Université de Montréal

Is Anybody Following?
Elite Polarization and How Masses React to it

par

Semih Çakır

Département de science politique

Faculté des arts et des sciences

Février 2023

Université de Montréal

Faculté des arts et des sciences

Cette thèse intitulée

Is Anybody Following?

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présentée par

Semih Çakır

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Jean-François Godbout

(président-rapporteur)

Ruth Dassonneville

(directrice de recherche)

Zeynep Somer-Topcu

(codirectrice)

Matthew Levendusky

(membre du jury)

Jane Green

(examinatrice externe)

Jean-François Bissonnette

(représentante du doyen de la FESP)

Résumé

Il y a une préoccupation croissante parmi les experts en ce qui a trait à la polarisation idéologique des élites politiques en raison de son potentiel à pousser les masses vers les extrêmes et à exacerber la polarisation affective. Ces préoccupations sont-elles justifiées? Cette thèse comprend trois articles distincts mais liés, chacun contribuant à apporter une réponse à cette question.

Le premier chapitre empirique (chapitre 2) examine si la polarisation idéologique des élites a augmenté au fil du temps en Europe de l'Ouest. Pour ce faire, ce chapitre se concentre sur la polarisation des partis politiques (c'est-à-dire la polarisation idéologique des élites) sur trois dimensions (économique, sociale et sur la question de l'intégration européenne) simultanément, car la transformation post-industrielle de l'espace politique européen a entraîné une politique multidimensionnelle qui n'est pas toujours alignée avec l'une et l'autre. De plus, le chapitre 2 compare ces tendances à celles fondées sur la dimension traditionnelle gauche-droite. En utilisant les jugements d'experts du Chapel Hill Expert Survey comme indicateur des positions des partis, la polarisation des parties est mesurée en fonction de leur dispersion moyenne des partis par rapport au centre relatif du système politique. Ce chapitre montre une tendance vers une plus grande polarisation des partis sur la dimension gauche-droite ainsi que sur les dimensions économique et sociale, mais pas sur la dimension d'integration européenne. Les partis prennent de plus en plus de positions distinctes sur les questions économique et sociales, et le "menu" idéologique servi aux citoyens est devenu plus diversifié u fil du temps. De plus, il montre que la polarisation des partis sur les dimensions économique, sociales et d'intégration européenne est modérément corrélée à celle de la dimension gauche-droite traditionnelle, tandis que les corrélations de la polarisation des partis sur ces dimensions entre elles sont plutôt faibles. Bien que la dimension gauche-droite agisse comme une position super-thématique qui absorbe les positions des partis sur d'autres dimensions, elles ne sont pas nécessairement alignées les unes sur les autres.

Ayant établi que la polarisation idéologique des élites est en hausse en Europe de l'Ouest, le deuxième chapitre empirique (chapitre 3) examine comment les masses réagissent à l'augmentation de la polarisation idéologiques des élites. Plus précisément, la question est de savoir si la polarisation idéologique des élites conduit à une polarisation idéologique des masses. En d'autres termes, lorsque des propositions de politique plus extrêmes sont disponibles pour les citoyens, adoptent-ils

également des préférences de politique plus extrêmes? Ce chapitre avance que les masses se polarisent suivant deux mécanismes. En vertu de la théorie de l'identité sociale, les partisans devraient suivre leur parti et adopter une position idéologique plus extrême, tandis que les non-partisans devraient réagir à l'opposé. De plus, ce chapitre soutient que si les partisans se polarisent en fonction des changements qui surviennent à l'interieur de leur parti dépend de leur position spatiale par rapport à ce même parti sur l'échelle idéologique. Par exemple, seuls ceux qui sont parfaitement alignée avec leur parti ou plus à droite que leur parti devraient se conformer aux mouvements des élites.

Ce chapitre teste ces attentes dans un cadre réel en s'appuyant sur un design quasi-expérimentale. Le chapitre exploite une augmentation subite de la polarisation idéologique de l'élite qui s'est produite lorsque le Parti travailliste au Royaume-Uni a subi une changement de position soudain avec l'élection de Jeremy Corbyn à titre de nouveau chef. À l'aide des données du British Election Study Internet Panel, ce chapitre ne trouve que des éléments de preuves limitées supportant l'hypothèse que la polarisation de l'élite entraîne une polarisation idéologique de masse : ni les partisans du Parti travailliste ni les autres partisans ne sont devenus plus polarisés à la suite du changement de position du Parti travailliste. Seule une petite minorité de partisans travaillistes situés à droite du parti ont suivi le parti en adoptant une position plus à gauche sur le plan idéologique. De plus, contrairement aux attentes, la plupart des partisans et des non-partisans ont modéré leurs positions. Ce chapitre examine les raisons potentielles de cet effet inattendu. Dans l'ensemble, ces résultats améliorent nos connaissances sur la manière dont les masses réagissent à la polarisation de l'élite et contribuent à dissiper les préoccupations des experts selon lesquelles les masses deviendraient elles-mêmes idéologiquement polarisées lorsque les partis politiques se polarisent.

Le troisième chapitre empirique (chapitre 4) étend l'étude aux réactions affectives des citoyens. Les masses deviennent-elles affectivement plus polarisées lorsque la polarisation idéologique de l'élite augmente ? En se basant sur le contexte britannique, qui a connu une montée de la polarisation idéologique de l'élite en raison du virage à gauche du Parti travailliste et du conflit du Brexit en cours, ce chapitre constate qu'une augmentation de la polarisation idéologique de l'élite conduit à une polarisation affective plus élevée des masses, même parmi les partisans de l'opposition et ceux qui ne sont pas attachés à un parti (c'est-à-dire les indépendants). Les résultats montrent que

l'effet de la polarisation de l'élite sur la polarisation affective des masses est davantage influencé par les sentiments envers le parti avec lequels identifient les individus que par les sentiments que ceux-ci entretiennent envers le parti opposé. Ces résultats suggèrent que la polarisation affective ne reflète pas nécessairement de l'animosité envers le parti opposé, mais peut fluctuer en raison des changements dans le niveau d'enthousiasme à l'égard de son propre parti. Ce chapitre constate également une relation causale bidirectionnelle entre la perception par des citoyens de la polarisation idéologique de l'élite et leur polarisation affective. Cela signifie que la polarisation affective est enracinée à la fois dans l'identité et l'idéologie. Les résultats suggèrent que la polarisation affective peut être tempérée dans une certaine mesure par une position modérée des partis, mais que certains niveaux de polarisation affective sont inhérents aux systems démocratiques.

Les analyses présentées dans cette thèse permettent d'apporter une réponse claire mais nuancée concernant les préoccupations des experts concernant sur l'augmentation de la polarisation idéologique et ses effets potentiellement néfastes. La polarisation idéologique des élites a augmenté en Europe de l'Ouest. Cependant, l'augmentation de la polarisation idéologique des élites ne conduit pas nécessairement à une polarisation idéologique accrue des masses, bien qu'elle conduise à une polarisation affective accrue parmi les citoyens. Dans la mesure où des niveaux excessifs de polarisation affective peuvent compromettre les démocraties représentatives, il peut être raisonnable pour les experts de s'inquiéter de l'augmentation des niveaux de polarisation idéologique des élites. Cependant, si la polarisation affective ne représente pas une menace pour les démocraties représentatives et ne conduit pas au délitement du tissu social, il peut ne pas être nécessaire de s'inquiéter immédiatement de l'impact de la polarisation idéologique des élites sur ce phénomène.

Mots clés : polarisation politique, polarisation partisane, polarisation idéologiques de l'élite, polarisation de masse, polarisation idéologique de masse, polarisation affective de masse, polarisation affective, politique multidimensionnelle, opinion publique.

Abstract

There is a growing concern among experts and policymakers about the increasing elite ideological polarization due to its potential to push the masses to the extremes and exacerbate affective polarization. Are these concerns warranted? This dissertation has 3 standalone articles, each of which contributes to providing an answer to this overarching question.

The first empirical chapter (Chapter 2) examines whether elite ideological polarization has increased over time in Western Europe. To do so, it focuses on party polarization (i.e., elite ideological polarization) on three dimensions (the economic, social, and European integration dimensions) simultaneously, as the post-industrialization transformation of the European political space has resulted in multi-dimensional politics that are not always aligned with each other. Additionally, it compares these trends to those based on the traditional left-right dimension. Using mean expert judgments from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey as an indicator of party positions, party polarization is measured based on the average dispersion of parties from the relative center of the political system. This chapter finds a trend towards more party polarization on the left-right, economic, and social dimensions, but not on the European integration dimension. Parties increasingly take more distinct positions from each other on economic and social issues, and the available ideological menu available to citizens has become more diverse over time. Moreover, it shows that party polarization on economic, social, and European integration dimensions moderately correlates with that on traditional left-right dimension while the correlations of party polarization on these dimensions are relatively weak. While left-right acts like a super-issue position that absorbs party positions on other dimensions, they are not necessarily aligned with each other.

Having established that elite ideological polarization is on the rise in Western Europe, second empirical chapter (Chapter 3) turns to how the masses react to the increasing elite ideological polarization. Specifically, the question is whether elite ideological polarization leads to mass ideological polarization. When more extreme policy proposals are available to citizens, do they also adopt more extreme policy preferences? This chapter argues that masses become polarized through two mechanisms. Based on social identity theory, in-partisans should follow their party and adopt a more extreme ideological stance, while out-partisans should backlash and move in the opposite direction. Additionally, this chapter argues that whether in-partisans become polarized when their

party does so depends on their spatial location relative to the party on the ideological scale. For example, only those who are perfectly aligned with the party or more right-wing than the party should follow the party to the left when it moves in that direction.

This chapter tests these expectations in a real-world setting by relying on a quasi-experimental design. It leverages a sudden increase in elite ideological polarization that occurred when the Labour Party in the United Kingdom underwent a sudden position change when Jeremy Corbyn was elected as its new leader. Using British Election Study Internet Panel data, this chapter finds limited evidence that elite polarization leads to mass ideological polarization: Neither in-partisans nor out-partisans became more polarized following the change in the Labour Party's position. Only a small minority of Labour partisans that were located to the right of the Labour Party followed the party by adopting a more left-wing ideological stance. Moreover, contrary to the expectations, I find that most in- and out-partisans moderated their positions. This chapter discusses the potential reasons for this unexpected effect.

The third empirical chapter (Chapter 4) extends the investigation to citizens' affective reactions. Do the masses become affectively more polarized when elite ideological polarization increases? Relying on the British context, which experienced a surge in elite ideological polarization as a result of both the leftward pivot of the Labour Party and the ongoing Brexit conflict, this chapter finds that an increase in elite ideological polarization leads to higher mass affective polarization, even among out-partisans (i.e., those who identify with the out-party) and those who lack partisan attachment (i.e., independents). The results show that the effect of elite polarization on affective mass polarization is driven more by in-party feelings than out-party feelings. These results suggest that affective polarization is not necessarily a reflection of out-party animosity, but can fluctuate due to changes in in-party enthusiasm. This chapter also finds a bidirectional causal relationship between how citizens perceive elite ideological polarization and how affectively polarized they are. This means that affective polarization is rooted both in identity and ideology. The findings suggest that affective polarization can be tamed to some extent by moderate position-taking by parties, but some levels of affective polarization are inherent in democratic systems.

Coming back to whether pundits' concerns about growing ideological polarization is warranted, this dissertation provides a clear but a nuanced answer. Elite ideological polarization has increased in Western Europe. However, increasing elite ideological polarization does not necessarily lead to

more ideologically polarized masses although it leads to more affectively polarized masses. To the extent that excessive levels of affective polarization can undermine representative democracies, it may be reasonable for pundits to express concern about rising levels of elite ideological polarization. However, if affective polarization does not pose a threat to representative democracies and does not hinder societal coexistence, then there may not be a need for immediate concern regarding the impact of elite ideological polarization on this phenomenon.

Keywords: political polarization, party polarization, elite ideological polarization, mass polarization, mass ideological polarization, mass affective polarization, affective polarization, multi-dimensional politics, public opinion.

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To my mother, father, and brother.

Acknowledgements

The human brain is truly fascinating in how it processes and stores information. Often without even realizing it, we form connections between different experiences and people in our lives, which all come together to create a singular and cohesive whole. When we think about one particular experience or person, we cannot help but feel emotions that extend beyond that individual moment or interaction. Similarly, when we reflect on our overall journey, we are naturally drawn to think about the people and experiences that contributed to our growth and development. When I think about my doctoral journey, I feel a sense of joy. That's why I would like to thank each person and experience that played their unique role in shaping who I am today as a scholar and a person.

This doctoral thesis is born out of my deep curiosity about the impact of political parties on public preferences, but it would not have been possible without the support of an incredible network of mentors, colleagues, and loved ones. I am particularly grateful to my advisor Ruth Dassonneville, and co-advisor, Zeynep Somer-Topcu. Ruth has diligently mentored me since I was a master's student. Her passion for academic excellence, mentorship, and empowerment of others has been a constant source of inspiration for me. Her active involvement and frequent feedback were invaluable, and her constant availability and patience were a testament to her dedication as a mentor. Ruth is not only an amazing scholar, but also a compassionate and kind-hearted person, making her a true gem in the academic world and I am lucky to have had her as my advisor. Zeynep's wisdom and unparalleled expertise have been pivotal in shaping my research agenda and guiding me through the intricacies of doctoral studies. Whenever I felt lost, she always managed to illuminate my path with her sincere guidance. Her dedication to my growth and success as a researcher has been priceless. Ruth and Zeynep have pushed me to grow and challenge myself as a scholar, and I am grateful to have been guided by two exceptional scholars whom I look up to as role models.

I would also like to thank Dieter for being a great colleague and turning into a great friend.

During doctoral studies, having a supportive circle of peers—a close-knit group of friends, can make all the difference. Alex and Nando, I cannot express enough gratitude for the invaluable support and camaraderie you have provided me during these past years. You have become more than just colleagues. From sharing an office space to bouncing ideas off each other, sharing countless laughs and deep conversations, your presence has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. Thank you for being my circle and for making my doctoral journey so much brighter.

My best friends, Ozan, Bengisu, and Nadia have been my rock throughout this journey, providing me with constant support and love. Ozan, you have always inspired me to take a step forward and shaped substantially where I am right now. Bengisu, you have been the sweetest, most caring friend ever. Every time I fell, you made sure I got up. Nadia, you have kept me anchored to reality when I floated. I cannot express how grateful and lucky I am to have you by my side.

Craig, thank you for your love and being my family.

It is truly difficult to put into words how grateful I am to my mother, father, and brother. I dedicate this dissertation to them, with deepest appreciation and love. Thank you for everything you have done for me, it means the world.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> We select our governments through elections. Parties propose policies and
> present candidates, we vote, someone is declared winner according to
> pre-established rules, the winner moves into the government office and the
> loser goes home. Glitches do sometimes occur but mostly the process works
> smoothly. We are governed for a few years and then have a chance to decide
> whether to retain the incumbents or throw the rascals out. All of this is so
> routine that we take it for granted.
>
> — Adam Przeworski, Why Bother with Elections?

1.1   Setting the Stage: Representative Democracies and Responsible Government

In representative democracies, citizens can influence the decision-making process by electing representatives. These elected representatives, who act on behalf of their supporters, translate their supporters' preferences into policy outcomes. Whether it is the delegate view of representation, where elected representatives are expected to follow voters' ideological preferences, or the trustee view of representation, where representatives are given the mandate to act based on their own judgment once elected to the office, citizens can vote out the representatives if their preferences are not reflected in policy outcomes or if they are dissatisfied with how their representatives performed in office (Bowler 2017; Pitkin 1967; Rehfeld 2011). This anticipation of electoral punishment makes the representatives willing to integrate policy preferences of the voters into the enacted policies and perform well in office (Key 1961). Through these mechanisms, elections ensure a responsible

government with a certain level of congruence between the elector and the elected in terms of policy preferences and outputs (Mayhew 2004). As put by Dahl (2008) "[c]ontinuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens [is] a key characteristic of democracy".

1.1.1 Responsible Parties, Elite Ideological Polarization and Elite Opinion Leadership

Responsible government is facilitated by political parties. A political party can be defined as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office" (Sartori 2005). Summarizing the importance of political parties in representative democracies, Dalton, Farrell and McAllister (2011) mention five main roles that parties play. First, parties campaign and set the agenda by transmitting their messages. Second, as parties rely on electoral support from citizens, they engage in efforts to mobilize them to secure their votes, thus maintaining an active citizenry in politics. Third, they simplify politics for citizens by discussing the consequences of proposed policies. Fourth, they represent citizens in government. Lastly, they implement the platforms on which they campaigned during the election period. The importance of political parties is not only recognized by political scientists, but also by a large majority of citizens, who consider political parties necessary for democracies. Specifically, focusing on a question available in Module 1 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data, Dalton and Weldon (2005) show that an average of 76 percent across 13 established democracies believe that political parties are necessary for democracies.[1]

In 1950, the APSA committee on political parties published a report in which it called for more responsible parties in the United States (APSA 1950). The report primarily suggested that parties become more cohesive and develop platforms that were clearly distinct from each other. There are several reasons to support the need for ideologically distinct political parties. First, when parties offer more distinct platforms, citizens recognize the differences between them (Hetherington 2001; Levendusky 2010), making it easier for citizens to choose a political party that better represents them and enabling more informed vote choices (Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006;

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[1]CSES surveys asked "Some people say that political parties are necessary to make our political system work in [country]. Others think that political parties are not needed in [country]. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that political parties are necessary to make our political system work, and FIVE means that political parties are not needed in [country]), where would you place yourself?" The answer is based on an agreement scale that ranges from 1 to 5 and allows respondents the option to choose "don't know".

Levendusky 2010; Pierce and Lau 2019; Zingher and Flynn 2018). Second, if policy outcomes differ substantially based on who is elected to office, the stakes become higher during elections (Crepaz 1990), and higher stakes subsequently mobilize citizens to participate in politics (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Huber et al. 2022; Moral 2017). Third, when parties are cohesive, their brand is clear, and they are better able to deliver on their platforms (Lecomte 2018). As it is easier for individuals to vote based on a party brand rather than individual representatives' policy preferences, representatives might have an incentive to be cohesive with the party and avoid deviating from the party brand (Godbout and Høyland 2017; Kölln 2015). Furthermore, when parties are explicitly distinct from each other, citizens can more easily associate policy outcomes with political parties (Lupu 2015), facilitating the attribution of responsibility by citizens (Stiers and Dassonneville 2020). Taken together, cohesive parties with a distinct ideological agenda can mobilize citizens, help them understand which party is responsible for specific policy outcomes, simplify complex politics for ordinary citizens, facilitate issue voting, and reinforce mechanisms of accountability at the ballot box.

Classic theories of voting behavior and public opinion place political elites at the core of their theories. As citizens are mostly inattentive to political matters and politically uninformed, they require opinion leadership from political parties to make political decisions (Achen and Bartels 2017; Lippmann 1993; Zaller 1992). For example, Zaller (1992) presents an influential theory of opinion formation that emphasizes the role of political elites, also known as elite opinion leadership. In a nutshell, the following quote from Zaller (1992, 95-96) summarizes his theory on how opinions are formed: "For, given a public that has no fixed attitude toward what it wants done, but simply a range of only partially consistent considerations, someone has got to play the role of crystallizing issues in a way that can lead to actions." This is in line with the findings of Converse (2006), which suggest that citizens tend to have weak and unstable issue opinions. Political parties assume the responsibility of guiding the public by framing issues and informing citizens about the potential advantages and disadvantages of proposed policies (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011). Examining how political elites influence citizens in opinion formation, Zaller (1992) shows that when parties agree on an issue (i.e., when there are no competing frames by political elites), citizens' opinions also converge towards a consensus. However, when parties disagree on an issue and provide citizens with competing frames, public opinion starts polarizing as well.

The polarization of opinions, the distinction of party platforms, the ideological congruence between the elector and the elected, and issue voting (i.e., proximity voting) are phenomena that can be explained as driven by the spatial theory of voting (Downs 1957). Simply put, thinking about a unidimensional political conflict, the overall preferences of citizens and parties can be represented by a single point on an ideological continuum. When citizens' opinions converge, the overall distance between their ideological preferences decreases, resulting in less polarized opinions. If parties' overall ideological positions are spread farther apart from each other (i.e., less concentrated around a point on the continuum), parties are more ideologically polarized, and their platforms become more distinct. Conversely, when parties are concentrated around a point on the continuum, they are ideologically less polarized, and their platforms are more similar. With this ideological space in mind, voters are expected to cast their ballots in favour of candidates whom they esteem to be closer to their own ideological stance (i.e., proximity voting). This ensures that the elected representatives' preferences align with those of the electors and shape policy outcomes. However, obtaining information is costly (Downs 1957), making it challenging for citizens to gather sufficient information to determine which candidate best represents their interests. Parties help overcome this challenge by (1) grouping representatives under a brand that shares similar values (Cox 2005) and (2) providing low-cost information to voters (Jones and Hudson 1998). In line with the APSA Committee's Report, as parties establish policy reputations that contribute to the development of their distinct party brands, it becomes easier for citizens to vote for a party that aligns with their preferences, even if they do not know the specific positions of individual candidates on the ballot (Wittman 1989). This tendency of voters to elect representatives based on a party brand rather than individual representatives' policy preferences, in turn, incentivizes representatives to be cohesive with their party (Godbout and Høyland 2017; Kölln 2015). Consequently, parties serve as low-cost and reliable information providers to ordinary citizens.

To summarize, the APSA Committee's report aimed to promote more responsible parties, which entailed having more ideologically polarized and cohesive parties. This implies that one party would consistently propose more left-wing (i.e., liberal) policies, while the other would support more right-wing (i.e., conservative) policies. Party polarization (i.e., elite-level ideological polarization), in this context, refers to the extent of ideological distinction between political parties. When parties adopt increasingly distinct left-wing and right-wing ideological positions (i.e., more dispersed on

the continuum), the range of ideological options available to citizens becomes more diverse (i.e., more polarized). In short, higher levels of ideological polarization, combined with more responsible parties, can be beneficial for representative governments since the general public relies on elite opinion leadership to form opinions on political issues.

1.2 Group Loyalties and its Implications for Party-Citizen Linkages

The overarching theory that I use in this dissertation is elite opinion leadership, which revolves around the concept of group loyalties. Social psychology literature shows that individuals easily develop attachments to groups (Tajfel 1981), even when these groups are arbitrarily created (Billig and Tajfel 1973). This propensity leads individuals to see the world in terms of "us" versus "them". Consequently, individuals tend to conform to their groups, engage in motivated reasoning, exhibit positive bias towards their own groups (Otten and Wentura 1999), and display negative bias towards other groups (Billig and Tajfel 1973). This is how social identities function. In the context of political science, the equivalent of these group attachments and loyalties is party identification, which refers to an enduring psychological attachment to a political party that develops through early socialization (Jennings and Niemi 1974). Individuals are hence motivated by their identities (Otten and Wentura 1999).

Based on the hot cognition theory, party identification is a socio-political concept that is affectively charged and is connected to other concepts in long-term memory (Lodge and Taber 2005). As affect precedes conscious reasoning (Lodge and Taber 2005), once party identification is activated (for instance through partisan cues (Goren, Federico and Kittilson 2009)), it automatically guides (i.e., biases) individuals' reasoning processes. All in all, social identity theory suggests that individuals are guided by their identities. Mason (2015) describes partisan behavior through social identity theory as such: "a partisan behaves more like a sports fan than like a banker choosing an investment. Partisans feel emotionally connected to the welfare of the party; they prefer to spend time with other members of the party; and when the party is threatened, they become angry and work to help conquer the threat, even if they disagree with some of the issue positions taken by the party." The social identity approach to group loyalties meshes well with the theory of elite

opinion leadership, as greater ideological distinction between parties leads partisans to form more polarized opinions. This is because individuals are primarily motivated to maintain and cheer their identity (Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Petersen et al. 2013). Therefore, when investigating the effect of elite polarization on mass ideological polarization, the role of group loyalties, specifically party identification, is expected to be important.

An alternative perspective on party identification views it as an outcome influenced by party performance in office and policy proposals made by parties (Fiorina 1981) or the expected benefits associated with parties (Achen 2002). According to this approach, party identification is seen as more rational and short-term identity that dynamically responds to parties' performance and policy positions (Achen 2002). This view of rational party identification is in line with the spatial theory of voting, which posits that citizens are rational actors whose political opinions are formed based on their belief systems. Rational citizens then vote for the political party whose positions align most closely with their own preferences (Achen 2002), which corresponds to the normative ideals of democracy. In contrast to the social identity approach, which suggests that individuals make sense of the political world through their identity, this alternative approach emphasizes the role of individuals' ideological lens (Achen and Bartels 2017). Using the analogy of Mason (2015), party identifiers, according to this alternative approach, behave more like bankers choosing an investment rather than sports fan cheering their team. These divergent approaches form the foundation of an ongoing debate regarding whether individuals are primarily guided by their identity or ideology.

As Aldrich et al. (2006) puts it "Elites appear to retain some leeway in shaping the expression of public opinion, but the mechanisms that give them that leeway are still little understood". If party identification is a social identity, mass polarization should follow party polarization among partisans. The mechanism that gives the political elites their leeway would then be through social identification. However, if party identification is the result of a rational calculus and based on one's expected utility from parties at a point in time, when a party adopts a more extreme position, mass ideological polarization should not follow among partisans of the polarizing party.

Regarding the effect of elite polarization on affective polarization, which is based on one's hostility towards the out-party and sympathy towards the in-party, group loyalties are considered a key mechanism. On the one hand, research suggests that affective polarization has its roots in identity, indicating that mere identification with a political party influences one's feelings towards

parties. For instance, Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes (2012) show that while affective polarization towards parties has increased over time in the United States, the same trend is not observed towards ideological groups (conservative versus liberal). Moreover, they argue that if affective polarization is rooted in ideology, we would expect higher levels of affective polarization among ideologically sorted partisans. However, using data from the American National Election Study (ANES), they find that ideologically sorted partisans only exhibit modestly higher levels of affective polarization, whereas the strength of party identification is more strongly associated with affective polarization. This is taken as evidence that the strength of social identification influences the extent of affective polarization, rather than ideological preferences. Similarly, Ward and Tavits (2019), focusing on 34 countries, show that the stronger one's partisan affect is (negative or positive), the more ideologically extreme she perceives the party to be, and consequently the more ideologically polarized she perceives the party system to be. These findings in both studies lead the authors to conclude that affective polarization is rooted more in identity than ideology.

On the other hand, some research also suggests that affective polarization is rooted in ideology (Enders and Lupton 2021; Lelkes 2021; Orr and Huber 2020; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016), meaning that the ideological differences between political parties drive individuals' feelings toward those parties. For instance, Rogowski and Sutherland (2016) conduct an experiment where participants were presented with a pair of candidates that are supposedly running for Congress in another state. Participants receive some bibliographical information on candidates along with their policy positions without knowing their party affiliations. Rogowski and Sutherland (2016) manipulate the extent to which policy positions between the candidates differ (i.e., candidates either converge or diverge on the issue). The results show that the average difference in affective polarization, measured using feeling thermometer scores ranging from 0 to 100, is 11.6 points higher in the high polarization condition compared to the low polarization condition. This indicates that ideological disagreement between candidates increases affective polarization. Similarly, focusing on egalitarianism and moral traditionalism in the United States, Enders and Lupton (2021) find evidence that individuals' previous core values influence their current levels of affective polarization, while their previous affective polarization does not influence their current core values. Additionally, Orr and Huber (2020) test the possibility that citizens infer policy positions from party identification. In an experiment, they find that when respondents are provided with policy information along with

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candidates' party affiliations, the effect of party identification on affective polarization decreases substantially (by at least 55 percent) compared to when no policy information is given. Lelkes (2021) finds similar results, with policy information having a larger impact than party identification on how warmly respondents feel towards the candidates. In short, while there is growing evidence supporting the ideology basis of affective polarization, the jury is still out there on the question of whether affective polarization is identity- or ideology-based, especially in the European contexts.

1.3 Consequences of Elite Ideological Polarization: Mass Ideological Polarization and Mass Affective Polarization

1.3.1 Does Elite Ideological Polarization Cause Mass Ideological Polarization?

Consistent with the elite opinion leadership thesis, when political parties in the United States started to diverge from each other in the late 1970s (Hetherington 2001; 2009; Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Layman and Carsey 2002; McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2016; Zingher and Flynn 2018), the ideological overlap between partisans (i.e., the presence of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats) decreased (Levendusky 2010; Zingher and Flynn 2018). That is, Republicans became more conservative, while Democrats became more liberal. In line with the elite opinion leadership thesis as put forward by Zaller (1992), Garner and Palmer (2011) show that not only did partisans become more homogeneous as a group (i.e., increased within-group similarity in terms of ideological preferences), but parties as groups also became more distinct from each other (i.e., decreased between-groups similarity in terms of ideological preference). Increased within-group similarity refers to a phenomenon where citizens' preferences increasingly become more aligned with political parties through a mechanism called "ideological sorting" or "partisan sorting" (Levendusky 2010). However, decreased between-group similarity refers to partisans within each group adopting more extreme preferences as political elites become more polarized.

This debate on whether the American public also became more polarized in their ideological positions or just became more homogeneous as groups is ongoing. Some argue that elite polarization has been accompanied by ideological polarization at the mass level (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Brewer 2005; Garner and Palmer 2011), meaning that the public has become more polarized in their

ideological preferences. Others argue that only a small minority became more polarized, while the majority of the electorate remained moderate (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder Jr 2006; Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Fowler et al. 2022). This debate relates to the key difference between mass ideological polarization and mass ideological sorting. Voters can become ideologically sorted with parties (i.e., their issue preferences match the positions of their party better) through two mechanisms. Once they realize parties' position on an issue, they can (1) adjust their own position to match that of their party better or (2) adjust their party identification to match their own preferences better. The first option can lead to ideological polarization, while the second option is merely an instance of becoming ideologically more sorted along party lines without becoming ideologically more polarized (Zingher and Flynn 2018). In any case, the elite opinion leadership thesis appears to hold, as political parties drive both ideological polarization and sorting at the mass level, giving credence to the Zallerian theory that elites guide citizens. When political parties offer different policy proposals, citizens do not ignore them. As Levendusky (2009, 35) puts it "change begins with elites and then spreads to the mass public". In short, political elites have an impact on how citizens form their opinions and choose their party, although there is still ongoing debate about whether elites truly lead the masses to adopt ideologically polarized positions.

1.3.2 Does Elite Ideological Polarization Cause Mass Affective Polarization?

Although the APSA Committee's report called for more polarized parties for the benefits of democracy, scholars increasingly argue that excessive levels of elite ideological polarization can be harmful for democracy. More specifically, an important consequence of elite ideological polarization is affective polarization (AP), which is based on one's hostility towards the out-party and sympathy towards the in-party (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012). The warmer one feels towards the in-party and the colder towards the out-party, the more affectively polarized one is (Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Wagner 2021). While elite-level ideological polarization has increased in the US, scholars have also documented an increase in antagonism against the other party at the mass level (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar et al. 2019). These two phenomena (elite ideological polarization and mass affective polarization) have been connected by scholars studying affective polarization. When political parties become ideologically more distinct, the feelings of partisans towards the other party become less warm (Gidron, Adams and Horne 2020). High affective polarization indicates larger

affective distance between how individuals feel towards political parties (Broockman, Kalla and Westwood Forthcoming; Orr and Huber 2020; Wagner 2021).

The literature reports two main underlying mechanisms through which party polarization leads to affective polarization. First, it heightens the salience of political identities (i.e., party identification), leading to a larger negative bias (positive bias) towards out-groups (in-groups) (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015). Moreover, when parties are ideologically more distinct, individuals are more likely to identify with a political party (Lupu 2013; 2015). That is, party polarization not only makes party identification more salient but also prompts individuals to develop party attachments, which in turn activate negative or positive bias towards out-groups or in-groups. This is what I refer to as **the identity basis** of affective polarization in this dissertation. Second, extreme policy proposals evoke heightened affective responses (Rogowski and Sutherland 2016). Higher party polarization means more ideological disagreement at the party level, which activates fundamental disagreements between groups, leading to the polarization of affective evaluations of parties (Enders and Lupton 2021). Furthermore, as the out-group becomes more different, it becomes easier to fit them into stereotypical categories (Ward and Tavits 2019), fueling in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. This is what I refer to as **the ideological basis** of affective polarization in this dissertation.

While ideological elite polarization might have the above-mentioned benefits for representative democracies, if it also leads to mass affective polarization, the benefits of ideological elite polarization might be cancelled out by the dire consequences of affective polarization. Studies have linked affective polarization to the decline in the legitimacy of a regime, the decline of democratic norms, and the increased dysfunctionality of the political system (Klein 2020; Levendusky 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; McCoy and Somer 2019). Moreover, affective polarization reinforces partisan bias (Ahler and Sood 2018; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012), reduces citizens' responsiveness to policy outcomes (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013), diminishes satisfaction with democracy (Wagner 2021), hinders accountability for politicians (Pierson and Schickler 2020), and discourages adherence to democratic norms (Graham and Svolik 2020; Kingzette et al. 2021). Its influence is even shown to spillover into non-political sphere, affecting social interactions (Shafranek 2021) and professional settings (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). If excessive levels of affective polarization are harmful to democracies and ideological elite polarization contributes to affective polarization, then

the potential benefits of responsible parties, as highlighted in the APSA Committee report, may be outweighed by the detrimental consequences (i.e., affective polarization).

For instance, the continued increase in affective polarization in the United States reached its peak during the 2016 elections (Boxell, Gentzkow and Shapiro 2023) which led to the election of an even more polarizing candidate. It further intensified during the 2020 elections, culminating in the physical manifestation of affective polarization with the assault on the US Capitol in January, 2021. It comes as no surprise that the United States experienced a weakening of the regime legitimacy, evident in two presidential impeachments within a single term and the politicization of the Supreme Court, leading to the reversal of its previous decision on the legal right to abortion (Roe v. Wade). Additionally, legislative gridlock increased, exemplified by the longest government shutdown in history. One of the leading reasons affective polarization manifests itself in such ways is because it leads people to perceive the opposing party as a threat to the nation (McCoy and Somer 2021). These concerns among political scientists have raised questions about the prevalence of affective polarization in other contexts. Comparative research on the prevalence of affective polarization shows that levels in the United States are not exceptionally high compared to other contexts (Gidron, Adams and Horne 2020; Wagner 2021). Wagner (2021) descriptively reports the level of mass affective polarization across countries using two different measures, which I replicate in Figure 1.1 based on the same data.[2] The first measure is based on the spread of feelings towards political parties, while the second measure is based on the average affective distance of other parties from one's most-liked party (See Wagner (2021) for details). As seen in Figure 1.1, the levels of affective polarization in the United States are not higher than the average affective polarization observed in other countries. For instance, based on the spread measure, countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and France exhibit higher levels of affective polarization compared to the United States. This also highlights the prevalence of high affective polarization in European democracies. Given the potential dangers of excessive affective polarization, studying its origins and nature becomes crucial in finding remedies for it.

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[2]Affective polarization is calculated based on data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems IMD Module. When multiple election surveys are available for a country, the average is reported in the figure.

Figure 1.1. Level of Affective Polarization across Countries
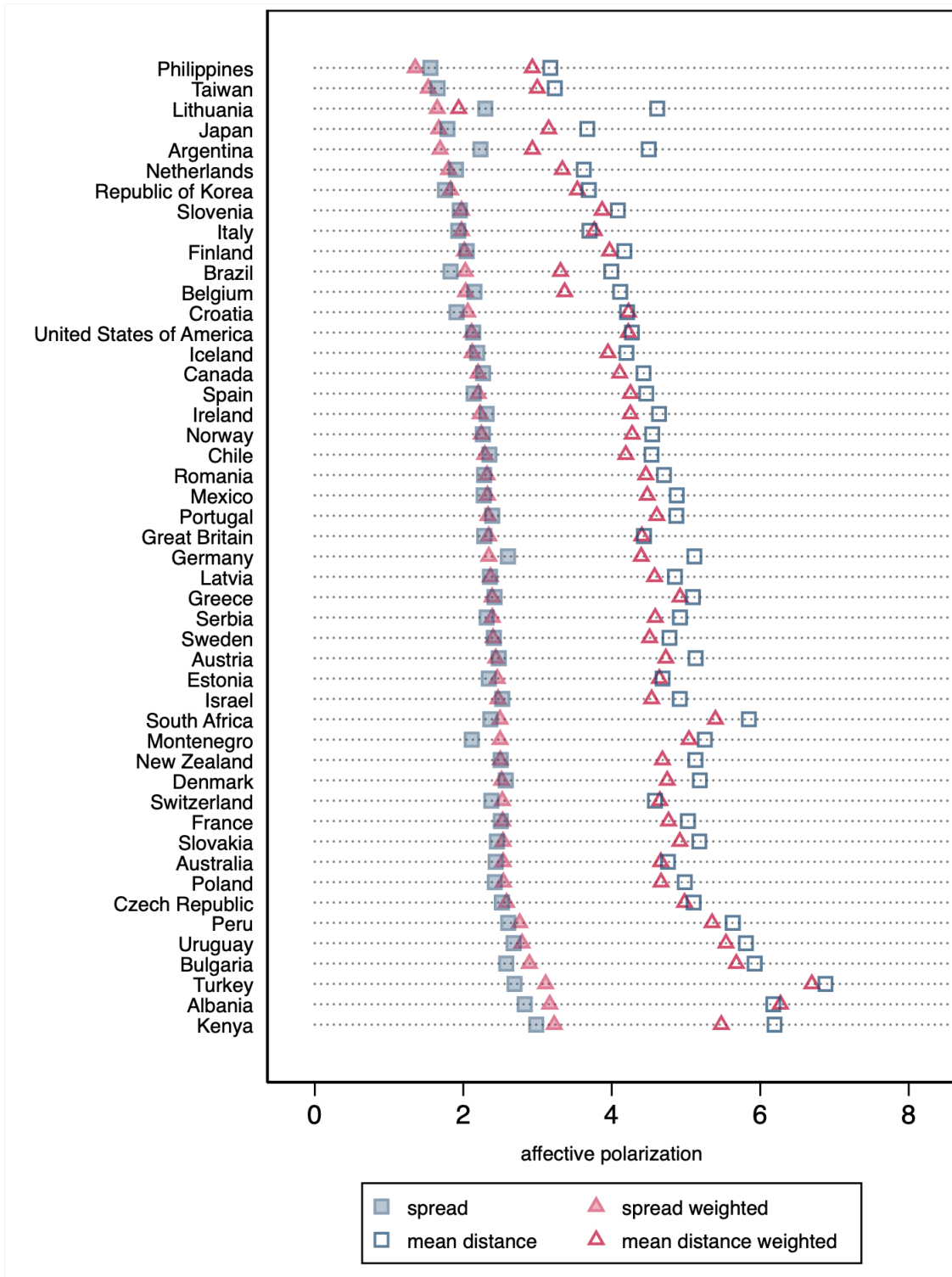
In addition, debates on affective polarization are not limited to whether it originates from identity or ideology, but they also extend to whether it is primarily driven by in-party or out-party

feelings. As affective polarization represents the distance between feelings towards the in-party and out-party, this debate is meaningful. If affective polarization is on the rise due to heightened animosity towards the out-party, it is likely to be harmful for democracy, compared to if it is on the rise because citizens are becoming more enthusiastic about the in-party. This debate can be summarized by two opposing camps, which are not necessarily exclusive.

On the one hand, when individuals perceive greater ideological dissimilarity between themselves and other groups, they view the opposing group as ideologically opposite and are more inclined to categorize them stereotypically (Ward and Tavits 2019). When the out-group is perceived as more dissimilar, out-party feelings tend to be more negative. On top of this inherent affective gap, if elite ideological polarization increases, it reinforces out-party hostility, suggesting that affective polarization is driven by out-party feelings. Research consistently supports this theoretical argument, indicating that in the United States, elite ideological polarization has led to more negative out-party feelings (Iyengar et al. 2019; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Webster and Abramowitz 2017), thus accounting for the observed increase in affective polarization.

On the other hand, there is also evidence that affective polarization can increase due to changes in in-party feelings rather than out-party feelings (Bassan-Nygate and Weiss 2022; Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Rudolph and Hetherington 2021). When a party adopts a more extreme position (i.e., increased elite ideological polarization), it signals doctrinal purity and ideological consistency to voters (Hinich and Munger 1996). Given that voters may also prefer to vote for those with more extreme positions for strategic reasons (Kedar 2005; Patty and Penn 2019; Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), it is reasonable to expect that an increase in in-party enthusiasm can also lead to higher levels of affective polarization.

Furthermore, another debate revolves around the mechanism through which elite ideological polarization leads to mass affective polarization, specifically concerning citizens' perception of the actual ideological divergence among political elites. The first step is for the masses to perceive the change in party polarization. Subsequently, as a response to increased elite ideological polarization, the masses become more affectively polarized. This mechanism implies that it is the perceived polarization that causes affective polarization. However, this assumption rests on the idea that perceived polarization corresponds to actual polarization, which may not be the case (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016).

In contrast to this assumption, recent research indicates that the level of affective polarization experienced by individuals influences the extent to which they perceive ideological polarization (Armaly and Enders 2021). For instance, if one is already highly affectively polarized, they are likely to perceive greater ideological polarization. This suggests that individuals' perceptions deviate from actual ideological polarization, creating a risk of self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, because one is more affectively polarized, they perceive more ideological polarization without the parties actually becoming more polarized (Ahler 2014).

