinion shifts and mean party supporter shifts with the dummy variable

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[15]There is a relatively large gap of four points between the groupings proportional and disproportional. The dummy variable is used to enhance the interpretation of the results. I note that the results remain unchanged when the continuous variable is employed.

[*niche*]. The [*disproportionality*] variable is based on the widely used Gallagher's Index of Disproportionality (Lijphart 1999; Dow 2011).[16]

The interaction terms allow us to estimate differences in the degree to which public opinion or party supporters influence parties' policy positions conditional on the electoral system. Let us first consider the effects of the variables [*mean shift − all voters*] or [*mean shift − party supporters*] on the policy shifts of parties. For parties in proportional electoral systems, the dummy variable [*disproportionality*] equals zero, and the coefficients B_2 and B_3 on the variables [*mean shift − all voters*] and [*mean shift − party supporters*] estimate the effects of public opinion shifts and party supporter shifts on mainstream parties' policy shifts. If parties are generally responsive to shifts in public opinion and to their supporters, coefficients B_2 and B_3 will be positive and statistically significant.

The effect of public opinion shifts and party supporter shifts on the policy shifts in disproportional systems are measured in the instances where [*disproportionality*] equals one. The effects of changes in public opinion on niche parties' policy programs will be captured by the sum of the coefficients B_2 and B_4 on the variables [*mean shift − all voters*] and [*disproportionality × mean shift − all voters*] in (1). Similarly, the sum of the coefficients B_3 and B_5 on variables [*mean shift − party supporters*] and [*disproportionality × mean shift − party supporters*] will estimate the influence of changes in the mean Left–Right position of party supporters on parties' policy shifts in disproportional systems.

Two additional variables in the core model specification are included. First, a lagged version of the dependent variable [*change in party position (t−1)*] is included, which measures the party's policy shift between election t−2 and election t−1. The lagged dependent variable addresses autocorrelation (discussed further below). Additionally, the [*change in party position (t−1)*] variable addresses policy alternation, a possibility raised by Budge (1994) and Adams (2001), that party elites may have electoral incentives to move their party's position in the opposite direction from their shift in the previous election. Policy alternation, according to Budge, is a rational response by party leaders to placate different wings within the party (see also Budge et al. 2010). Adams emphasizes the existence of non-policy related factors such as the party identification of voters that would explain similar zigzag patterns of party movement.[17] Under either scenario, the direction of parties' policy shifts in the previous election might influence party leaders' Left–Right

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[16]Based on this measure the countries categorized as proportional systems are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. Countries categorized as disproportional systems are the United Kingdom, Spain, France, and Greece.

[17]There are two additional considerations which would also explain party policy alternation. Burt (1997) proposes a random ideologies model that explains policy alternations by assuming a random selection of three successive party ideologies from a random probability distribution. Measurement error in the CMP estimates of parties' Left–Right positions is a fourth factor that would explain policy alternation. To the extent that parties' "true" positions do not vary over time, and to the extent that the CMP estimates contain measurement error, the estimates will shift in the pattern predicted by Burt's random ideologies model.

strategies in the current election. The [*disproportionality*] variable is also included on its own in the model specification to ensure that the effects of the interaction terms are measured accurately (Braumoeller 2004).[18]

2.3 Evaluating the Electoral System Effects Hypotheses

The hypotheses are evaluated using time-series cross-sectional data from 15 Western European democracies over the period 1973–2002. One possible concern is the existence of unobserved differences between countries or parties: estimating a simple regression on the pooled data containing these unobserved differences could lead to erroneous inferences (Hsiao 2003; Green et al. 2001). In Table 1 estimates are reported for the core model specification that controls for country-specific effects.[19] The results indicate that unobserved differences between countries are not driving the major findings.

The parameter estimates for the core model specification are presented in Column 1 of Table 1. The coefficient estimate on the [*Change in party position* $(t-1)$] variable is negative and statistically significant, which is consistent with the theoretical arguments of Budge (1994); see also (Budge et al. 2010) and Adams (2001) that parties tend to shift their positions in the opposite direction from their shifts in the previous inter-election period. With respect to the key hypotheses, the parameter estimates suggest that mainstream parties respond to shifts in the mean voter position: specifically, the parameter estimate on the [*mean shift − all voters* (t)] variable is positive and statistically significant (+11.55). Furthermore, the magnitude of this estimate suggests that the effect is *substantively* significant: the coefficient indicates that when the mean Left–Right self-placement of respondents in a country shifts by a unit along the 1–10 Eurobarometer Left–Right scale during an inter-election period then mainstream parties' Left–Right positions tend to shift 11.55 units in the same direction along the 200-point CMP Left–Right scale. Accordingly, the evidence supports that finding that shifts in parties' Left–Right policy positions systematically respond to shifts in the mean voter position.

Table 1 also reports the parameter estimates for the [*mean shift − party supporters*] variable, which are close to zero (+0.41) and statistically insignificant. Thus the evidence does not support a finding that parties in proportional systems are systematically responsive to their supporters.

With respect to the expectations raised above, if there is evidence that parties are relatively more sensitive to shifts in the mean voter position in disproportional

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[18]One of the central implications of the study by Braumoeller (2004) is that properly estimating the effects of interaction terms involves including the constitutive (i.e. lower-order) terms in the model specification.

[19]Parameters were also estimated for a model with party-specific effects, and the substantive results remained unchanged. Also, the [*disproportionality*] variable does not vary within country, and so this term naturally drops out of the model specification.

Electoral Systems and Party Responsiveness

Table 1 Explaining parties' policy shifts

	Basic (1)	Type of party (2)	Past election results (3)	Ideology (4)	Full (5)
Mean shift − all voters (t)	11.55**	13.62***	10.69**	11.54**	12.81**
	(4.85)	(5.07)	(4.84)	(4.86)	(5.06)
Mean shift − party supporters (t)	0.41	−1.48	0.82	0.46	−1.01
	(1.67)	(1.85)	(1.68)	(1.68)	(1.86)
Disproportionality × mean shift − all voters (t)	−11.42	−11.74	−9.82	−11.47	−10.10
	(7.23)	(7.24)	(7.20)	(7.24)	(7.22)
Disproportionality × mean shift − party supporters (t)	−3.81	−4.15	−4.57	−3.78	−4.89
	(5.13)	(5.12)	(5.12)	(5.13)	(5.12)
Niche × mean shift − all voters		−4.93			−5.40
		(7.87)			(7.83)
Niche × mean shift − party supporters		8.84**			8.58**
		(3.84)			(3.82)
Niche		−0.98			−1.07
		(1.73)			(1.84)
Change in party position (t−1) × vote change (t−1)			0.024**		0.02*
			(0.012)		(0.01)
Vote change (t−1)			−0.23*		−0.23*
			(0.14)		(0.14)
Ideology				0.36	0.10
				(0.75)	(0.80)
Change in party position (t−1)	−0.43***	−0.43***	−0.44***	−0.43***	−0.43***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Intercept	1.91***	2.06***	1.91***	1.98***	1.95***
	(0.66)	(0.74)	(0.66)	(0.67)	(0.74)
N	309	309	309	309	309
R^2	0.19	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.21

Notes: $*p < 0.10$, $**p < 0.05$, $***p < 0.01$, two-tailed tests. Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in a party's Left–Right policy position, based on the codings of parties' policy programmes that are reported in the CD-ROM in Budge et al. (2001) and Klingemann et al. (2006). The model is estimated with country-specific intercepts, and disproportionality (t) drops out of the model because the estimates do not vary by country

systems than in proportional systems, we would expect the coefficient on the [*disproportionality × mean shift − all voters*] variable to be positive and statistically significant. Alternatively, if the coefficient on the [*disproportionality × mean shift − party supporters*] variable is positive and statistically significant, this would indicate that parties in less proportional systems are more responsive to their supporters than parties in proportional systems.