This debate on the causal relationship between perceived polarization and affective polarization carries important implications for real-world politics. If affective polarization causes perceived polarization, it highlights the role of identity in shaping the levels of affective polarization among the masses. In this scenario, citizens' perceptions of the ideological options available to them are shaped (and potentially distorted) by their identities, which contradicts the normative ideals of democracy. It also suggests that reducing affective polarization becomes more challenging since identities tend to be stable over time. On the other hand, in the second scenario, if perceived polarization reflects actual polarization, it implies that ideology plays a role in determining the extent of affective polarization among the masses. This offers a more optimistic outlook for reducing affective polarization, as adopting moderate positions by political parties could potentially reduce affective polarization. This dissertation aims to contribute to this debate on the relation between issue positions and political identities, shedding light on these competing perspectives (Achen and Bartels 2017).

1.4   Transformation of European Political Space

The traditional left-right dimension was used as synonymous with the economic left and right in the post-industrialized era when European cleavages revolved around the conflict between owners and workers (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). However, the political space in which parties compete in Western European democracies is no longer confined to a uni-dimensional left-right dimension that taps preference of state involvement in the economy (O'Grady and Abou-Chadi 2019). The emergence of post-materialist issues (Inglehart 1971; 1990), a global open-market economy (Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008), and increasingly politicized topics such as immigration (Dancygier and Margalit 2020; Hutter and Kriesi 2022) and European integration (De Vries 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2009)

have given rise to new dimensions of political conflict. Political competition now occurs across an economic dimension, a social dimension[3], and a European integration dimension, in addition to the traditional left-right dimension (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012). The degree of alignment between these dimensions, that is, the extent to which they relate to one another, varies significantly across countries (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012; Dassonneville, Fournier and Somer-Topcu 2022).

When political conflicts on these dimensions align with each other, political competition can be described as taking place on a uni-dimensional space. This suggests that a party's position on one issue within a dimension can be inferred based on its position on another issue within a different dimension, as they tend to move in the same direction. For example, if a party takes a left-wing (right-wing) position on the social dimension, it is also likely to take a left-wing (right-wing) position on the economic dimension. However, when political conflicts occur independently across different sets of issues (i.e., economic dimension, social dimension, and European integration dimension), a party's position on one dimension does not necessarily predict its position on another dimension. Parties may strategically adopt positions on dimensions to gain electoral support. For instance, while they may adopt a mainstream position on one dimension (i.e., economic dimension), they may take a more extreme position on another dimension (i.e., social dimension) to mobilize the votes with specific extreme preferences (Krause 2020; Wagner 2012). Similarly, parties may also shift their position on one dimension for strategic reasons while maintaining a stable position on the dimension that is more important to them for reputation purposes (Koedam 2021).

The multidimensionality of the political space has significant implications for the study of elite ideological polarization. With the emergence of new issues forming different dimensions, the traditional left-right dimension can now be viewed as an overarching super-issue position that absorbs the new political conflicts (Knutsen 1998). However, the degree to which it absorbs the new dimensions varies across countries. Each dimension represents a component of the left-right dimension, and the importance of their contribution depends on their salience (Meyer and Wagner 2020). Consequently, the meaning of left-right can change over time and across countries (Knutsen 1998; Meyer and Wagner 2020), rendering the comparison of party polarization based solely on the left-right dimension over time and between countries less meaningful. This is because we cannot

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[3]In this dissertation, I refer to the social dimension as the GAL/TAN dimension for reasons of consistency, although it may be known by different terms in the literature. While there are nuanced differences between these terms, they are generally used to refer to this second dimension. See Chapter 2 for details.

(1) determine whether the within-country trends are due to parties adopting more/less distinct positions or if they stem from changes in the meaning of the left-right, and (2) compare the levels of elite ideological polarization between countries since the meaning of left-right can vary across countries. Therefore, to study ideological polarization accurately, it is important to move beyond the traditional left-right dimension and take into account the multidimensionality of the political space.

1.5   Summing up the Key Gaps in the Literature

Despite the extensive body of literature on political polarization, I identified key debates to which this thesis contributes and addresses the theoretical questions that motivate these debates. In this section, I summarize these key areas and the theoretical questions that motivate these debates.

First, are individuals mainly guided by their identity or ideology? This question brings two opposite camps regarding partisan identification into conflict. On the one hand, some argue that party identification is a social identity that guides one's ideological preferences (Achen and Bartels 2017; Campbell et al. 1980; Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Huddy, Bankert and Davies 2018). According to this approach, when parties adopt more extreme positions, partisans are expected to adjust their own positions on the same issue to align with their party because they are motivated by their identity rather than ideology (Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Petersen et al. 2013). On the other hand, another camp argues that party identification is a rational identity that is updated based on evaluations of the government, economy and expected benefits from a political party (Achen 2002; Fiorina 1981). This conceptualization places one's ideological preferences at the core of political behavior, suggesting that when parties polarize, partisans should not necessarily follow suit by adopting more polarized ideological stances to align with their party. This dissertation contributes to this ongoing debate by investigating the effect of party polarization on mass ideological polarization. If partisans become more ideologically polarized when their party takes a more extreme position, it would provide evidence in support of party identification as a social identity. Conversely, if this effect is not observed, it would indicate limitations to the social identity approach and the leeway of political parties in shaping mass opinions. However, while the absence of mass polarization is a necessary condition to give credence to the view of party identification as a rational identity, it is not

sufficient unless partisans switch their party identification to better match their opinions. Research shows that partisans can indeed rate candidates with less moderate positions from their own party more warmly (Lelkes 2021). This is because partisans may have rational reasons to support parties with more extreme positions, even if they themselves do not adopt such positions (Kedar 2005; Patty and Penn 2019). In short, I only test whether partisans behave as expected according to social identity theory, and that testing whether party identification is updated by ideology is beyond the scope of this thesis. This means that the results of these analyses in Chapter 3 do not test whether the causal influence flows exclusively from party identification to one's preferences.

Second, how do the masses react to increasing elite-level ideological polarization? Masses can react ideologically and affectively. First, focusing on the ideological reaction (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Brewer 2005; Garner and Palmer 2011), while some argue that the masses react by becoming more ideologically polarized, others argue that the masses do not follow the elites by adopting more extreme positions but simply become ideologically better sorted along party lines (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder Jr 2006; Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Fowler et al. 2022; Zingher and Flynn 2018). This debate is closely related to whether party identification functions as a social identity that motivates party cheering. Second, increased ideological polarization is linked to increasing affective polarization (Gidron, Adams and Horne 2020; Lelkes 2021; Orr and Huber 2020; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016). That is, when party polarization increases, affective polarization should also increase. However, there is no consensus on whether affective polarization is rooted in identity or ideology. This dissertation makes a contribution to this ongoing debate by providing evidence as to the nature of affective polarization. This has important consequences because without knowing the sources of affective polarization, effective solutions to excessive affective polarization cannot be found. For instance, if it is rooted in identity, there might not be effective tools to tame it other than reducing the salience of party identification, as it tends to be stable over time. In contrast, if affective polarization is rooted in ideological differences between parties, it means that the extremity of parties' ideological positions drives it, implying that if parties take more centrist positions, affective polarization can be effectively reduced.

Third, is affective polarization driven more by in-party feelings or out-party feelings? If it is mainly driven by out-party feelings, we can consider the change in affective polarization as an outcome of growing out-party hostility, as is the case in the United States (Iyengar et al. 2019; Iyengar,

Sood and Lelkes 2012; Webster and Abramowitz 2017). However, if affective polarization increases due to increasing in-party enthusiasm, high affective polarization would have different meanings. Instead of increasing hostility (animosity or hate) towards out-group(s), affective polarization can signal an emotionally more engaged and enthusiastic citizenry, while the out-party feelings remain stable.

Fourth, does perceived polarization cause affective polarization or vice versa? Elite polarization clarifies the differences between political parties to citizens, activating the fundamental disagreements among different groups, which leads to higher affective polarization (Gidron, Adams and Horne 2020; Lelkes 2021; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016). However, once individuals develop group attachments (i.e., party identification), they tend to exaggerate the differences between themselves and the out-group (Tajfel and Wilkes 1963), leading them to perceive more ideological polarization than actually exists (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). This suggests that partisan affect causes perceptions, hence it is plausible to consider that one's level of affective polarization alters the way they perceive elite polarization (Armaly and Enders 2021). Understanding the direction of this relation is important for two main reasons. First, it is crucial for those seeking remedies to affective polarization. If partisan affect influences perceived polarization and not the other way around, then perceived polarization can exacerbate affective polarization (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012), making it a self-fulfilling prophecy (Ahler 2014). Second, it provides insights into other political behaviors and attitudes, as perceived polarization has a distinct influence on political attitudes and behavior compared to actual polarization (Enders and Armaly 2019; Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). For instance, perceived polarization is linked to decreased political trust, while actual polarization is not (Enders and Armaly 2019).

In this dissertation, my focus is on examining the nature of political polarization. Following the elite opinion leadership approach (Zaller 1992), I take the parties as the starting point and analyze whether changes in party polarization lead to changes in ideological and affective polarization at the mass level. It is important to note that while political elites are the starting point in this dissertation, I do not exclude the possibility that political elites might also be polarizing in reaction to mass polarization or as a response to anticipated future mass polarization. Both factors likely influence each other, and disentangling the effect of each on the other is challenging due to their endogenous relationship. Therefore, in this dissertation, I focus on one direction: the effect of elite

ideological polarization on ideological and affective polarization at the mass level. To address the endogeneity issue, I employ a quasi-experimental design that allows me to test the causal direction posited in this dissertation, namely that party polarization causes mass polarization.

Before testing this, I confirm whether these questions are also meaningful in the European context. Specifically, have parties become more polarized like it is case in the United States? And how does party polarization vary between countries? If party polarization is increasing in Western Europe as well, studying the consequences of elite polarization on mass polarization becomes even more urgent. However, it is important to acknowledge that studying these questions without considering the transformation of the European political landscape has major drawbacks. This is primarily because we cannot determine whether the changes observed over time and between countries are due to (1) the changing meaning of the left-right or (2) contextual variations in its interpretation across different countries. This limitation hinders us from obtaining a clear answer regarding whether party positions have indeed become more distinct over time. Therefore, in Chapter 2, I simultaneously examine multiple dimensions of political conflict to document how party polarization has evolved in 13 Western European democracies from 1999 to 2019.

1.6   Methodological Notes

There are two main challenges in studying the research questions regarding the relationship between elite polarization and (1) mass ideological polarization and (2) mass affective polarization. First, even though this dissertation takes the political elites as the starting point, it is possible that elites polarize in response to perceived or anticipated mass polarization. This introduces the risk of incorrectly attributing increasing mass polarization to the increase in elite polarization. Conversely, masses may also polarize because elites do so. This endogeneity constitutes the main empirical challenge when studying the effect of elite polarization on mass polarization. As we cannot randomly treat individuals with elite polarization in observational data, analyses of observational data do not allow saying something about the causal influence between the two. Moreover, the gradual nature of party position changes in the real world further complicates the study of how elite polarization influences mass polarization. As a solution, one might consider resorting to experimental designs, although a trade-off must be made between internal validity and external validity. Manipulating

party positions in experimental designs may not accurately reflect the complexities of real-world politics. Respondents are likely to have been exposed to information about party positions on major issues prior to the experiment (Slothuus 2016). This pre-treatment can hinder the identification of the true effect of elite polarization. For instance, if respondents have already aligned their preferences with their preferred party or switched their preferred party to better match their own preferences, it may lead to the conclusion that the effect is nil, even when it is present. Manipulating party positions to diverge from their real positions on major issues poses even more challenges, as respondents may perceive the treatment as unrealistic. One approach to overcome these challenges is to use hypothetical parties, although this decreases external validity. Another approach is to manipulate party positions on lesser-known issues. However, this limits the interpretation to minor issues where voters may care less to oppose their parties' position, thereby giving the impression that parties lead the public. I overcome these limitations by employing a quasi-experimental design that leverages a real-world sudden party polarization when the United Kingdom's Labour Party shifted to the left following a leadership change. In this design, I use the unanticipated change in party position as a real-world treatment and compare the pre and post-ideological preferences of Labour Party partisans with those of non-partisans. This approach enables me to test the effect of party polarization on mass ideological polarization in a real-world setting.

Second, testing the argument that elite ideological polarization leads to affective polarization necessitates examining a two-step mechanism. The process involves individuals first perceiving an increase in elite ideological polarization, which then leads to heightened affective polarization. However, it is also plausible that affective polarization can influence the extent to which individuals perceive elite polarization. This debate is also rooted in the question of whether individuals are driven by their identity or ideology. If the degree of affective polarization determines the level of perceived elite ideological polarization, then identity plays a role. Conversely, if the extent of perceived elite polarization determines the level of affective polarization, then ideology plays a role. Nevertheless, when people fail to recognize changes in party positions, it becomes challenging to test whether affective polarization is genuinely grounded in ideology. This is simply because we cannot test whether a non-existent perception causes something. Therefore, in order to study the effect of change in elite polarization on affective polarization and vice versa, we need a case in which a change in elite polarization has occurred and is realized by individuals. I overcome this challenge

by relying on the British case, which provides an opportunity to test the impact of objective elite polarization on affective polarization, as the sudden shift in the Labour Party's position was widely perceived throughout the population.

1.7   Outline of the Dissertation

This is a dissertation about political polarization. Specifically, I document over-time trends in ideological elite polarization (i.e., party polarization) in 13 Western European democracies on different dimensions of political conflict: (1) the left-right dimension, (2) the economic dimension, (3) the social dimension, and (4) the EU integration dimension. After showing the increasing polarization trends at the elite level, I turn to an in-depth analysis of how the masses react to this increasing elite ideological polarization. Does elite ideological polarization lead to mass ideological and affective polarization? Focusing on the British case, where a sudden change in elite ideological polarization occurred, I find that party polarization does not lead to mass ideological polarization, but causes affective polarization.

This dissertation is guided by three main questions: (1) Did elite ideological polarization increase over time in Western European democracies? (2) Does elite ideological polarization cause mass ideological polarization? and (3) Does elite ideological polarization cause mass affective polarization? Each empirical chapter (Chapter 2, 3 and 4) focuses on one question. The dissertation finishes with a conclusion where I discuss the results of each empirical chapter's findings and draw inferences about the implications for the major debates in political behavior and public opinion. I also discuss avenues for future research. In the remainder of this section, I provide a description of each empirical chapter and their general contributions.

1.7.1   Chapter 2

The first empirical chapter of the dissertation addresses three guiding questions to which I provide answers. First, did party polarization increase over time in Western European democracies? Second, which countries exhibit higher levels of polarization? Third, how do these trends of de(polarization) vary within countries?

I focus on 13 Western European democracies (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) covering the

period from 1999 to 2019. In this chapter, I go beyond party polarization on the traditional left-right dimension, as the transformation of the European political space since the post-industrialized era has resulted in multidimensional politics that are not always aligned with each other (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Inglehart 1990; 1971; Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008; Marks et al. 2006). Therefore, I examine party polarization on each of these three dimensions simultaneously based on the ideological menu available to citizens. It is important to note that I also compare these trends to those based on the traditional left-right dimension. Using mean expert judgments from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey as indicator of party positions, I measure party polarization (i.e., elite ideological polarization) based on the average dispersion of parties from the relative center of the political system (see Chapter 2 for details). This measure is referred to as party polarization (PP) in the remainder of the dissertation and is different from party system polarization (PSP), which integrates parties' electoral weight to calculate elite polarization. I discuss the theoretical and empirical implications of both measures in detail and show how trends differ based on each measure.

This chapter reveals a trend towards more party polarization on the left-right, economic, and social dimensions but not on the European integration dimension. Parties are taking increasingly distinct positions from each other in terms of their economic and social stances, thereby expanding the range of ideological options available to citizens over time. Examining trends within countries, I show that these patterns hold true for most cases. Additionally, I find that party polarization on economic, social and European integration dimensions moderately correlates with party polarization on the traditional left-right dimension, while the correlations of among party polarization on these dimensions themselves are relatively weak. This is in line with the idea that the left-right dimension functions as a super-issue position, absorbing, to some extent, party positions on other dimensions. However, although these dimensions are somewhat absorbed by the traditional left-right dimension, they are not necessarily aligned with each other.

1.7.2   Chapter 3

Given the findings from Chapter 2, which demonstrate an increase in elite ideological polarization in Western democracies, I now turn to understanding how the masses react to this growing elite ideological polarization. Specifically, does elite ideological polarization lead to mass ideological polarization? When citizens are exposed to more extreme policy proposals, do they also adopt

more extreme policy preferences? In addressing these questions, I propose two mechanisms through which ideological polarization among the masses occurs. Drawing on social identity theory, when a political party adopts a more extreme ideological stance, I argue that in-partisans are likely to follow the party and adopt a more extreme ideological stance. Conversely, I expect out-partisans to backlash and move in the opposite direction. Furthermore, I argue that whether in-partisans become polarized when their preferred party does depends on their spatial location relative to the party on the ideological scale. For example, when a party moves to the left, only those who are either perfectly aligned with the party or more right-wing than the party should follow the party's shift to the left.

To test these expectations, I utilize a real-world case of sudden party polarization, specifically the leftward shift of the Labour Party, as discussed earlier and detailed in Chapter 3. By analyzing data from the British Election Study Internet Panel, I examine whether there is evidence of mass ideological polarization resulting from elite ideological polarization. The findings reveal limited evidence: Neither in-partisans nor out-partisans became more polarized following the change in the Labour Party's position. Only Labour partisans that were located to the right of the Labour Party—a small minority—became more polarized. Interestingly, contrary to expectations, I find that most in-partisans and out-partisans moderated their positions. The unexpected nature of these findings prompts a discussion of potential reasons for this effect. Overall, these results shed light on how the masses react to elite polarization, mitigating pundits' concerns that party polarization inevitably leads to ideological polarization among the general public.

These results directly contributes to the ongoing debate regarding the influence of identity on ideology. This debate revolves around social identity theory, which suggests that group members reduce cognitive dissonance by aligning their preferences with their party's position. The results of this chapter challenge the provocative argument put forth by Achen and Bartels (2017) that partisans behave like tribe members, unwaveringly cheering their identities no matter what, thereby rendering the normative democratic ideals a folk theory of democracy. Additionally, these findings also stand against the Zallerian elite opinion leadership thesis in that I do not find that public opinion polarizes when competing frames become more distinct. While this does not necessarily mean that masses are motivated by ideology, it means that citizens are not blindly adopting the ideological frame offered by their political parties. Thus, it suggests that parties may have more

limited influence in shaping mass opinions than previously thought.

1.7.3 Chapter 4

Building on the findings of Chapter 2 and 3, I continue investigating how the masses react to elite ideological polarization with a focus on citizens' affective reactions. More specifically, this chapter tests whether an increase in elite ideological polarization leads to heightened affective polarization among the masses, which refers to the extent to which individuals like their own party and dislike the other parties.

Making use of the sudden position change of the Labour Party, I find that higher ideological elite polarization leads to higher affective mass polarization. Moreover, this effect is not confined solely to in-partisans (i.e., Labour identifiers), but extends even to out-partisans (i.e., Conservative identifiers). While elite polarization does not cause ideological polarization among the masses, it does influence mass behavior by intensifying affective polarization (i.e., by widening the affective distance between parties). This implies that while elites may fail to shape mass opinions, they still guide how citizens think of political parties based on their ideological compositions. As a second step, I also test whether affective polarization is primarily driven by in-party or out-party feelings. The findings reveal that in-party feelings drive the increase in affective polarization more than out-party feelings. This finding stands in stark contrast to findings from the American case, but aligns with the findings of Rudolph and Hetherington (2021), Lelkes and Westwood (2017) and Bassan-Nygate and Weiss (2022).

In short, affective polarization is not necessarily a reflection of out-party animosity but can fluctuate due to changes in in-party enthusiasm. This suggests that we should be cautious about the bipolar conceptualization of in- and out-party feelings or reducing affective polarization to out-party hostility alone, as the change in the affective gap is not necessarily driven by out-party animosity.

Lastly, I show that the causal direction between how citizens perceive elite ideological polarization and how affectively polarized they are is bidirectional, which means that affective polarization is rooted in both identity and policy. This reconciles the arguments of two opposing camps. When citizens realize that parties change their positions, this perceived change in elite polarization causes a change in affective polarization. While some levels of affective polarization are inherent in demo-

cratic party systems, affective polarization can, to a certain extent, be mitigated by parties adopting moderate positions.

1.7.4 Connecting the Three Empirical Chapters

This dissertation first has two main objectives: it examines the prevalence and evolution of elite ideological polarization over time and investigates its impact on mass ideological polarization and mass affective polarization. Each empirical chapter complements the others in addressing different aspects of political polarization.

The first empirical chapter examines elite ideological polarization in Western European democracies based on party positions as perceived by experts. It is important to note that expert perceptions strongly correlate with how citizens perceive party positions, as previous research has shown (Dalton and McAllister 2015). This connection is crucial because for elite ideological polarization to influence mass ideological and mass affective polarization, the masses need to be aware of the extent of such polarization. The second chapter confirms that the change in the position of the Labour Party was perceived not only by experts (Figure 3.1), but also by ordinary citizens (Figure 3.5). The third empirical chapter (Figure 4.1) also corroborates this in that the growing ideological difference between the Conservative and Labour Parties was also perceived by citizens at large. These indicate that citizen perceptions align with expert perceptions, meaning that citizens and experts perceive similar levels of elite ideological polarization.

The second empirical chapter evaluates whether the masses also become more ideologically polarized when a political party adopts a more ideologically polarized stance. Unlike the first empirical chapter, which considers overall party polarization, taking into account each party's position, the second empirical chapter examines a specific case of individual ideological polarization where one specific party (i.e., the Labour Party in the United Kingdom) moves away from the center while the other parties' positions remain relatively stable. This positional change contributes to the overall party polarization in the country by increasing the ideological dispersion among political parties. The chapter aims to test whether the masses react to this ideological polarization by adopting more polarized stances themselves, either by following the party to the left or by backlashing and moving in the opposite direction. By mass ideological polarization, I refer to the extent to which individuals' ideological preferences diverge from each other, typically described by

a bimodal distribution of individual preferences.

The third empirical chapter examines whether increased party polarization in the system, resulting from the increasing ideological divergence between the two primary parties, leads to increased affective polarization among citizens. By affective polarization, I refer to the extent to which individuals like their own party and dislike the other parties. When affective polarization is high, individuals tend to exhibit greater enthusiasm towards their own party while exhibiting greater animosity towards other parties. It is important to emphasize that while both the second and the third empirical chapters examine the effects of increased ideological polarization on mass polarization, the outcome variable in both chapters differs. The second chapter evaluates whether citizens also become ideologically more distinct from each other by adopting more extreme positions, while the third chapter tests whether citizens' feelings toward parties become more polarized (i.e., higher affective polarization).

Chapter 2

Evolution of Party Polarization on Multiple Dimensions in Western Europe

2.1 Introduction

Political polarization has recently become one of the most talked about by the general public, political elites, pundits, and journalists. The prevailing consensus in these discussions is that political elites have become more diverse in the policy options they propose to citizens. Political scientists argue that party polarization has increased over time in Western Europe (Abedi 2002; Dalton 2021). However, we still lack a definitive answer due to both theoretical and methodological challenges in documenting trends in party polarization over time in Western Europe. Theoretically, first, the political cleavages in Western Europe are no longer confined to a unidimensional left-right dimension; they have transformed to include multiple distinct dimensions of political conflict over which parties compete (Hooghe and Marks 2018). Second, the meaning of left-right has changed over time, and this change varies across different contexts (De Vries, Hakhverdian and Lancee 2013; Knutsen 1998; Meyer and Wagner 2020). Therefore, analyzing party polarization solely based on the traditional left-right dimension is not ideal for determining whether party polarization in terms of proposed policies has increased over time. Empirically, to document party polarization (PP), we need to focus solely on the supply side and separate it from the demand side. However, most studies primarily focus on party system polarization (PSP), which considers both voter support and party positions simultaneously. In this chapter, I will overcome these shortcomings and provide a more

definitive answer regarding whether party polarization has increased over time in Western Europe on each of the political dimensions.

In the post-industrialized era, a societal cleavage between owners and workers structured political competition in Western Europe. Political parties used to politicize this divide, through which citizens made sense of the political world. This cleavage, coupled with questions surrounding national morals and the role of the divide between the church and the state, became a stable conflict in post-industrialized countries. This phenomenon, which is referred to as the freezing of the European cleavages by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), provided a framework for citizens to understand the political landscape. It allowed them to perceive each party as located on a unidimensional left-right space.

This ideological space, based on social class conflict (Inglehart 2017), pitted those on the left who favoured more state intervention in the economy through deregulation, government spending, and wealth redistribution against those on the right who favoured individualism and a free market with minimal state intervention (Bartolini and Mair 1990). The economic cleavage, centered on the class divide, hence, constituted the essence of the left-right ideological space (Downs 1957). Empirical evidence has shown strong relationship between the economic cleavage and the left-right (Knutsen 1995). The political space was structured in a way that parties would mobilize this economic cleavage and compete with each other. That is, the terms "left" and "right" became synonymous with economic left-wing and right-wing positions. In this context, party polarization indicated the degree of distinction between parties on the economic dimension, which was captured by the traditional left-right dimension. However, scholars have pointed out that the European political space has been undergoing a notable transformation (Hooghe and Marks 2018), which affects the absorbing capacity of the traditional left-right dimension in different political conflicts.

In addition to the economic conflict, political competition has transformed to include new conflicts such as post-materialist issues (Inglehart 1971; 1990), globalization (Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008), immigration (Dancygier and Margalit 2020; Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2019; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2019; Hutter and Kriesi 2022), and European Integration (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012; Costello, Thomassen and Rosema 2012; De Vries 2007; Prosser 2016). While some of these new issues are absorbed by the left-right dimension, others have formed new dimensions of political conflict on which parties take different positions. As a consequence, scholars of politics in

European democracies often distinguish three dimensions of conflict in European party systems: an economic dimension, a cultural dimension, and a European integration dimension (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Inglehart 1990; Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008; Kitschelt et al. 1994; Kitschelt and McGann 1997; Marks et al. 2006). These dimensions are independent dimensions of political conflict that are not necessarily aligned with each other (Albright 2010; Borbáth, Hutter and Leininger 2022; Knutsen 1998). That is, as the competition widened, political conflict became multidimensional, and parties can take distinct positions on each dimension (i.e., more left-wing one and right-wing on another dimension).

I argue that this transformation has implications for studying polarization over time and across countries. While the traditional left-right dimension was synonymous with economic left-right in post-industrialized Western European democracies, it can now be thought of as a super issue summarizing parties' positions on different dimensions (Jou and Dalton 2017; Knutsen 1998). Parties also strategically choose which dimensions to take moderate positions on and which ones to have a more extreme position on (Alonso 2012; Rovny 2012; Wagner 2012). The weight of each dimension in the overall left-right position depends not only on the salience of each dimension in a specific context at a given point in time (Meyer and Wagner 2020), but also on the meaning of left-right in each country (Jou and Dalton 2017). Hence, if what constitutes the left-right dimension is not fixed but rather dynamic (De Vries, Hakhverdian and Lancee 2013), studying how party polarization compares over time within countries and between countries based on this dimension becomes less meaningful. Therefore, in order to provide an answer to whether party polarization has increased over time, we need to go beyond the traditional left-right dimension and examine party polarization on each dimension.

By party polarization, I mean elite ideological polarization, which refers to the ideological differences in terms of proposed policies between the parties. At the party level, this translates into party polarization, which captures the extent to which political parties take distinct ideological positions (Dassonneville and Çakır 2021). High party polarization indicates that elites have greater policy divergence, while low party polarization suggests that elites propose policies that are more similar. There are two principal perspectives on the consequences of party polarization. On the one hand, the 1950 APSA Committee report argued in favour of more ideological polarization to make political choices matter. This perspective finds empirical support, as high party polarization has

been shown to increase electoral turnout (Crepaz 1990), strengthen issue voting (Alvarez and Nagler 2004), and proximity voting (Pierce and Lau 2019). On the other hand, Sartori (2005) warned that high ideological polarization (1) renders political debates exclusively ideological, (2) weakens the legitimacy of the regime, and (3) makes the political system dysfunctional and unstable. This perspective also finds support, as high party polarization can also foster partisan attachments, strengthening partisan biases in politics (Dassonneville and Çakır 2021; Lupu 2015), and mass affective polarization (Webster and Abramowitz 2017; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016), and increase the dysfunctionality of the system (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019). Furthermore, when individuals perceive the out-party to be more ideologically distinct, they are more likely to perceive hostility toward the out-party (Carlin and Love 2018; Reiljan 2020; Zakharova and Warwick 2014), which is argued to be detrimental because, among others, it leads citizens to perceive the opposing party as a threat to the nation (McCoy and Somer 2019).

Given the importance of ideological polarization, the body of literature on ideological polarization in European democracies continues to grow. This chapter makes two important contributions to this burgeoning literature. First, it extends the focus beyond the traditional left-right ideological polarization to include other dimensions. Second, it emphasizes the significance of party polarization (PP) in analyzing the ideological options available to citizens, rather than solely examining party system polarization (PSP). PSP measures the level of ideological polarization of political parties based on their share of electoral support (Dalton 2008). While previous studies have predominantly relied on this measure, it is dependent on electoral dynamics and therefore influenced by citizens behavior. If citizens increasingly support less centrist parties, this would result in higher party system polarization, even if parties' ideological positions remain unchanged. While this perspective provides valuable insights, it may not be well-suited for investigating whether the ideological menu available to citizens is becoming more diverse or not.

This chapter aims to address three key questions. First, have parties become more polarized (or depolarized) over time in Western European democracies? Second, which countries are more polarized and what is the variation between countries in terms of polarization on each dimension? Third, how do these trends vary within countries? To provide answers to these questions, I overcome the aforementioned challenge and focus on how party polarization evolves over time in Western European democracies on (1) the traditional left-right dimension, (2) the economic dimension, (3)

the social dimension, and (4) the European integration dimension.

2.2 Political Conflicts, Implications and Party Polarization

2.2.1 Transformation of the European Political Space

The political space in which parties compete has undergone a significant transformation in Western Europe. The emergence of post-materialist issues, a globalized open-market economy, and the increasing politicization of immigration issues, along with the division on European integration, has led to the formation of new dimensions of political conflict. The extent to which these dimensions are absorbed by the traditional left-right dimension varies across countries, resulting in variations in the meaning of the traditional left-right dimension between countries. Furthermore, as parties now employ distinct electoral strategies to mobilize citizens on different dimensions, the meaning of the traditional left-right dimension also varies within countries. In what follows, I elaborate on the transformation of the political space in Western Europe in more detail.

First, with the increasing economic safety in Western European democracies, individuals have shifted their attention from materialist issues (such as economic and personal safety) to post-materialist issues (such as environment, personal freedom and rights, participation) (Inglehart 1971; 1990). These new values have redefined the traditional left-right continuum. The emergence of green parties and citizen mobilization around environmental issues can be seen as a consequence of this post-materialist shift (Dalton 2021). Consistent with the post-materialism thesis, depolarization on economic issues among mainstream parties has occurred in the post-war period (Caul and Gray 2001; Kitschelt et al. 1994; Thomas 1980). For instance, left-wing parties such as the Social Democratic and Labour Parties have moved toward the center. A prominent example of this convergence thesis is the Labour Party of the United Kingdom, which significantly moderated its ideological position under Tony Blair and rebranded itself as New Labour, moving to the center (Adams, Green and Milazzo 2012; Green 2011).

Second, Kriesi et al. (2006; 2008) argue that globalization has transformed the political space, creating a new divide between the winners and losers of globalization. On the one hand, a globalized open-market economy and the expansion of the European Union have resulted in increased competition for the less skilled, particularly in the labour market, as companies seek to reduce costs

and maximize profits by moving their operations to other locations. On the other hand, the same globalized economy has provided more opportunities for the skilled and educated. Simultaneously, the rise in immigration has further intensified competition for those who are negatively affected by globalization. Additionally, a globalized economy has also fueled demands for protectionist policies to safeguard national economies and reduce competition for those on the losing end. Moreover, the influx of immigrants from both Eastern Europe (due to EU enlargement) and non-European countries, along with the growing number of refugees, has led to the politicization of the immigration issue (Dancygier and Margalit 2020; Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2019; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2019; Hutter and Kriesi 2022). Questions of immigration have become significant drivers of political competition in European politics. The emergence of such issues has given rise to a social/cultural dimension of political conflict, which has been labeled in various ways. It is referred to as (1) the social/cultural dimension (Rovny and Edwards 2012), (2) the authoritarian - libertarian dimension (Kitschelt et al. 1994; Kitschelt and McGann 1997), (3) the transnational cleavage (Hooghe and Marks 2018), (4) the winners versus losers of globalization (Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008), (5) the GAL/TAN dimension (green-alternative-libertarian versus traditional-authoritarian-nationalist) (Marks et al. 2006), and (6) the cosmopolitan-parochial divide (De Vries 2018). For the sake of consistency, I will refer to this second dimension as the GAL/TAN dimension (or social dimension) throughout the rest of this chapter, despite slight variations in terminology.

The emergence of the new political conflict over this second dimension has brought about a shift in the meaning of the left-right dimension. Research has shown that mass attitudes on the economic and cultural dimensions do not always align in the same direction (left-wing or right-wing), indicating that they are not interdependent (Malka, Lelkes and Soto 2019). This multidimensional political space creates an environment where individuals may experience cross-pressures, meaning they hold left-wing (right-wing) positions on one dimension but endorse right-wing (left-wing) policies on another dimension (Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006; Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann 2014). For instance, a significant portion of the electorate endorses left-wing economic policies but also more right-wing (authoritarian) social policies (Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann 2014). In the case of left-authoritarians, if there is no political party that aligns with their preferences (i.e., left-wing on one dimension and right wing on another), these citizens become cross-pressured, having to prioritize one dimension over the other when choosing which party to vote for. Mainstream parties

are less likely to adopt positions that are left-wing (right-wing) on one dimension and right-wing (left-wing) on another, making it more challenging for cross-pressured citizens to find a political party that represents their preferences. As a result, a significant number of citizens experience cross-pressures. For instance, the share of left-authoritarians is reported as 9 percent in Germany, 16 percent in Sweden, 26 percent in Portugal and Spain, 28 percent in United Kingdom, and 32 percent in the Netherlands.[1] Similarly, there is an increasing proportion of economic chauvinists within the electorate. Economic chauvinism refers to the support for economically intervention-ist measures but with limitations that excludes immigrants, focusing benefits primarily on native populations (Mudde 2007).

Third, attitudes toward European integration are considered a "sleeping giant" because they have the potential to become a mobilizing force when political parties politicize them (De Vries 2007). However, the overall consensus in favour of European integration has diminished (Hooghe and Marks 2009). The giant is no longer sleeping: the 2008 Economic crisis increased the salience of attitudes toward the European Union, as eurozone creditor governments faced domestic resis-tance to bailouts for debtor economies. This created a political conflict centered around national sovereignty regarding EU fiscal policies. Similar to the GAL/TAN dimension, the dimension of European integration is also independent of the traditional left-right dimension (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012; Costello, Thomassen and Rosema 2012; Prosser 2016).

In short, the political landscape in Western Europe has undergone significant changes, with par-ties taking distinct positions on various dimensions such as the economy, social issues, and European integration. The relationships between these dimensions vary across different European democra-cies, with some countries exhibiting stronger interrelatedness between party positions and others displaying greater independence (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012; Dassonneville, Fournier and Somer-Topcu 2022). For instance, Austria, Finland, and Denmark have less interrelated party positions, while the United Kingdom, Ireland and Sweden have more interrelated positions (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012; Dassonneville, Fournier and Somer-Topcu 2022). These new conflicts highlight a politi-cal space where parties strategically compete on multiple dimensions. In the next section, I explore the implications of this multidimensionality for the study of ideological polarization research.

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[1]These numbers are as reported in Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann (2014) and based on European Election Study 2009 data.

2.2.2 Implications of the Transformation for Polarization Research

In European politics, the traditional left-right dimension is no longer sufficient to fully grasp party behavior, as the political landscape has become increasingly multidimensional. In this section, I present two key reasons why taking into account the dimensionality of politics is important for research on ideological polarization.

First, the meaning of the political left-right is no longer the same as it was in the post-industrialized era, where left-right was synonymous with the economic left-right. With the emergence of new issues and the transformation of the political space in European democracies into a multidimensional space, the political left-right becomes a super issue representing parties' overall positions across different issues. That is, party positions on different dimensions constitute a party's overall left-right position (Meyer and Wagner 2020), and the importance given to each dimension may alter the relative meaning of left-right across countries (Meyer and Wagner 2020) or simply change the overall aggregated position (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013). In other words, the left-right dimension can be thought of an overarching dimension that absorbs issue positions across different dimensions (economic and social/cultural dimensions) (Knutsen 1998). How the left-right dimension absorbs these dimensions is context-specific, meaning it can vary across countries. Given that the salience of issues from different dimensions can vary both over time and across countries, the change in left-right positions is a product of both changing policy positions (on different dimensions) and the changing meaning of the left-right dimension (Knutsen 1998). As a result, when studying polarization trends over time based on this overarching left-right dimension, it becomes challenging to (1) infer whether polarization trends are due to the changing meaning of left-right in a given country or reflect actual changes in the positions of parties on specific issues or dimensions and (2) compare the extent to which countries are polarized in comparison to each other. Hence, it is crucial to go beyond the left-right dimension to understand how party and mass polarization evolve over time. Looking only at how politics is structured on the left-right dimension might mask how it is structured on each dimension.

Second, parties do not always compete with each other solely on the traditional left-right dimension. In the context of multiple political cleavages, parties strategically positions themselves on each of these cleavages. For instance, Wagner (2012) argues that parties may prioritize a specific

dimension, their primary dimension of interest, and adopt more extreme ideological stances on this dimension while maintaining moderate positions on the secondary dimension, which is of lesser importance to them. This strategic approach allows parties to appeal to a broader public with a moderate position on one dimension while targeting specific sections of the population and maximizing their electoral support through more polarized positions on another dimension (Alonso 2012, p.42). Similarly, Koedam (2021) argues that parties tend to maintain stability on their primary dimension to safeguard their reputation, while they strategically shift their positions on the secondary dimension for various strategic reasons. Therefore, in a political space where parties adopt different positions on multiple dimensions, it is important to examine party behavior simultaneously across these dimensions.

Given that multidimensional politics allows parties to strategically position themselves on various dimensions, the degree of party polarization can differ across these dimensions. Moreover, what constitutes party polarization on the traditional left-right dimension and how party polarization on other dimensions relate to it can vary from context to context and the salience of specific issues at a given time. If the overall left-right position is an aggregation of party positions on different dimensions, and parties maintain centrist positions on one dimension while adopting more polarized stances on another, the extent of party polarization may be underestimated. Hence, focusing solely on party polarization trends over time and across countries based on the traditional left-right dimension is insufficient for understanding the extent to which the ideological menu available to citizens polarized. It is important to examine party polarization on different dimensions simultaneously to gain comprehensive understanding of the political landscape.

2.2.3 Party Polarization in Europe

Most research on the evolution of party polarization is limited to case studies. For instance, a large body of research has focused on party polarization and its consequences in the United States. These works mostly unanimously conclude that both the Democratic Party and Republican Party have increasingly polarized (on the liberal-conservative dimension) over time since 1970s (Hetherington 2001; 2009; Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006). As for European democracies, there is some research in terms of case studies and comparative studies. For instance, Adams, Green and Milazzo (2012) show that the ideological difference

on the economic dimension between the Conservative and Labour Party in the United Kingdom considerably decreased between 1987 and 2001. Similarly, mainstream parties in the Netherlands depolarized between 1986 and 1998 not only on the traditional left-right dimension but also on the economic dimension and some post-materialist issues (Adams, De Vries and Leiter 2012), although the trend turned toward polarization after 2002 (Silva 2018). These studies are important because they provide evidence that while a polarization trend was present in the United States at the elite level (Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006), the opposite trend was taking place in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Party polarization has also considerably increased in Switzerland since the 1990s (Vatter 2016).

At the comparative level, Abedi (2002) investigates the evolution of (1) party system polarization (PSP), (2) established party divergence, and (3) anti-establishment support from 1945 to 1993 in 16 advanced democracies. Several conclusions can be drawn from this research. First, there is a trend toward higher levels of party system polarization in all Western European democracies (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom). Second, while mainstream parties polarized on the left-right dimension until the 1970s, they have started to depolarize afterwards. Third, support for anti-establishment parties has been on the rise since the 1980s, contributing to party system polarization. Dalton (2021) also provides evidence in favour of a trend toward polarization on the left-right dimension in most European countries between 1995 and 2019. However, these studies focus solely on the traditional left-right continuum, which no longer provides a good approximation of party or citizen preferences across issue positions in a European political space characterized by multiple dimensions (Borbáth, Hutter and Leininger 2022).