The results are quite striking. The coefficient on the [*disproportionality × mean shift − all voters*] variable is approaching significance ($p = 0.115$), and it is substantively large (B = −11.42). This suggests that the evidence does not support the hypothesis that parties are systematically responsive to the mean voter position in disproportional systems (the conditional parameter estimates on the [*mean shift − all voters (t)*] variable for disproportional systems are: B2 + B4 = 0.13; s.e. = 5.54, $p = 0.98$). Furthermore, the coefficient on the [*disproportionality × mean shift − party supporters*] variable is negative and insignificant. The conditional

Table 2 Summary of findings

Electoral system	Model of party responsiveness	
	Mean voter	Partisan-constituency
Proportional	✓	X
Disproportional	X	X

parameter estimates for the [mean shift − party supporters] variable do not support a finding that parties in disproportional systems are responsive to their supporters (B3 + B5 = −3.40; s.e. = 4.84, p = 0.48).

To summarize the findings briefly, as depicted in Table 2, parties display responsiveness to the mean voter position in proportional electoral systems. However, the evidence does not support a similar finding for parties in disproportional systems; namely, there is no evidence that parties systematically respond to the mean voter position in these systems. Finally, there is no evidence to suggest that parties under either system systematically respond to their supporters.

2.4   Sensitivity Analyses

The possibility of serially correlated errors within countries is also addressed. Given the structure of the data, the causal processes which generate the change in the policy position of a party at time t could also be operating during the prior inter-election period $t−1$. This concern is addressed by including the lagged version of the dependent variable, [*change in party position (t−1)*] in the core specification given in (1) (see Beck and Katz 1995, 1996).[20]

Columns 2–5 in Table 1 report parameter estimates for pooled data analyses that control for additional factors that plausibly influence parties' policy positions, including the type of party; effects of past election results; party system convergence; and a full specification that accounts for all of the factors in the analysis.

2.4.1   Type of Party

Column 2 reports estimates for a *Type of Party* model, which accounts for the type of party, 'niche' or 'mainstream', competing in the election. Ezrow et al. (2011) have argued that mainstream parties (i.e., parties belonging to the Social Democratic, Conservative, Christian Democratic, or Liberal party families) tend to adjust their Left–Right positions in response to shifts in the mean voter position, but appear unresponsive to the policy shifts of their supporters. Additionally, they have

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[20]The coefficient on the variable [*change in party position (t−1)*] is negative and statistically significant, which suggests that parties tend to shift policy in the opposite direction from their previous policy shift. This result is consistent with conclusions reported by Budge (1994) and Adams (2001).

noted that the opposite pattern is true for niche parties (i.e., parties belonging to the Communist, Nationalist, and Green party families), and that these parties are highly sensitive to shifts in the position of their mean supporter, while they do not respond systematically to the mean voter in the general electorate. The parameter estimates in Column 2 support these authors' findings that mainstream parties are responsive to the mean voter and that niche parties are responsive to their supporters. Moreover, the parameter estimates continue to support the substantive conclusions.

2.4.2 Past Election Results

Column 3 reports estimates for a *Past Election Results* model, which is identical to the basic model *except* that it controls for the possibility that parties adjust their Left–Right positions in response to the outcome of the previous election. Specifically, building on Budge's (1994) empirical finding that parties tend to shift their policies in the same direction as the last time if they gained votes at the previous election, and in the opposite direction if they lost votes (see also Adams et al. 2004; Somer-Topcu 2009; Budge et al. 2010), a variable [*vote change (t−1)*] is incorporated that denotes the party's vote gain or loss at the previous election, and the variable [*vote change (t−1) × change in party position (t−1)*] that interacts the vote change variable with the party's Left–Right shift at the previous election. A positive coefficient estimate on this interactive variable will indicate that parties tend to shift their positions in the same direction as their previous policy shift if they gained votes at the previous election, and in the opposite direction if they lost votes. The parameter estimate on this variable that is reported in column 3 is indeed positive and statistically significant, which supports Budge's arguments. More importantly, the parameter estimates continue to support the substantive conclusion that parties tend to be responsive to the mean voter position across electoral systems.

2.4.3 Party System Convergence

Previous studies by Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009), Ezrow (2007), and Keman and Pennings (2006) report results suggesting that parties tend to moderate their Left–Right positions over time, i.e. left-wing parties tend to shift to the right while right-wing parties shift leftward. To evaluate this hypothesis, a model was estimated that was identical to the basic model *except* that a [*party ideology*] variable was incorporated that was scored at +1 for left-wing parties, −1 for right-wing parties, and zero for centrist parties.[21] Column 4 of Table 3 reports the parameter

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[21]Parties are defined as left-wing if the CMP classified the party as being a member of the Social Democratic party family, while right-wing parties were those that the CMP classified as belonging to the Conservative or Christian Democratic party families. Parties were defined as centrist if they were classified as members of the Liberal party family. The parties' family designations are reported in Appendix 1.

estimates for this *Party Moderation* model. The estimated coefficient on the [*party ideology*] variable is positive but is not statistically significant. The inclusion of this variable does not alter the substantive conclusions.

2.4.4 A Fully-Specified Model

Column 5 in Table 3 reports the parameter estimates for a *Fully-Specified Model*, which controls for type of party; past election results; and party system convergence. The coefficient estimates for this model continue to support the substantive conclusions.

2.4.5 Collinearity

The possibility of collinearity between public opinion and supporter positions was also considered. If it were the case that these variables are highly collinear then parsing out their effects would be difficult. This might be a problem especially for mainstream parties, where one could argue that supporters may be a more representative cross-section of the public than is the case for niche parties. There is modest evidence of this: the correlation between public opinion changes and changes in the positions of party supporters is 0.20 ($p < 0.01$). However, for mainstream parties the correlation is not so high as to create severe collinearity. In quite a few cases (40.9%) changes in public opinion are in the opposite direction to those among party supporters. Moreover, parameter estimates for a *Public Opinion* model and a *Party Supporter* model, where the effects of *only* changes in mean voter; and *only* changes in supporter positions were estimated, and in each case, the results remain unchanged.[22]

3 Discussion and Conclusion

3.1 Summary of Findings

How parties represent the policy preferences of citizens is a crucial aspect of political representation. In spite of the importance of understanding these linkages, there has been very little systematic cross-national empirical examination of the *dynamic* relationships that exist between parties and electorates. This chapter hurdles some of the macro-level observational barriers that are required to analyze

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[22]These estimates are available from the author upon request. Additionally, Appendix 2 addresses two variants of endogeneity, 'cueing' and treating the data as a panel, and concludes that these do not affect the substantive conclusions.

theories at the country- and party- levels. In so doing, three findings have been identified: the first is that changes in the mean voter position cause corresponding shifts in parties' policy positions in proportional electoral systems.

The second major finding is that there is evidence that electoral systems mediate citizen-party linkages. The evidence suggests that proportional systems display mean voter representation, and disproportional systems do not. Several scholars have argued that adopting some form of proportional representation may be desirable (Lijphart 1999; see also Ezrow 2010), and this chapter suggests that they outperform disproportional systems in terms of mean voter representation. This finding, that parties are highly responsive to the mean voter position in PR systems, comports well with scholars that have emphasized post-election coalition negotiations as a factor in explaining party positioning strategies in systems featuring PR (Schofield et al. 1998; Axelrod 1970; Laver and Shepsle 1996).