To the best of my knowledge, only two comparative studies have focused on ideological polarization at the party level beyond the traditional left-right dimension. First, Dalton and Berning (2021), use expert party placements of political parties to examine the evolution of party system polarization (PSP) on both social and economic dimensions between 2006 and 2019 across European party systems. They find a trend toward polarization on both dimensions. Second, Dassonneville and Çakır (2021) document the evolution of party system polarization on (1) the economic dimension, (2) the social and post-materialist dimension, and (3) national identity and immigration issues since 1950 in 12 established democracies, using party position estimates from the Compara-

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tive Manifesto Project (CMP). They find significant variation across countries, but overall, there is no depolarization trend on the economic dimension in the long run, while polarization is increasing on social and post-materialist issues, as well as on national identity and immigration issues. They also note that parties are most polarized on the economic dimension, followed by post-materialist issues, and then the national identity and immigration.

These two studies provide valuable insights into polarization patterns at the party system level. However, it is important to note that they do not specifically examine trends based on the extent to which individual political parties differ from each other. Instead, they use a measure of party system polarization that takes into account the electoral share of parties. This means that the calculated polarization index is influenced by the level of electoral support received by extreme and more moderate parties. If centrist parties receive more support, the polarization score will be lower, even if there are small parties with extreme policies. Conversely, in the same context, if extreme parties receive more electoral support, the party system polarization index will increase, reflecting changes in citizen behavior. In this chapter, I am interested in polarization trends at the supply side independent of how much support parties receive from citizens. For that reason, my analyses focus on over-time change in party polarization (which is distinct from party system polarization).

Previous work is also limited by the dimensions and issues they consider. In this chapter, I aim to extend previous research by including an analysis of the over-time ideological polarization trends on the European integration dimension, which is recognized as a third dimension in European politics (Bakker, Jolly and Polk 2012; Hix 1999*b*;*a*; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016; Prosser 2016).

In short, to the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to provide a comparative analysis of ideological polarization at the supply side (i.e., party polarization) in four dimensions of political conflict: the traditional left-right dimension, economic dimension, social dimension and European integration dimension.

2.3 Data and Methods

2.3.1 Data

To document party polarization trends on different dimensions, data on the positions of parties on each ideological dimension are necessary. While a manifesto-based approach, such as the one

used by Dassonneville and Çakır (2021), can be employed to estimate party positions, it is less suitable for the scope of this chapter. First, CMP estimates are constructed based on the frequency of left-wing or right-wing issue mentions (quasi sentences), which may inadvertently capture the level of issue salience (Lowe et al. 2011) rather than the extremity or intensity of the position. While CMP estimates can serve as a reasonable proxy for parties' true positions, theoretically, I am interested in comparing party polarization levels within countries across dimensions based on their true positions independently of their salience or indicated statements on policies. Moreover, CMP-based party positions tend to have a centrist bias (Benoit et al. 2012). Consequently, an underestimation of the actual extent of polarization at the elite level occurs, as exteme parties are considered to be more moderate (Ecker et al. 2022).

To obtain estimates of parties' positions irrespective of saliency, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) provides a better alternative. It offers surveys that capture expert perceptions of where parties are located on the traditional left-right dimension, economic left-right dimension, GAL/TAN dimension, and European integration dimension from 1999 onward.[2] More specifically, CHES data provide the average placement of parties by multiple experts in 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2019. While these placements reflect expert perceptions of where parties are located, previous research shows that expert perceptions correlate well with voter perceptions, even better than other available indicators such as CMP estimates (Adams et al. 2019; Dalton and McAllister 2015). These expert placements also serve as a reliable indicator of party positions (Bakker et al. 2015; Hooghe et al. 2010), with a clear mid-point (i.e., no centrist bias). Specifically, experts are asked to respond to the following items:

- **Traditional left-right dimension:** Left-Right Position of the party in [YEAR] in terms of its overall ideological stance (0-extreme left, 5-center, 10-extreme right).

- **Economic dimension:** Position of the party in [YEAR] in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues. Parties can be classified in terms of their stance on economic issues. Parties

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[2]It is important to note that CHES data also provide information on party positions specifically on immigration, redistribution, and social lifestyles. Unfortunately, these items are only available from 2006 onwards. As the focus of this study is on over-time trends of party polarization, I opt to use the GAL/TAN dimension instead of party positions on immigration or social lifestyle, and the economic left-right dimension instead of redistribution issue position. Party positions on the GAL/TAN and economic left-right dimensions are available since 1999, allowing for a longer time period to be covered. However, it is worth noting that I also examine whether trends differ when focusing on these individual issue positions compared to the GAL/TAN dimension and economic left-right dimension. As shown in Appendix A.1, the trends are found to be largely similar.

on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state (0-extreme left, 5-center, 10-extreme right).

- **GAL/TAN dimension:** Position of the party in [YEAR] in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights. "Libertarian" or "postmaterialist" parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues (0-libertarian/postmaterialist, 5-center, 10-traditional/authoritarian).

- **European integration dimension:** Overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in [YEAR] (1-strongly opposed, 2-opposed, 3-somewhat opposed, 4-neutral, 5-somewhat in favor, 6-in favor, 7-strongly in favor).

The analyses include 13 Western European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The CHES data cover 231 individual political parties, but parties with less than 1 percent of electoral support are excluded.[3] Therefore, the final data set comprises 163 parties in the 13 Western European democracies.

2.3.2 Measuring Party Polarization

Party polarization (PP), as operationalized in this study, captures the extent to which political parties differ from each other. Polarization is thus not just the global distance of parties from the center of a scale, but from the center of the system (i.e., mean position of all parties), which can vary between contexts. Low levels of polarization indicate that parties' ideological positions are concentrated around the center of the party system, resulting in less distinct policies and lower variation. In Sartori (2005)'s terms, this represents a centripetal system characterized by low ideological conflict among parties. Conversely, as polarization increases, the ideological menu

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[3]See the next section for the rationale.

offered to citizens becomes more diverse, with parties located away from the center of the system. This type of system, as described by Sartori (2005), is centrifugal, where party positions differ significantly. In summary, party polarization (PP) captures the dispersion of political parties in an ideological space and signifies the degree of political conflict within a political system.

Ideological polarization at the elite level is measured in various ways in the literature. One approach is to measure it by calculating the distance between the two most extremist parties located on both ends of the scale (Abedi 2002; Crepaz 1990). For instance, in country A, if the most left-wing party is located at 3 and the most right-wing party is at 7, the polarization score would be 4. Similarly, in country B, if the most left-wing party is at 1 and the most right-wing party is at 9, the measure would yield a polarization score of 8. According to this measure, country B would be considered more polarized than country A because it has parties advocating more extreme ideologies. While this measure provides useful information, it is incomplete as it ignores the positions of other parties and their location in relation to the mean of the system. Another approach to measuring polarization, which takes all parties into account, is based on the variance between parties' positions (Taylor and Herman 1971). This approach also considers parties' electoral power, such as vote share or seat share, thereby incorporating the weight of each party into the calculation (See Lupu (2015) and Dalton (2008) for examples).

In this chapter, I am interested in measuring party polarization (PP), which refers to the ideological menu available to citizens, rather than party system polarization (PSP), which takes into account how much each party contributes to polarization based on their electoral support. Specifically, my interest lies in analyzing the ideological polarization at the supply side, and for this purpose, PSP is less suitable as it relies on voters' reactions to party positions. In order to figure out if the elites have polarized, I need a measure that is not driven by voters' reactions to party positions. Standard ways for capturing PSP are constructed by integrating the extent to which parties' platforms receive support from citizens. Therefore, it is important to note that the PSP index does not solely capture the presence of these parties but is a combination of the supply side (parties) and demand side (voters) factors.[4] Party polarization (PP) and party system

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[4]This also renders the comparison of how much polarization occurs at the supply side (party level) and demand side (mass level) difficult. That is, given that citizens tend to vote for parties that are ideologically closer to them (Downs 1957), a weighted polarization index (i.e., PSP) would systematically bias the comparison towards a closer relation between party and voter polarization.

polarization (PSP) are conceptually and empirically distinct. To evaluate whether *parties* have polarized ideologically, I measure party polarization (PP) without weighting party positions by their electoral support. One concern, however, might be that there are very small parties that do not compete at the national level or that might even be inactive whose existence is not meaningful to consider the available ideological menu in a country. In order to alleviate these concerns, however, I further limit the sample of parties to those who obtained at least 1 percent of the votes, which leads to the exclusion of 10 percent of the sample.[5]

$$PartyPolarization = (\sum_{x=1}^{N}(p_x - \bar{p})^2)/N_p \tag{2.1}$$

Following previous works (Dalton 2008; Ezrow 2005), I build on the measure of Hazan (1995) to capture party polarization (equation 2.1), where N is the number of parties in a system, p_x is the position of party X on the left-right scale, and $\bar{p}$ is the average party position.[6] I further divide the sum by the number of parties included in the measure order to avoid an artificial inflation in the summation caused by the number of parties. The outcome of this equation takes into account all parties' distances from each other in relation to the relative center of the political system. Using an 11-point left-right scale results in a polarization index varying from 0, where all parties have the same position, to 25, where parties take the opposite extreme positions (See Appendix A.3 for party polarization visualizations for each country and dimension).

I apply this formula to four dimensions of political conflicts: (1) the traditional left-right dimension, (2) the economic dimension, (3) the social dimension and (4) the European Integration dimension.[7] For estimates of parties' positions, I make use of Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES), which provide experts' placements of political parties on these four dimensions.

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[5]Note that inclusion of these parties do not alter the tendencies. The choice of limiting the sample to parties that obtain at least 1 percent of the electoral support might seem arbitrary. However, the idea is to exclude parties that are inactive in politics rather than to exclude small parties. For instance, in many countries that are included in the analyses, parties with less than 5 percent electoral support are still politically active and they have representation (i.e., seats) in the parliament, which means they are visible. Electoral support for some relatively established parties also fluctuates over time sometimes dropping below 5 percent as well (The Left in Germany, the Greens in Austria, the Labour Party in Ireland, The Conservatives in Denmark, GreenLeft in the Netherlands, The Liberals in Sweden so on and so forth).

[6]This measure is also similar to Taylor and Herman (1971)'s measure of polarization, which can be indicated as $\sum_{j=1}^{J} w_j(p_j - \bar{p})$, where w_j is the vote share of party x, p_j is the position of party j on the left-right scale, and $\bar{p}$ is the mean position (i.e., center of the system).

[7]The range of the polarization measure depends on the scale of the item used. It ranges from 0 to 25 on an 11-point scale, such as the left-right dimension, economic dimension and GAL/TAN dimension, but ranges from 0 to 9 for the 7-point European integration dimension.

Figure 2.1. Visualization of Party Polarization According to Party polarization measure
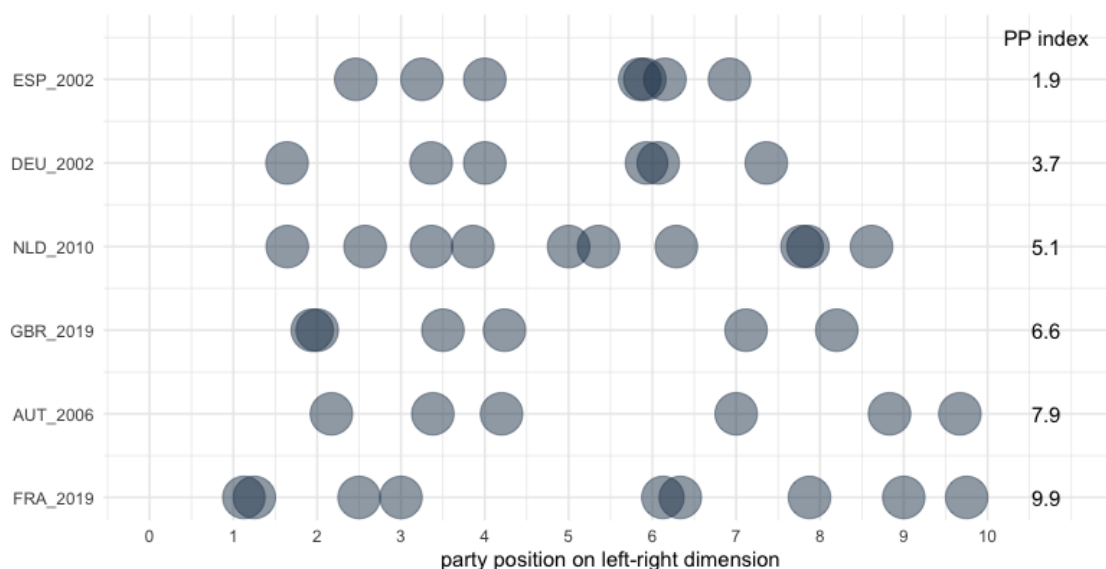
To illustrate what the party polarization measure captures, Figure 2.1 plots party positions in six countries that vary in terms of their degree of polarization on the traditional left-right dimension. The countries are sorted based on their degree of polarization, with PP increasing in descending order. Among these six cases, Spain in 2002 is the least polarized context with a score of 1.9, while France in 2019 is the most polarized context with a score of 9.9. In Spain, parties are not located very far from each other on the ideological continuum. While the center of the continuum (5) is empty, parties occupy somewhat centrist positions, with the most left-wing party placed at 2.5 and the most right-wing party placed at 7. The party polarization (PP) in Germany in 2002 is higher (a score of 3.67) than in Spain in 2002. Similarly, the midpoint of the continuum is still empty, but parties are further away from each other. In addition to centrist parties, the most left-wing party is located on 1.6, and the most right-wing party is located at 7.4. Furthermore, the space between parties is also larger. The 2010 Dutch case presents a context where parties are even more dispersed, despite having two parties that take a very centrist ideological position. The presence of three parties located at 7.7, 7.8, and 8.6 also contributes to party polarization (an index of 5.14). The British case is quite similar to the Dutch case although the center is emptier, contributing to the increased distance between individual party pairs. This leads to higher polarization (6.62). In Austria in 2008, the presence of two extreme right parties, the lack of centrist parties, and the presence of three leftist parties result in a higher polarization index (7.86). Finally, the French

political space in 2019 presents an empty center with several extreme left/right parties, resulting in a high level of party polarization (9.9). In this case, the ideological menu available to citizens is very diverse, and the ideological difference between the least left-wing and right-wing options is large. These examples show that the polarization measure captures meaningful differences in the extent to which parties are dissimilar to each other. It is also clear that the polarization score can theoretically range from 0 to 25, but in practice, it does not reach these extreme values. Even in the least polarized context with a score of 1.9 on the polarization index (e.g., Spain in 2002), there is still some level of ideological diversity among parties. By the same token, France in 2019 represents the most polarized context in the sample and has a score of 9.9 on this polarization measure. For the other dimensions of political conflict, the party polarization (PP) scores range from 2.5 to 11.3 on the GAL/TAN dimension, from 2.2 to 9.7 on the economic dimension, and from 0.4 to 5.0 on the European Integration dimension. This illustrates the varying degrees of polarization across different dimensions of political conflict.

2.4   Results: Over-Time Trends in Party Polarization in Western European Democracies

Did party polarization increase over time in Western European democracies? In other words, have parties in Western Europe adopted more distinct positions from each other over time? Figure 2.2 shows whether party polarization (PP) increased from 1999 to 2019 based on four dimensions of party polarization: (1) the left-right super issue dimension, (2) the economic dimension, (3) the GAL/TAN dimension, and (4) the European Integration dimension.

Scatter plots in Figure 2.2 show whether the average party polarization (vertical axis) across countries increased over time (horizontal axis). The level of party polarization in each country is also indicated by year. An upward slope would indicate an increase in average PP over time. It is important to note that the number of countries remains stable at 13 throughout the years. There is a clear trend towards polarization on all dimensions except for the European Integration dimension, which shows a fairly flat trend. First, focusing on the left-right dimension, PP has experienced an upward trend. The average PP across countries was 4.8 in 1999, which increased to 5.9 in 2010 and further to 6.4 in 2019. This represents a significant increase in the diversity of

policy options available to citizens and indicates a rise in ideological polarization. This trend is not driven by certain countries that experienced an exceptional increase in party polarization. That is, both previously low-polarization countries (such as the United Kingdom) and moderately-polarized countries (such as Austria) have witnessed an intensification of political conflict. Second, a similar but less sizeable trend toward polarization is observed on the economic dimension. The mean PP was 4.4 in 1999, reaching its peak at 5.5 in 2014, and slightly decreasing to 5.2 in 2019. This suggests that the convergence thesis, which posits that parties converge on the role of government in the economy, no longer holds for the Western European democracies. Instead, there appears to be an increasing disagreement on this question since the beginning of the 21st century.

Third, party polarization on the social dimension (i.e., the GAL/TAN dimension) exhibited the most significant increase over time. In 1999, the PP on the GAL/TAN dimension was 4.8, which then rose to 6.2 in 2010 and continued to gradually increase, reaching a mean score of 6.4 in 2019. The level of party polarization on the GAL/TAN dimension is comparable to that on the economic dimension. This confirms that parties are more polarized on the social dimension compared to the economic dimension. This finding aligns with the argument put forth by (Inglehart 1990) regarding the influence of post-materialist values on shaping political conflicts. Parties are increasingly mobilizing around the social cleavage. However, contrary to expectations, the mobilization of the social dimension does not lead to a depolarization on the economic dimension.

Fourth, at first glance, it may appear that party polarization on the European Integration dimension has remained quite stable over time. However, upon closer examination, a curvilinear trend with some fluctuations becomes apparent. For instance, the PP on this dimension reached its highest (3.3) in 1999, then decreased to a low of 2.1 in 2002, and gradually increased to 2.9 in 2019. It is worth noting that the scale used for measuring parties' positions on European Integration is a 7-point scale, resulting in a polarization index ranging from 0 to 9. Caution should be exercised when interpreting a trend toward polarization on this dimension because the increase observed in 2019 is primarily driven by increased polarization at the party level in the United Kingdom (evident during the EU referendum) and France (as seen in the face-off between pro-Europe centrist Macron and euro-sceptic le Pen during the presidential race).

Given that overall party polarization has increased over time, several questions abound. Is this a homogeneous trend across Western European democracies? And to what extent does this

Figure 2.2. Did Party Polarization Increase over Time?
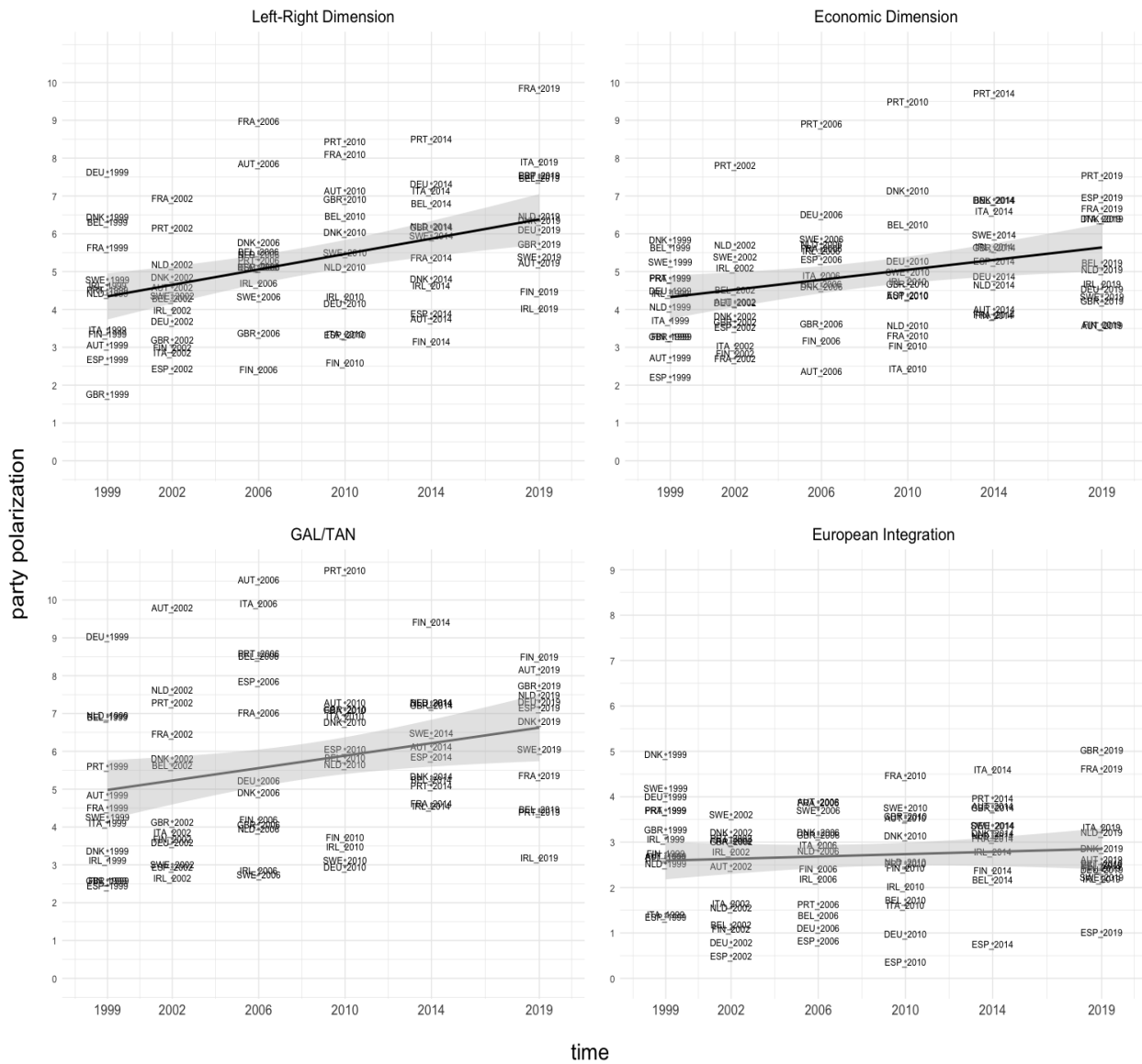
trend towards more polarization apply to individual countries? Figure 2.3 plots the degree of party polarization on the left-right dimension from 1999 to 2019 for each country. Consistent with Figure 2.2, the trend towards increasing polarization is evident across countries, with the exceptions of Ireland and Denmark. However, the magnitude of this increase varies from country to country. The increase in party polarization over time is particularly significant in Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the UK and Belgium. For instance, party polarization in the United Kingdom rose from 3 in 1999 to 7 in 2010, with some fluctuations around this level in 2014 and 2019. Similarly,

Figure 2.3. Party Polarization on the Left-Right Super Issue Dimension
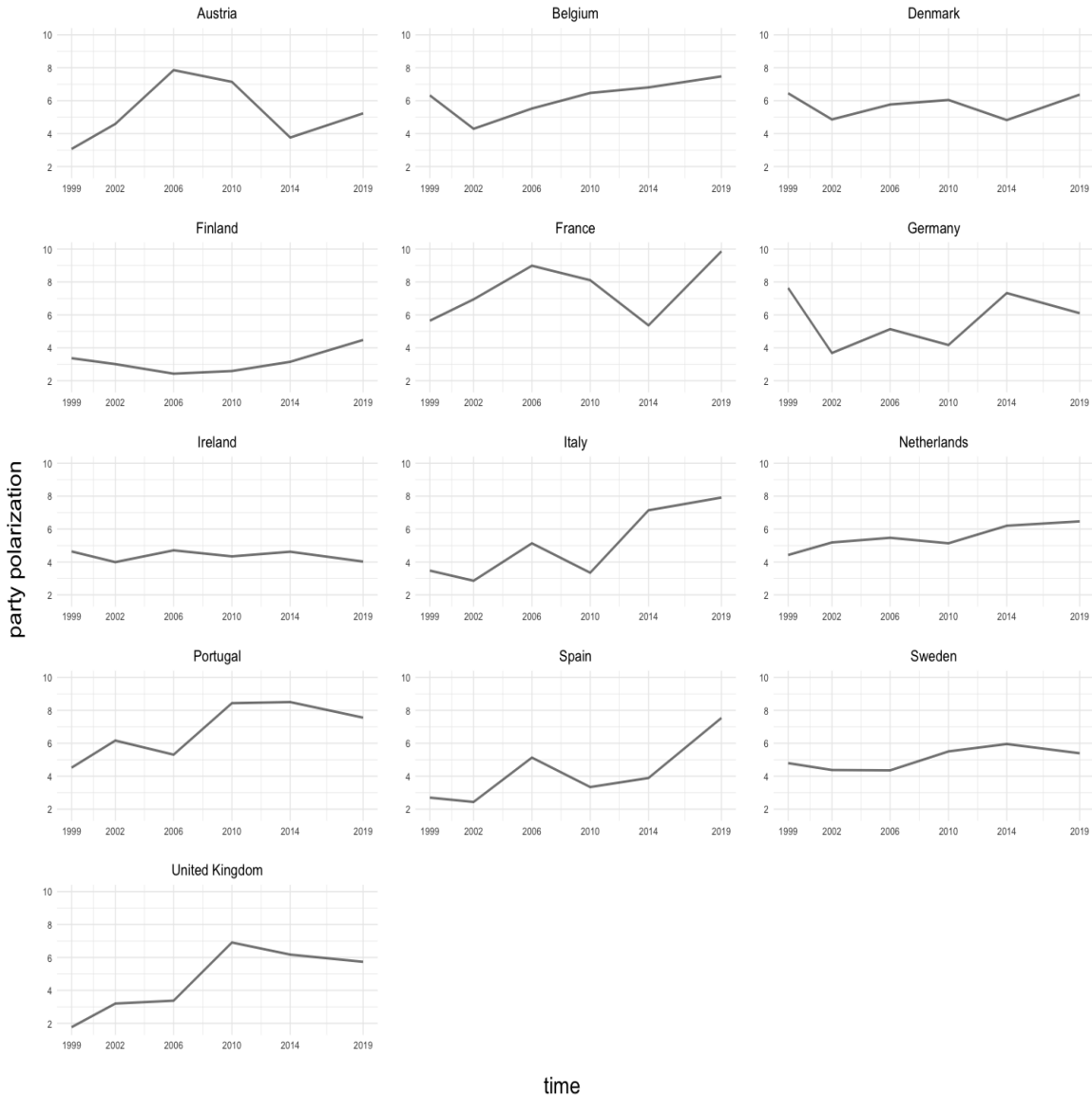
party polarization in Italy rose from 3.4 in 1999 to 5.5 in 2006, to 7 in 2014 and to 8 in 2019. In Sweden and the Netherlands, this increase is more modest but still noteworthy. For example, in Sweden, party polarization was already high (5.0) in 1999, and it further increased to 5.5 in 2010 and 6 in 2014. In the Netherlands, which was also polarized in 1999 (4.2), the level of polarization rose 6.1 in 2014 and to 6.3 in 2019. Overall, parties in Western Europe have clearly become more ideologically distinct on the traditional left-right dimension over time. However, the degree and pace of this increase in party polarization vary across countries.

The traditional left-right dimension is often considered a super issue position (i.e., an average

Figure 2.4. Party Polarization on the Economic Dimension
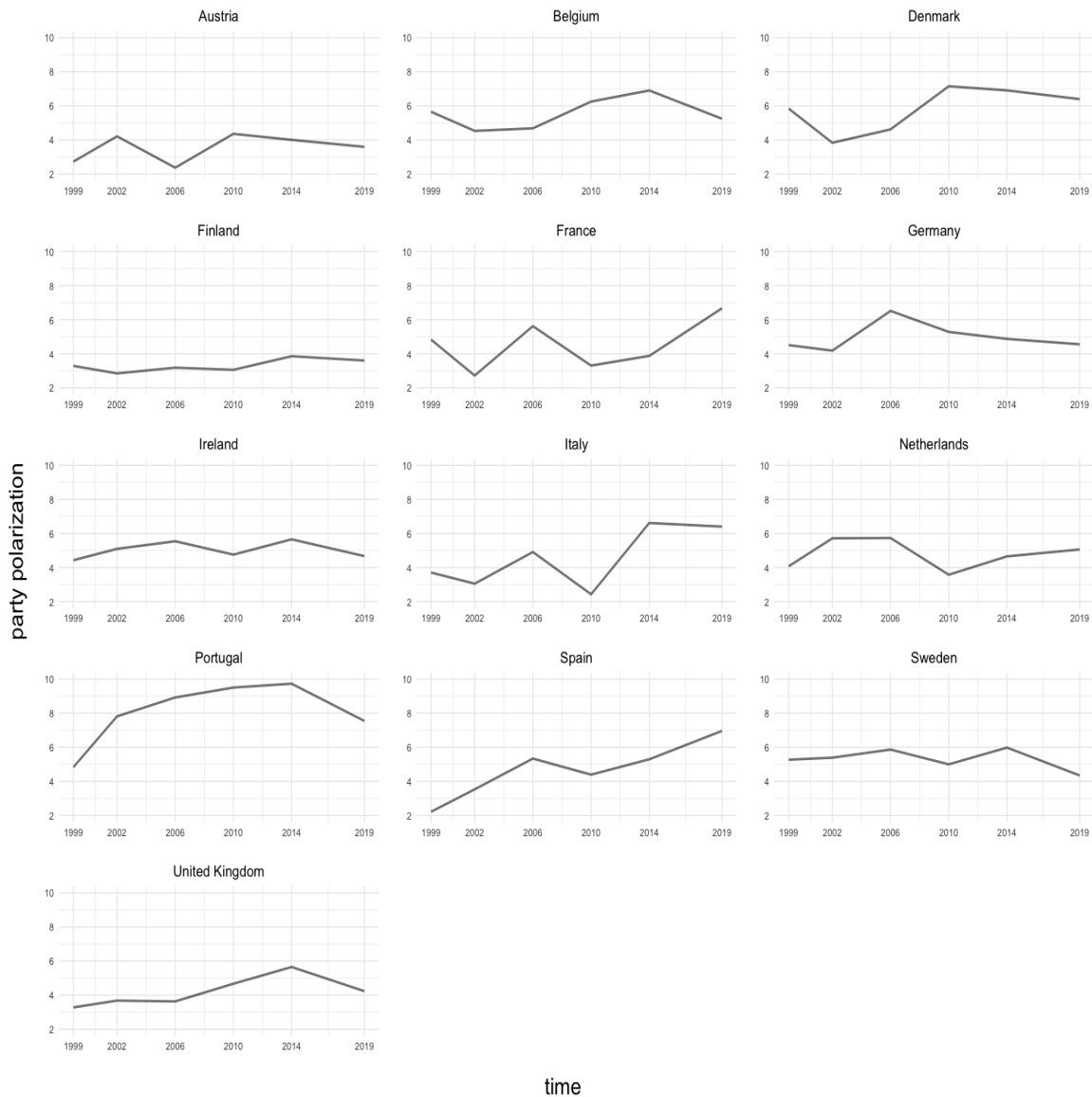
position) that summarizes multiple issue positions (Inglehart 1990; Knutsen 1998). However, it is important to explore whether party polarization reflects polarization on specific issue dimensions, such as the economic dimension, the social dimension, or the European integration dimension. It is also crucial to determine whether the increasing left-right polarization is accompanied by polarization on these other dimensions. If not, which of these dimensions drive the increasing polarization on the left-right dimension? To shed light on these questions, I will now examine the within-country evolution of party polarization on three other dimensions of political conflict in European democracies.

Figure 2.4 provides insights into party polarization on the economic dimension over time. In most countries, there is an observable increase in the level of disagreement among parties regarding the role of government in economic affairs. While there are fluctuations, the overall trend towards increasing polarization on the economic dimension is evident in most countries. For example, Spain experienced a significant increase in party polarization on this dimension, rising from a score of 2 in 1999 to 7 in 2019. In the United Kingdom, polarization increased by more than 2 points in the post-Tony Blair era. However, it is important to note that not all countries exhibit the same trend. Belgium, for example, witnessed substantial polarization following the 2008 economic crisis but subsequently experienced depolarization after 2014. In Sweden and Ireland, there is no clear pattern of trends, as party conflict slightly increases and decreases from election to election. The levels of average party polarization on the economic dimension are comparable to those on the left-right dimension, although slightly higher on the latter. This indicates that the economic dimension is not the only driver of polarization on the left-right dimension.[8] In short, both the mean polarization across countries over time (Figure 2.2) and the within-country analysis (Figure 2.4) show that the economic dimension is still an important part of political conflict, and it has even become more divisive for political parties in Western European democracies.

Figure 2.5 presents the evolution of party polarization on the social dimension (GAL/TAN or transnational cleavage). There is clear evidence that the extent of conflict varies within and between countries. Parties are clearly divided on this dimension of political conflict, and the level of division varies from one election to another. In most countries, there is a positive trend in polarization on the GAL-TAN dimension. However, there are also cases where parties initially polarized but then depolarized to their lowest levels (such as in Belgium and Portugal). Fluctuations in polarization are also observed in countries like the Netherlands, Austria and Germany. In terms of cross-dimension comparison, parties in some countries are particularly polarized on this social dimension. For example, party polarization in countries such as Austria, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain reaches higher levels than on the economic dimension. These findings provide evidence that party polarization on the social dimension tends to be higher than that on the economic dimension.

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[8]Note that party polarization on the left-right dimension and the economic dimension is measured on the same scale, and the polarization scores are comparable.

Figure 2.5. Party Polarization on the GAL-TAN Dimension
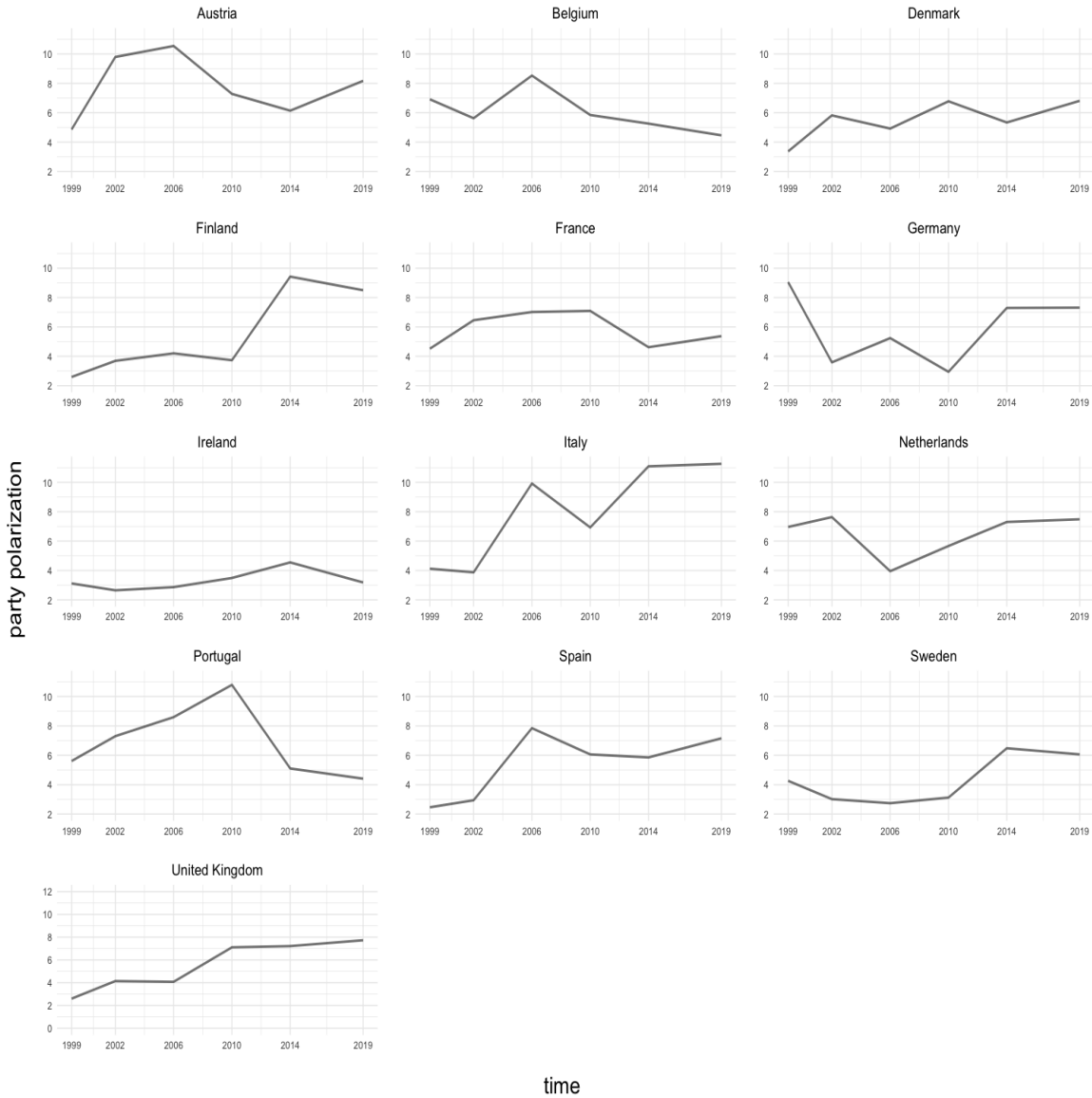
Lastly, Figure 2.6 presents party polarization trends on another dimension of political conflict in European democracies: whether European integration should be pushed further or not. In line with the weak change in mean party polarization since 1999 (See Figure 2.2), this trend is not universal and is driven by a few countries. Party polarization on this dimension increased in France, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. For instance, parties became more conflicted on the question of European integration in the United Kingdom prior to the referendum on the European Union, and this conflict further increased in the aftermath of the referendum, reaching a record high level of polarization in the United Kingdom. Hobolt, Leeper and Tilley (2021) show that British citizens

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Figure 2.6. Party Polarization on the European Integration Dimension
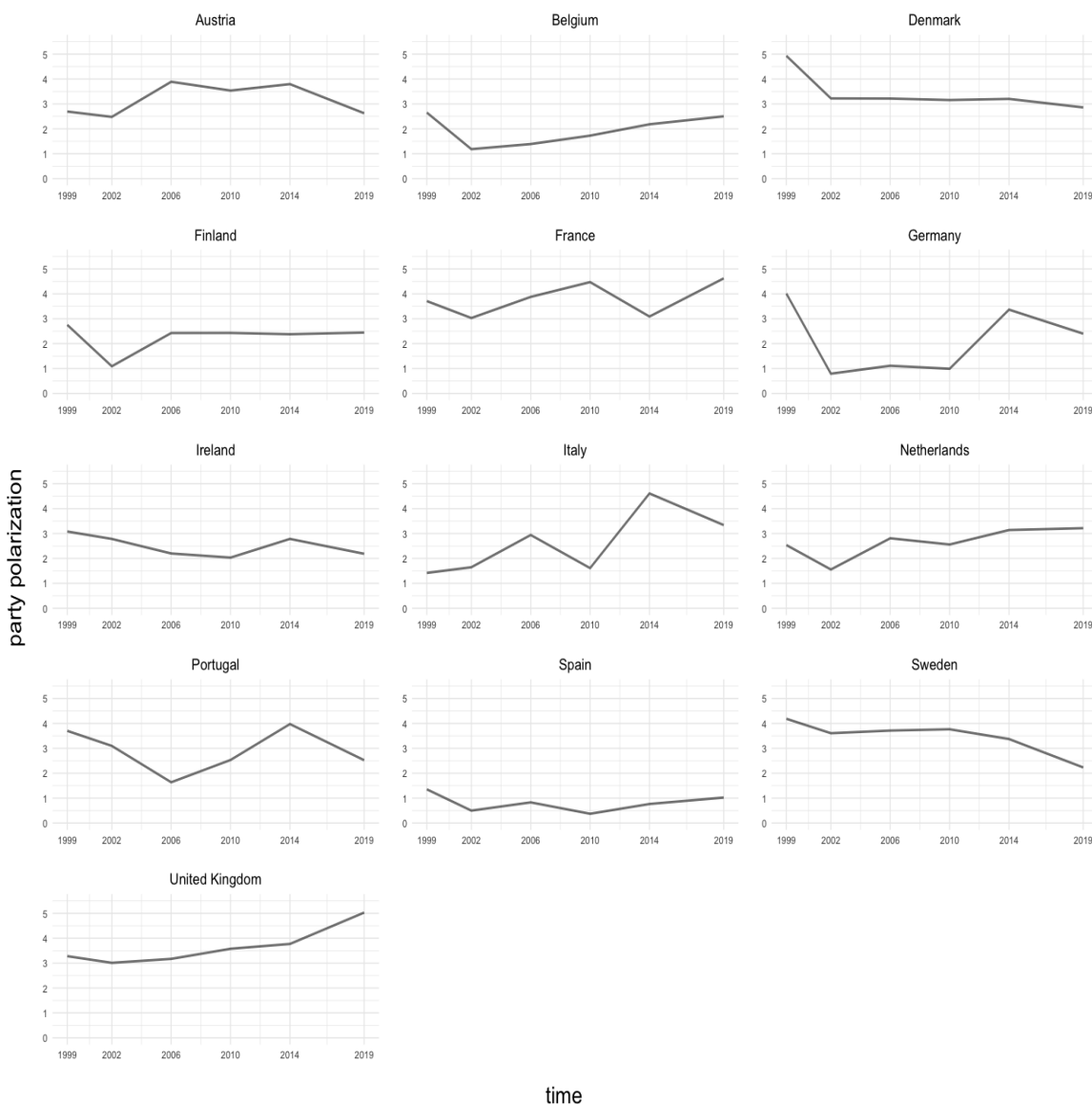
even developed new identifications as "remainers" versus "leavers" that act as social identities. At the same time, there are two cases of clear depolarization on the European integration dimension (Ireland, and Sweden). In the remaining countries, there is no specific trend toward polarization or depolarization, but the level of party polarization fluctuates.

The findings on party polarization not only confirm the previous literature on the presence of multiple dimensions of political competition but also contributes to our understanding of how party polarization on different dimensions is linked to each other. Does party polarization on a given dimension imply an increase in polarization on another dimension? Not necessarily. For instance,

parties were polarizing on the economic dimension in Austria and Germany, while depolarizing on the social dimension. The opposite was true for Belgium: parties were polarizing on the economic dimension, while depolarizing on the social dimension. When comparing these (de)polarization trends with the trends on the traditional left-right dimension, it becomes clear that they are context specific. In Austria and Germany, it was the social dimension that followed the same trend as left-right polarization, while in Belgium, it was the economic dimension. Moreover, the trend in party polarization on the European integration dimension is independent of the trends on other dimensions, except for several countries. For instance, it tracks the trends on the left-right dimension in Belgium, and the left-right and GAL/TAN dimensions in the United Kingdom and Germany. Italy seems to be an exception where party polarization follows the same trend on each of the four dimensions under study.

Table 2.1. Correlations of Party Polarization on Different Dimensions

Party Polarization	left-right dimension	economic dimension	GAL/TAN dimension
economic dimension	0.56		
GAL/TAN dimension	0.50	0.21	
European integration dimension	0.47	0.12	0.16

To more systematically assess the connections between polarization on different dimensions, Table 2.1 presents the correlations between party polarization on different dimensions. First, party polarization on the left-right dimension shows moderate correlations with party polarization on the economic dimension (0.56), GAL/TAN dimension (0.50), and European integration dimension (0.47). These correlations are not particularly strong. The fact that party polarization on the economic dimension explains only 0.56 of the variation in party polarization on the left-right dimension confirms that the meaning of left-right is no longer synonymous with economic positions. While there is a positive relationship between party polarization on different dimensions and on the left-right dimension, a high level of polarization on one dimension does not necessarily translate into the same level of polarization on the left-right dimension. This supports the argument that the left-right dimension serves as an overarching super issue position, and we need to look beyond it to study polarization trends. Second, the correlations between party polarization on the economic dimension, GAL/TAN dimension and European integration dimension are rather weak, ranging from 0.12 to 0.21. Even though there is some relationship between party polarization on the left-right dimension and polarization on the other dimensions (economic, GAL/TAN and European

integration), the associations between the latter are rather weak.

Taken together, the results presented in this chapter highlights the importance of considering the existence of multiple political conflicts in Western Europe when studying ideological polarization. The traditional left-right super issue position is not a perfect approximation of parties' positions on various issues, and party polarization on different dimensions (such as the economic dimension, the GAL/TAN dimension, and the European integration dimension) demonstrates weak correlations. This underscores the need to account for the multidimensionality of political conflicts and avoid solely relying on the left-right dimension when examining ideological polarization in Western European democracies.

2.5   Conclusion

This chapter argued that the transformation of the European political space has important implications for the study of polarization over time in different countries. In the past, the political left-right dimension was closely aligned with economic left-right positions in the post-industrialized Western world. However, the emergence of new issues that do not necessarily fit within the traditional left-right framework has led to the existence of multiple dimensions of political conflict. As a result, the meaning of the overarching left-right dimension has become influenced by the presence and salience of these additional dimensions. Therefore, when examining trends of party polarization over time based on the left-right dimension alone, it is unclear whether the observed changes represent real shifts in polarization or simply reflect the evolving meaning of the left-right dimension itself. For this reason, this study focused on analyzing trends in party polarization across 13 Western European democracies between 1999 and 2019 on four dimensions: (1) the traditional left-right dimension, (2) the economic dimension, (3) the social dimension, and (4) the European integration dimension.

I find that there is an overall trend towards increased party polarization on the left-right, economic and GAL/TAN dimensions, but not on the European integration dimension. This indicates that parties in Western democracies are offering more polarized policy proposals not only on the traditional left-right spectrum but also on economic and social issues. These findings are consistent across most countries when examined at the within-country level. Importantly, I also find that, on

the one hand, party polarization on the economic, social and European integration dimensions is positively correlated with party polarization on the left-right dimension, although these correlations are only moderate. This suggests that party polarization on different dimensions contributes to party polarization on the left-right dimension. On the other hand, it is important to note that the correlations between these dimensions (economic, social, and EU) are very weak, indicating that they function as independent dimensions of political conflict. These findings have two implications. First, party polarization on different dimensions contributes to the overall party polarization on the left-right dimension. Second, party polarization on one of these dimensions does not necessarily imply polarization on another dimension, highlighting the nature of these dimensions. Further research is needed to understand what factors contribute to the meaning of the left-right dimension. Overall, these results emphasize the importance of studying party polarization on multiple dimensions to gain a comprehensive understanding of political conflict.

This study differs from others in that it measures party polarization based only on the supply side as offered by parties regardless of the electoral support they receive. Comparing elite-level ideological polarization trends with party polarization and party system polarization (see Appendix A.2), I show that party system polarization fails to capture the real extent of polarization at the elite level because it is weighted by electoral support. This has implications for research focusing on how elite polarization influences mass polarization and vice versa. If the measure of elite-level polarization is constructed based on the extent to which the masses support parties, the level of correspondence between elite and mass preferences is bound to produce more congruent results. That is, party polarization and mass polarization would be artificially forced to align in the same direction. However, by focusing solely on the supply side (i.e., what parties offer to citizen), we can study party-mass linkages in a more meaningful way. While this study has primarily focused on the descriptive trends of party polarization, it is essential for future research to also examine the extent of mass polarization on these dimensions. Such an examination will enable us to investigate whether party polarization precedes mass polarization or vice versa.

Chapter 3

How do Masses React to Party Polarization? Limited Effect of Elite Polarization on Mass Ideological Polarization

3.1 Introduction

Elite-level ideological polarization is a phenomenon observed in both the United States (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Hetherington 2001) and in numerous European countries (Dalton 2021). For example, in the United States, party elites have increasingly taken distinct positions on issues since the 1970s (Hetherington 2001; Hill and Tausanovitch 2015). Similarly, results from Chapter 2 show that elite behaviour in other established democracies has also become less cooperative and more competitive due to rising ideological polarization. Even Swiss democracy, traditionally seen as an example of consociational democracy, has experienced polarization (Vatter 2016). With the prevalence of increasing party polarization patterns (Dalton 2021), it is crucial to study how the masses react to elite polarization. Although scholars have given attention to this question (Adams, De Vries and Leiter 2012; Adams, Green and Milazzo 2012; Arndt 2016; Hetherington 2001; Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006; Silva 2018), studying how the masses respond to elite-level polarization poses challenges due to the endogenous relationship between elite position-taking and mass position-taking. In this chapter, I study this question causally by leveraging a unique case—the sudden ideological polarization of

the United Kingdom's Labour Party in 2015 following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as its leader. I study the implications of this elite ideological polarization by focusing on how in-partisans and out-partisans react to it. First, do in-partisans (i.e., Labour partisans) follow their party and adopt more extreme ideological positions? Second, do out-partisans (i.e., Conservative partisans) backlash to the polarization of the out-party by adopting more extreme positions in the opposite direction?

First, I argue that elite ideological polarization will influence mass ideological polarization because individuals are more motivated to maintain their identity than their specific ideological preferences. Classical studies have viewed party identification as a driver of ideological preferences (Campbell et al. 1980). A social identity approach to party identification has been gaining ground in this debate of whether parties polarize the masses. As identities are easier to comprehend and process compared to the abstract core values that guide policy opinions (Goren, Federico and Kittilson 2009), citizens tend to rely on their identity (i.e., party identification) to simplify the complexities of politics and form opinions on specific issues (Brader et al. 2020; Downs 1957; Mondak 1993; Zaller 1992). In addition, party identification has numerous latent affective associations in long-term memory that become activated by party cue, thereby influencing conscious reasoning (Lodge and Taber 2005; Morris et al. 2003). That is, partisanship becomes activated and guides how identifiers reason about their ideological stances. Overall, when a political party adopts a more extreme position, citizens are both consciously and unconsciously motivated to align their position with that of their party by also adopting a more extreme stance. Specifically, in-group members (i.e., partisans of the polarizing party) strive to maximize both in-group similarity and differentiation from the out-group, which translates into the expectations that when elites polarize, in-partisans should adjust their own preferences in the direction of the party's position change. Furthermore, I argue that this updating process is contingent on spatial positions: partisans should only adopt a more left-wing position if it reduces the ideological gap between themselves and their party.

Second, studying misperceptions of partisan groups, Ahler (2014) shows that when partisans perceive the other group as more extreme than they actually are, they tend to position themselves as more extreme, but in the opposite direction. Importantly, when their misperceptions of the out-group are corrected to reflect less extreme positions, they also moderate their own positions (Ahler 2014). Hence, the perceived position of the out-group influences the positioning of in-group members, as they seek to distinguish themselves from the other group. Moreover, out-partisans fear

the potential implementation of policies that may favour the opposing group, which can trigger a backlash effect among them (Bishin et al. 2016; Bischof and Wagner 2019). Consequently, I argue that when a political party adopts a more extreme position, out-partisans (i.e., identifiers of the opposing party) will also become more polarized, moving in the opposite direction.

In this chapter, I test whether elite polarization leads to mass ideological polarization using a quasi-experimental design. I exploit a real-world scenario that occurred after a leadership change in the United Kingdom's Labour Party in 2015, which resulted in a sudden shift of the party's position from the center towards the extreme left, while other parties remained relatively stable. This unexpected shift in the party's position came about when Jeremy Corbyn, initially lacking sufficient nominations to compete for the leadership position, received additional support from members seeking to broaden the scope of discussions by including this unviable and outsider candidate in the competition (Quinn 2016). This shift in the Labour Party's position under unexpected new leadership resulted in elite polarization within the country. This situation presents a unique opportunity to test how the masses react to elite polarization. Previous research has shown that (1) voters often rely on party leaders to inform their political preferences (Popkin 1991), (2) parties with new leaders tend to receive higher media attention, providing them with a wider reach to citizens, and (3) when new leaders assume their roles, they often clarify their party's position, reducing disagreements among voters regarding the party's ideological stance, particularly when the party undergoes a significant ideological shift (Somer-Topcu 2017).

Using two waves of data from the British Election Study Internet Panel, conducted before and after the leadership change in the Labour Party, I examine the impact of this event on ideological polarization among Labour and Conservative identifiers. Contrary to expectations, I find that neither Labour identifiers became more polarized nor did Conservative identifiers respond with a backlash by adopting more right-wing positions. Instead, both in-partisans (i.e., Labour identifiers) and out-partisans (i.e., Conservative identifiers) slightly moderated their ideological stances. The results provide suggestive evidence that the influence of elite polarization is contingent upon one's spatial location within the ideological spectrum. Furthermore, the results suggest that political parties have limited leeway in polarizing mass preferences. Overall, I find limited evidence of elite polarization influencing mass polarization.

These findings make several implications. First and foremost, they contribute to the existing

research on political polarization by challenging the notion that increasing elite-level ideological polarization inevitably leads to a more polarized citizenry. The results provide limited evidence to support this claim, as a majority of partisans moderated their ideological positions rather than adopting more extreme stances when their party shifted towards extremism. This suggests that the impact of political parties on shaping mass ideological preferences may be less pronounced than previously believed. Even though some ideologically out-of-touch partisans aligned with their party's extreme position, this was observed among a small minority. This paints a less pessimistic image on the extent to which political parties shape mass ideological preferences. If a mainstream party adopts an extreme ideological position, partisans do not necessarily follow the party and become polarized. Second, this research is also relevant for the literature on whether individuals are more motivated to keep their (partisan) identity or ideology. Does party identification reflect one's identity or one's ideological preferences? Even though partisans perceived the shift in their party's position, they did not follow the party and become more extreme. This means that the effect of identity on ideology might be more limited than previously thought. Lastly, this study expands the empirical scope of studying the link between elite ideological polarization and mass ideological polarization. Given the difficulty of studying the link between elite polarization and mass ideological polarization because (1) they are likely endogenous and (2) they take place gradually over time, scholars often find themselves with a trade-off between causality and external validity. A real-world event in which a mainstream party suddenly adopted a more extreme position allowed me to study the effect of ideological polarization at the elite level on mass ideological polarization, both causally and with high external validity.

3.2   Theory

Do masses polarize ideologically when elites polarize? While there is evidence that elite polarization has increased since the 1970s, there is still debate about whether the masses have also become ideologically more polarized. On the one hand, some argue that when elites polarize, the masses follow the suit and adopt more extreme positions (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2016). On the other hand, it is pointed out that elite-level ideological polarization provides ideological cues to citizens, leading to ideological sorting rather

than a shift in partisans' positions (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Zingher and Flynn 2018), thus suggesting that the mass preferences of most Americans remain moderate (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder Jr 2006). Similar debates persist in European democracies. On the one hand, there is evidence that the Dutch public depolarized following elite depolarization between 1986 and 1998 (Adams, De Vries and Leiter 2012) and polarized following the rise of populist radical right parties since the early 2000s (Silva 2018). Furthermore, Arndt (2016) shows that elite polarization led the masses to become polarized in Denmark as well. However, there is also contrary evidence. Notably, when the two dominant parties in the United Kingdom dramatically depolarized between 1987 and 2001, the preferences of the British public did not become more centrist (Adams, Green and Milazzo 2012). While the masses did not moderate their ideological positions, the ideological homogeneity of party identifiers did decrease. That is, the masses did not adjust their policy issues but became less ideologically sorted along party lines. In sum, while the question of whether elite polarization causes mass polarization is under scrutiny, we still lack a scholarly consensus on whether elite ideological polarization leads to mass ideological polarization.

3.2.1 Effects of Elite Polarization

Most of what we know about the process of how the masses react to elite polarization comes from research conducted in the U.S. context. While it was not very easy to ideologically differentiate the Democratic Party from the Republican Party during the 1950s, their ideological overlap has gradually decreased starting in the 1970s (Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Layman and Carsey 2002). Even though some argue that the causal direction between elite polarization and voter polarization could go both ways for some issues (Jacobson 2000; Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006), a large body of research finds that elite ideological polarization leads to mass ideological polarization (Dancey and Goren 2010; Gillion, Ladd and Meredith Forthcoming; Hetherington 2001; 2009; Levendusky 2010; Stoker and Jennings 2008; Zaller 1992). These studies suggest that when elites take distinct positions and the media diffuses this information, voters see party divergences on issues and become better able to sort themselves into the political party that shares their issue positions. There is an ongoing debate, however, on whether the American public—on top of becoming more sorted—also polarized in response to elite polarization (see Fiorina, Abrams and Pope (2005)). From a theoretical perspective, even though ideological sorting and voter polarization may both occur as

a result of elite ideological polarization, they remain two distinct phenomena that have different consequences (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Levendusky 2009; Zingher and Flynn 2018). The proponents of the polarization thesis argue that when the political elites in the U.S. polarized along a liberal-conservative dimension, the masses (partisans in particular) followed them by adopting more extreme positions themselves (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Abramowitz 2010; Garner and Palmer 2011; Jacobson 2000). On the other hand, the proponents of the partisan sorting thesis argue that even though voters have become more aware of the elite-level polarization, only a small minority has followed by adopting more extreme ideological stances. The majority of voters held onto their original moderate positions (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder Jr 2006; Fowler et al. 2022) even though they did end up having more consistent ideological preferences with their identified party (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Hetherington 2009; Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Levendusky 2009; Zingher and Flynn 2018). That is, following elite-level polarization, it became easier for voters to affiliate with the ideologically correct party (i.e., to sort, without necessarily adopting more extreme positions on issues). While the debate continues on whether elite polarization leads to ideological mass polarization, both camps agree that mass polarization and ideological sorting are both outcomes of elite ideological polarization in the United States.

What do we know about the effects of elite ideological polarization on mass ideological polarization in European democracies? European democracies differ from the U.S. one in several aspects that are theoretically important for understanding the influence of elites on mass polarization. Two features of European democracies may affect the role of party identification in this context. First, European democracies typically have multiparty systems. In such systems, even if there are parties with less centrist positions, there is usually a presence of a centrist party, which suggests that mass polarization due to elite polarization may be less likely compared to a two-party system. The presence of multiple parties (i.e., alternative parties with less extreme policy proposals) can limit the ability of political parties have to shape the preferences of their partisans. For instance, in multiparty systems, when a left-wing Party A changes its position on a specific issue, another left-wing party (Party B) may compete for Party A's supporters on that issue, making citizens less likely to prioritize their party identity over ideological preferences. In line with this argument, Lachat (2011) finds that having more effective electoral parties (i.e., higher party fragmentation) reduces the impact of party identification on vote choice, allowing for issue-based voting rather

than identity-based voting (Lachat 2011).

Second, the effect of party identification is likely different in the European context because party identification is less aligned with other political and non-political identities. In the United States, party identity is often aligned with multiple social identities (i.e., religious identity, ethnic identity, rural/urban identity), and citizens' ideological preferences can also be categorized as conservative or liberal. The alignment of ideological preferences, social identities, and political identities strengthens one's party identity and makes voters more likely to follow the party when it adopts a more extreme position. In contrast, European democracies are increasingly characterized as multidimensional (Abou-Chadi and Wagner 2020; Caughey, O'Grady and Warshaw 2019; Kitschelt and McGann 1997; Kriesi et al. 2008; Prosser 2016) due to the presence of different dimensions of political conflict such as the economic dimension, the social dimension, and the European integration dimension, which are not necessarily aligned with each other. Hence, individuals in European democracies may have different preferences on each dimension, leading to multiple political identities that are not necessarily summarized by a single left-right dimension. For example, there are individuals who have left-wing economic attitudes but more right-wing social attitudes, known as left authoritarians Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann (2014). European voters are accustomed to having cross-cutting identities, and cross-pressures have increased over time (Gidron 2022), reducing their incentive to follow their party if it adopts a more extreme position. The proportion of left-authoritarians, for instance, can range from as high as 32 percent in the Netherlands to as low as 9 percent in Germany (Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann 2014). Importantly, these cross-pressured citizens, left-authoritarians in this context, constitute a large share of the citizens in the United Kingdom (28 percent), which is the case under study in this chapter.

Most of the research on how elites drive mass polarization in European contexts focuses on the European Integration dimension (Carrubba 2001; De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Feld 2019; Franklin, Marsh and McLaren 1994; Gabel and Scheve 2007; Hobolt and De Vries 2015; Ray 2003; Steenbergen, Edwards and De Vries 2007; Wessels 1995), and there is less consensus on whether the masses follow elites (Carrubba 2001; Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008; Steenbergen, Edwards and De Vries 2007).[1]. However, there is a growing body of research that comprehensively investigates how the masses

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[1]Even in cases when elites lead voters, parties' leeway appears to be limited to (1) ideologically coherent opposition parties (Steenbergen, Edwards and De Vries 2007; Ray 2003), (2) niche parties (Arndt 2016), and (3) radical parties (Bischof and Wagner 2019; Silva 2018)

react to changing levels of elite polarization in Europe. For instance, Adams, De Vries and Leiter (2012) examine whether the depolarization of the two mainstream parties (CDA and PvdA) in the Netherlands between 1986 and 1998 led to voter depolarization in terms of left-right positions as well as attitudes towards income inequality, nuclear power, and euthanasia. They find that mass depolarization took place alongside elite depolarization. Since the beginning of the 2000s, elite polarization in the Netherlands has increased again, and Silva (2018) leverages this to examine whether the increase has led to mass polarization. The study finds that the increase in elite polarization in the Netherlands has caused mass polarization. Additionally, Bischof and Wagner (2019) find that the entry of radical parties to the parliament leads to mass polarization through two mechanisms. First, once the party enters the parliament, it receives institutional legitimization, which decreases the taboo of supporting the party among citizens. When it is no longer a taboo, voters are more likely to adopt its ideological position (i.e., become more polarized). Second, the presence of a radical party in the parliament leads those who oppose it to adopt stronger opinions (i.e., backlash effect). These findings are consistent with the polarization thesis in the United States (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Garner and Palmer 2011) suggesting that elite ideological polarization (or depolarization) leads to mass ideological polarization (or depolarization). Finally, the research of Adams, Green and Milazzo (2012) differs in terms of whether the masses follow elites. They investigate the position-taking of the Conservative Party and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom during the 1987-2001 period and examine whether elite depolarization is associated with voter depolarization regarding (1) income redistribution, (2) nationalization of industry, (3) the preference between inflation and unemployment, and (4) preferences between taxes and social service spending. They find that party depolarization led the masses to only slightly moderate their preferences, even though they perceived elite depolarization.

In sum, while one would expect that when elites polarize, the masses should adopt more polarized views, empirical research examining this relationship has yielded mixed results. One camp argues that the masses indeed follow elite polarization and adopt more extreme preferences, while another camp suggests that only a small segment of the electorate demonstrates such behavior, with the majority of citizens remaining moderate. Additionally, the multiparty context of European democracies presents theoretical reasons to believe that the influence of party identification on ideological preferences may be limited. The presence of cross-pressured voters and competition

across different dimensions of political conflict, as well as the availability of centrist policies offered by other parties, can constrain the ability of political parties to shape mass attitudes. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the impact of elite polarization on mass ideological polarization in European democracies.

3.2.2   Why Should Masses Polarize when Elites do?

What are the psychological underpinnings explaining why party identifiers might or might not become more polarized as a reaction to their party elites becoming more polarized? I argue that a theoretical bridging of social identity theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and the role of affect in opinion formation is insightful to understand partisan attitudes.

First, theories of rationalization—cognitive dissonance and motivated reasoning—are central to understanding partisan behavior. The human brain evolved to avoid inconsistencies between behavior and belief systems (Festinger 1962). There are several ways in which humans can avoid dissonance. A first option is to ignore new information that conflicts with the individuals' preferences (i.e., information indicating that the party has changed its position). Instead of choosing to expose themselves to information that is consistent with their preferences (Mummolo 2016), partisans can refuse to acknowledge the information even if they are exposed to it (Zaller 1992). In the context of polarization, this translates into ignoring or not acknowledging the party position change. If a partisan reasons that the party remained ideologically stable, they can avoid dissonance, hence eliminating the need to change their own ideological positions when their party adopts a more extreme stance.[2] A second option is to adjust their party identification to be consistent with their ideological preferences. However, I argue that this option is less likely because (1) social identities guide ideology and not vice versa (Achen and Bartels 2017; Lenz 2009; Otten and Wentura 1999; Petersen, Giessing and Nielsen 2015; Slothuus and Bisgaard 2020), and (2) voters do not punish in-party extremism (see Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989) for the directional theory of issue voting). A third option is to adjust their ideological preferences to be consistent with the party. I argue that when a party takes a more extreme position (i.e., when elite ideological polarization increases), party identifiers will adjust their ideological preferences by adopting more extreme positions. This

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[2]Note that in this study, the majority of respondents realized and acknowledged the position change in the Labour Party's position.

adjustment leads to an increase in mass ideological polarization. Below I present a theoretical account supporting this expectation.

Classical studies have viewed party identification, an enduring psychological attachment to a political party, as a driver of ideological preferences (Campbell et al. 1980; Zaller 1992), which are generally less stable (Converse 2006). Party identification, as a stable socio-political identity, acts as an unmoved mover and is a central concept for explaining why the masses should follow parties when the latter polarize. A self-perceived partisan identity functions as a social identity (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Huddy, Bankert and Davies 2018), meaning that once citizens feel a sense of belonging to a social group, they tend to see the world as "them" versus "others" (Greene 1999). This emotional involvement with their social group (party identity) motivates individuals to act in a way that positively distinguishes their own group (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel et al. 1979). This internalized identification is so deeply rooted that it even influences physiological symptoms individuals exhibit when faced with their party's electoral defeat. For instance, individuals' testosterone levels decrease when their candidate loses an election (Stanton et al. 2009). This is not surprising since socio-political concepts, including party identification, are affectively charged and interconnected in long term memory (Morris et al. 2003). When one of these concepts is triggered, affect becomes activated and automatically guides conscious reasoning, indicating the primacy of affect (Morris et al. 2003; Murphy and Zajonc 1993). Therefore, as party identification is affectively charged and given that affect precedes conscious reasoning, one's belonging to a social group automatically influences how they reason (Taber and Lodge 2006). That is, partisans are inherently biased reasoners when it comes to their party's behavior. This aligns with the motivated reasoning theory, which explains how individuals form their opinions. According to Kunda (1990), individuals are driven by either accuracy goals or directional goals. Accuracy goals involve objective information processing by individuals who are rational political actors with minimum levels of cognitive bias. Directional goals, on the other hand, reflect a process in which individuals' behavior is influenced by cognitive biases, meaning that they form opinions based on the desired outcome, which in this case is to protect their social group identity (i.e., party identity). Self-perceived identity is directly linked to in-group bias and conformity with the group (social cohesion). When partisans realize there is a discrepancy between them and their party, they tend to conform with the party to increase in-group similarity (Greene 1999). In this case, adjusting beliefs to align with their identity becomes

the default way to achieve consonance for group members. Thus, partisans adjust their ideological stances, rationalizing their identity (Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Petersen et al. 2013).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, classical studies have found that partisans readily conform to their parties (Cohen 2003). When voters become aware of their party's positions on an issue, they tend to adjust their issue preferences to align more closely with their party's positions (Lenz 2009). Real-world evidence from Denmark supports this finding, demonstrating that even when a party takes a position that clearly contradicts the preferences of its partisans, partisans tend to follow the party by tempering their positions although this effect is concentrated among those who previously held a strong preference on the issue (Slothuus and Bisgaard 2021). Additionally, there is evidence that in some cases, partisans may even reverse their position, shifting from opposition to support for a policy, in order to align with their party (Slothuus and Bisgaard 2020).

In an example of an individual that has developed an enduring social identity as a Labour identifier, a state of cognitive dissonance arises if the Labour Party adopts a slightly anti-immigration stance while the identifier holds a positive opinion on immigration. In such a context, not toeing the party line results in a sense of cognitive dissonance, leading to the need for motivated reasoning (Matz and Wood 2005). How do party identifiers reduce cognitive dissonance, and do they differ from those without party identification in how they seek consonance? Theories of cognitive dissonance, group conformity and motivated reasoning support the notion that party identifiers are biased reasoners. Party identification serves as a perceptual screen through which individuals interpret and makes sense of the political world (Campbell et al. 1980). Partisans are motivated to maintain their identities rather than what their party ideologically stands for (Achen and Bartels 2017; Huddy, Bankert and Davies 2018). Therefore, when elite-level polarization increases, mass polarization should follow because partisans will adjust their positions to increase consonance with their party. Based on these arguments, I test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 *When a political party shifts its ideological position further to the left (or right), in-party identifiers will adopt more a left-wing (or right-wing) stance.*

What about out-partisans? As party identity functions as a social identity and evokes emotional involvement, group members are motivated to exhibit positive or negative biases towards their in-group or out-group (Taber and Lodge 2006). Additionally, by default, group members

strive to increase dissimilarity with other groups while prompting in-group similarity. Research has shown that when the out-party is perceived as more extreme than it actually is, partisans position themselves closer to the opposite extreme, thereby distancing themselves from the out-party (Ahler 2014). Consequently, if a party adopts a more left-wing (right-wing) position, this will trigger a backlash among out-partisans who fear that the implemented policies will favour the other group over their own (Bishin et al. 2016). This would result in out-partisans adjusting their ideological stances to become more extreme in the opposite direction of the out-party.

Hypothesis 2 *When a political party shifts its ideological position further to the left (or right), out-party identifiers will lash back and adopt more a right-wing (or left-wing) stance.*

In addition to the expectations regarding in-partisans and out-partisans, I also expect variations within the in-group in terms of their reactions to elite ideological polarization. The way partisan masses react to elite polarization should be contingent on their position relative to the party. When a party adopts a more extreme ideological stance in direction A, an individual who identifies with that party should only move in the same direction if it means the party is now further away from them. In contrast, if the change in the party's position brings it closer to the individual (i.e., the ideological distance between them decreases), then the partisan should not move. This expectation is rooted in the need to avoid cognitive dissonance, which prompts individuals to adjust their positions. If the party's position change does not intensify cognitive dissonance, then there is no incentive for individuals to align themselves with the party's shift. For instance, if centrist and left-wing partisans become even more left-wing (i.e., increasing polarization) when a party moves to the left, this will contribute to overall mass polarization. However, if only right-wing partisans move to the left (i.e., towards center or center-left), it may not necessarily increase their distance from the center. Nonetheless, it would still contribute to ideological polarization between the in-party and out-party. Therefore, examining variations based on spatial location not only has implications for democratic representation but also sheds light on the extent to which politicians can create polarized masses.

In short, I argue that there is important heterogeneity in the ways partisan masses react to elite polarization that should be taken into account when studying mass polarization. Assuming that all partisan individuals move in the same direction or assuming a perfect correspondence between

partisans and their party oversimplifies the complex dynamics of politics. For instance, if Party A is initially located at 4 on a 11-point left-right scale and it shifts to the left by 2 points (now located at 2), expecting all partisans to shift their positions by 2 points would imply that they were either perfectly aligned with the party or more right-wing than the party. A perfectly aligned partisan (i.e., located at 4) would be motivated to maintain that alignment. Moreover, a partisan who is already to the right of the party (i.e., located at 7) would be expected to move further to the left to avoid cognitive dissonance and reduce the dissimilarity with the party. However, a partisan (Partisan C) who is already located at 2, should not shift further to the left when the party moves from 4 to 2. Doing so would contradict the theories of social identity, as group members are motivated to maximize in-group similarity and coherence with the party. Moving further to the left for Partisan C would mean maintaining the social distance between them and the party, rather than maximizing similarity. Therefore, the spatial location of partisans relative to the party before its shift is crucial for studying the effects of party identification on opinion formation (see Ferland (2020) for a similar argument explaining party responsiveness to the median voter and supporters). Based on these arguments, I formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3 *Partisans' left-right position relative to the party conditions whether they adopt a more left-wing (or right-wing) stance when the party shifts its ideological position further to the left (or right).*

Hypothesis 3. 1 *Identifiers who are previously more right-wing (left-wing) than the party should adopt a more left-wing (right-wing) position when the party moves to the left (right).*

3.2.3 A Unique Opportunity: Sudden Party Position Shift Following the Labour Party's Leadership Change in the United Kingdom

Parties rarely change their positions on issues, and when they do, these changes are gradual. Evidence shows that when parties gradually change positions in real-world politics, citizens at large take their time in perceiving these shifts (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Stevens 2013). Examining the reversal of EU positions of the Labour Party and Conservative Party in the 1980s, Evans and Butt (2007) show that it took voters 1 to 2 election cycles to perceive the shift. Conservative supporters became more anti-Europe, while Labour supporters became more pro-Europe. This

gradual evolution of party position-taking and the subsequent reactions of voters pose significant challenges when studying the causally mechanisms underlying opinion formation.

Scholars, hence, often resort to experimental designs (but see Schonfeld and Winter-Levy 2021; Slothuus and Bisgaard 2021; 2020), where they manipulate party positions and examine their impact on voters' issue preferences. This approach allows for a causal investigation of the effect of partisan attachments on issue opinions. However, there is a trade-off between internal validity and external validity associated with this approach. Manipulating party positions on major issues may make the treatment less realistic, and respondents are more likely to have strong prior partisan predispositions on the issue. One way to address this is by focusing on issue positions with minimal party conflict (Slothuus and Bisgaard 2020). However, these are often issues that voters rarely care enough about in real politics. As a result, experimental designs may be less suitable for studying the central questions of interest in this study.

A better option is to focus on sudden changes that take place in the real world and use panel data. However, suitable cases of sudden party position changes are rare. Despite rare instances, voters may hold skepticism regarding the sincerity of these changes. They may interpret party policy changes as strategic maneuvers employed to gain votes (Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2019) and view parties that frequently change positions as flipfloppers (Somer-Topcu 2009). This skepticism is consequential when examining whether partisans align with their party's new position. If partisans perceive these changes as a vote-seeking electoral strategy, they would not be motivated to adjust their positions to align with the party's new stance (Fernandez-Vazquez 2019). However, there are instances where party position changes are perceived as more sincere. In particular, when parties change their ideological positions under new leadership, voters consider these changes to be more credible (Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2019), which may motivate partisans to follow the party by adjusting their own positions accordingly. Party leaders serve as informational cues for understanding party stances on issues (Popkin 1991). With a party leadership change, a new leader has the opportunity to clarify the party's position. The increased media attention received by new leaders allows them to effectively communicate their messages to citizens (Somer-Topcu 2017). Cross-sectional research finds that new leaders successfully clarify party positions, reducing voter disagreement regarding the party's stance, particularly when there is an ideological shift (Slothuus 2010; Somer-Topcu 2017). That is, when a party undergoes a position change under new leadership,

voters are likely to be exposed to this change and perceive it as sincere.

Based on these arguments, an ideal case to study the effect of elite polarization on partisan mass polarization should involve a sudden party position change towards a more extreme ideological stance that voters perceive as sincere. This could be achieved through a leadership change in a major party, which would attract extensive media coverage and be widely perceived by the masses as genuine. Furthermore, in order to investigate the reactions of in-partisans and out-partisans when a political party adopts a more extreme position (hypotheses 1 and 2), it is crucial that only the party in question changes its ideological stance while other parties' positions remain stable. This ensures that the observed effect is specifically due to the position change of the focal party, and not a response to changes by other parties. Similarly, to isolate the effect of backlash by out-partisans towards a political party that takes a more extreme position, it is necessary for the out-party to shift its position while their own party remains stable. Otherwise, it would be challenging to determine which party's position change the voters are responding to. Below, I present a case study that meets these criteria.

Figure 3.1. Party Positions According to British Election Study Expert Surveys
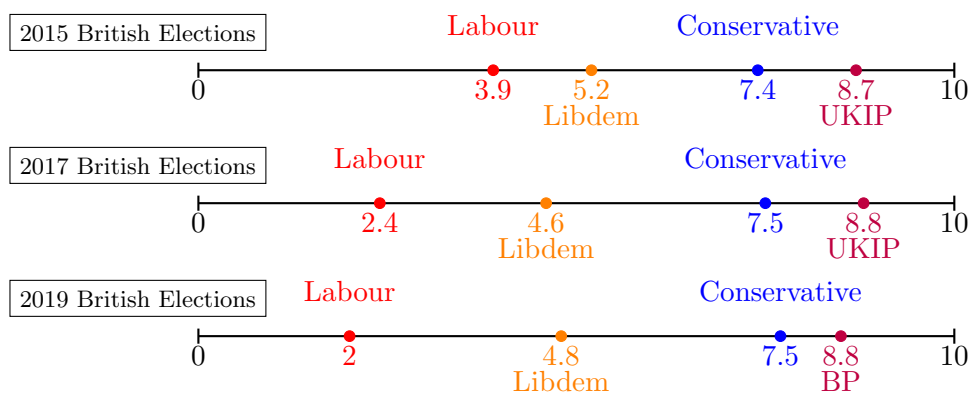
The Labour Party in the United Kingdom under Jeremy Corbyn provides an ideal case to study the causal effect of elite polarization on partisan mass polarization, overcoming the limitations previously discussed. After the defeat in the 2015 British General Elections, the leader of the Labour Party, Ed Miliband, announced his resignation on May 8th. Harriet Harman, the deputy leader, served as the acting leader until a new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, was elected. The leadership election took place between August 14th and September 10th. Under Corbyn's leadership, the Labour Party underwent a rapid leftward shift, leading to an immediate increase in elite-level polarization in the

United Kingdom. Figure 3.1 displays party positions according to BES experts during the British Elections in 2015, 2017 and 2019. It is noteworthy that experts positioned the Conservative Party and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) similarly in all three elections, indicating that parties became more dispersed on the ideological spectrum (i.e., increased party polarization) due to the leftward shift of the Labour Party. The Conservative Party, UKIP and Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, remained stable (although Liberal Democrats slightly moved the left as well). The Labour Party is the only party that significantly shifted leftward, moving from 3.9 in 2015 (pre-Corbyn) to 2.4 in 2017 (post-Corbyn - 2 years) and to 2.0 in 2019 (post-Corbyn - 4 years). In short, this case presents a good opportunity to examine how the masses react to increased elite-level ideological polarization.

Figure 3.2. Labour Party's Shift to the Left and Conditionality of Party Effect
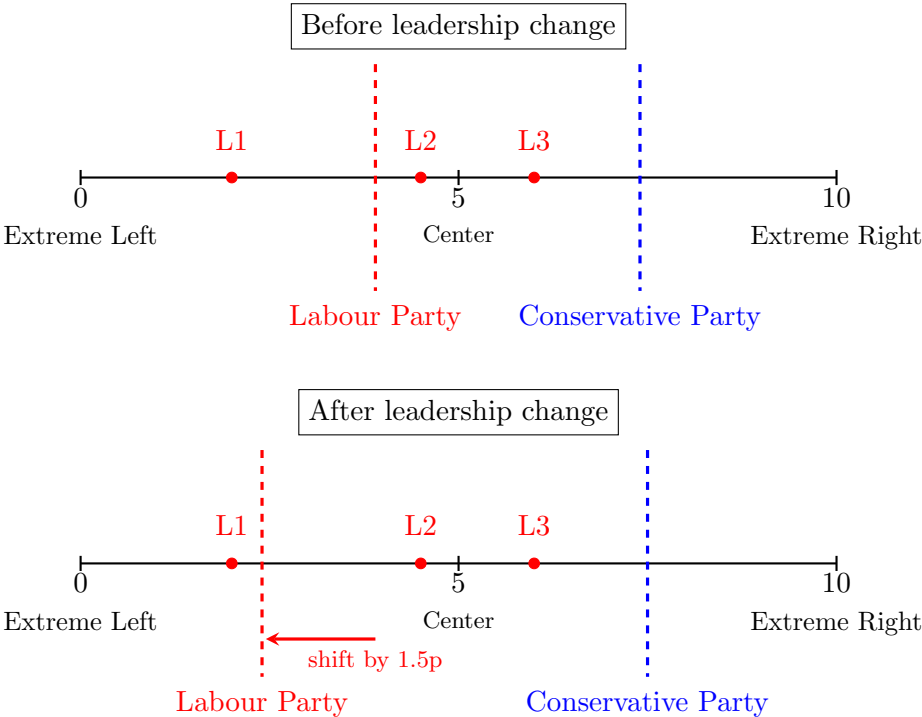
In order to put hypothesis 3—partisans' left-right position relative to the party conditions whether they adopt a more left-wing (or right-wing) stance when the party shifts its ideological position to further to the left (or right)—in context, the top panel in Figure 3.2 illustrates the

left-right positioning of the Labour Party in 2015 prior to the leadership change, along with three hypothetical Labour partisans (L1, L2, and L3, indicated in red). According to experts from the British Election Study, the Labour Party was located at 3.9 on the left-right scale in 2015 before Jeremy Corbyn assumed leadership. The bottom panel illustrates that experts positioned the Labour Party under Corbyn at 2.4 during his first general elections in 2017, two years into his tenure. That is, experts perceived the Labour Party to have shifted 1.5 point to the left on a 11-point left-right scale. To explain the conditional effect of party position change, let's focus on the three hypothetical Labour partisans within the same left-right scale. Looking at the top panel, L2 is a centrist Labour partisan whose position aligns closely with the party (ideologically congruent partisan), while L1 and L3 are positioned further away from the party (ideologically incongruent partisans). L1 is more left-wing than the party, while L3 is more right-wing. When the party moves to the left (as shown in the bottom panel), it moves away from L2 and L3, while moving closer to L1. After the party clarifies its new position, two expectations arise concerning Labour identifiers. First, those who were previously to the right of the party (L3) and those who are now to the right of the party (L2) should move to the left in order to maintain coherence and minimize the dissimilarity with the party (hypothesis 3). Second, those who were already to the left of the party (L1) should not move further to the left, as the party's approach to their position mechanically decreases the dissimilarity between L1 and the party, leading to a better alignment in terms of ideological similarity.

3.3   Identification Strategy

To test the effect of elite polarization on mass polarization, I use panel data from the British Election Study Internet Panel 2014-2023 (BESIP). To test hypothesis 1–whether Labour partisans followed the party when the party moved to the left, I compare the left-right positions of Labour partisans before Jeremy Corbyn was elected (September 2015) to the left-right positions after he became the leader of the party. It is important to note that party identification is measured in wave 6 (May 2015), which was conducted before Jeremy Corbyn assumed leadership. As Ed Miliband resigned right after his party's loss in the 2015 General Elections (after wave 5 and before wave 6),

I use wave 6 (May 2015) as the latest available wave to capture pre-Corbyn left-right positions.[3] The first survey conducted after the leadership change is wave 7, which was fielded in April/May 2016. To minimize the time distance between pre- and post-Corbyn measures and avoid potential confounding factors during the comparison period, I choose to examine wave 6 and wave 7. Given that political information consumption increases with the volume of available information to voters (Zaller 1992), and information about the party's new position becomes more accessible to voters following a leadership change (Somer-Topcu 2017), I expect that the Labour Party's ideological position should be clarified immediately after the change. Hence, I compare the left-right positions of Labour partisans in wave 6 (pre-Corbyn) to those in wave 7 (post-Corbyn). It is important to note that although there is a one-year gap between the two waves, wave 6 was conducted four months before the leadership change, while wave 7 was conducted six months after. Since there was no election campaign during this period, any changes in how voters and experts perceive the Labour Party's position on the left-right ideological spectrum can plausibly be attributed to the position change and clarification following the leadership change (see Figure 3.2).