The third major finding is that – apart from niche parties – there is no evidence to suggest that parties are responsive to shifts in their supporters' positions in political systems featuring either proportional or disproportional electoral systems. The central implication of this result is that the citizen-party linkage is particularly useful for understanding the policy shifts of niche parties in Western Europe, but that the remaining parties in these systems do not display a similar pattern of responsiveness. The result that niche parties respond to their supporters corroborates and extends the research that emphasizes the type of party (Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005, 2008; Ezrow 2008; see also Calvo and Hellwig 2011) in spatial analyses of elections and political representation.[23]

3.2 Mixed Party Strategies in Disproportional Systems

While the finding that parties in proportional systems respond to the mean voter position can be interpreted in a fairly straightforward fashion by referring to the work of prominent coalition theorists (e.g. Axelrod 1970; Laver and Shepsle 1996), the finding that parties neither respond to the mean voter nor their supporters in disproportional systems requires additional explanation. It has been posited that in disproportional systems, votes are more important due to the 'mechanical effect' which hurts small parties and favors large parties when national vote shares are translated into seat shares in the lower house (see Cox 1990; Dow 2001). On the surface, this would lead to the expectation that parties in disproportional systems would cater to the center of the voter distribution, in a Downsian fashion, to maximize votes. The empirical findings that are reported in this chapter obviously do not support this explanation.

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[23]Furthermore, these conclusions support the perspective of Laver (2005) and Fowler and Laver (2008), that it is worthwhile to model competition between sets of parties that employ different decision rules.

Even if votes are more important for parties in disproportional systems, this would not necessarily translate into all parties adopting strategies that are highly responsive to the center of the voter distribution. Indeed the central implication of the Groseclose (2001) formal study of valence in two-party systems (i.e. systems that tend to rate highly in terms of disproportionality) is that when there are valence inequalities this should lead the valence-advantaged party to locate at the center – but that the valence disadvantaged party should locate in a distinctly non-centrist position. The reason is that the valence-disadvantaged party must try to distinguish itself in policy terms in order to have any chance of winning the election. Under this scenario, it makes sense for one party to follow the mean voter model, and another to conceivably follow the party supporter model to enhance its valence.

3.3   Looking Forward

Although there is no evidence suggesting that parties in disproportional systems are uniformly behaving as the mean voter model or the partisan-constituency model predict, this does not preclude different parties from pursuing different strategies. That is, it may be that valence-advantaged parties are responding to the mean voter, and valence-disadvantaged parties to their supporters. Identifying which parties are responding to which voters is one area for future study.

This discussion raises several additional questions for future research. Western Europe does not have a great deal of variation in terms of disproportionality. Thus, another path is to explore the validity of the general electorate model and the partisan constituency model in additional disproportional settings such as the United States and Australia.

While the evidence suggests that there are indeed direct linkages between voter preferences and the policy positions that are on offer by parties in a political system, the explanations put forth in this chapter are only tentative. Consequently, a comprehensive explanation requires *contextual* analyses of Western European parties: namely, of parties' organizational structures, of party elites, as well as of rank-and-file party supporters (see, e.g., Kitschelt 1988). An analysis of *why* different parties are apparently receiving different signals from different segments of the electorate, though outside the scope of this study, is necessary in order to reach a better understanding of how changes occur to the policy choices that political parties present to the electorate.

The results of this analysis, nonetheless, are relevant to our understanding of the democratic process. This chapter demonstrates the existence of linkages between the policy preferences of citizens and parties primarily through the mean voter position.

Appendix 1: List of Countries, Inter-Election Periods, Parties, Party Families and Mean Left–Right Party Supporter Positions Included in the Empirical Analyses

Country Inter-election period	Party	Party family	Mean left–right party supporter position
Austria 1995–1999; 1999–2003	Austrian Peoples' Party (ÖVP)	Conservative	5.84
	League of the Independents, later named Freedom Movement (VdU/FPÖ)	Liberal	6.63
	Social Democratic Party (SPÖ)	Social democratic	4.33
	Green Alternative (GA)	Green	4.79
Belgium 1974–1977; 1977–1978; 1979–1981; 1985–1987; 1987–1991; 1991–1995; 1995–1999	Christian Social Party (PSC)	Christian democratic	6.43
	Christian People's Party (CVP)	Christian democratic	6.89
	Liberal Reformation Party (PRL)	Liberal	6.47
	Liberal Reformation Party-Francophone Democratic Front (PRL-FDF)	Liberal	6.22
	Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD)	Liberal	6.37
	Francophone Socialist Party (PS)	Social democratic	3.94
	Flemish Socialist Party (SP)	Social democratic	4.34
	AGALEV	Green	4.45
	ECOLA	Green	4.58
	Flemish Bloc (VB)	Nationalist	6.36
Denmark 1977–1979; 1979–1981; 1981–1984; 1984–1987; 1987–1988; 1988–1990; 1990–1994; 1994–1998; 1998–2001	Conservative People's Party (KF)	Conservative	7.33
	Radical Party (RV)	Liberal	5.42
	Liberals (V)	Liberal	6.86
	Social Democratic Party (SD)	Social democratic	4.95
	Center Democrats (CD)	Social democratic	6.42
	Socialist People's Party (SF)	Communist	3.48
	Progress Party (FP)	Nationalist	7.11
Finland 1995–1999; 1999–2003	National Rally (KOK)	Conservative	7.91
	Finnish Center (KESK)	Liberal	6.46
	Finnish Social Democrats (SSDP)	Social democratic	4.48
	Left Wing Alliance (VL)	Communist	3.01
	Green Union (VL)	Green	5.23
France 1978–1981; 1981–1986;	Gaullists	Conservative	7.14
	Rally for the Republic (RPR)	Conservative	7.18

(*continued*)

Country Inter-election period	Party	Party family	Mean left–right party supporter position
1986–1988; 1988–1993; 1993–1997; 1997–2002	Union for French Democracy (UDF)	Conservative	6.43
	Socialist Party (PS)	Social democratic	3.66
	French Communist Party (PCF)	Communist	2.59
Germany 1976–1980; 1980–1983; 1983–1987; 1987–1990;	Christian Democratic Party/ Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)	Christian democratic	6.43
1990–1994; 1994–1998;	Free Democratic Party (FDP)	Liberal	5.86
1998–2002	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	Social democratic	4.40
	Party of German Socialism (PDS)	Communist	4.23
Greece 1981–1985; 1985–1989	New Democracy (ND)	Christian democratic	8.14
(June); 1989–1989 (Nov); 1989–1990;	Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	Social democratic	4.59
1990–1993; 1993–1996;	Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	Communist	2.12
1996–2000	Progressive Left Coalition (SAP)	Communist	2.69
Ireland 1977–1981; 1981–1982	Fianna Fail	Conservative	6.56
(Feb); 1982–1982 (Nov);	Fine Gail	Christian democratic	6.37
1982–1987; 1987–1989;	Progressive Democrats (PD)	Liberal	6.15
1989–1992; 1992–1997;	Labour Party (LP)	Social democratic	4.88
1997–2002			
Italy 1976–1979; 1979–1983;	Italian Social Movement (AN)	Nationalist	8.26
1987–1992; 1992–1994;	Northern League (LN)	Nationalist	6.10
1994–1996; 1996–2001	Go Italy (FI)	Conservative	7.01
	Italian People's Party (PPI)	Christian democratic	5.70
	Republican Party (PRI)	Liberal	4.95
	Italian Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI)	Social democratic	4.50
	Socialist Party (PSI)	Social democratic	3.62
	Newly Founded Communists (RC)	Communist	2.06
	Democrats of the Left (DS)	Communist	2.48
Luxembourg 1979–1984; 1984–1989;	Christian Social People's Party (PCS/CSV)	Christian democratic	6.82
1989–1994; 1994–1999	Patriotic and Democratic Group (PD/DP)	Liberal	5.76
	Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP)	Social democratic	4.20
	Communist Party (PCL/KPL)	Communist	3.14
Netherlands 1977–1981; 1981–1982;	Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	Christian democratic	6.67
1982–1986; 1986–1989; 1989–1994; 1994–1998;	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	Liberal	6.84
1998–2002	Labour Party (PvdA)	Social democratic	3.76

(continued)