Respondents are asked to place themselves on a left-right scale in each wave.[4] The dependent variable is the shift in left-right self-placement between wave 6 and 7. The range of this variable varies from -10 (indicating a shift of 10 units to the left) to 10 (indicating a shift of 10 units to the right), with a value of 0 indicating no change in respondents' left-right position. For instance, if a respondent placed themselves at 8 in wave 6 and then placed herself at 2 in wave 7, the variable would take the value of -6, indicating a shift of 6 units to the left. Figure 3.3 visually represents the distribution of values for this variable. It illustrates that large changes in one's ideological position are rare, with values mostly concentrated around no change or slight changes. However, there are also some instances of more significant changes in respondents' left-right positions.

To test hypothesis 1, which suggests that Labour partisans will shift to the left following the leadership change and clarification of the party's new position, I will use a measure of party identification. Respondents are asked to indicate whether they think of themselves as Labour, Conservative,

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[3]It worth mentioning that Jeremy Corbyn's nomination and victory were unexpected, as he had only just managed to secure enough support for nomination. Therefore, Corbyn's win was not anticipated at the time of wave 6.

[4]The exact question is as follows: In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?

Liberal Democrat or something else.[5] I regress the shift in left-right self-placement between wave 6 and wave 7 on pre-Corbyn partisanship, which is measured in wave 6. The counterfactual group in this analysis consists of independents, as they lack identification with a political party and are not expected to follow or backlash against the Labour Party's position change. I expect a negative and statistically significant coefficient for Labour partisanship, meaning that compared to independents, Labour identifiers shift their ideological position to the left. As for hypothesis 2 that out-partisans will backlash by adopting a more extreme position in the opposite direction, I focus on whether Conservative identifiers become more right-wing. To confirm this hypothesis, I expect a significant and positive coefficient for Conservative identification, meaning that they adopt more right-wing positions compared to independents.

Figure 3.3. Distribution of Change in Left-Right Self-Placement
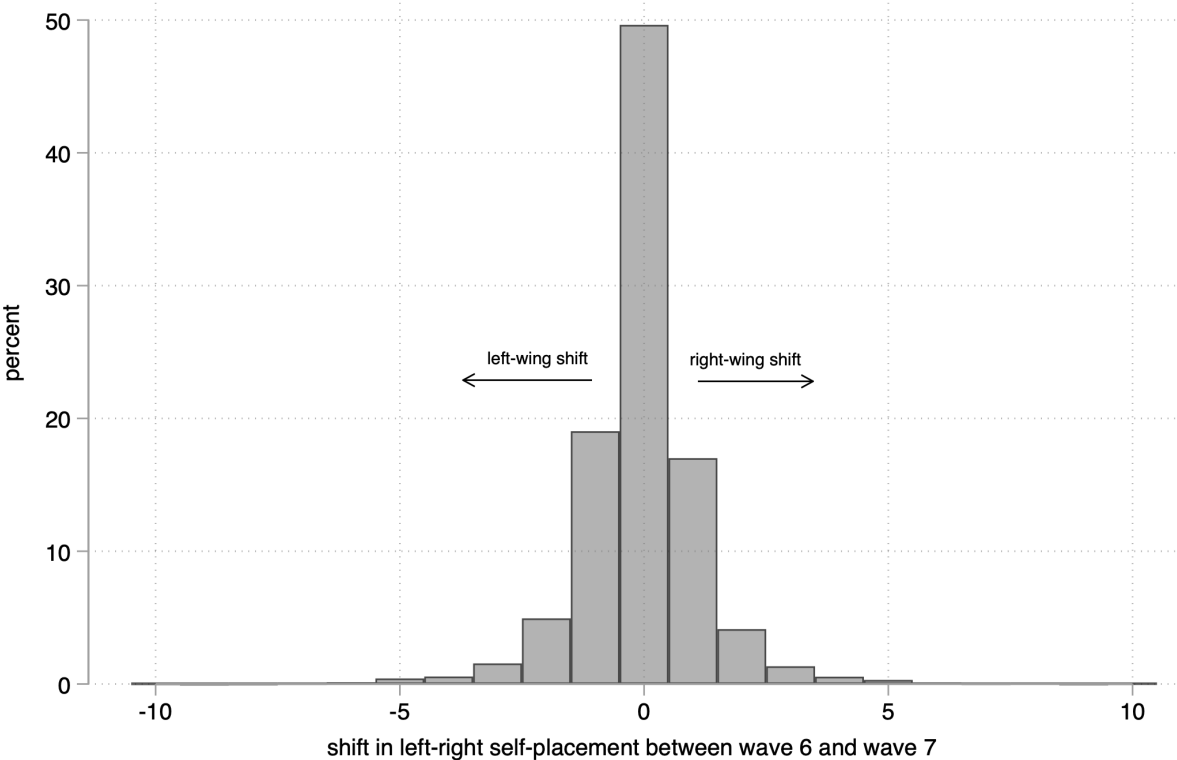
Next, while hypothesis 1 tests whether Labour identification caused a more left-wing stance, overall I expect this effect to be moderated by where partisans are located on the left-right spectrum

in wave 6 (pre-Corbyn). That is, when the party moves to the left, it gets closer to those who were already positioned on the left of the party. Hence we should not expect Labour identification to cause a left-wing shift among more left-wing respondents (L1 in Figure 3.2). However, for those who were previously centrist (L2 in 3.2) or right-wing (L3 in Figure 3.2), the Labour Party moves away from their positions, suggesting that Labour identification may lead to a left-wing shift among these respondents. Testing these expectations requires interacting Labour identification with respondents' self-placement's on the left-right ideological scale in wave 6. I create a categorical variable capturing respondents' spatial location on the left-right ideological scale in wave 6. This variable has three categories: 0 for centrist respondents (located at 5), 1 for left-wing respondents (located between 0 and 4), and 2 for right-wing respondents (located between 6 and 10).[6] Hence, to test the hypothesis 3, I expand the model to include an interaction between Labour identification and self-placement on the left-right spectrum in wave 6 (pre-Corbyn).

One might argue that this is conditioned by perceptions. Hence, I also check whether the electorate perceived any shifts in party positions (see Appendix B.1). While the electorate as a whole perceived the Labour Party at 3.2 in 2015 (wave 6, pre-Corbyn), they perceived it to be located at 2.6 after Corbyn's arrival in 2016 (wave 7), at 2.2 in 2017 (wave 12), and 1.7 in 2019 (wave 18). It is hence clear that the Labour Party, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, shifted its policy to the far left, and this change was perceived by the electorate.[7] More specifically, the electorate perceived a 0.7-point shift to the left between wave 6 and 7, a 1-point shift to the left between wave 6 and wave 12 (the first election wave after the leadership change), and a 1.4-point shift to the left between wave 6 and wave 18 (the second election wave after the leadership change). Moreover, between wave 6 and wave 7, the Liberal Democrats, Conservative Party, and UKIP were perceived to have shifted to the left by 0.4, 0.2 and 0.1 points, respectively. This indicates that both experts and citizens did not perceive a change in other party positions while perceiving a clear shift in the Labour Party's position, which increased elite polarization in the United Kingdom.

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[6]In Appendix B.3, I also move beyond this simplification and use the full scale to replicate the analyses, which yield similar results.

[7]See Appendix B.1 for more descriptive information about who perceived this shift. Further analyses indicate that all party identifiers perceived the left-wing shift, although this shift is perceived to be larger among independents. The perception of Labour partisans do not differ from those identifying with the Liberal Democrats, Conservative Party, and UKIP. It is safe to state that Labour partisans or more left-wing respondents did not perceive this shift in a biased fashion, and the leadership change has clarified the party's new position to the electorate at large. This means that all party identifiers and independents perceived the shift, giving us the opportunity to test whether Labour partisans adjusted their opinions with their party.

While the main analyses for the quasi-experimental design include estimation with simple OLS models with robust standard errors, I also provide results using auto-regressive OLS panel data analysis to examine the long-term effects of the Labour Party's position change on Labour partisans and Conservative partisans' ideological positions. Panel data analysis is useful for three main reasons. First, it helps determine the longevity of the effect. Second, it allows us to investigate whether the effect of party position change is lagged. That is, Labour partisans and Conservative partisans may react to the change over time. Third, auto-regressive OLS panel data analysis with individual fixed effects allows estimation of the within-individual effect while controlling for observed or unobserved time-invariant confounders. Therefore, I complement the quasi-experimental design with these over-time analyses. When looking at over-time trends, it is important to acknowledge that Brexit also played an important role in the post-referendum period in addition to the Labour Party's leftwards shift. It is possible that the overall party brands were also influenced by parties' stances on the Brexit issue (the European integration dimension). Hence, the over-time trends should not be considered to be solely driven by the leadership change.

3.4   Results

How does increased ideological elite polarization affect mass ideological polarization? To answer this question, I focus on how in-party identifiers and out-party identifiers react to this elite-level polarization. Did Labour identification (i.e., in-party identification) cause a left-wing shift? Did Conservative identification (i.e., out-party identification) cause a backlash effect in response to out-party polarization? The results for these questions are presented in Model 1 in Table 3.1. The positive coefficient for Labour identification indicates that Labour identifiers, compared to independents who only slightly moved to the left by 0.1 points, overall became more right-wing by 0.18 points. On the other hand, the negative coefficient for Conservative identification indicates that Conservative identifiers, compared to independents, became more left-wing by 0.20 points. These results do provide support for hypotheses 1 and 2. In other words, in-partisans did not follow the Labour Party by adopting more left-wing positions, and out-partisans did not respond with a backlash by adopting more extreme positions in the opposite direction.

Next, I turn to the results concerning hypothesis 3, which examines how the spatial location of

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in-partisans affects their reaction to elite ideological polarization. The hypothesis posits that not all in-party identifiers react in a similar way to polarizing elites. To recap, I only expect those who are to the right of the Labour Party to move to the left and not the left-wing Labour partisans. To test this, Model 2 interacts one's pre-Corbyn spatial location with Labour identification.[8] Labour identification per se is no longer statistically significant (-0.048). Taking the centrists as a comparison point, individuals who already hold left-wing positions are more likely to move to the right by 0.36 ($p < 0.001$), while those with right-wing positions are more likely to move to the left compared to independents by 0.47 ($p < 0.001$). Focusing on the interaction term between Labour identification and spatial location, left-wing Labour identifiers do not differ from independents, meaning that they also shift towards the right with independents. However, right-wing Labour identifiers differ from independents, as they shift their ideological stance towards the left by 0.90 point. Based on the results of Model 2, Figure 3.4 plots the change in self-placement on the left-right scale among Labour identifiers (indicated by the red circle) and independents (indicated by the gray circle).

These results are in line with the expectation that individuals who are already left-wing (i.e., consistent with the party) do not become more polarized by adopting a more left-wing stance. However, right-wing individuals do shift towards the left, as they find themselves increasingly distanced from the party that has moved to the left. However, the expectation regarding centrist Labour identifiers (L2 in Figure 3.2) is not supported by the results, as they do not differ from independents. These results provide partial support for hypothesis 3, indicating that in-partisans' reactions to elite ideological polarization are contingent on their initial spatial location.

How meaningful are these shifts, and does it mean that Labour partisans became more left-wing as a group? As Model 1 suggests, Labour identifiers as a group become less left-wing. This is driven by the distribution of ideological positions among Labour identifiers before the Labour Party moved to the left. For example, 79 percent of the group were left-wing (located at 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 on the ideological scale), 13 percent were centrist (located at 5), and only 9 percent were right-wing (located at 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10). Given that left-wing Labour partisans moved to the right (see Figure 3.4), while right-wing partisans moved to the left, at the aggregate level, more Labour

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[8]To test whether partisans follow their party to the extreme depends on one's spatial location, I only focus on Labour partisans because, based on a social identity approach, the need to decrease the cognitive dissonance emerges among Labour partisans when their party moves away from them. However, I have no theoretical expectations on whether the spatial location of Conservative partisans should moderate the backlash effect.

Table 3.1. Do Labour Identifiers Become more Left-Wing?

	shift in LR	
	Model 1	*Model 2*
party identification (ref = independent)		
Labour identification	0.182***	-0.048
	(0.031)	(0.061)
Conservative identification	-0.198***	
	(0.029)	
other identification	0.084**	
	(0.031)	
spatial location (ref = center)		
left-wing		0.355***
		(0.051)
right-wing		-0.469***
		(0.056)
Labour identification x spatial location		
Labour identification x left-wing		0.050
		(0.074)
Labour identification x right-wing		-0.902***
		(0.132)
intercept	-0.060*	-0.041
	(0.024)	(0.033)
N	16774	7345

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ if i keep tyoing here will it

partisans moved to the right than to the left, which explains why the coefficient's sign for Labour identification per se flips in Model 2 once the spatial location is taken into account.

In short, the effects of elite polarization on group polarization are negligible overall, as the substantial effects observed among right-wing Labour partisans are outweighed by their small proportion within the group of Labour identifiers. Consequently, Labour partisans as a whole did not become more left-wing (contrary to hypothesis 1), and there was no backlash from Conservative partisans resulting in a more right-wing position (contrary to hypothesis 2). Instead, both partisan groups moderated their ideological stances when the Labour Party adopted a more extreme stance, a trend also observed among independents. However, the impact of elite polarization is heterogeneous and dependent on one's spatial location on the left-right scale. Whether in-group identifiers follow and become more polarized along with their party depends on the overall ideological distribution of the in-group (hypothesis 3). In the case of the Labour Party and Labour identifiers, this led the ideologically out-of-touch partisans to follow the party, but it did not lead the consistent

Figure 3.4. Previously Right-Wing Labour Partisans Follow the Party to the Left
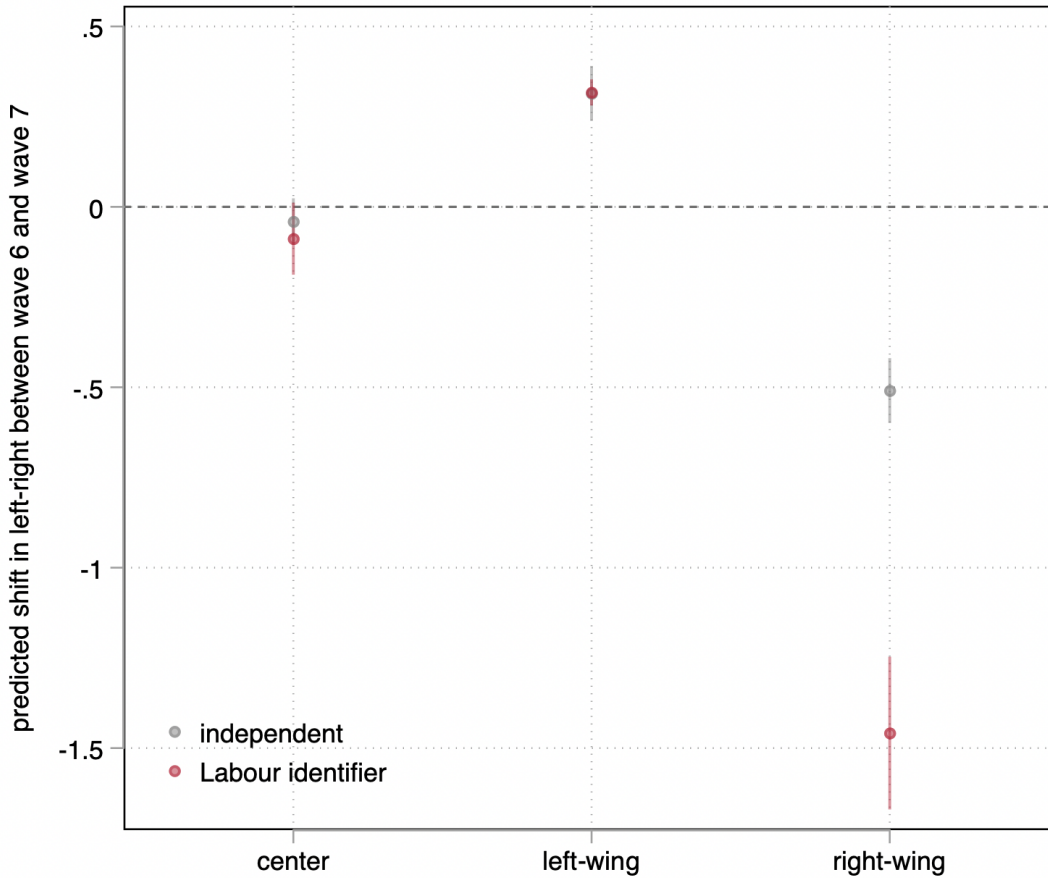
partisans to adopt more extreme positions.

One might wonder if the Labour Party's new, more extreme position can have a lagged effect, meaning that Labour partisans and Conservative partisans might react to it over time. In order to confirm these null findings that Labour identifiers did not become more left-wing and Conservative identifiers did not lash back by becoming more right-wing, I now turn to time series analysis using panel data OLS regressions with individual fixed effects and cluster-robust standard errors at the individual level. These models hold both observed and unobserved time-invariant factors constant and allow for analysis of within-individual effects over time.[9] Figure 3.5 includes two panels: (a) Labour identifiers and (b) Conservative identifiers. Starting with the former, the figure plots the evolution of ideological positions among those who did not identify with any of the parties in wave 6 (independents, shown in gray) and those identified with the Labour Party in wave 6 (shown in

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[9]The models assume that the missing data are random. Additionally, the models in Appendix B.8, which track only the same individuals who participated in each wave, reveal similar results.

dark red). Note that party identification is held constant at wave 6 (pre-Corbyn). It also shows the evolution of perceptions of where the Labour Party is located according to Labour identifiers in wave 6 evolved (shown in light red). The vertical line indicates the Labour Party's leadership change and, consequently, the position change. In the short term, Labour identifiers immediately perceived a 0.5 point left-wing shift in the position of the Labour Party between wave 6 (May 2015) and wave 7 (April/May 2016). However, they did not adopt a left-wing shift themselves. If anything, the models suggest that Labour partisans became less left-wing by 0.13 points immediately after the leadership change, which is consistent with Model 1 in Table 3.1. In the long run, Labour partisans increasingly saw the Labour Party as more left-wing from wave 6 onwards, but they continued to moderate their ideological stance nonetheless. For instance, the mean position of respondents who identified with the Labour Party in wave 6 was 3.16 immediately before the position change. It increased to 3.29 right after in wave 7, 3.39 during the 2017 General Elections (wave 12), and 3.46 during the 2019 General Elections (wave 18), while those who did not identify with any party (i.e., independents) in wave 6 remained stable over time.

Panel b in Figure 3.5 focuses on Conservative identifiers (shown in dark blue) based on their wave 6 identification. It shows the perceived position of the Conservative Party by Conservative identifiers (shown in light blue) and how Conservative identifiers perceived the Labour Party (shown in light red). In the short run, immediately after the position change, Conservative partisans became less right-wing by 0.26 point. Surprisingly, they also perceived their party to have shifted to the left by 0.27 points, even though the party's position did not change according to experts. However, it is important to note that they also perceived the Labour Party to have shifted to the left by 0.28 points. In the long run, there was no backlash effect among Conservatives. Similar to Labour partisans, Conservative partisans also became slightly more centrist over time. Even though Conservatives perceived their party to have moved to the left, this interpretation requires caution, as perceptions of party position and one's own ideological position are endogenous. It is possible that Conservative identifiers are aligning their perceptions of their party's position with their new ideological stance. However, regardless of the interpretation, these results clearly indicate a lack of backlash: Conservative partisans did not move to the right when the Labour Party moved to the left.

Figure 3.5. Labour Partisans do not Follow the Party and Conservative Partisans do not Backlash

(a) Labour identifiers

(b) Conservative identifiers
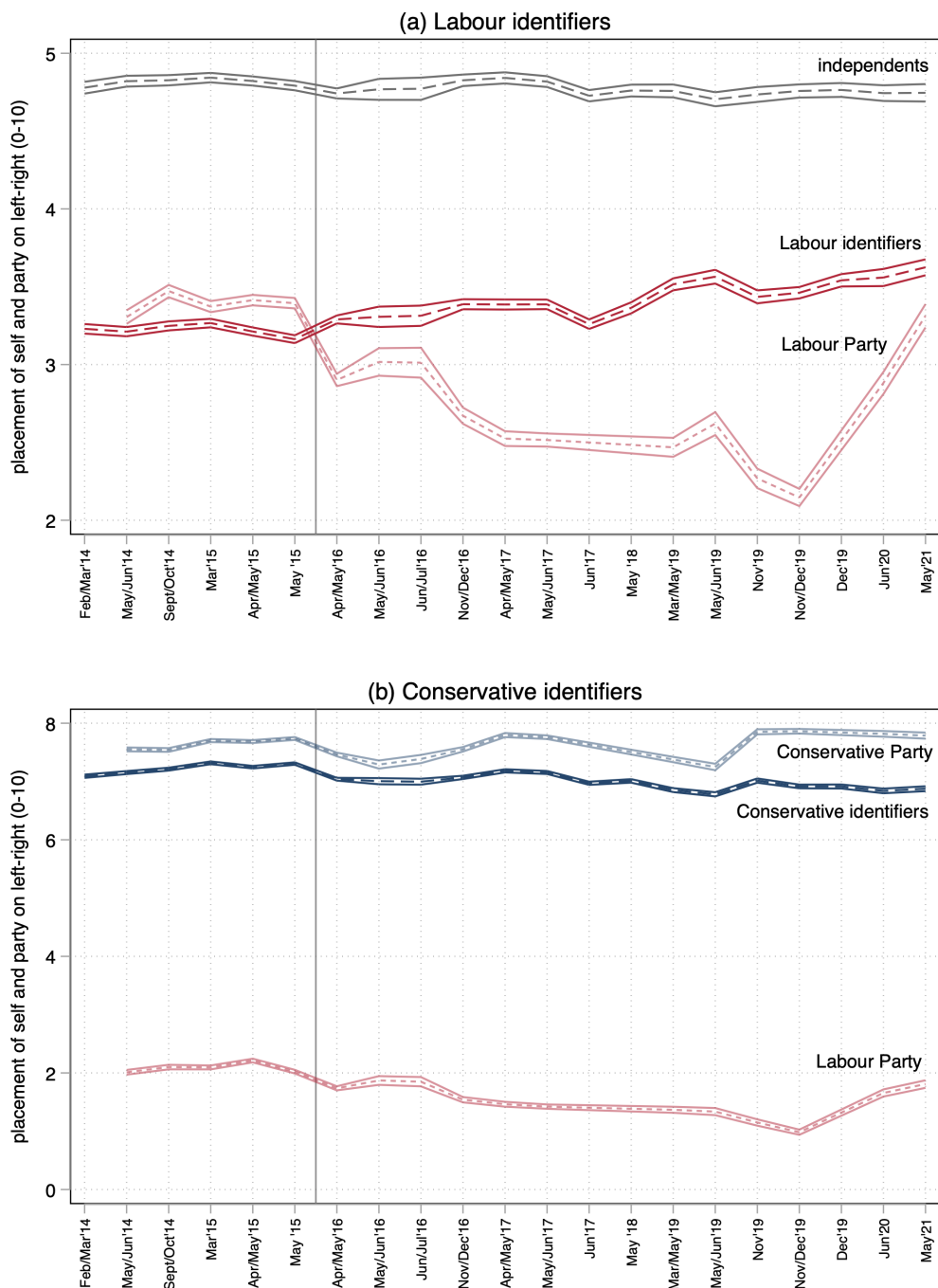
Note: Predictions are from panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effect, and the models assume missing values at random. Panel a plots the evolution of (1) the left-right self-placement of Labour identifiers (indicated by red dashed lines), (2) the perceived left-right position of the Labour Party by Labour identifiers (indicated by light red short dashed lines), and (3) the left-right self-placement of independents (indicated by gray dashed lines). Panel b plots the evolution of (1) the left-right self-placement of Conservative identifiers (indicated by dark blue dashed lines), (2) the perceived left-right position of the Conservative Party by Conservative identifiers (indicated by light blue short lines), and (3) the perceived left-right position of the Labour Party by Conservative identifiers (indicated by light red short dashed lines). Note that party identification is held constant at wave 6 (May 2015).

3.5   Robustness

One might question whether certain types of partisans may behave differently than others. For instance, those with stronger attachment or those considered as consistently loyal partisans might be more motivated to follow the party to the extreme because their identity is more important to them. By the same token, stronger partisans might feel a greater need to reduce their cognitive dissonance when the party moves away from their ideological position. Additionally, some partisans, regardless of identity strength, might be more inclined than others to engage in motivated reasoning after the position change because they have consistently identified with the Labour Party. Below, I check these three theoretical possibilities, examine whether sorting on the Brexit issue intervenes with the findings, and provide three empirical robustness checks.

Starting with the theoretical robustness checks, first, in Appendix B.7, I examine those who identified with the Labour Party prior to the position change and also remained Labour identifier in each wave until wave 12 (May/June 2017). Since they maintained their identification as Labour partisans, their motivation to align their ideological stance with the party by adopting a more left-wing position could be stronger. However, the analyses do not provide any evidence in favour of this expectation. The interpretation for the hypotheses 1 and 3 remain unchanged. Furthermore, even these partisans became slightly more centrist over time. Second, in Appendix B.6, I investigate whether those who consistently reported identifying with the Labour Party in previous waves became more left-wing when the Labour Party shifted its position to the left. Focusing on loyal partisans excludes those partisans for whom party identification is more volatile. The results show that even among these individuals, who could be considered as the most loyal partisans, there was no shift towards a more extreme position. Third, I explore the possibility that strong partisans might act differently from weak partisans. Strong partisans, due to their stronger psychological attachment or stronger party identity, they might be more motivated to reduce dissonance caused by changes in the party's position. In Appendix B.4, I show that even strong Labour partisans did not adopt a more left-wing position. The results remain consistent, indicating that being a centrist or left-wing Labour partisan has the same effect as before. However, the effect of being a right-wing Labour partisan on adopting a more left-wing stance is more pronounced among strong Labour partisans compared to weak Labour partisans.

Next, I explore whether sorting on the Brexit issue drives the moderation observed among Labour and Conservative identifiers in the post-Brexit period. It is possible that individuals who identified with the Labour Party at wave 6 changed their stance on Brexit and began identifying with the Conservative Party, particularly as the Conservatives increasingly became the party advocating for Brexit. This potential shift could explain the moderation effect. Similarly, among those who identified with the Conservative Party in wave 6, some individuals may no longer identify with the party due to its Brexit stance, leading to a potential moderation effect among previous Conservative identifiers. Thus, sorting on Brexit issue could offer a potential explanation for the observed trends of moderation. To examine this, I replicate the analysis by focusing on those whose views on Brexit remained consistent between wave 6 (May 2015) to wave 12 (May/Jun 2017). The results in Appendix B.5 show that even when considering only those who did not change their views on Brexit, a slight moderation effect over time is still evident.[10]

Turning to the empirical robustness checks, first, in Appendix B.3, I check whether the results remain robust when using a different operationalization of spatial location. I replicate the analysis by using an 11-point left-right self-placement scale, allowing for variation in the effect of each point. The results remain similar, suggesting that the simplification of spatial location into three categories (i.e., left-wing, centrist, and right-wing) does not result in a loss of information. Next, I replicate the time series analyses using two different samples in order to ensure that the observed trends over time are not driven by respondents dropping out in some surveys and returning in other waves. The first replication involves a sample limited to the first 12 survey-takers, while the second replication includes all 20 survey-takers. Although this results in significant attrition (see Appendix

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[10]In multidimensional European political landscape, the traditional left-right scale no longer solely represents economic attitudes. It has evolved into a super-issue position encompassing various dimensions. What constitutes the left-right brand of the party can be influenced by what dimension is more salient at a given time (Meyer and Wagner 2020) even if parties position on different dimensions do not change over time (Wagner and Meyer 2023). Considering the post-Brexit period, if the European integration dimension became more salient, it could explain why Labour partisans did not align with the Labour Party's leftward shift on the traditional left-right dimension, especially given the Labour Party's ambiguous stance under Corbyn's leadership. However, if Brexit was the primary driver shaping left-right conceptualization during that period, we would expect Conservative identifiers to shift further to the right, given the Conservative Party's clear support for leaving the European Union and the assertive messaging from leaders like Theresa May and Boris Johnson. Thus, while it is possible that the meaning of left-right has evolved over the studies time frame, we can still conclude that citizens did not simply follow their parties based on the standards they use at a given time to assess both party positions and their own left-right positions. In other words, if parties' left-right positions change and become more left-wing due to the changing meaning of the left-right spectrum, this change in meaning also affects citizens' overall left-right placement, hence allowing the investigation of whether elite ideological polarization leads to mass ideological polarization based on the overall left-right brand.

B.8 for further details), the replications yield similar results, reaffirming that Labour partisans did not become more left-wing.

Overall, these robustness checks provide further support for the original findings, showing the reliability of the results.

3.6   Conclusion

Scholars have extensively examined the level of political polarization among elites in various countries. With the increasing elite polarization in many countries, there is a growing need to understand how this polarization among political elites affects the general public. Do the masses follow suit and become more polarized when the elites polarize? Or is it the case that the elites polarize as a result of mass polarization? This study addresses the first question, contributing to the existing literature. It demonstrates that while elite polarization does have an impact on mass polarization, this impact is relatively limited. These findings provide some reassurance and alleviate concerns about the extent of influence that political elites hold over the general public.

Causally studying the effect of elite polarization on mass polarization presents challenges due to the infrequent nature of party position changes, which mostly take place gradually. Consequently, the masses realize these changes gradually. Hence, scholars rely on experimental designs to isolate the effect of elite polarization on mass polarization by avoiding omitted variable bias. However, manipulating party positions on major issues is unrealistic, and voters are likely to have already formed strong priors on these issues. In this research, I overcome these limitations and study the effect of a real-world sudden polarization of the Labour Party following a leadership change on the ideological preferences of both in-partisans and out-partisans. Given that the position change was swift, sincere (i.e., not for strategic purposes), and widely understood by the general public, the UK case provides a unique opportunity to study the effect of party identification on ideology. By using a quasi-experimental design and comparing the ideological stances of the same respondents before and after the leadership change, I am able to causally isolate the effect of elite polarization on mass polarization.

The results of this research address a very common concern among pundits and political scientists: When leaders with extreme policy agenda assume leadership roles in mainstream parties, can

they polarize the ideological preferences of their partisans? Contrary to conventional wisdom, the results do not support the expectation that both in-partisans and out-partisans would adopt more extreme positions in opposite directions. Instead, both groups tended to moderate their ideological stances, which contradicts the "follow-the-party" and "backlash" effects. Moreover, only ideologically inconsistent partisans (i.e., right-wing Labour partisans) exhibited a tendency to align with the party's new position once it was clarified. This indicates that there is important heterogeneity in how the masses react to elite polarization. Partisans do not automatically adopt more polarized stances simply because their party embraces more extreme ideologies. Rather, their ideological shifts are driven by a spatial logic. The effect of elite polarization on mass polarization is dependent on individuals' positions on the ideological spectrum. This has important implications for understanding how elite polarization influences mass polarization. If a majority of partisans were not already polarized (i.e., concentrated around the center), then we could observe mass polarization with center-right in-partisans shifting leftward. However, if partisans are already consistent with the party (i.e., either left-wing or right-wing), they may not further polarize. This indicates that the scope for political parties to polarize mass preferences may depend on the existing level of polarization within a country. While this may seem intuitive, it enhances our understanding of political polarization. In Western European democracies, which have already reached some levels of polarization (see Chapter 2), the impact of elite polarization on mass polarization is indeed limited. That is, if parties decide to take more extreme positions, their partisans will likely not adopt more extreme positions. Overall, these results alleviate pundits' concern that the masses polarize if political parties polarize. In European democracies, where cross-pressures across different dimensions exist, the impact of elite polarization is indeed more limited. However, this does not necessarily mean that parties do not polarize the masses in new democracies, where party-voter alignment is less established, and individuals are still positioning themselves along the left-right dimension.

It is important to acknowledge that this paper specifically focused on elite ideological polarization within a mainstream party that underwent a shift towards a more extreme ideological position. The mechanism of polarization through mainstream parties differs from that of the emergence of radical parties. While mainstream parties have a stable partisan base, radical parties often lack such stability. Hence, when drawing conclusions regarding how party polarization influences mass polarization, it is important to recognize that these findings may not directly apply to situations

involving elite-level polarization resulting from the emergence of a radical party, as the dynamics and effects of polarization in such cases may be distinct.

What is it about British partisans that they do not follow the party and become more polarized? It is not because the British electorate is less partisan that they do not follow the party, as even strong Labour partisans did not adopt more left-wing positions. It is also not about the stability of partisan identity that explains why they do not follow the party. Even Labour partisans who had consistently identified with the Labour Party did not adopt a more left-wing position. Similarly, those partisans who continued to identify with the party after the position change did not become more polarized. Hence, neither the stability nor the strength of partisanship explains the lack of the follow-the-party effect. Future research should focus on whether British voters make a distinction between the leadership ideology and the party ideology. If Labour partisans thought that the party would go back to the center again in the future (i.e., another change in leadership), it might explain why they did not adopt a more left-wing position.

The findings of this chapter, which suggest that the masses do not follow parties, align with the findings of Adams, Green and Milazzo (2012), who found that the British public did not follow elite-level depolarization and become less polarized. One might question whether these findings can be generalized to other Western European democracies or if they are specific to the British context. Does party identification not function as a social identity in the United Kingdom? According to Schonfeld and Winter-Levy (2021)'s study, the answer is nuanced. Following a narrow victory for the leave side in the British referendum on whether to leave the European Union, the Conservative Party changed its position and supported the leave side, despite having campaigned for the remain side. On the one hand, previously pro-European Conservative Party identifiers were more likely to leave the party instead of changing their attitudes towards Europe. On the other hand, new Conservative identifiers adjusted their opinions on redistribution policy to better align with the Conservative Party. While British voters do not blindly follow parties, there is still evidence that they adjust their issue preferences to better align with their party. Furthermore, experimental evidence shows that citizens in the United Kingdom use party cues to form opinions (Brader and Tucker 2012; Brader, Tucker and Duell 2013), although this effect is smaller than it is in the United States.

It is possible that as the Labour Party moves to the left, it attracts new supporters from the

extreme end of the ideological spectrum, which may create an image of a more left-wing support base. However, this phenomenon is more about bringing an electoral base together rather than shifting the ideological preferences of a particular partisan base. This chapter specifically examines whether party polarization leads to an increase in mass ideological polarization, focusing on whether in-partisans align with the party's position and out-partisans lash back to it. However, further research should delve into the electoral trade-off faced by mainstream parties when they adopt more extreme stances.

Why did Labour and Conservative partisans become more centrist? Growing evidence shows that partisans update their beliefs when information is available to them (Hill 2017). Fowler and Howell (2023) show that party identifiers not only update their beliefs in line with the information provided by their own party, but also when the information comes from the opposing party. Remarkably, this holds true even for highly committed partisans. Building on the findings of 20 experiments, Coppock (2016) reaches a similar conclusion that individuals, regardless of their background or ideological positions, update their beliefs as a weighted average of their prior beliefs and new information. Following a leadership change, media coverage significantly increases, especially if it leads to a change in the party's ideological position. This exposes citizens to a wealth of new information about the party, originating not only from the party itself (i.e., the Labour Party) but also from political commentators and elites of other parties (i.e., the Conservative Party) who comment on the new position of their opposing party. Consequently, partisans may be responding to information provided by the out-party as well (i.e., Labour partisans reacting to the Conservative Party's framing of the Labour Party, and Conservative partisans reacting to the Labour Party's framing). Further research should investigate whether the moderation effect observed among in-partisans and out-partisans can be explained by this mechanism. If so, the implications of party polarization on mass polarization may not be as worrisome as previously thought.

Chapter 4

Do Masses Become more Affectively Polarized When Elite Ideological Polarization Increases?

4.1 Introduction

Elite ideological polarization is a growing phenomenon in Western democracies (Dalton 2021; Hetherington 2001) (also see Chapter 2). The literature offers various expectations regarding how the masses react to this increasing ideological elite polarization. In the previous chapter, I examined whether the masses ideologically react to rising ideological elite polarization by adopting more extreme ideological positions. I found that when the Labour Party in the United Kingdom underwent a sudden shift toward a more extreme position under a new leader, there was no corresponding increase in mass ideological polarization. Neither in-partisans nor out-partisans became more ideologically polarized. That is, I did not find that the masses reacted ideologically to the growing elite ideological polarization by becoming more ideologically polarized. However, affective reaction is another way in which the masses could react to changing dynamics in ideological differentiation between political parties. Ideological mass polarization and affective mass polarization are distinct concepts, with the former referring to the ideological distinctiveness of citizens (Dassonneville and Çakır 2021; Lupu 2015), and the latter referring to the distance between in-party appreciation and out-party dislike (Broockman, Kalla and Westwood Forthcoming; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Kingzette et al. 2021; Wagner 2021). This chapter focuses on the affective reaction.

High ideological elite polarization means that the policy proposals that are offered to citizens

are very distinct from each other. As discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation, the effects of elite ideological polarization are much debated. On the one hand, it is argued that there are some benefits to higher elite polarization. For instance, when policy proposals are clearer, voters can select parties that are ideologically closer to them (Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006). This implies that citizens can more easily identify and vote for parties that represent them better. Moreover, when elite polarization is high, who gets elected to the office matters more for what kinds of policies will be implemented, which raises the stakes of an election (APSA 1950; Crepaz 1990) and leads citizens to turn out to vote at higher rates (Moral 2017). On the other hand, elite polarization can also have adverse effects for democratic quality. When elites dispute over policy (i.e., when policy proposals are more extreme and different from each other), this could change the emotional engagement of citizens by making them more affectively polarized (Lelkes 2021; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016).

While some levels of affective polarization are necessary to create engaged citizens, high levels of affective polarization are linked to the weakening legitimacy of the regime, erosion of democratic norms, and increasing dysfunctionality of the political system (Kingzette et al. 2021; Klein 2020; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; McCoy and Somer 2019). Some argue that these adverse effects of affective polarization result from the fact that affective polarization leads people to perceive the opposing party as a threat to the nation (McCoy and Somer 2019). Furthermore, affective polarization can reinforce partisan bias (Ahler and Sood 2018), reduce citizens' responsiveness to policy-related outcomes (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013), decrease satisfaction with democracy (Wagner 2021), prevent citizens from holding politicians accountable, and discourage adherence to democratic norms (Graham and Svolik 2020). Affective polarization also alters the ways in which ordinary citizens interact with each other. For instance, the proportion of those who would be dissatisfied if one's child married to someone who identifies with the out-party has dramatically increased since the 1960s (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Similarly, its effects even spill over to non-political tasks (Rudolph and Hetherington 2021), such as scholarship attribution (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Given the negative consequences of affective polarization on democracy and the prevalence of elite polarization across Western democracies, it is of foremost importance to understand the effect of elite polarization on affective polarization.

I examine whether elite ideological polarization increases affective polarization among citizens by leveraging the British case, where elite ideological polarization started to increase when the

Labour Party suddenly adopted a more extreme ideological stance under a new leader. The divergence continued as the two main parties clashed over Brexit following the 2016 Referendum. To preview the results, I show that higher ideological elite polarization leads to higher affective mass polarization. While affective polarization increases among partisans, non-partisans in particular become more affectively polarized. Importantly, in-party feelings drive the increase in affective polarization more than out-party feelings. This means that a bipolar conceptualization of in-party and out-party feelings should be reconsidered. Affective polarization is not solely a reflection of out-party animosity but can also fluctuate due to changes in in-party enthusiasm. Furthermore, I show that both perceived elite polarization and affective polarization influence each other, indicating a bidirectional causal relationship. This provides evidence supporting both identity-based and policy-based conceptions of affective polarization. The implications are twofold. First, affective polarization is identity-based, meaning that some level of affective polarization is inherent in democratic party systems. Second, affective polarization also has ideological roots, meaning that it can, to a certain extent, be tempered by moderate position-taking by parties.

4.2   Theory

4.2.1   Elite Polarization and Mass Affective Polarization

The literature has identified two main mechanisms to explain why elite polarization should lead to higher affective polarization. The first mechanism relates to identity. When individuals develop self-identification with a political party, it acts as a social identity (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Huddy, Bankert and Davies 2018), leading them to categorize themselves into in-groups and out-groups (Greene 1999; Tajfel et al. 1979; Tajfel 1981). Political identities, such as party identification, are affectively charged and linked to other political objects in long-term memory (Lodge and Taber 2005), hence, latent partisan biases become activated when individuals are exposed to a stimulus (i.e., partisan identities themselves or the political objects linked to the party identification) (Goren, Federico and Kittilson 2009). This is because when these links are activated, so are the affective evaluations. Given that affect precedes conscious thinking and since affects are automatically activated when individuals are asked to make a political evaluation, affective evaluations become triggered (Taber and Lodge 2006). Therefore, individuals have unconscious emotional

connections with political concepts, and this emotional involvement can even manifest in physiological reactions to the electoral defeat or victory of their political groups (Stanton et al. 2009). Furthermore, as group members are motivated to maintain their identities by distinguishing themselves from the out-groups, they tend to view their own group more favourably and the out-groups less favourably (Tajfel et al. 1979; Tajfel 1981). This psychological need to maintain social identity naturally leads to a certain level of affective polarization among group members (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Huddy, Bankert and Davies 2018).[1] Hence, the identity perspective leads to the expectation that when elite dispute over policies intensifies, group identities become more salient, implying that group bias intensifies, leading to a larger gap between feelings towards the in-party and the out-party.

The second mechanism relates to ideology. Parties' ideological brands clarify to citizens the kind of ideological and social groups they represent (Ahler and Sood 2018; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2004; Lupu 2015). When elites clash more intensely over ideological disputes, group members perceive higher ideological dissimilarity between the in-group and the out-group. This indicates larger differences in belief systems. Let's consider economic values as an example. On the one hand, left politics favours more income redistribution from the rich to the less well-off through social spending, typically achieved through higher taxation. On the other hand, right politics favours a free market with less government spending (i.e., less taxation) on welfare programs, relying on the market to address the negative effects of income inequality. Hence, one camp argues in favour of the market regulating itself (i.e., less government intervention), while the other assumes the system is unjust and requires intervention (Jost, Federico and Napier 2009). In this example, when elites clash more intensely on economic issues—when their positions become closer to the poles in opposite direction—this activates fundamental disagreements between groups and increases the perceived threat posed by the out-group (Renström, Bäck and Carroll 2021).

Nevertheless, the ideological mechanism does not limit the heightened affective responses to

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[1] Research shows that when parties are ideologically more different from each other, citizens realize this difference and become ideologically more sorted with political parties (Levendusky 2009; Zingher and Flynn 2018). Once groups are ideologically more homogeneous, the common grounds that group members share is larger, which leads them to view their own group even more favorably and the out-group less favorably (Mason 2015). This is an indirect way that ideological elite polarization influences affective polarization through the sorting mechanism. According to this mechanism, voters either align their ideological stance with their party or their party with their ideological stance. As a consequence of this homogenization, group members become affectively more polarized. However, in this chapter, I focus on another mechanism: the direct effect of elite polarization on affective polarization.

partisans only. Individuals without partisan identity (i.e., independents) can also react to growing ideological difference. When individuals are confronted with polarized options, the stakes associated with the prevailing option becomes higher (APSA 1950), meaning that policy outcomes would vary significantly depending on the election result. This raises affective reactions (both negative and positive) towards political parties among citizens (Orr and Huber 2020; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016). Even when individuals are only exposed to the party identity of candidates, they may infer policy positions, implying that the effect of ideological considerations might be mistakenly attributed to party identification. In the absence of policy information, the effect of party identification could absorb the effect of policy information if party identification aligns with ideological preferences. Orr and Huber (2020) tested this possibility and found that when individuals are not exposed to policy information, party identification largely influences how they evaluate a candidate. However, when provided with information on candidates' policy positions, the effect of party identification dramatically decreases, while the effect of policy information remains quite large. This indicates that affective evaluations of candidates are not only driven by identity but also, to a larger extent, by policy positions. In line with this, under high ideological polarization, parties' ideological differences should carry more weight when citizens evaluate political parties or candidates. The findings of Lelkes (2021) also support the policy-based nature of affective polarization, as they show that when individuals are given information on both candidate ideology and partisan affiliation, the former has a greater impact on warmth toward the candidate than the latter. Specifically, the more extreme the ideological preference of the candidate is, the larger the affective evaluation gap between the candidates becomes (Lelkes 2021).

Taken together, both the ideology-based and identity-based mechanisms provide reasons to expect that extreme policy proposals will elicit heightened affective responses from citizens at large, including both partisans and independents.

Hypothesis 1 *Ideological elite polarization leads to affective polarization among citizens at large.*

Two types of feelings toward groups—favouritism of the in-party and discrimination against the out-party—play a role in shaping affective polarization by determining the affective distance between the groups. However, the question of which of these feelings has the greatest influence on changes in affective polarization is still debated. Is it a question of in-party sympathy (Bassan-

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Nygate and Weiss 2022; Lelkes and Westwood 2017) or out-party animosity (Iyengar et al. 2019; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Webster and Abramowitz 2017)?

Both the identity and ideology mechanisms provide grounds to theorize that both out-party and in-party feelings drive affective polarization. According to the identity mechanism, party identification serves as a cue for demographic characteristics and non-political identities of group members, such as religious affiliation, social class, or ethnicity (Orr and Huber 2020). When party identification aligns with other non-political identities (Harteveld 2021b), individuals may infer characteristics about others based on their group affiliations. The greater the alignment between non-political identities and partisan identity (i.e., high intra-group similarity), the higher the perceived social dissimilarity represented by the out-party in individuals' minds (Mason 2016). Moreover, perceptions of group compositions can influence feelings toward them (Ahler and Sood 2018). When individuals perceive greater social dissimilarity between group compositions, they are less likely to appreciate the out-party (Ahler and Sood 2018; Mason and Wronski 2018), reinforcing group-based discrimination. This indicates that out-party feelings drive affective polarization. However, when intra-group dissimilarity is low (i.e., sorted groups) and inter-group dissimilarity is high, individuals should feel warmer toward the in-group due to both greater intra-group similarity and distinctiveness between groups. This indicates that affective polarization is also driven by in-party feelings.

According to the ideology mechanism, when elites are more ideologically distinct, it becomes easier to categorize the out-party into stereotyped categories, perceiving them as the opposite extreme (Ward and Tavits 2019), which further widens the social distance between groups. At the same time, Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989)'s framework of the directional theory of issue voting suggests that individuals prefer more extreme candidates over moderate ones. In line with this, taking extreme positions helps clarify parties' ideological positions to voters (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), signals ideological consistency, and emphasizes the doctrinal purity of the party (Hinich and Munger 1996). Taken together, when a political party takes a more extreme ideological position, enthusiasm or sympathy toward the in-party is likely to increase. In this case, in-party feelings drive the change in affective polarization.

In short, although both in-party feelings and out-party feelings are expected to contribute to the change in affective polarization in response to increased elite ideological polarization, the relative influence of each remains an open question. Therefore, I formulate two competing hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2 *Affective polarization is driven by out-party animosity rather than in-party sympathy.*

Hypothesis 3 *Affective polarization is driven by in-party sympathy rather than out-party animosity.*

4.3   Identification Strategy

To test the effect of elite ideological polarization on mass affective polarization, I use panel data from the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) spanning the period of 2014-2023. This data set allows me to examine whether the level of affective polarization among British citizens varies in relation to the level of elite ideological polarization. To measure affective polarization, I rely on a question in which respondents rate their feelings toward different political parties. Specifically, panelists are asked to indicate their level of liking or disliking for each party on a scale that ranging from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like). Following Broockman, Kalla and Westwood (Forthcoming) and Rogowski and Sutherland (2016), I operationalize affective polarization as the affective distance (i.e., feeling thermometer difference) between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party.[2] In the main text, I focus on Labour identifiers and Conservative identifiers, but I also replicate the results by including the Liberal Democrats in the appendices. The affective polarization variable ranges from 0 to 10, with lower values indicating similar evaluations of both parties (i.e., low affective polarization) and the higher values indicating a stronger preference for one party over the other (i.e., high affective polarization) (Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Wagner 2021). To contextualize, the larger the affective distance, the more affectively polarized one becomes. if respondent A's feeling thermometer scores for the Labour and Conservative Parties are 8 and 4, respectively, this results in an affective polarization score of 4. Similarly, if respondent B's feeling thermometer score for, the Labour and Conservative Parties are 7 and 6, respectively, this results in an affective polarization score of 1. Respondent A is more polarized than respondent B, who is indeed not affectively polarized, as they feel relatively similar warmth towards both parties. Additionally, I replicate the results using three alternative operationalizations of affective polarization in

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[2]It is worth noting that, although it would be preferable to measure affective polarization based on feelings toward in-partisans and out-partisans, the available items in the data set lead me to operationalize affective polarization based on parties. However, it is important to acknowledge that research has shown a high correlation between these two measures (Harteveld 2021*a*; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012).

the appendices: one focusing on the spread of party likes among the electorate (See Appendix C.3), another employing an identity-based measure exclusively targeting party identifiers (See Appendix C.4), and a third one focusing on another identity-based measure that includes non-partisans by inferring their party attachments based on their vote intention (See Appendix C.6).

The British case is a good setting for studying the effects of elite ideological polarization due to several key events that led to a significant increase in elite ideological polarization. One notable event occurred in 2015 when the Labour Party experienced a leadership change. After the party's loss in the 2015 General Elections, Ed Miliband stepped down as the leader, and Jeremy Corbyn, representing a more extreme left-wing faction within the party, was elected as the new leader in September 2015. Under Corbyn's leadership, the party shifted toward a more left-wing stance, moving away from the center and contributing to an increase in elite ideological polarization (Whiteley et al. 2019). Furthermore, this was not the only factor that contributed to increasing elite ideological polarization. To counter the rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which gained support by opposing the European Union, the Conservative Party decided to hold a referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU (Lynch and Whitaker 2016). Even though both the Conservative and Labour Parties campaigned to remain in the European Union during the 2016 referendum, the Conservative Party shifted its official position to support leaving after the narrow victory of the "leave" side. This decision, coupled with the contentious debate surrounding Brexit, further deepened the divide among political elites and even fostered a new political identity centered around being a "remainer" or "leaver" (Hobolt, Leeper and Tilley 2021). Following the referendum, the British politics experienced a prolonged period of gridlock as the parties struggled to agree on a Brexit deal. The governing party called for early elections twice, in 2017 and 2019, in an attempt to resolve the post-Brexit impasse. This tumultuous period in British politics exacerbated overall elite ideological polarization, driven by the Labour Party's leftward shift and the intensified partisan clash over Brexit between the two major parties, as also indicated in Chapter 3.

According to the British Election Study Expert Surveys (Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3), the average expert perception of the Labour Party in 2015 (prior to Corbyn) was 3.9. However, in 2017 (two years after Corbyn's leadership), it decreased to 2.4, and in 2019 (four years after Corbyn), it further declined to 2.0. Conversely, experts did not perceive major position shifts in the positions

of other parties on the left-right scale, indicating that the increase in elite polarization in the United Kingdom can be attributed to the Labour Party's adoption of a more extreme position. Expert perceptions also confirm the widening gap between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party on European integration following the referendum.

Furthermore, there is evidence that this shift in the Labour Party's position is also perceived by the electorate as a whole. Figure 4.1 plots the perceived mean difference between the Conservative Party and the Labour Party on (1) the left-right ideological scale and (2) the question of European Integration. For instance, on the left-right dimension (indicated by the blue line), the difference between the mean respondent perception of where the Labour Party and the Conservative Party were located on an 11-point scale was 5.14 in May 2015 (4 months before Corbyn) and 5.50 in April/May 2016 (6 months after Corbyn), 6.11 in May/June 2017 (2 years after), and 6.79 in November/December 2019 (4 years after). This increase in ideological difference started with the election of Jeremy Corbyn and continued to be clearer to citizens over the course of the following election campaigns. As for Brexit, it further contributed to elite polarization both on the left-right scale and the European integration issue. While parties' positions converged on European integration during the referendum campaign, it increased due to the change in the Conservative Party's position following the results. In short, British politics experienced a period of increasing elite-level conflict that started with the Labour Party's shift to the left and further increased after the unexpected results of the 2016 Referendum. This provides a good opportunity to study whether the growing elite ideological polarization is followed by an increase in affective polarization.[3] As the cause must precede the effect, and the British case provides a clear moment in time where elite polarization started to increase, it therefore allows to test whether elite polarization precedes affective polarization. Empirically, I simply compare affective polarization levels before and after the

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[3]Note that I do not claim that the increase in elite ideological polarization can be solely attributed to the leftward shift of the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn. The increasing ideological divergence between the Labour and Conservative Parties is the result of both the Labour Party's leftward shift and the Conservative Party's position change on Brexit following the referendum results. In the post-Brexit period, it is likely that the European integration dimension played a significant role in shaping the overall left-right brand of the parties. This period coincided with the time when the Labour Party moved further to the left on all dimensions, except for the European dimension, as perceived by British Election Study experts. The Labour Party's leftward shift persisted until Keir Starmer replaced Jeremy Corbyn in 2020. However, the specific dimension that had a greater impact on shaping the left-right brand of the parties is not the focus of this chapter. What matters is that elite ideological polarization increased on multiple dimensions, with the Labour Party moving to the left on the left-right dimension, the economic dimension, and to a lesser extent on the GAL/TAN dimension, while the Conservative Party moved to the right on the European integration dimension. The chapter's main concern is to examine whether this elite ideological polarization has led to mass affective polarization.

increase in elite polarization to test hypothesis 1. I also explore whether this effect is heterogeneous across different partisan groups (as measured in wave 6 (May 2015), the latest pre-Corbyn wave).

Figure 4.1. Perception of Ideological Difference According to the Electorate as a Whole
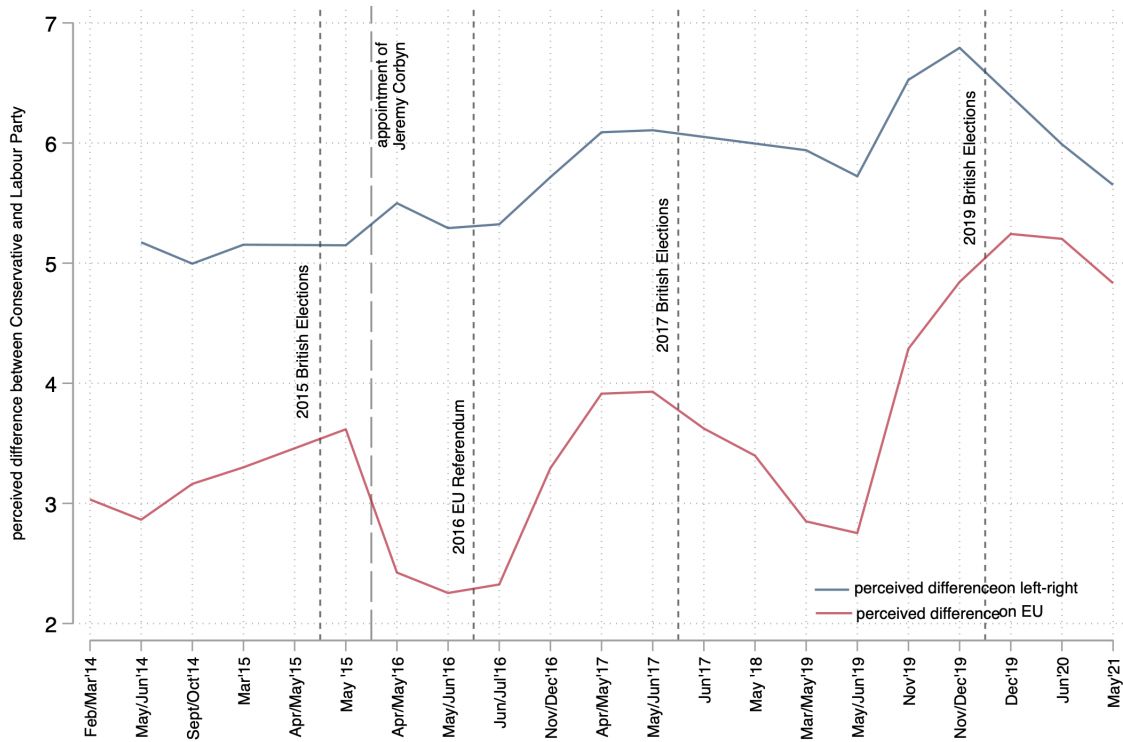
As for testing hypotheses 2 and 3—whether affective polarization is driven by in-party feelings or out-party feelings, I rely on respondents' party identification. Panelists are asked to respond to the question, "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?" Using this item, I operationalize party identification based on their identification in the last wave before the increase in elite ideological polarization (wave 6 - May 2015). Based on respondents' party identification, I operationalize feelings towards the in-party as feelings towards the party they identify with, and feelings towards the out-party as feelings towards the party they do not identify with.

Recall that I test whether elite ideological polarization leads to mass affective polarization. The theoretical framework leads me to expect that there are both identity basis and ideology basis to affective polarization. According to the identity-based perspective, partisans should be more affectively polarized than non-partisans due to their partisan identity. Therefore, elite po-

larization is likely to have a stronger impact on partisans compared to independents. However, the ideology-based perspective suggests that elite polarization, independent of identity, can also elicit more negative reactions towards polarized options among citizens, including those without a party identification. In the previous chapter, I expected Labour partisans to adopt a more left-wing position when the party moved to the left in comparison to independents, who were not expected to follow the Labour Party. This allowed me to rely on a more quasi-experimental design that allowed a causal examination by attributing the difference in the left-right positions between Labour partisans and independents to the effect of elite ideological polarization. However, when it comes to affective polarization, both partisans and non-partisans can be influenced by increasing elite ideological polarization, making independents an inappropriate counterfactual group. This limitation prevents me from attributing the effect to elite ideological polarization by comparing affective polarization levels before and after among different groups, including independents (using a difference-in-differences design). Therefore, in this chapter, I rely on a different design: panel data Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions with individual fixed effects, using cluster robust standard errors at the individual level.[4] These models hold both observed and unobserved time-invariant factors constant, allowing for the analysis of within-individual effects over time.[5] Including individual fixed effects alleviates concerns about omitted variable bias by controlling for observed and unobserved time-invariant factors that may influence affective polarization. Although the design itself does not establish causality between perceived elite ideological polarization and mass affective polarization, I further examine the causality by employing a cross-lagged approach, testing whether perceived elite polarization causes affective polarization or vice versa. This way, I can still plausibly test whether elite polarization has a causal impact on affective polarization.

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[4]The total number of participants in each wave varies from 27.839 to 37.959, with an average of approximately 31.800 respondents. Respondents who participate in one wave may drop out in subsequent waves but may return in other waves. Therefore, while the overall retention rate for all 21 waves is low, the retention rate between different pairs of waves is higher.

[5]It is important to note that models assume missing data to be random. The total number of observations is 226.188 (individual-wave), while the within-effects are estimated based on 23.394 respondents. However, I also replicate the analyses by considering only the same individuals who participated in each wave, as discussed in Appendix C.6

4.4   Results

4.4.1   Did Affective Polarization Increase in the Period of more Ideological Elite Polarization?

I first focus on whether there was an increase in affective polarization over time following the rise in elite ideological polarization, which started with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the Labour Party. Based on panel OLS regressions with individual fixed effects and robust cluster errors at the individual level, Figure 4.2 presents the average within-individual effect from 2014 to 2021, utilizing the two-party measure of affective polarization, which measures the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party).[6] The vertical dashed lines in the figure represent key events, namely the 2015, 2017 and 2019 General Elections, as well as the 2016 referendum (Brexit). The solid red vertical line indicates Jeremy Corbyn's election as the party leader of the Labour Party, which signifies the onset of the period when elite ideological polarization began to increase in the United Kingdom.

Overall, there has been an increase in affective polarization among citizens since the rise in elite ideological polarization. Given that affective polarization peaks during election time and then recedes to previous levels in non-electoral periods (Hernandez, Anduiza and Rico 2021; Reiljan and Ryan 2021), we can compare pre-Corbyn affective polarization with post-Corbyn affective polarization in both (1) non-electoral contexts, and (2) electoral contexts.[7]

First, comparing affective polarization levels during non-electoral contexts, average affective polarization increased in the post-Corbyn period compared to the pre-Corbyn period. In September/October 2014 (pre-Corbyn non-electoral context), affective polarization stood at 4.06. However, it rose to 4.33 in April/May 2016 (post-Corbyn non electoral context) and further increased to above 4.96 in June 2020 (post-Corbyn non-electoral context).

Second, affective polarization increased when comparing waves during election periods. In the 2015 elections (pre-Corbyn), affective polarization reached 4.7. However, it rose to 5.2 during the

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[6]Note that these analyses include independents, as well as Labour partisans, Conservative partisans, and Liberal Democrat partisans.

[7]Affective polarization is expected to peak during election periods due to heightened political conflict resulting from increased political information, which activates political predispositions (Hernandez, Anduiza and Rico 2021). As these political predispositions play a more significant role in shaping political evaluations, affective polarization reaches its peak. In non-electoral periods, when these political predispositions lie dormant or latent, affective polarization is lower (Hernandez, Anduiza and Rico 2021).

Figure 4.2. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time
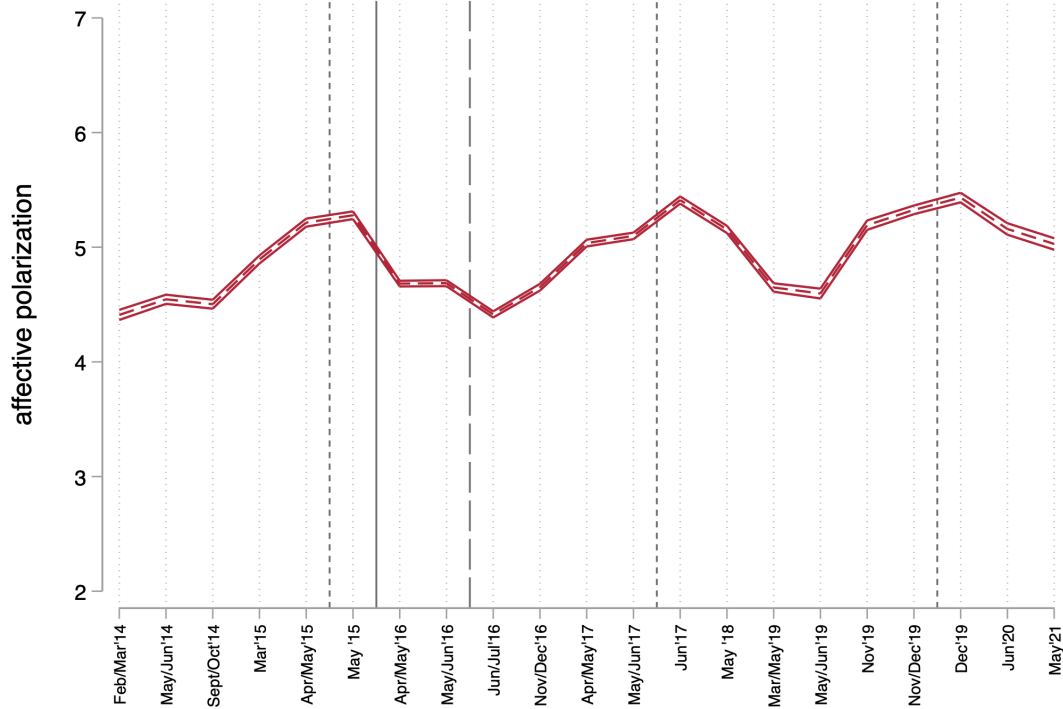
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. A larger distance indicates higher affective polarization. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

2017 elections and 5.3 during the 2019 elections. That is, affective polarization levels peaks to a greater extent during election periods in the polarized post-Corbyn period compared to the less polarized pre-Corbyn period. In short, the average within-individual effects indicate that affective polarization increased following elite polarization, both when comparing electoral and non-electoral periods.[8] These results lend support to hypothesis 1 suggesting that elite ideological polarization leads to mass affective polarization. In order to contextualize the effect sizes, one-unit change in positive direction in affective polarization represents an increase in the affective distance between

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[8]In contrast, affective polarization did not peak during the 2016 referendum; it even decreased further in the post-referendum wave. Several reasons explain this phenomenon. First, referenda are primarily revolve around voting on an issue rather than selecting a political party for office. Second, while parties may still campaign during referenda, they do so on behalf of a camp rather than for their own interests, potentially aligning them with other parties that are typically competitors. This was the case for the Labour and Conservative Party as they both officially campaigned to remain in the EU. This may have conveyed a sense of cooperation between parties, which should decrease affective polarization (Gidron, Adams and Horne 2022). Third, European integration and the decision to leave the EU or not cut across party lines (Fieldhouse et al. 2021, p.38-39), making it even more challenging for parties to transform the 2016 referendum into a party-centric campaign.

the Labour and Conservative Parties on an 11-point scale. It is also important to note that while these effects may appear relatively small, they represent the average within-individual effects. Descriptive statistics on how much change in affective polarization occurs between consecutive waves are reported in Appendix C.1.

4.4.2 Which Partisan Groups Become more Affectively Polarized?

While Figure 4.2 shows the overall increase in affective polarization with elite ideological polarization, there are still two important questions to address. First, does this trend apply to each partisan group? Even though the theory does not provide specific expectations for different partisan groups, I explore how these different groups reacted to the rise in elite ideological polarization. To investigate this, I estimated panel data OLS regressions with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level for each partisan group individually. Figure 4.3 plots the trends in affective polarization by party identification, as measured prior to the increase in elite polarization (wave 6 - May 2015).[9] The overall trends show that affective polarization increases during election periods, and this pattern applies to different segments of the electorate, although there may be some variations between groups. As a reminder, the identity mechanism suggests that partisans (Labour and Conservative identifiers) will become more affectively polarized in response to increased ideological elite polarization. However, the ideology mechanism suggests that both partisans and independents will react with heightened affective reaction to the growing elite ideological polarization.

Three things are noteworthy. First, independents exhibit significantly lower levels of affective polarization compared to partisans. This is consistent with the identity mechanism, which suggests that a certain degree of affective polarization is inherent in democracies due to party identification. Merely identifying with a political party intensifies one's emotional involvement in politics. Second, polarization trends among all groups follow a similar pattern prior to the increase in elite ideological polarization (indicated by the vertical red line). This indicates that their affective reactions to political stimuli, whether observed or unobserved time-varying factors, are similar. Third, trends

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[9]Even though partisanship is measured in wave 6, I include first 6 waves in the analyses to observe how affective polarization evolved prior to the change in elite ideological polarization among partisan groups. Given that affective polarization increases during election periods and decreases afterward, the level of affective polarization during non-electoral periods in the initial waves serves as a benchmark for comparison to affective polarization during the period of heightened elite ideological polarization.

start to diverge as elite ideological polarization intensifies. Independents experience a continuous increase in affective polarization as elite ideological polarization increases. The affective distance among non-partisans expands from 2.28 in September/October 2014 to 3.55 in June 2020, representing a more than 50 percent increase, which is a very substantial change. In contrast, the trends for partisans, which initially overlapped with each other, diverge from this point onwards.

Examining the period before (May 2015, post-election wave) and after (April/May 2016, non-electoral wave) the leadership change (indicated by the vertical red solid line), we observe a decrease in affective polarization among Labour, Conservative, and independents. Recall that this is expected because affective polarization peaks closer to the election day.

In the short run, specifically before and after the Labour Party adopted a more left-wing position, Conservative partisans depolarized in April/May 2016 (5.26, post-Corbyn) back to their previous affective polarization levels in September/October 2014 (5.34, pre-Corbyn, non electoral). This indicates that Conservative identifiers depolarized and returned to their previous non-electoral levels of affective polarization. Independents also experienced depolarization after the election, but their levels of affective polarization in April/May 2016 (2.61) remained higher than those in September/October 2014 (2.28). This suggests that elite polarization is associated with an increase in affective polarization among independents. Labour partisans, even though they somewhat depolarized after the election, still exhibited higher levels of affective polarization in April/May 2016 (5.82) compared to September/October 2014 (5.51). This suggests that, in the short run, elite ideological polarization constrained the general depolarization that typically takes place among Labour partisans and independents, but not among Conservative identifiers. In terms of effect size, the observed effects (approximately 0.3-point change on an 11-point scale among both independents and Labour identifiers) are meaningful given they represent average within-individual effects, hence, hiding the instances of more substantial individual-level changes in affective polarization.

In the long run, there is a clear trend towards increased affective polarization among all partisan groups, although this trend is less pronounced among Labour partisans. Particularly, Conservative partisans and independents become more affectively polarized following the Conservative Party's shift in position after the 2016 Referendum results. Looking at the extent of affective polarization among independents, it increases over time, which is consistent with the perception of the Labour Party's leftward shift movement, especially evident in the 2017 and 2019 general elections with

Figure 4.3. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time by Party Identification
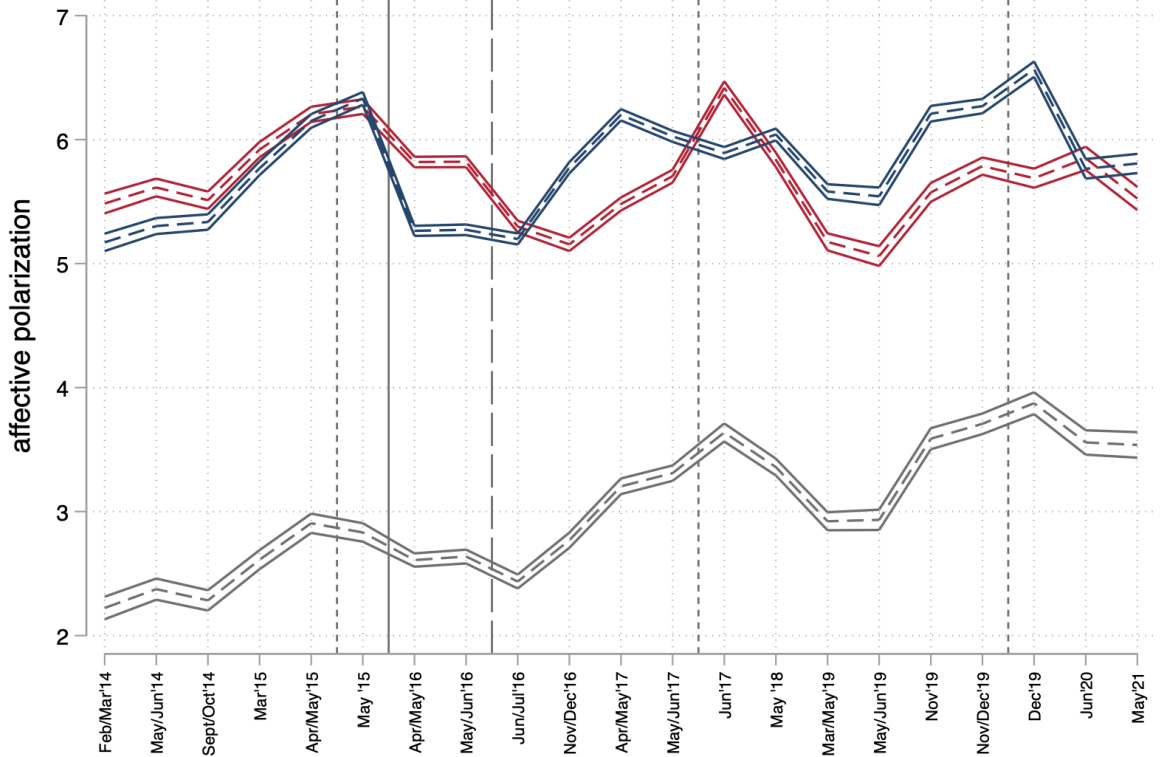
Note: The estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster-robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for each partisan group. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. A larger distance indicates higher affective polarization. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization among Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue) and independents (in gray) as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

notable changes in their manifesto, such as the proposal for free tuition (2019). Figure 4.1 also corroborates that the electorate's perception of the Labour Party's ideological position becomes increasingly left-wing over time. Labour partisans exhibit higher levels of affective polarization during the 2017 elections, but they depolarize back to their previous levels in the 2019 elections. In contrast, Conservative partisans show a different pattern, with a general tendency towards greater polarization, although affective polarization does not peak during the 2017 elections. Overall, the long-term trend indicates that increased elite ideological polarization is associated with higher levels of affective polarization among the electorate. Importantly, independents are the group that experiences the most significant polarization during this period of heightened ideological elite polarization. Because partisan affect might influence where identifiers see their party (Dinas, Hartman

and Van Spanje 2016), comparing the trends of affective polarization between Conservative and Labour identifiers to those of independents allows confirming that the increase in affective polarization is not due to partisan bias among Labour and Conservative identifiers, as affective distance between the two parties grows among all out-groups following the elite ideological polarization, indicating that affective polarization extends beyond partisan identification.

All in all, analyses of panel data including individual fixed effects reveal that the masses reacted affectively to the increase in ideological elite polarization.

4.4.3 Drivers of Affective Polarization: In-Party Sympathy versus Out-Party Animosity

Affective polarization consists of two components: in-party sympathy and out-party animosity. Therefore, a change in affective polarization indicates a change in the affective distance between parties, but it does not indicate whether in-party or out-party feelings are driving this change. In this section, I test hypotheses 2 and 3 to examine the extent to which elite polarization affects in-party and out-party feelings. By doing so, I shed light on the question of whether affective polarization is a matter of out-party animosity as it is the case in the United States (Iyengar et al. 2019; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Webster and Abramowitz 2017). Given that Labour partisans are predominantly left-wing (79 percent), when the Labour Party moved to the left, Labour identifiers overall might feel warmer towards the party. This could result in an increased affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party due to in-party feelings, indicating affective polarization is driven by warmer feelings towards the in-party. Similarly, Conservative identifiers, who are mostly right-wing, may react by developing colder feelings towards the Labour Party. Or, when elite polarization increased due to the Conservative Party changing its position on the European Union, this could lead Labour partisans to develop colder feelings towards the Conservative Party. These examples illustrate how affective polarization can be influenced by both in-party and out-party feelings.

Figure 4.4 plots the evolution of in-party, out-party feelings, and affective polarization based on within-individual estimates from panel data OLS regressions with cluster robust standard errors at the individual level.[10] More specifically, the first panel focuses on Labour identifiers and their evaluations of the in-party (i.e., the Labour Party, indicated in red), out-party (i.e., the Conservative

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[10]A separate model with in-party feelings, out-party feelings and affective polarization as dependent variables is estimated.

Party, indicated in blue), and the level of affective polarization among Labour partisans. The second panel focuses on Conservative identifiers and their evaluations of the in-party (i.e., the Conservative Party, indicated in blue), out-party (i.e., the Labour Party, indicated in red), and the level of affective polarization among Conservative partisans. Recall that these effects are average within-individual effects estimated with panel data OLS regressions. Three main conclusions can be drawn from these results.

Figure 4.4. Evolution of In-Party, Out-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization over Time
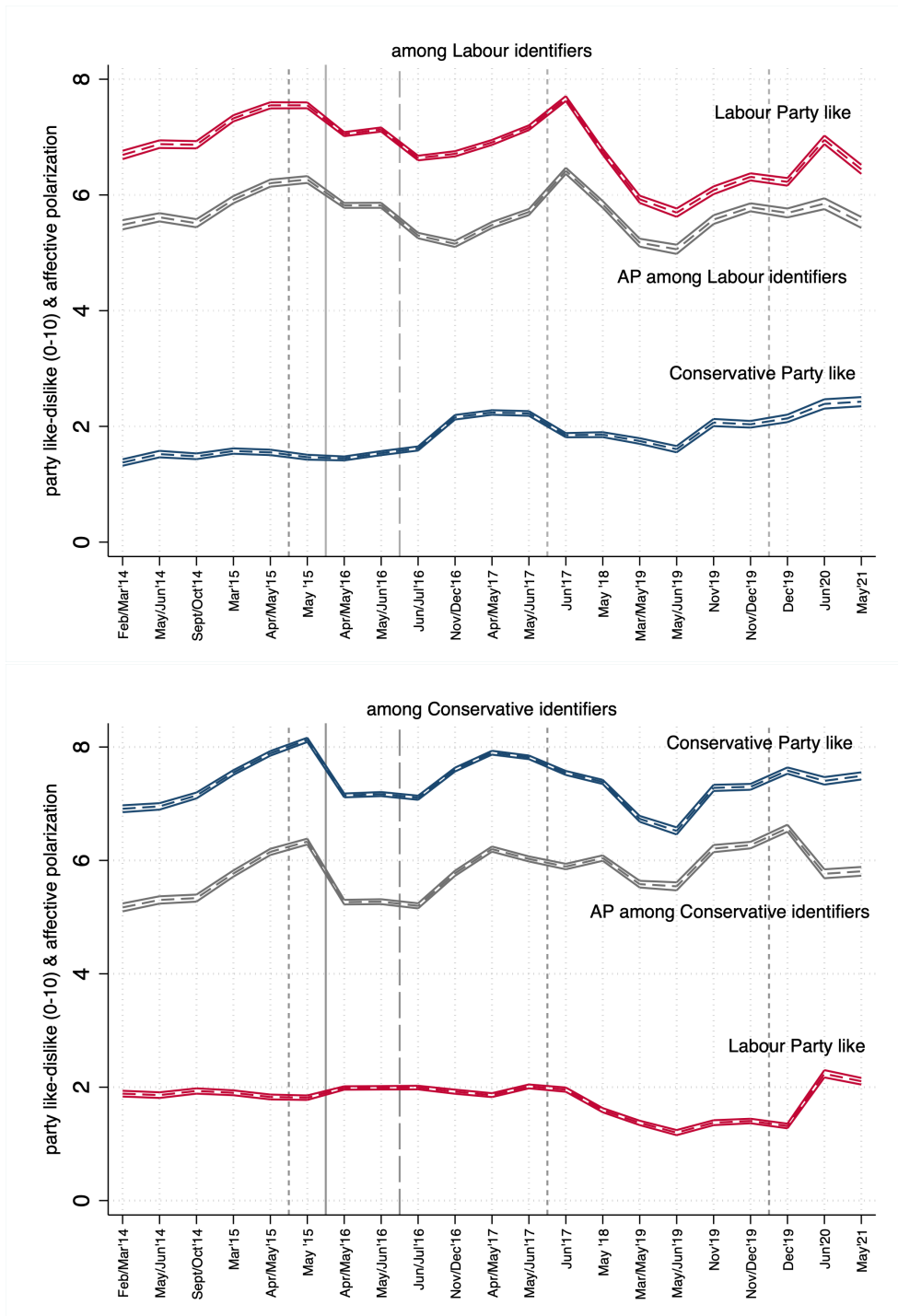
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The models are run separately for each partisan group as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). The dependent variables are the feeling toward each party (Labour Party in red, Conservative Party in blue) and affective polarization (i.e., the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party). The left panel presents the results among Labour identifiers and the right panel presents those among Conservative identifiers. The estimates indicate within-individual averages. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

First, overall, in-partisans have strong positive feelings towards their own party and strong negative feelings towards the out-party. In line with the findings in Sweden, these in-party fluctuations follow a cyclical trend in that they peak in election times (Reiljan and Ryan 2021).

Second, among Labour identifiers (first panel), out-party feelings remain relatively stable from the 2014 General Elections to the 2016 referendum, but then there is a tendency towards warmer feelings. Among Conservative identifiers (second panel), out-party feelings are quite stable until the 2017 General Elections, but then become colder until Jeremy Corbyn is replaced by Keir Starmer in April 2020, who is more centrist.

Third, affective polarization trends follow that of in-party feelings. When in-party feelings become warmer, affective polarization increases. On the other hand, feelings towards the out-party also seem to contribute to affective polarization, but a lot less so.[11] For instance, the decrease in affective polarization among Conservative identifiers in June 2020 is due to their increasing warmer feelings about the Labour Party under its more centrist leader Keir Starmer. These results are consistent with the account suggesting that affective polarization is more of an in-party enthusiasm story than an out-party animosity story (Bassan-Nygate and Weiss 2022; Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Rudolph and Hetherington 2021). This differs from the drivers of affective polarization in the United States, where increasing animosity towards the out-party is a prominent factor (Iyengar et al. 2019; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Webster and Abramowitz 2017). These findings highlight the need to reconsider how we conceptualize affective polarization. Research that focuses on the American case mostly considers affective polarization as an outcome of out-party hostility. However, this conceptualization, based solely on the out-group, may face difficulties when applied to other cases.

Moreover, the tendency to positively evaluate the in-party and negatively evaluate the out-

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[11]Note that the results are based on fixed Labour identification at wave 6, without considering those who change their partisanship in later waves. That is, respondents who identified with the Labour Party in wave 6 but no longer identify with it in subsequent waves are still included in the analyses. Conversely, those who did not identify with the party in wave 6 but started identifying with the Labour Party in later waves are not included in these analyses. This means that I focus on how the affective evaluations of those who identified with the Labour Party at wave 6 evolve over time in response to growing elite polarization. However, it is important to acknowledge that considering the sorting mechanism may alter the observed patterns. The inclusion of new Labour partisans and the exclusion of old Labour partisans could potentially moderate the overall appreciation of the party. In Appendix C.2, I show that when party identification is measured dynamically in each wave, Labour partisans tend to exhibit slightly higher enthusiasm for their party and slightly more affectively polarization. Nevertheless, the overall observed pattern remains consistent when party identification is fixed at wave 6. The trends in affective polarization among Labour partisans still follows the trends in in-party evaluation.

party is generally considered to be a zero-sum situation. However, as Allport (1954); Brewer (1999) suggest, in-party favouritism can be independent of out-party hostility, and partisan discrimination is not necessarily driven by out-party animosity (Brewer 1999). The bipolar assumption of in- and out-party feelings, where positive feelings toward the in-party result in negative feelings toward the out-party, calls for a reconsideration of the conceptualization of affective polarization.[12]

4.5   Directionality of the Effect: Does Elite Polarization Increase Affective Polarization or vice versa?

Until now, I have focused on the evolution of affective polarization in an increased polarization environment. However, the argument that elite ideological polarization increases affective polarization hinges on the assumption that citizens are aware of the extent of elite polarization and this awareness of increased divergence causes an increase in affective polarization. That is, it is a question of a two-step mechanism. First, elites polarize, and citizens realize the change in elite polarization. Second, because they perceive growing elite ideological polarization, they become more affectively polarized. In this section, I validate this assumption.

The evolution of the perceived ideological distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, as shown in Figure 4.1, clearly indicates that citizens at large perceived a significant ideological divergence between the two parties. While the average perceived ideological difference between them was 5.1 before the leadership change, it increased to 6.1 during the first election under Jeremy Corbyn, and further increased to 6.8 during the second election under the new leadership. This validates the first step, as citizens indeed perceived the increase in elite polarization, and importantly, this perceived change is a meaningful one.