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Country Inter-election period	Party	Party family	Mean left–right party supporter position
	Democrats 66 (D'66)	Social democratic	4.75
	Green Left (GL)	Green	3.34
Portugal 1987–1991; 1991–1995; 1995–1999	Center Social Democrats (CDS/PP)	Conservative	7.37
	Popular Democratic Party (PPD/PSD)	Social democratic	6.95
	Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP)	Social democratic	4.63
	Unified Democratic Coalition, (CDU)	Communist	2.64
Spain 1986–1989; 1989–1993; 1993–1996; 1996–2000	Popular Alliance (AP/PP)	Conservative	7.29
	Convergence and Union (CiU)	Conservative	5.33
	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)	Social democratic	3.54
	Communist Party (IU)	Communist	2.74
Sweden 1994–1998; 1998–2002	Moderate Coalition Party (MSP)	Conservative	7.80
	Christian Democratic Community Party (KdS)	Christian democratic	6.48
	People's Party (FP)	Liberal	6.23
	Center Party (CP)	Liberal	5.90
	Social Democratic Labour Party (SdsP)	Social democratic	4.18
	Communist Party (VP)	Communist	2.90
	Green Party	Green	4.63
United Kingdom 1979–1983; 1983–1987; 1987–1992; 1992–1997; 1997–2001	Conservative Party	Conservative	6.97
	Liberal Democrats (LD)	Liberal	5.39
	Labour Party	Social democratic	4.26

Notes: Parties are observed in at least three successive elections. The mean Left-Right party supporter position is calculated as the average of the mean party supporter positions for all of the elections in which the party is included in the empirical analysis

Appendix 2: Addressing Two Types of Endogeneity

The first variant of endogeneity concerns the possible cueing of public opinion or supporters by parties. Although this study concentrates on the ideological *linkages* between parties and citizens rather than the direction in which ideological preferences are transmitted between these groups, cueing is nevertheless relevant. Indeed, it may be that citizens respond to parties, rather than the reverse, in which case the coefficients reported may be biased and inconsistent. Past studies that have explicitly addressed this issue of causality have found that any cue-giving effects by parties tend to be weaker than the corresponding cues that voters transmit to parties (see Carrubba 2001; Steenbergen et al. 2007). Nonetheless,

a Durbin-Wu-Hausman test was performed in which public opinion and supporter positions were modeled as functions of their lagged values, computed the residuals, and entered these residuals into a model of parties' policy positions. If public opinion and supporter positions were endogenous with respect to party positions, then these positions would be reflected in the residuals; namely, the residuals would exert a significant effect on parties' Left–Right positions. There was no evidence of this for mainstream parties. For niche parties there was evidence that the public opinion residual is significant. For mainstream parties, the effect of the public opinion residuals yields $p = 0.941$, while the corresponding p-value for the supporter residuals is 0.261. For niche parties, the p-values are 0.376 for the supporter residual and 0.029 for the public opinion residual. The upshot is that the estimates reported in the tables are not marred by endogeneity. With the possible exception of the effect of public opinion on niche parties, these estimates are consistent.

The second type of endogeneity that could be present in the empirical analyses is that the results could inherently be tilted towards supporting the partisan constituency model of political representation. To the extent that this type of endogeneity is a problem, it should bias the statistical analyses in favor of the finding that parties respond to their supporters. For example, if a party shifts away from a segment of its constituency it should lose support from some of these voters. This policy shift should also produce a subsequent increase in support for the party by virtue of its moving towards a new set of voters. If this 'party switching' process were taking place, we would observe a pattern in which the mean Left–Right supporter position would shift in tandem with the party's policy shift even if none of the voters are actually shifting their ideological positions. Since this should bias the empirical findings towards a finding that *all* parties are responsive to their supporters, it cannot account for the observation that only niche parties are responding to their supporters. Given this unavoidable feature of the empirical analyses, it actually further strengthens the finding that mainstream parties respond to the mean voter position. Thus to the extent that this second type of endogeneity is a "problem," it actually strengthens the substantive conclusion that mainstream parties are *not* disproportionately responsive to their supporters, since the statistical analyses may be biased in the opposite direction.

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