Having established that citizens were indeed aware of the increasing divergence between party elites, now I turn to validating the second step that perceived elite polarization leads to an increase in affective polarization. This requires addressing the question of the directionality of the effect between perceived elite polarization and affective polarization. While this paper argues that elite polarization (and thus perceived elite polarization) influences affective polarization, research also provides evidence that one's affect towards parties influences the perceived ideology of parties,

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[12]For instance, individuals can have warmer feelings toward several parties at the same time, and this is quite common in multiparty systems (Çakır 2022).

Figure 4.5. How Elite Polarization Influences Mass Affective Polarization
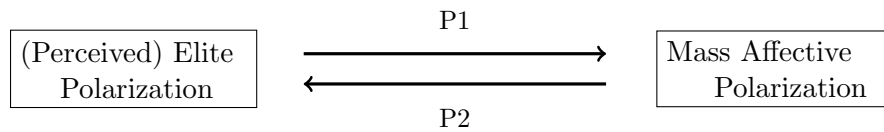
thereby impacting perceived polarization (Armaly and Enders 2021; Ward and Tavits 2019). Hence, determining the directionality of the effect serves as a check to confirm whether elite polarization is indeed the driving force behind affective polarization. Moreover, establishing the directionality has important implications in terms of potential remedies in real-world politics. If affective polarization influences perceived polarization, it suggests that affective polarization is identity-based, and thus more challenging to decrease. However, if perceived polarization influences affective polarization, parties and candidates can reduce affective polarization by adopting more moderate ideological stances.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the competing theoretical arguments that explain the relationship between perceived elite polarization and mass affective polarization. The analyses in this chapter are based on the assumption that perceived elite polarization causes affective polarization. This is indicated as P1. The rationale behind this assumption is straightforward. Party identification is an affectively charged social identity (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Huddy, Bankert and Davies 2018), which generates emotional involvement in that identity. Therefore, when party elites clash, these affects are activated and contribute to an increase in affective polarization. That is, since affect precedes conscious reasoning (Lodge and Taber 2005), an increase in elite polarization triggers the activation of affectively charged social identities (i.e., party identity), directly influencing affective polarization. Conversely, if an individual is already more affectively polarized, they are also more likely to perceive greater ideological differences between political elites (Armaly and Enders 2021; Ward and Tavits 2019). This is indicated as P2. In order to validate the above-mentioned assumption, it is necessary to demonstrate that perceived elite polarization indeed influences mass affective polarization, although this does not exclude the possibility of a mutual influence between the two factors.

Table 4.1. Does Elite Polarization Lead to Mass Polarization of vice versa? Cross-Lagged Panel Models

	non-electoral context		2017 General Elections		2019 General Elections	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$
Affective polarization$_{t-1}$	0.0535***	0.7399***	0.0877***	0.7613***	0.0788***	0.7623***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Perceived polarization$_{t-1}$	0.5952***	0.0770***	0.5486***	0.0663***	0.5592***	0.0967***
	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	1975	1975	7473	7473	3661	3661

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. $†p < 0.1$, $* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$, $*** p < 0.001$. In Model 1 and 2, t-1 variables are measured in wave 7 (first post-Corbyn wave) and t variables are measured in wave 8 (second post-Corbyn wave). In model 3 and 4, t-1 variables are measured in wave 11 and t variables are measured in wave 12 (pre 2017 General Election wave). In model 5 and 6, t-1 variables are measured in wave 17 and t variables are measured in wave 18 (pre 2019 General Election wave). Control variables are all measured at t-1 and they include age, education, gender, party identification, ideological extremity, and referendum vote intention.

In order to test whether this perceived elite-level ideological divergence explains the change in affective polarization (path P1 in Figure 4.5), I make use of cross-lagged panel models to assess whether previous perceived elite polarization causes affective polarization in subsequent waves (Models 2, 4 and 6). I also test whether previous affective polarization explains future changes in perceived polarization between the two parties (Models 1, 3 and 5). Models 1 and 2 focus on waves 7[13] (t-1 values - April/May 2016) and 8 (t values - May/June 2016), Models 3 and 4 focus on waves 11 (t-1 values - April/May 2017) and 12 (t values - May/June 2017), and Models 5 and 6 focus on waves 17 (t-1 values - November 2019) and 18 (t values - November/December 2019). This means that I am testing whether the causal influence flows from perceived elite ideological polarization to affective polarization or vice versa at three different time points during the period of increasing elite polarization.[14]

All models show the presence of bidirectional influence between perceived elite polarization and mass affective polarization. The previous level of perceived polarization explains both the current level of perceived polarization and affective polarization. Likewise, the previous level of affective polarization explains both the current level of affective polarization and perceived polarization. In terms of effect sizes, both directions are similar, although the impact of affective polarization on perceived polarization is slightly smaller in the non-electoral context and during the 2019 General Elections.

As theorized in Figure 4.5, perceived elite ideological polarization influences affective polarization, although affective polarization also influences how elite polarization is perceived. All in all, these findings suggest that the increase in elite ideological polarization and individuals' awareness of it play a significant role in shaping mass affective polarization. Consistent with the two-step mechanism, when elite ideological polarization increased in the United Kingdom, citizens perceived this growing divergence among political elites (step 1). These evolving perceptions of elite polarization subsequently resulted in changes in affective polarization (step 2).

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[13] I focus on the first wave after the elite ideological polarization started increasing because there is no reason to expect that perceived ideological difference between the parties should impact future affective polarization during times of ideological stability in the system. This is because this effect likely occurred during past episodes of elite polarization.

[14] It should be noted that elite polarization increases over time since the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the Labour Party in 2015. Research also shows that affective polarization peaks during election time and then decreases afterwards (Hernandez, Anduiza and Rico 2021; Reiljan and Ryan 2021). Therefore, I focus on different time points (election waves), where there is variation in the level of elite ideological polarization and affective polarization.

4.6 Conclusion

Does elite ideological polarization lead to mass affective polarization? I studied this question in the British context where elite polarization started to clearly increase when the new leadership in the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn shifted the party's position to the left. Elite polarization also increased due to the Conservative Party changing its position on Brexit following the referendum results, which led to a more contentious clash between the political elites. Using panel data to investigate the evolution before and after the increase in ideological elite polarization, I find that elite polarization leads to an increase in affective polarization.

Moreover, the increase in mass affective polarization occurs among the general population. Importantly, the affective distance between the Labour and Conservative Party among non-partisans increases from below 3 before the start of increasing elite polarization to 3.7 two years after, and just below 4 four years after. While the immediate effect of elite polarization seems to counter the affective depolarization that typically takes places after the election, particularly among the Labour partisans, Conservative partisans start to become more affectively polarized from the 2017 General Elections onwards.

This research also contributes to the growing literature on whether affective polarization is caused by perceived ideological polarization or vice versa, and what remedies political scientists can suggest for reducing affective polarization. Studies have found that individuals tend to perceive their opponents' ideological positions as more extreme than they actually are (Ahler 2014), which leads them to adopt more extreme ideological stances themselves. They also tend to overestimate the social compositions of opposing partisans to fit stereotypical thinking (Ahler and Sood 2018), thereby increasing the social distance between the groups. Moreover, research indicates that partisan affect plays a significant role in driving these misperceptions (Ward and Tavits 2019), and that affective polarization influences perceived polarization, while the reverse direction does not hold true (Armaly and Enders 2021). This suggests that affective polarization can become a self-fulfilling prophecy as described by Ahler (2014).

This leads to sobering results about mass affective polarization for two main reasons. First, if excessive levels of affective polarization are detrimental, reducing it becomes more challenging as it is rooted in identity, which tends to be stable over time. Second, if citizens' perception of

elite divergence is determined by their identities rather than the actual policy positions of political elites, it suggests that political identities are shaping issue opinions, contrary to what normative theories of representative democracy would expect. However, this paper shows that in the context of increased elite ideological polarization in the United Kingdom, ordinary citizens accurately perceived the growing ideological differentiation between the two main political parties. Moreover, their perceived polarization also played a role in how affectively polarized they subsequently became. Encouragingly, when the actual elite-level polarization decreased after December 2019, citizens at large also perceived this decrease and affective depolarization also took place during the same period. This suggests that affective polarization is also rooted in ideology, offering a more optimistic perspective. Therefore, political parties and candidates have the ability to tame mass affective polarization by adopting more moderate ideological positions.

The analysis of the evolution of affective polarization and the drivers of change reveals two important results. First, it is the increase in in-party enthusiasm rather than out-party animosity that primarily contributes to changes in affective polarization. This diverges from the pattern observed in the American case, where in-party feelings remain stable while out-party hostility intensifies over time. This contrast underscores the importance of being cautious when conceptualizing affective polarization solely based on out-party animosity, especially when applying the concept across different countries. Second,the relationship between in-party and out-party feelings is not zero-sum, meaning that an increase in warmth toward one party does not necessarily entail a decrease in warmth toward the other party. Therefore, these two components of affective polarization should not be treated as bipolar opposites. One implication of this finding is that out-party animosity can remain stable while affective polarization increases or decreases solely due to changes in in-party enthusiasm. Thus, it is incorrect to assume that an increase in affective polarization automatically signifies growing animosity toward parties. However, these results should be considered as preliminary, and future research should study which component of affective polarization drives the outcomes over an extended time period in the United Kingdom, as well as how these findings compare to other democracies.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

In this dissertation, I studied elite ideological polarization and its impact on mass ideological and affective polarization. Three main questions guided this dissertation. First, has elite ideological polarization increased in Western Europe over time? Second, do masses become more ideologically polarized when elite ideological polarization increases? Third, do masses become more affectively polarized when elite ideological polarization increases?

In Chapter 2, I focused on the prevalence of elite ideological polarization in Western Europe and investigated whether it has increased over time. I found a noticeable trend toward greater party polarization on the left-right, economic, and social dimensions, but not on the European integration dimension. This trend reflects a growing ideological distinction between parties, resulting in a more diverse range of ideological options available to citizens in Western Europe. This trend is observed in most countries, suggesting a widespread phenomenon. This chapter also showed that party polarization on the economic, social, and European integration dimensions moderately correlate with that on the traditional left-right dimension, indicating some degree of overlap between these dimensions. However, the correlations among party polarization on these dimensions are relatively weak, suggesting that while the left-right dimension acts as a "super-issue" position that absorbs party positions on other dimensions, these dimensions are not necessarily aligned with each other. More generally, these results contribute to a better understanding of ideological trends and party polarization across different dimensions of political competition over time, shedding light on the increasing complexity of party systems in Western Europe. More specifically, elite ideological

polarization is found to influence political attitudes and behavior such as party identification (Lupu 2013), partisan sorting (i.e., ideological sorting) (Levendusky 2009; 2010), extremity of individual opinions (Zaller 1992), voter turnout (Moral 2017), proximity voting (Pierce and Lau 2019), and attribution of responsibility (Jones 2010; Stiers and Dassonneville 2020). Therefore, uncovering the trends in elite ideological polarization across different dimensions of political conflict is crucial for gaining deeper insights into political transformations and identifying potential avenues for understanding changes in these attitudes and behaviors.

Having established the presence of elite ideological polarization, I next turned to the ways in which this elite polarization affects the masses. I focused on two ways that the masses can react to elite ideological polarization: ideological and affective reactions.

In Chapter 3, I tested whether the masses become more ideologically polarized in response to elite ideological polarization. As a reminder, mass ideological polarization refers to the extent to which ideological preferences of citizens diverge. I leveraged a sudden increase in party polarization in the United Kingdom, which occurred when the Labour Party shifted its position to the left under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. This real-world sudden party polarization, overcoming the endogeneity problem that often arises when examining the relationship between party identification and ideological preferences, allowed me to test whether partisans followed their party when the latter took a more extreme position. I expected in-partisans (i.e., Labour partisans) to follow the party by adopting a more left-wing position, while out-partisans (i.e., Conservative partisans) were expected to lash back and adopt a more right-wing position. The results, however, do not provide evidence for these expectations. Neither in-partisans nor out-partisans adopted a more extreme position when elite ideological polarization increased in the United Kingdom. In contrast, both groups appear to have moderated their positions. Only a small minority of the in-partisans, those who were more right-wing than the Labour Party prior to the position change, adopted a more left-wing position. In addition to relying on a quasi-experimental design, I also used a panel data approach to analyze the evolution of ideological positions across 20 panel waves during seven years. The results from these analyses provide corroborating evidence that, instead of adopting a more extreme ideological stance, both in-partisans and out-partisans moderated their ideological positions.

In Chapter 4, I focused on the impact of elite ideological polarization on individuals' affect and tested whether the masses become more affectively polarized following an increase in elite ideological

polarization. As a reminder, affective polarization refers to the extent to which individuals like their own party and dislike the other parties. When affective polarization is high, feelings towards one's own party and other parties become more distinct, indicating larger affective distance between them. Also relying on the British case, a context that underwent an increase in elite ideological polarization not only due to the left-wing shift in the Labour Party's position but also the continued clash between parties on Brexit, I found that even though the masses did not become ideologically more polarized, they became affectively more polarized. This effect is not limited to in-partisans, but it extends to citizens at large. Next, I turned to the question of whether affective polarization is driven by in-party enthusiasm or out-party animosity. I found that changes in affective polarization are mostly driven by changes in citizens' in-party evaluations. While out-party feelings are more stable over time, in-party feelings fluctuate. Lastly, in this chapter, I also tested the commonly made assumption that the effect of elite ideological polarization on affective polarization runs through perceived elite ideological polarization. That is, does perceived polarization cause affective polarization or vice versa? I found that they both influence each other, meaning that affective polarization is rooted both in identity and ideology.

I discussed the importance of this research project in the introduction and in each empirical chapter. The rest of the conclusion is organized into three sections, where I (1) expand on the implications of my findings, (2) mention the limitations of this dissertation, and (3) discuss avenues for future research.

5.2   Implications

5.2.1   Do Parties Lead Masses?

The observation that elites are polarizing motivates many scholars to examine in more depth whether this trend affects the masses. Such work fits within a larger line of research that asks the question of whether parties lead citizens when it comes to opinion formation. Based on the conclusions from the classics of voter behavior and public opinion, it is generally assumed that the average citizen is uninformed, not interested in politics, and falls short of the democratic standards assigned to them by pundits (Achen and Bartels 2017; Converse 2006; Lippmann 1993; Zaller 1992). However, it is also theorized that parties can help overcome these shortcomings by

serving as a short-cut and cue for citizens to form opinions through a political identity (Kam 2005; Petersen, Giessing and Nielsen 2015; Zaller 1992) that citizens develop during early socialization (Campbell et al. 1980; Jennings and Niemi 1974). Alternatively, parties can simply provide low-cost and simplified information to citizens (Downs 1957; Jones and Hudson 1998). Political elites initiate political debates on issues, providing the necessary tools for citizens to make sense of complicated politics and form opinions on political matters (Zaller 1992). Such mechanisms would imply that parties lead citizens (Broockman and Butler 2017; Zaller 1992).

There is a large body of evidence in favour of the elite opinion leadership thesis. For instance, Lenz (2009) shows that when people learn about a candidate's position on an issue, they align their own positions to match that of their party's candidate, even if it is inconsistent with their prior preference (Lenz 2009). Similarly, relying on a quasi-experimental design, Slothuus and Bisgaard (2020) show that when the Liberal Party changed its position on two major issues in Denmark, partisans adopted the party's new position, even if it went against their own preference. Furthermore, Broockman and Butler (2017) conducted a field experiment where they measured public support on various issues and then sent letters to citizens informing them of their legislator's positions on those issues. The experiment revealed that simply receiving the letter indicating the legislator's position increased public support on that issue among voters by around 5 percentage points. Even more interestingly, Broockman and Butler (2017) did not find any additional impact of providing persuasive justification from the legislator on why they take the position. Simply indicating the position was sufficient for voters to align their position without even leading to a worse evaluation of the legislator. Overall, these accounts indicate that parties enjoy some leeway in shaping the opinions of citizens to the extent that some claim citizens blindly follow parties (Achen and Bartels 2017). However, there is also evidence that the leeway political parties have can be somewhat limited. For instance, Carsey and Layman (2006) show that when an issue is not salient to voters, they tend to follow the party. But when the issue is salient to them, the relation between party identification and issue opinion becomes endogenous, with both influencing each other. This indicates evidence against blind following. The results of Chapter 3 and 4 have implications for this ongoing debate. Based on the elite opinion leadership thesis and the conceptualization of party identification as a social identity, partisans should follow their party when the latter changes its position, especially when this change is obvious to them (Achen and Bartels 2017; Campbell et al. 1980; Lenz 2009;

Zaller 1992). This account suggests that individuals, motivated to maintain their identity more than their ideological preferences (Otten and Wentura 1999; Petersen et al. 2013), should align their positions to better match that of their party to reduce cognitive dissonance created by their party's shift away from the center. However, I found no evidence in favour of these expectations. Partisans perceived that the Labour Party adopted a more left-wing position under Jeremy Corbyn, but did not follow the party by adjusting their positions to become more left-wing. This holds true even for strong Labour partisans. This finding clearly indicates that partisans do not blindly follow their parties and points to the limits of elites' leeway in shaping the preferences of their supporters.

However, I also found that even though citizens do not follow the parties when it comes to their ideological preferences, this does not necessarily mean that parties do not lead or that citizens ignore elites' positions. Results of Chapter 4 show that when the elite ideological polarization increased in the United Kingdom, citizens recognized the change in the available ideological menu and reacted by adjusting their affective evaluations of parties. That is, their affective evaluations became more polarized. Moreover, this affective polarization even took place among independents, whose evaluations of parties generally tend to be less polarized (Rudolph 2011). This is important for several reasons. As party identification as a social identity (i.e., expressive partisanship) is an affect-based attachment (Mason 2015; Petersen, Giessing and Nielsen 2015), and affect precedes conscious reasoning (Lodge and Taber 2005), affects towards parties become automatically activated and guide one's reasoning. One consequence of this bias is that citizens perceive more polarization than actually exists (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). The findings of Chapter 4 show that party polarization leads to affective polarization, meaning that under high elite ideological polarization, citizens develop more polarized affective evaluations of parties. Given that affect toward parties has been shown to influence various political attitudes and behaviors (see the introduction), parties still guide and lead citizens, but this does not seem occur through blind following. For instance, research shows that citizens that have positive affective evaluations of parties (i.e., ambivalent citizens) tend to turn out to vote at lower rates compared to those with more polarized affective evaluations of parties (Çakır 2022). If elite ideological polarization leads citizens to become more affectively polarized, then the results also have implications for voter turnout, as people with more polarized affects towards parties (i.e., less ambivalence towards parties) are more likely to turn out to vote (Çakır 2022).

If partisans do not adjust their ideological preferences to align with their party, does this mean that citizens are primarily motivated by ideology rather than identity? Not necessarily. While this is a necessary condition for ideology to trump identity, it is not sufficient on its own to confirm this. If identity precedes ideology, we should observe that partisans update their ideological preferences along with their party. The lack of evidence supporting this suggests that there are limits to identity when it comes to shaping ideological preferences. If ideology precedes identity, meaning citizens choose their parties based on the alignment of their ideological positions, then we need to observe two phenomena. First, they should not follow the party when it changes its position (a necessary but not sufficient condition). Second, in addition to not following, they should also update their party identification based on their ideological commitments (a sufficient condition). This dissertation provided evidence supporting the necessary condition, but not enough evidence to support the sufficient condition that ideology trumps identity. To claim that ideology takes precedence over identity, one would have to test whether Labour partisans update their party identification with another party that better aligns with their ideological preferences (see Figure 5.4 when discussing future research avenues).

Ideological elite polarization can increase affective polarization through identity and ideology mechanisms. The former suggests that party identification is rooted in affect, and there is an increase in elite ideological polarization, political identities become more salient, leading to heightened affective polarization. The latter suggests that individuals react with heightened affective reactions to ideologically extreme proposals, regardless of their political identity. The results of this dissertation provide evidence that is in line with both mechanisms. First, the results show that affective polarization increases among both in-partisans and out-partisans. This suggests that when elite ideological polarization intensifies, individuals with a party identification experience heightened affective polarization, indicating that their political identities become more salient. Second, even independents, who do not have an attachment to a specific party, become more affectively polarized. This suggests that individuals without party affiliations also adjust their evaluations of those who propose polarized policies in response to the increasingly polarized ideological landscape. This also points to a citizenry that evaluates political parties based on their ideological positions, even if they do not adopt the extreme positions of those parties. In short, both party identification and ideological considerations guide people's reactions to party behavior.

Overall, the results portray a citizenry that is at odds with the accounts depicting the average citizen as uninformed, uninterested, and disengaged from politics. These results echo what Wlezien and Soroka (2016) state: "Despite ongoing concerns about the ignorance and irrationality of the average citizen, a growing body of recent work shows that the average citizen may be more informed than initially assumed. This is not to say that the average citizen knows very much about politics, but there is accumulating evidence that individuals may be capable of basic, rational political judgments." The findings of this dissertation support this perspective by showing that citizens, at least the British public, are aware of what positions parties take and update their affective evaluations of parties based on these positions. This indicates that citizens do indeed pay attention to what parties propose and incorporate them into their evaluations. In the next section, I turn to possible reasons why parties choose to polarize even though masses do not follow them ideologically.

5.2.2   If Masses do not Follow Parties, Why do Parties Polarize?

The underlying assumption of theories of elite opinion leadership is that citizens neither have enough time nor interest to invest in politics, nor the expertise on political matters. Hence, they rely on political elites to form opinions and make political decisions. This dissertation provided evidence that when elites take a more extreme position, they do not lead the masses to align their preferences with the party by adopting more extreme position. So, why do parties polarize if the masses do not follow? There are potential reasons that explain why parties might still prefer to polarize, even though they fail to shape the opinions of their partisan base.

First, the fact that citizens react affectively to increasing elite ideological polarization is consistent with the evidence that higher party polarization provides clearer cues to citizens, allowing them to more easily find a political party that shares their own preferences (Levendusky 2010). When citizens vote for the party that represents them (i.e., when they cast an informed vote (Pierce and Lau 2019)), policy implementations by the representatives should correspond more closely to the preferences of those who elected them, reinforcing the representation link between the elected and the electorate. This way, parties indeed help mobilize citizens and increase policy representation.

Second, when parties are ideologically more distinct, it becomes easier for citizens to associate policy outcomes with political parties. In polarized systems, citizens can more easily attribute responsibility to political parties and, as a result, reward or punish the incumbent for policy out-

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comes (Jones 2010). Therefore, ideologically distinguishing the party from the opposition could be a beneficial strategy for a well-performing incumbent. Similarly, opposition parties may also find it advantageous to differentiate themselves ideologically if the incumbent is under-performing. However, it is important to note that if elite ideological polarization leads to mass affective polarization, this could potentially impede the accountability mechanism by reinforcing partisan bias in the evaluation of parties and their performance in office.

Third, by polarizing ideologically, political parties might be attempting to please their party activists and donors. For instance, Broockman and Malhotra (2020) show that political donors in the United States hold more extreme positions compared to the average partisan base of parties. Specifically, the average Republican donor is more conservative on economic issues than the average Republican voter, while the average Democratic donor is more liberal than the average Democratic voter (Broockman and Malhotra 2020). It is worth noting that campaign spending has been linked to improved electoral performance (Johnson 2013), leading parties to rely on donors for electoral success. Consequently, parties may adopt more extreme positions on certain issues to cater to the preferences of their donors. However, it should be noted that while the British case shares similarities with the American case in terms of campaign donations, this may not necessarily be applicable to the rest of Western Europe (Grant 2005).

Fourth, obtaining media coverage is a good strategy for reaching and persuading citizens. When parties adopt more extreme positions, they are more likely to get the attention of journalists, resulting in increased media coverage (Haselmayer, Meyer and Wagner 2019). This media exposure assists parties in persuading voters and asserting their ownership of specific issues (Petitpas 2022).

Fifth, adopting extreme positions can also signal the ideological purity of a party, enhancing its perceived sincerity (Hinich and Munger 1996). Consequently, taking a polarized approach can still be an effective strategy for parties to convince citizens to vote for them based on shared ideological convictions.

Sixth, parties may polarize in anticipation of future mass polarization. As political elites possess greater knowledge and access to information, they can anticipate the importance and potential divisions surrounding a particular issue. If they anticipate mass polarization, they have an incentive to take a distinct position on that matter and provide an ideological framework to guide and lead the political debate.

Seventh, just like citizens, representatives are not immune to perceptual biases. If citizens tend to perceive greater ideological polarization than actually exists (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016), it is plausible that political elites are also subject to similar biases. Research shows that political elites have biased perceptions of their constituents' opinions on issues (Broockman and Skovron 2018). In single-member districts, representatives have incentives not to break off with their constituency and may adopt more extreme positions for electoral purposes if they believe their constituents to hold more extreme preferences than they actually do.

Overall, there are logical reasons that explain why parties may engage in polarization even when the masses do not follow them by adopting their positions.

5.2.3 Why do Masses not Follow?

There are several potential explanations as to why partisans in the United Kingdom do not follow their party by adopting their party's positions. In what follows, I present arguments regarding (1) the nature of party identification, (2) the distinction between leader and party position, and (3) the absence of opinion leaders among party supporters.

First, it is possible that party identification functions less like a social identity in the British context. On the one hand, Goren (2005) finds that, partisan attachments in the United States are even more stable than core values, which themselves are generally more stable than issue positions. This suggests that party identification in the United States causes changes in values without being influenced by them. These findings align with the original conceptualization of party identification by Campbell et al. (1980) that it is an unmoved mover that is exogenous to issue positions and core values. As summarized by Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2004, 4), "When people feel a sense of belonging to a given social group, they absorb the doctrinal positions that the group advocates." However, measuring party identification as a social identity through various items in four multiparty contexts (United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands and Sweden), Huddy, Bankert and Davies (2018) find that strong partisans in the United Kingdom act like partisans in the United States in that they prioritize their identity over ideology.[1] On the other hand, Evans and Neundorf (2020) find that in the United Kingdom, core values exhibit greater stability than partisan attachments. Moreover, in

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[1]Note that I found that even those who strongly identified with the Labour Party did not adopt more left-wing positions.

contrast to the findings of Goren (2005), core values predominantly influence partisanship rather than the other way around. Additionally, the results of Adams, Green and Milazzo (2012) also corroborate this in that when the Labour Party moved to the center on various issues under Tony Blair's leadership, branding itself as New Labour, Labour partisans did not follow the party to the center.

However, the debate on the nature of party identification in the British case remains unresolved. For instance, Schonfeld and Winter-Levy (2021) find that when the Conservative Party shifted its official position on Brexit from remain to leave immediately after the referendum, pro-European Conservative partisans left the party, while anti-European voters joined it. Importantly, the new Conservative Party identifiers adjusted their positions on redistribution to align with the party's stance, becoming less supportive of redistribution. These contrasting findings regarding the nature of party identification in the United States and the United Kingdom raise questions about whether party identification functions as a social identity outside of the American case. If partisanship is influenced by core values, it suggests that it is more like a preference rather than an identity. This has implications for the extent to which parties can shape the opinions of their supporters. It aligns with the normative ideals of representative democracy, which envision a citizenry guided by their political values and supporting representatives based on their policy proposals.

Second, even though partisans perceive changes in party leadership's positions, it is possible that they do not generalize this to the party's overall position. In other words, partisans may consider leader-induced position changes as temporary or somewhat disconnected from the party's core stance. Policy reputations and party brands are known to be long-lasting and change slowly (Lupu 2013), so partisans might take their time to associate the new position with the party, or they may simply wait to see if the policy change is there to stay. As neatly put by Lupu (2013), "Voters' perceptions of party brands are determined by observations of the party's behavior over time. This means that the updated party brand (the posterior) combines prior and new information. The new perceived party position is a weighted average of the prior position and the average party position signaled by the new observations of the party's behavior. In other words, voters have some conception of a party's brand based on past experience, but they continually average in new observations of the party." Assuming that partisans believe that their party will eventually revert to its previous position, such as with another leadership change, they may not feel compelled to

reconcile the dissonance created by the party's position change. For example, when Jeremy Corbyn was replaced by centrist Keir Starmer, citizens perceived the party as more centrist, and affective polarization immediately decreased (Chapter 2 and 4). If the Labour Party had maintained its extreme position even after the replacement of Jeremy Corbyn by Keir Starmer, it would have signaled the stability of the new position, independent of the leader. Similarly, if voters are not convinced that the party is internally unified on its new position, partisans may be less likely to follow the party. Under Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party was seen more divided than before (Fieldhouse et al. 2021), potentially because he was seen as too left-wing. Whether partisans choose not to follow or become more critical of party position changes, both highlight the presence of a more discerning citizenry that does not blindly adopt party's new positions. Overall, my main and perhaps optimistic interpretation of these findings is that citizens' ideological convictions are somewhat resistant to short-term changes in party behaviour.

Third, we know that opinion leaders among the supporters of a party are more receptive to party messages, more engaged in politics, and spend more time discussing politics with others, trying to persuade them on political matters (Steenbergen, Edwards and De Vries 2007). This segment of a party's base plays an important role in facilitating the connection between elites and masses, as parties with fewer opinion leaders experience weaker influence between elites and partisans. It is worth noting that mainstream parties generally have a smaller pool of opinion leaders (Steenbergen, Edwards and De Vries 2007). Therefore, the absence of elite influence observed in Chapter 3 may be attributed to the lack of opinion leaders among the supporters of the Conservative Party and Labour Party.

5.2.4 Moderation as a Consequence of Party Polarization

The results of Chapter 3 do not support the notions of in-party polarization (i.e., follow the party effect) or out-party polarization (i.e., backlash effect). Surprisingly, I found evidence that both in- and out-party members moderated their positions, moving towards the positions of the out-party. While these results go against my expectations, they are in line with existing research showing that citizens update their opinions when presented with new information (Hill 2017). Even though citizens do not update their beliefs in a perfectly unbiased way, citizens still incorporate new information even when it contradicts their prior beliefs (Hill 2017). Experiment evidence by Broockman

and Butler (2017) shows that citizens adjust their positions in the same direction as their legislators, even without explicit justifications for their positions. More importantly, this updating occurs even among individuals who previously disagreed with their legislators on the issues, indicating the presence of updating with the out-party information. Drawing on the results of 20 experiments, Coppock (2016) also comes to a similar conclusion that individuals update their beliefs as a weighted average of their priors and new information, regardless of their background or ideological positions. Moreover, Fowler and Howell (2023) show that party identifiers update their beliefs in response to information from both their own party and the out-party, even among highly committed partisans. Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that citizens, regardless of party identification, update their perceptions of parties' ideological positions based on media coverage during election campaigns (Somer-Topcu, Tavits and Baumann 2020). In summary, a growing body of literature challenges the conventional wisdom that individuals solely engage in biased (or partisan) processing of new information, reinforcing their priors with consistent information and moving in the opposite direction when faced with inconsistent information, thereby leading to opinion polarization among groups (Taber and Lodge 2006; Bartels 2002; Lord, Ross and Lepper 1979).

Taken together, these studies all indicate a form of Bayesian updating among citizens when confronted with new information. The implications of this are three-fold. First, this goes against the notion of a rationalizing citizenry that engages in motivated reasoning to fit their opinions to their identities. Second, despite party identification serving as a cognitive shortcut or cue, partisans are still receptive to alternative party proposals. The presence of a moderation effect in a real-world context suggests that citizens are not confined to echo-chambers where they only expose themselves to one-sided information. This finding goes against the Receive-Accept-Sample Model of Zaller (1992) that stipulates that once individuals are exposed to information that is inconsistent with their political predispositions (i.e., party identification), they will exhibit partisan bias and resist the information. While this may hold true for certain subgroups, particularly those with higher political awareness, the results of Chapter 3 show that partisan bias at the group level is weaker than previously thought. This joins the findings of Wlezien (1995) who shows that citizens act like thermostats, adjusting their policy preferences based on the government's policy outputs, whether they desire more or less of a particular policy.

Third, the findings suggest that elite-level polarization can lead to persuasion effects that tran-

scend party lines. While this still means parties lead citizens, it is through persuasion rather than blind following. This presents a more optimistic outlook for both the average democratic citizen and the leeway that political parties can have in shaping the opinions of their supporters.

5.2.5 Enthusiasm over Animosity

In Chapter 4, I found that in-party feelings play a more significant role in driving the increase in affective polarization compared to out-party feelings. These findings have three key implications.

First, the operationalization of affective polarization influences the interpretations of results. When affective polarization is measured based on out-party feelings, it tends to be more stable over time. However, when it is measured as the affective gap between the in- and out-party, it fluctuates more, and this fluctuation is not necessarily due to an increase in animosity toward the out-party. In this dissertation, I focused on the affective distance, and found that changes in affective polarization are primarily driven by in-party feelings.

Second, negative campaigning has increased over time (Motta and Fowler 2016), even though voters do not prefer candidates that employ uncivil rhetoric (Costa 2021). When candidates insult the opposing party, legislators' approval ratings suffer, even among those who identify with the legislator's party (Costa 2021). Moreover, political incivility decreases political trust (Skytte 2021). I found in Chapter 4 that the trend of affective polarization aligns more closely with in-party feelings rather than out-party feelings, and the feelings toward the out-party are relatively stable. This implies an optimistic recipe for representative democracies in that campaign strategists have less incentive to engage in negative campaigning or resort to incivility to mobilize citizens to vote.

Third, research shows that a lower affective distance between parties (i.e., higher party ambivalence) leads to a decrease in voter turnout (Çakır 2022). Instead of attempting to increase the distance by reducing out-party feelings, strategists can focus on boosting the engagement of their party's voters by increasing enthusiasm. This approach will not only mobilize voters by reducing party ambivalence but also maintain political trust among citizens.

5.2.6 Implications Concerning the Measurement Strategies for Party Polarization and Affective Polarization

In this dissertation, I focused on the extent of ideological polarization on the supply side based on their ideological positions. As the focus was on the ideological menu that is available to citizens, I relied on a measurement of party polarization (PP) that did not involve weighting party positions by their electoral support. This is in contrast to party system polarization (PSP), which takes into account citizens' support for parties' policies. I argued that measuring PSP is less ideal to study trends in elite-level polarization because it is also driven by voters' reactions to party positions. It is important to recognize the theoretical and empirical distinctions between these two concepts and decide which one aligns with the research question at hand. If the goal is to analyze the political system as a whole, encompassing both parties and citizens, then the PSP index would be more appropriate. On the other hand, if the focus is solely on party behavior, isolated from the impact of voter responses to party position changes, then the PP index is the preferred choice.

The implications of this measurement choice are at least three-fold. First, the evolution of ideological elite polarization based on PSP can be merely or in part driven by changes in which parties citizens support over time—even if parties' positions do not change. For instance, let's imagine a hypothetical party system with four stable parties located at positions 2, 4, 5, and 7 on the left-right ideological spectrum, respectively. If citizens shift their support from the party located at 5 to the parties located at 4 and 7, the PSP index would yield an increase in party system polarization even though the positions of the parties themselves did not change. On the other hand, the PP index would remain unchanged because the distinctiveness between party positions remained stable.

Second, if citizens support parties that offer more extreme (distinct) positions at lower rates, the PSP index fails to capture the true extent of elite-level polarization, thereby presenting a more moderate image of ideological polarization (Appendix A.2).

Third, the PSP index fails to capture most of the fluctuations in the ideological menu available to citizens (Appendix A.2). This implies that the PSP index does not adequately reflect the actual extent of distinct policy proposals offered by political elites.

Based on these implications, studies that investigate the relationship between elite ideological

polarization and mass ideological polarization should use the PP index rather than the PSP index. The use of the PSP index may lead to an inflated relationship between the two, as it is driven by voter support for parties.

Regarding the measurement of mass affective polarization, the literature is rapidly evolving. Due to data availability constraints, many researchers have measured affective polarization by means of feeling thermometers for political parties. However, there is also a growing body of research that explores alternative operationalizations, such as social distance measures (Klar, Krupnikov and Ryan 2018; Bogardus 1933; Mather, Jones and Moats 2017), trait attributions (Levendusky 2018), and feeling thermometers for political groups (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). While most of these approaches anchor affective polarization to a social identity (i.e., party identification), limiting the assessment to partisans, there are recent studies that take a broader approach (Wagner 2021). In line with Wagner (2021), I employed an alternative measurement that allows for the inclusion of individuals without partisan identity in addition to the identity-based approach.

The findings of Chapter 4 show that the largest increase in affective polarization resulting from elite ideological polarization has been observed among political independents. These independents experienced substantial polarization in their affective evaluations of parties, which were more similar prior to the increase in elite ideological polarization. Moreover, I provided evidence indicating that affective polarization is not only solely rooted in identity, but also in ideology. This implies that that the measurement of affective polarization should not be restricted solely to partisans.

5.2.7   Overall Implications

I will conclude the implications of this dissertation with two questions that are central to the field of party and voter behavior. First, if a candidate with extreme policy preferences assumes leadership of a mainstream party, will public preferences also move towards the extremes? This question arises from the argument that mainstream parties generally possess a loyal partisan base, as they have existed for a considerable period, and citizens may have developed their party identification during early socialization (Jennings and Niemi 1974). Research shows that once party identification is established during early socialization, it functions as a social identity. However, when developed later in life, it resembles a preference rather than a stable social identity (Chou et al. 2021). Therefore, there is concern among pundits that if a candidate with extreme policy preferences

takes over the leadership of a mainstream party, the partisan base will follow the leader towards the extremes, leading to intense mass polarization. However, the findings of this dissertation suggest that public opinions are not as malleable as pundits fear, and the masses do not automatically become ideologically polarized simply because their party adopts a more extreme position.

Second, what do the results of this dissertation imply regarding the impact of elite ideological polarization on affective polarization? Studies have established a link between affective polarization and various negative outcomes in democratic societies, including a decline in regime legitimacy, erosion of democratic norms, and increased political dysfunctionality (Klein 2020; Levendusky 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; McCoy and Somer 2019). Furthermore, affective polarization exacerbates partisan bias (Ahler and Sood 2018; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012), reduces citizens' responsiveness to policy outcomes (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013), diminishes satisfaction with democracy (Wagner 2021), hinders accountability for politicians (Pierson and Schickler 2020), and discourages adherence to democratic norms (Graham and Svolik 2020; Kingzette et al. 2021). Its negative impact extends beyond the realm of politics, affecting social interactions, where it can lead to unwillingness to spend time together (Shafranek 2021), and professional settings, where it can affect scholarship attribution (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). If excessive levels of affective polarization pose a threat to democracies and elite ideological polarization contributes to its development, the results of this dissertation suggest that we should exercise caution regarding the potential consequences of elite polarization on the political system. They also highlight the possibility that the potential benefits of responsible parties, as emphasized by the APSA Committee Report, may be offset by the detrimental consequences of affective polarization. However, there is a nuanced perspective to consider. For instance, if affective polarization increases primarily due to in-party enthusiasm without a corresponding increase in animosity towards other parties, the detrimental effects of affective polarization on the quality of democracies may be less dire than what is commonly feared by pundits.

5.3   Limitations

The results of this dissertation are not without limitations. In what follows, I elaborate on these limitations.

First, these results should be interpreted within the scope of the time period under study. The analysis of over-time trends in elite ideological polarization in Western Europe covers the period from 1999 to 2019. It is important to note that the economic convergence thesis was proposed for a time frame that falls outside the scope of this study. Therefore, the absence of findings regarding economic convergence among parties in this study does not imply that parties never converged on the economic dimension. In fact, a broader examination of a longer time period, as demonstrated by Dassonneville and Çakır (2021), reveals indications of party convergence on the economic dimension in several countries, including the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. However, these trends also vary within countries. For instance, while convergence continues in Sweden, parties in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom started to diverge in the 21st century.

While focusing on 20 survey waves that spanned a seven-year period is a good opportunity to study how affective polarization reacts to immediate political events, it offers limited insights into the long-term durability of these effects. The study confirms that the masses react affectively to changes in elite ideological polarization in the short run. However, it remains to be tested whether these reactions are short-lived or persist over time, encompassing multiple regular election cycles. Initial indications suggest that the masses started to become slightly less affectively polarized when parties became less ideologically polarized in 2020 with the election of centrist Keir Starmer as the leader of the Labour Party. Yet, it remains uncertain whether mass affective polarization will fully revert back to its previous level. Understanding the longevity and reversibility of the effects of elite ideological polarization carries both normative and practical implications for representative democracies.

At the same time, regarding the findings of Chapter 3, the absence of an immediate effect observed in the study, where individuals did not immediately adopt more extreme ideological positions by following the party over a four-year period, suggests that it is unlikely for the masses will follow suit in the future.

Second, I tested whether elite ideological polarization affects mass ideological polarization on the traditional left-right dimension. However, it is important to note that the political landscape in Europe has evolved to encompass additional dimensions of party competition, including (1) the economic dimension, (2) the social dimension, and (3) the dimension of European integration. Given that parties can take distinct positions on these dimensions, the findings of Chapter 3 are limited

to the traditional left-right dimension and may not necessarily apply to other dimensions. Due to the endogenous nature of party position-taking and mass position-taking, to study whether elite polarization influences mass polarization on different dimensions, we need a sudden and exogenous change in party positions on each dimension. In the context of the United Kingdom during the time period covered in this thesis, there have been two such sudden position changes that can be analyzed using a quasi-experimental design. The first notable change is the unexpected leadership change in the Labour Party, which resulted in a shift to the left. The second change is the Conservative Party's position change on the Brexit issue (i.e., the European integration dimension). While this change has already been studied by Schonfeld and Winter-Levy (2021), this dissertation focused on the impact of leadership change in the Labour Party. The findings of Schonfeld and Winter-Levy (2021) indicate that Conservative partisans did not follow the Conservative Party and update their own preferences. Instead, they left the party. This lack of a follow-the-leader effect on the European integration dimension is consistent with the lack of a follow-the-party effect on the left-right dimension observed in this dissertation. These consistent findings across dimensions suggest that changes in elite polarization on different dimensions may not necessarily lead to corresponding changes in mass polarization.

Third, during the period under study in Chapter 2 and 3, British politics experienced a number of other events that may have affected British citizens. The post-referendum period consists of a legislative gridlock on Brexit, leading to several leadership changes within the Conservative Party, and two early elections, followed by the Covid-19 crisis, and partygate. All these events contribute to the particularity of the context at hand. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to other contexts. Importantly, as found by Schonfeld and Winter-Levy (2021), this period has seen a realignment on the Brexit issue and emergence of a new Brexit identity (remainer versus leaver) that started to function like a social identity (Hobolt, Leeper and Tilley 2021), which may have reduced the reliance of party identification in the post-referendum period.

Fourth, I tested whether elite ideological polarization causes mass ideological and affective polarization in a single case: the United Kingdom. While the United Kingdom shares certain characteristics with other Western democracies, such as being a parliamentary system, it also has its unique features, including plurality voting and a low effective number of electoral parties (2.5). In contexts like the United Kingdom, parties may have more flexibility to shift their positions with

fewer electoral consequences compared to proportional systems with a higher number of effective electoral parties. This is because in countries with multiple parties competing under proportional voting regulations, when one party shifts its position, it can potentially provide electoral advantages to other parties. If this greater flexibility in party movements is associated with more frequent position shifts by parties in the UK compared to proportional systems, it is plausible that voters in the UK may be more accustomed to policy shifts and have learned to accommodate the cognitive dissonance caused by parties' changing positions. Therefore, one should be cautious when generalizing the results of Chapter 3 and 4 to other democracies, as the specific context of the United Kingdom may have unique influences on the relationship between elite ideological polarization and mass polarization.

Fifth, it is also important to note that Chapter 3 focused on a case where a mainstream party underwent polarization. Mainstream parties have well-established party brands that are more resistant to change. This may make it more challenging for mainstream parties to shape the opinions of their partisans, even when they clearly shift their positions on certain issues. In contrast, newer parties, especially those with extreme ideological stances, have the advantage of being able to establish their policy brands more easily, as they do not have long-standing party brands constraining their positions. That is, new parties may indeed have a greater ability to persuade and lead voters. Hence, one should also take into account that these results from Chapter 3 and 4 might not apply to new parties.

5.4   Future Research Avenues

Having discussed the implications of the findings and the limitations, I now turn to what this dissertation offers as future research avenues.

First, future research should go beyond the traditional left-right dimension and focus on whether the masses become more ideologically polarized when their party adopts more extreme positions on different dimensions. For instance, it is possible that the masses may follow on pragmatic issues (i.e., economic dimension) but not on principled issues (i.e., social dimension) (Tavits 2007). The British Election Study Internet Panel data includes measures to examine mass opinions on redistribution, immigration (both cultural and economic perspectives), and European integration, which

can be used to test whether the impact of elite position-taking varies across different dimensions. This theory could also be extended to explore the effect of elite ideological polarization on mass affective polarization. That is, future work should examine whether elite polarization on principled issues (i.e., social dimension) leads to grater affective polarization compared to elite polarization on pragmatic issues (i.e., economic dimension).

Second, in contrast to what I expected, I found that both in-partisans (Labour partisans) and out-partisans (Conservative partisans) moderated their ideological stances when elite ideological polarization increased due to the Labour Party's shift to the left. Conservative partisans did not lash back to it by moving to the right, nor did the Labour partisans simply follow the party's leftward shift. Instead, both groups moved toward the center. Future research should focus on explaining these findings. One possible explanation is that parties not only talk about their own policy preferences, but also frame their policies in opposition to those of other parties. It is possible that Labour partisans reacted to the Conservative Party's framing of the Labour Party, and similarly, Conservative partisans may have reacted to the Labour Party's framing of the Conservative Party. Conducting a content analysis of newspapers and parliamentary speeches before and after the appointment of Jeremy Corbyn would allow for an examination of whether the moderation effect is influenced by the out-party's framing of the parties. In addition, this research should be complemented by an experimental design with three treatment groups where the first group would receive framing of the new position by the in-party itself, the second group would receive framing by the out-party, and the third group would receive both in-party and out-party framing of the new position. This experimental setup would enable the identification of the effect of in-party and out-party framing, allowing for testing of whether partisans move in the direction of the out-party based on framing influences.

Third, future research should investigate the trade-off between attracting new supporters and potentially losing existing ones when a party adopts a more polarized position. In this dissertation, I found that partisans did not follow the Labour Party by adopting more left-wing positions. However, note that I focused on whether those who identified with the Labour Party prior to the party's shift to the left changed their positions. On the other hand, it is also possible that the Labour Party attracted new left-wing supporters who did not previously identify with it. If this is the case, even if long-standing partisans did not follow the party's shift, the influx of new left-wing partisans

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might shift the mean partisan position to the left, potentially reducing the ideological distance between the average partisan and the party. In short, there exists a trade-off between attracting new partisans and alienating the established partisan base. Research shows that parties can appeal to certain groups through taking a more polarized stance on one dimension and resorting to a broad appeal strategy on another dimension to avoid alienating their partisan base (Koedam 2021; Wagner 2012). In order to make policy recommendations to political parties and party strategists, future research should examine the electoral trade-off of polarization, taking into account both newcomers and exiters, and further investigate its effects on representation (e.g., congruence between the party and its supporter base), vote share, and the perception of the party brand.

Fourth, while I focused on one outcome (i.e., mass ideological polarization) of elite ideological polarization in terms of ideological mass reactions in Chapter 3, this is not the only possible consequence of elite polarization. Elite ideological polarization also leads to ideological sorting, a process through which partisans' preferences become more consistent with their party's positions. However, the literature has not reached a consensus on whether the ideological sorting and voter polarization occur due to opinion conversion or party conversion. Given the results of this dissertation regarding the constraining role of party identification on ideological preferences, this debate becomes particularly relevant in multiparty systems. In Figure 5.1, I elaborate on these possibilities and demonstrate how the findings of this dissertation can guide future research on the mechanisms of ideological sorting in multiparty systems. The top panel presents two hypothetical parties and a partisan that identifies with Party A. The second panel shows Party A moving to the left while Party B remains stable. The subsequent three panels depicts three potential ways in which partisan A can react. They can (1) choose not to follow the party but still identify with the Party A, as depicted in the third panel, (2) follow the party to the left, as shown in the fourth panel (opinion conversion), or (3) bring their party identification in line with their ideological preference, as illustrated in the fifth panel (party conversion). The results of this dissertation provide evidence against the opinion conversion thesis. Even among those who continued to identify with the party after the position change, there was no subsequent following of the party (Appendix B.7), which is consistent with the third panel where partisans accommodate the increased cognitive dissonance resulting from the growing ideological gap between their party and themselves. However, this dissertation did not test whether Labour partisans aligned their party identification with their own

ideological preferences (fifth panel). Future research can test whether this is the case and identify which partisans are more likely to exit the party. It is important to mention that such a test is not limited to the traditional left-right dimension, but can extend to polarization on other dimensions of political conflict (i.e., the economic dimension, the social dimension or the European integration dimension) or to specific issues.

Figure 5.1. Hypothetical Illustration of Party Conversion and Opinion Conversion as a Result of Party Polarization
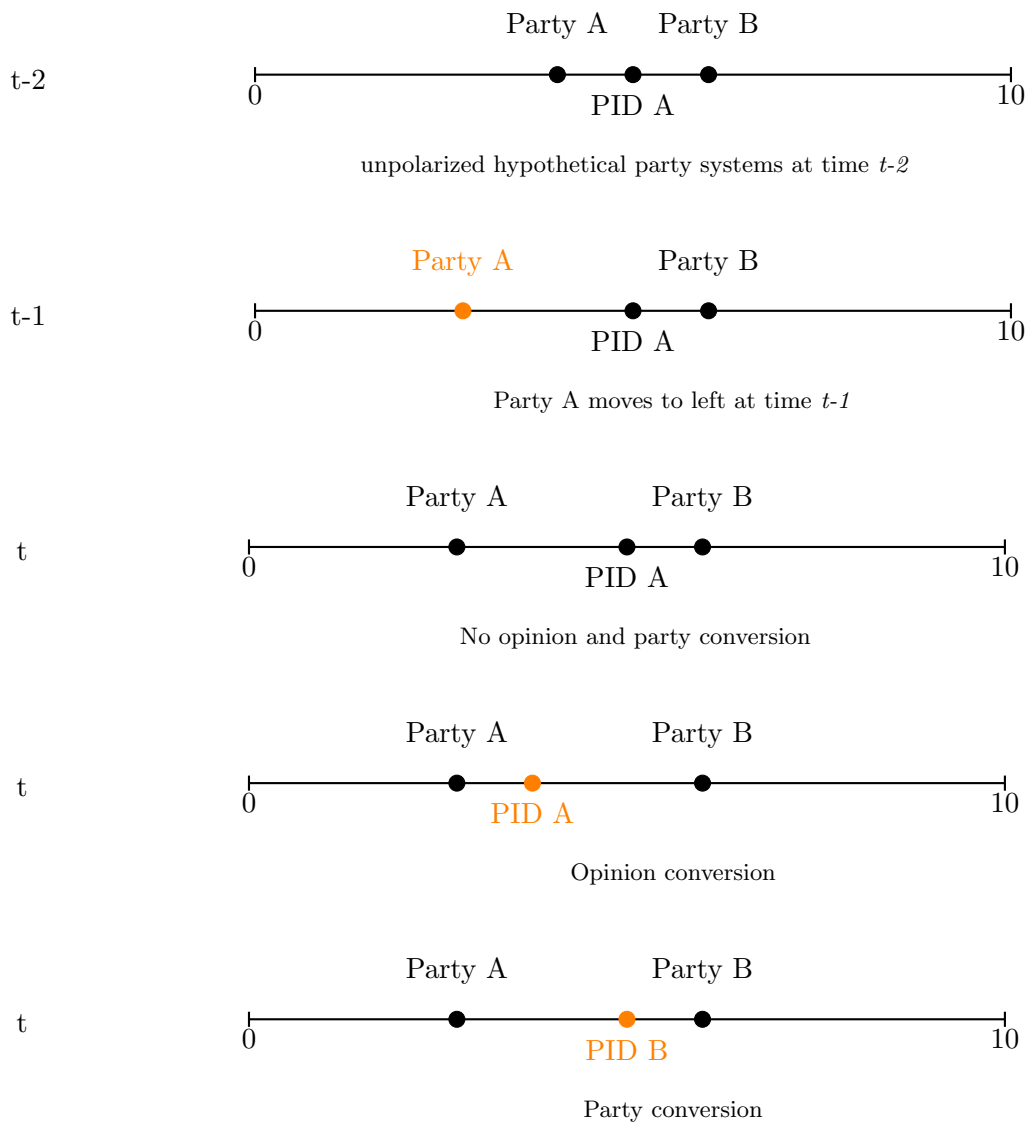
Fifth, given that party polarization (PP) and party system polarization (PSP) are distinct, future work that focuses on the relationship between ideological polarization of the supply side and the demand side should use party polarization index. While elite polarization metrics are based

on the degree of public support for political parties, assessing the degree of concordance between elite and mass preferences will inevitably yield more congruous outcomes. This approach carries the risk of compelling party polarization and mass polarization to move in the same direction. However, by focusing solely on the supply side (i.e., using PP instead of PSP), which refers to what political parties offer to citizens regardless of the level of support for these policies, we can investigate the connections between party and mass polarization in a more meaningful way. While this dissertation provided descriptive tendencies of party polarization, future research should also document the extent of mass polarization on these dimensions. This would allow for an examination of whether party polarization precedes mass polarization or vice versa.

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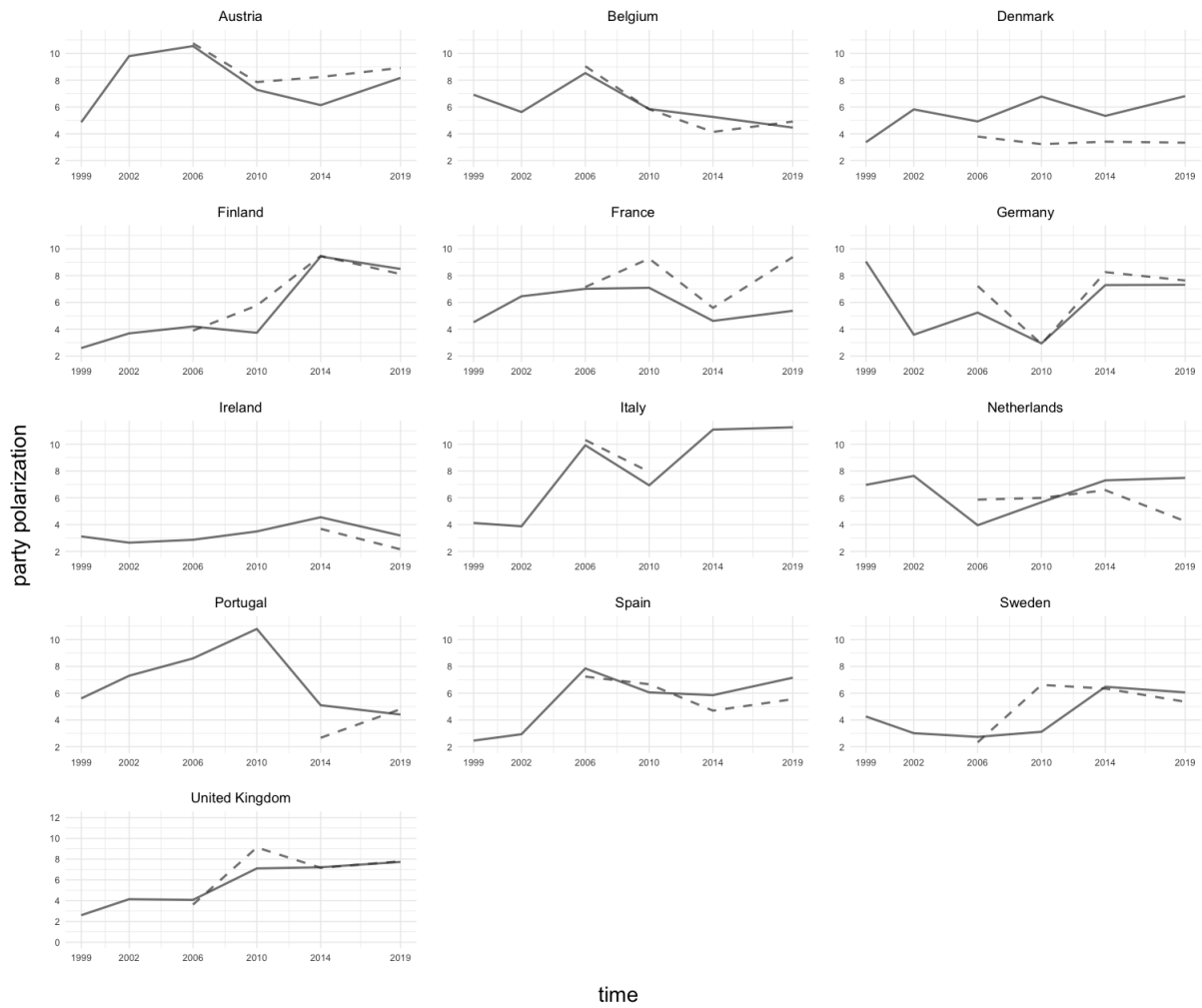
Appendix A

A.1 Party Polarization Trends with (1) Immigration Item and GAL/TAN, (2) Social Lifestyle Item and GAL/TAN, and (3) Redistribution Item with Economic Left-Right
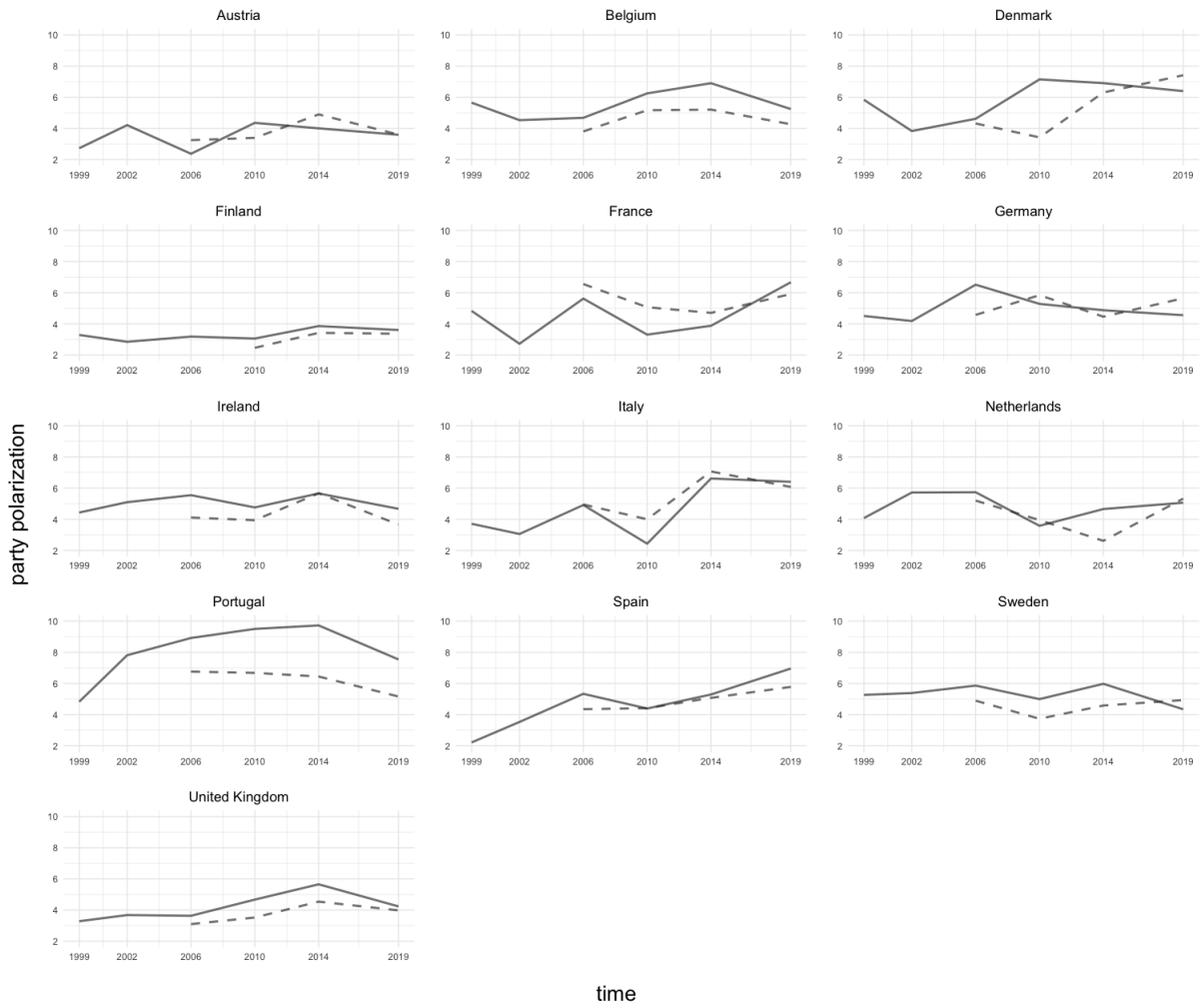
A.1.1 Party Polarization on GAL/TAN and Immigration
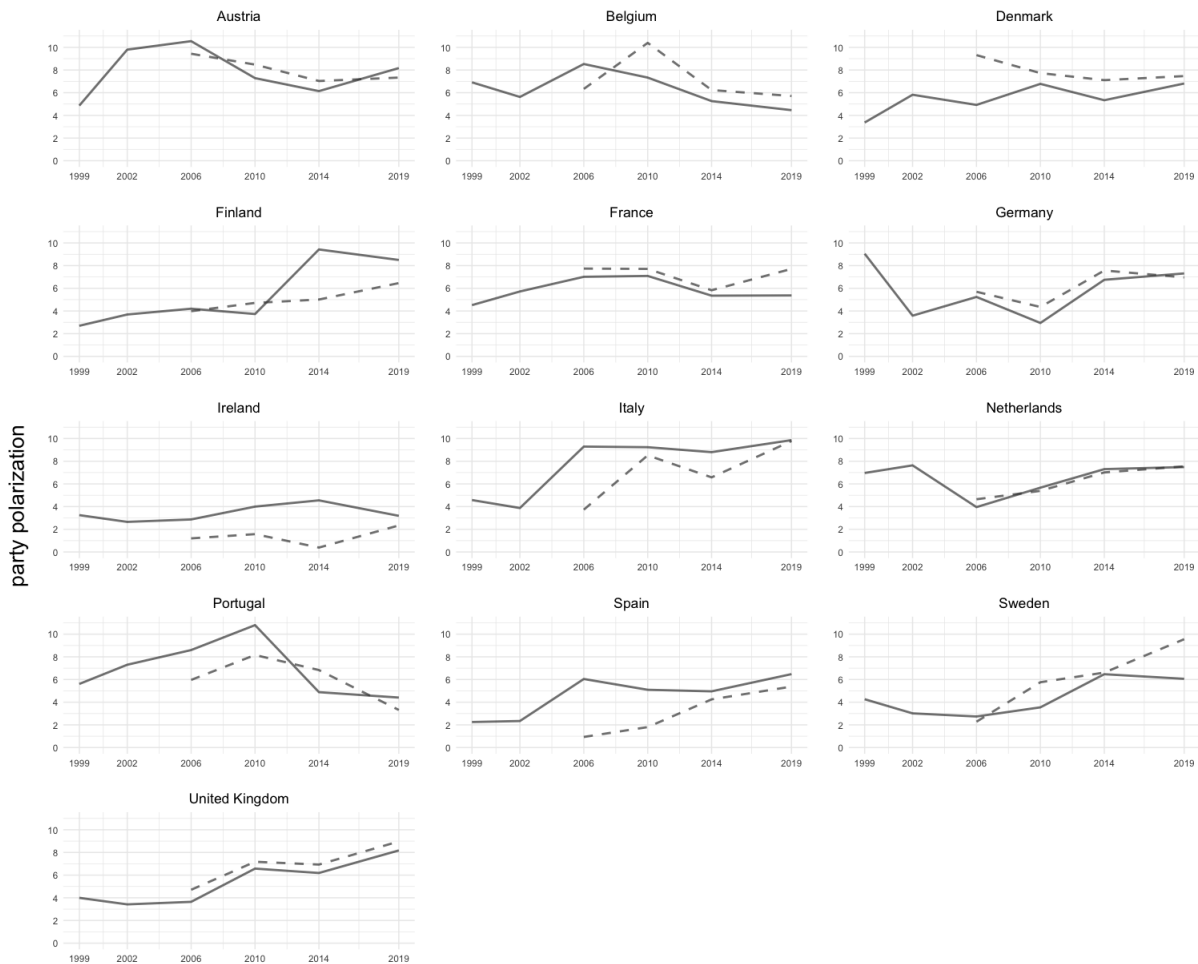
A.1.2 Party Polarization on GAL/TAN and Social Lifestyle

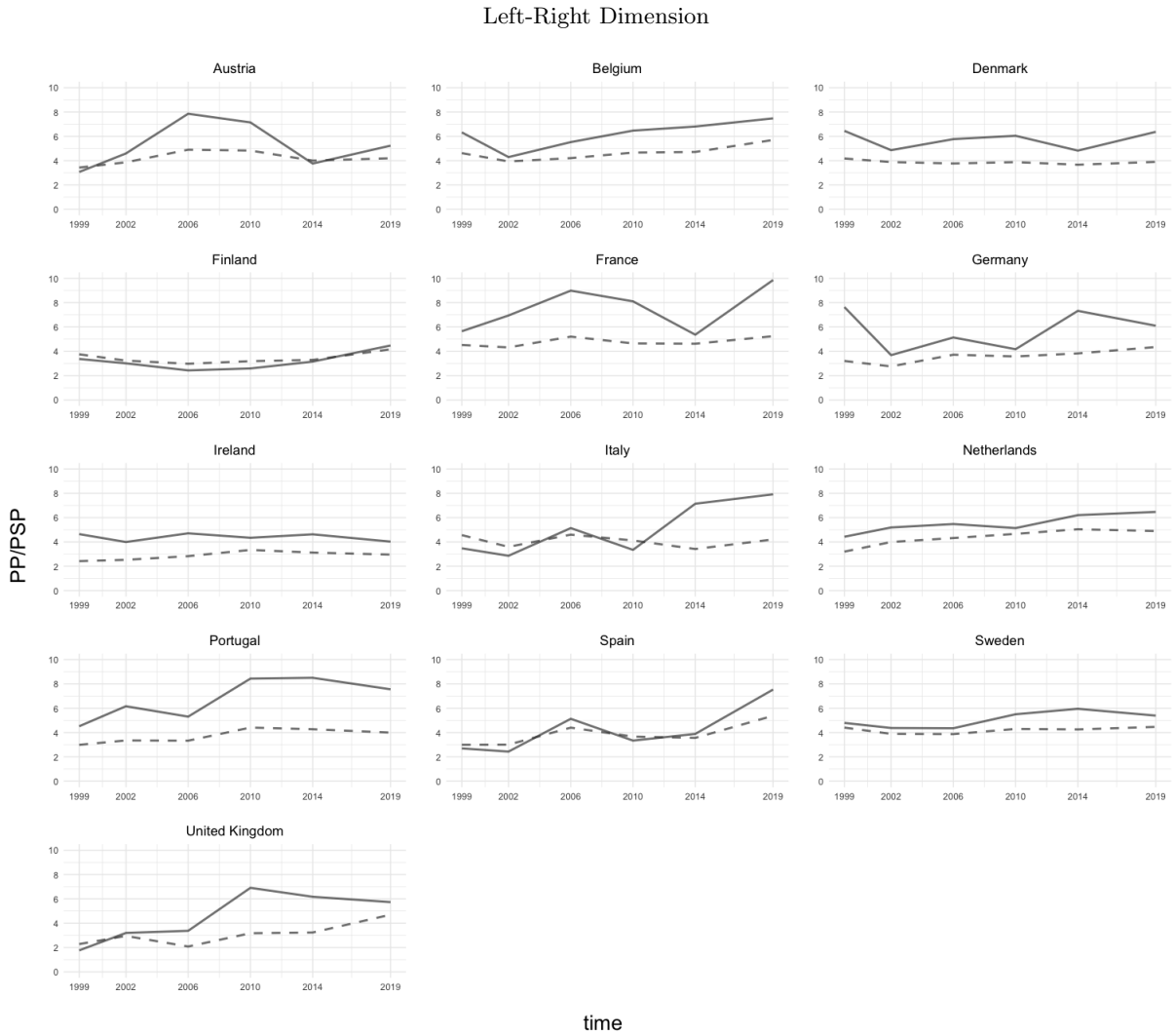## A.1.3 Party Polarization on Economic Left-Right and Redistribution

A.2 Trends with Party Polarization and Party System Polarization

In this Appendix, I compare the trends of party polarization (PP), indicated by solid line, with those of party system polarization (PSP) index, indicated by dashed line on each dimension. Recall that PSP takes into account parties' electoral support in the election, which means it captures the extent of party polarization that finds support from the masses. However, this is different from the extent of ideological difference between the parties in a system irrelevant of their electoral support size. The operationalization of PP is explained in the main text. I follow Dalton (2008)'s formula of party system polarization.

Correlations between PP and PSP is 0.63 on left-right dimension, 0.56 on economic dimension, 0.79 on GAL/TAN dimension, and 0.78 on European integration dimension. These indicate that while there is an overlap between PP and PSP, they do not capture the same thing. More details can be found in the following figures that plot the trends on each dimension. Starting with the left-right dimension, on the one hand, it is clear that the actual ideological menu available to citizens can differ while PSP remains flat or changes minimally (i.e., in Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal, United Kingdom). On the other hands, both indices show same trends in countries such as Finland, Netherlands, Ireland and Sweden. When trends differ, it is due to the electoral support these parties obtain. If PP is higher than PSP, then it is suggestive that parties further from the center obtain less electoral support than those closer to the center.

On the economic dimension, the story is quite similar. PSP fails to capture the up and down ticks in PP in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. On GAL/TAN dimension, the gap between PP and PSP is in general larger, meaning that while there are extreme party presence on this dimension, they obtain less electoral support compared to centrist parties. This is rather visible in Austria, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Moreover, the change in PP trends are not detected by PSP in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. Lastly, on European integration dimension, both indices yields similar trajectories. This suggests that there is not a big difference between how much electoral support parties with extreme and centrist positions on this dimension obtain. This is in line with the sleeping giant thesis (De Vries 2007), according to which European integration dimension does not actively play a role in determining the vote choice unless it is politicised by parties.

Overall, these results show that PP and PSP are not only theoretically the same, but they are also empirically different.
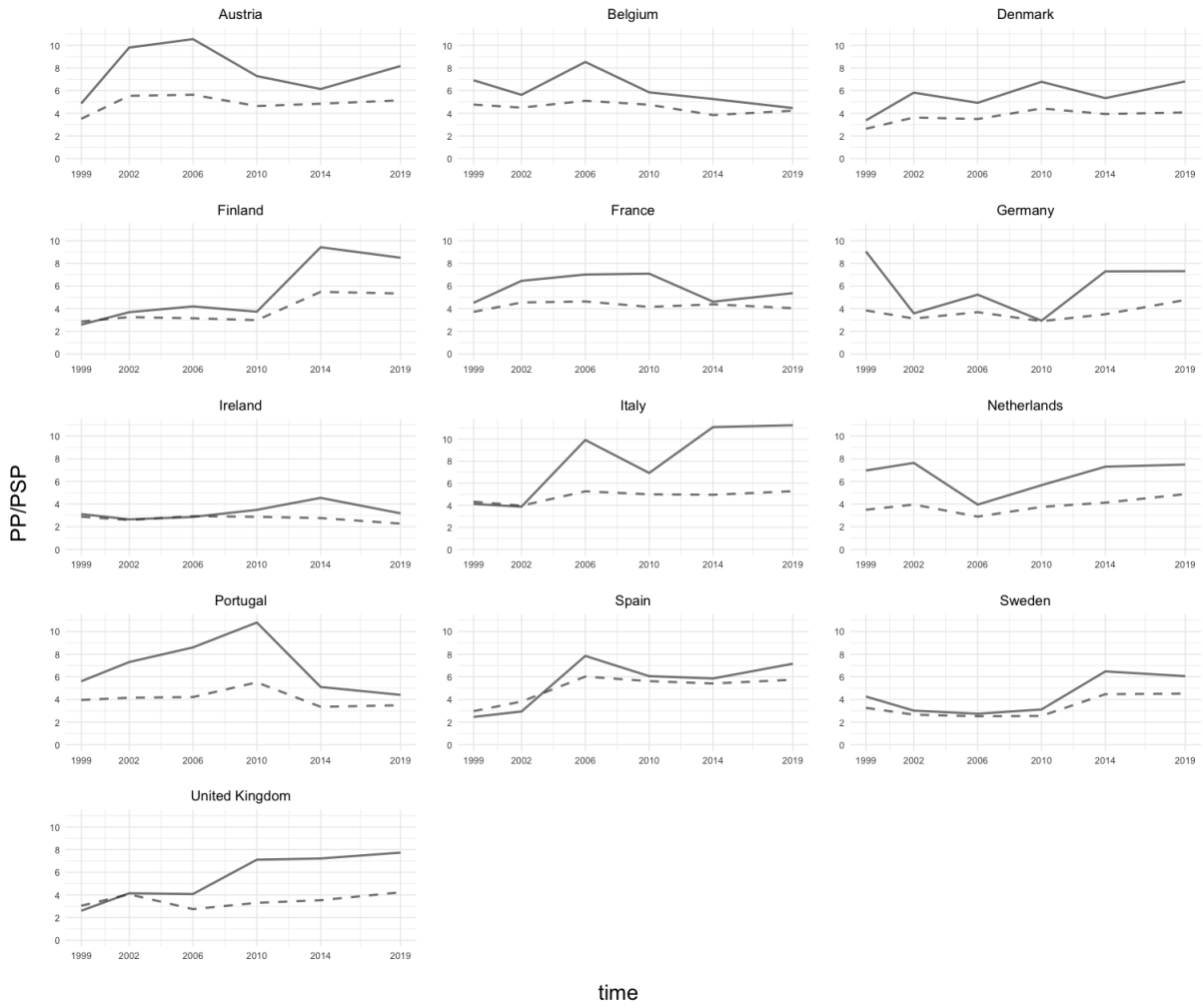
Left-Right Dimension

Note: Estimates are based on CHES data. Solid and dashed lines represent party polarization and party system polarization on left-right dimension, respectively.
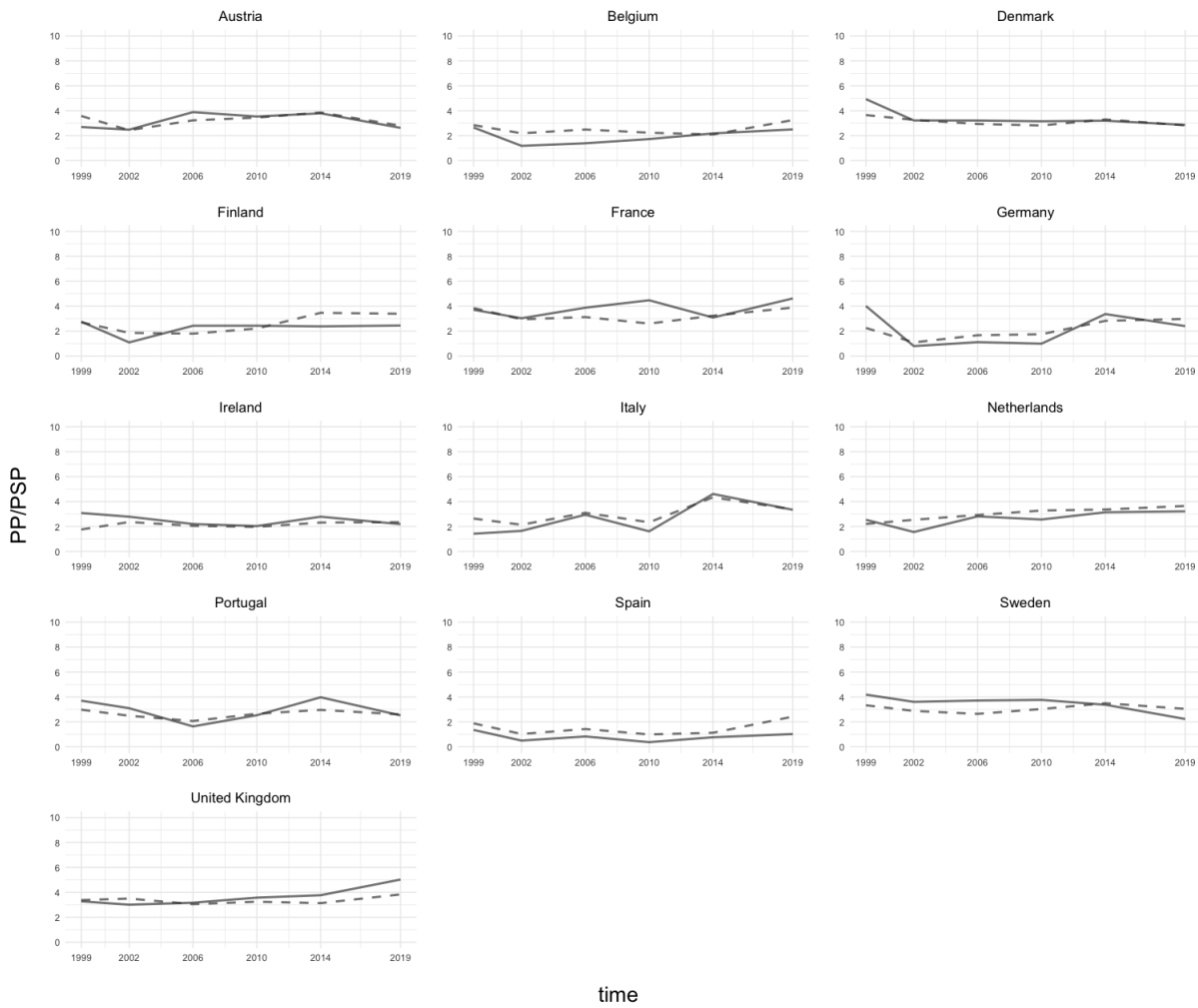
Economic Dimension
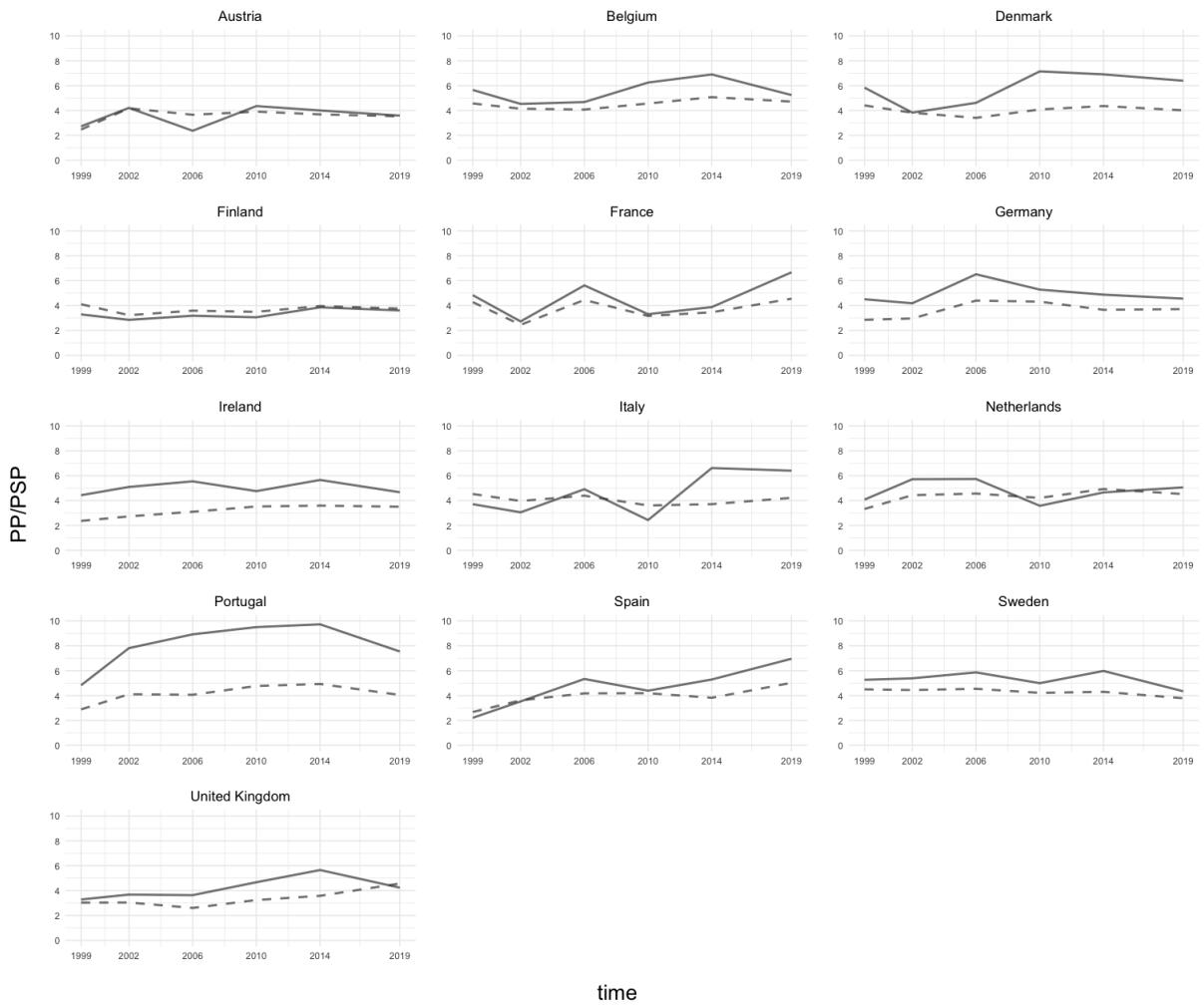
Note: Estimates are based on CHES data. Solid and dashed lines represent party polarization and party system polarization on economic dimension, respectively

GAL/TAN Dimension

Note: Estimates are based on CHES data. Solid and dashed lines represent party polarization and party system polarization on GAL/TAN dimension, respectively

165

European Integration Dimension

Note: Estimates are based on CHES data. Solid and dashed lines represent party polarization and party system polarization on European Integration dimension, respectively

A.3 Party Polarization by Country and Dimension

A.3.1 The Traditional Left-Right Dimension

In this Appendix, I plot how party positions evolve over time in each country for each dimension.

Y axis indicates the time while X axis indicates the party position on the indicated dimension.

left-right dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

France

Germany

Ireland

Italy

time

left-right dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

left-right dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

United Kingdom
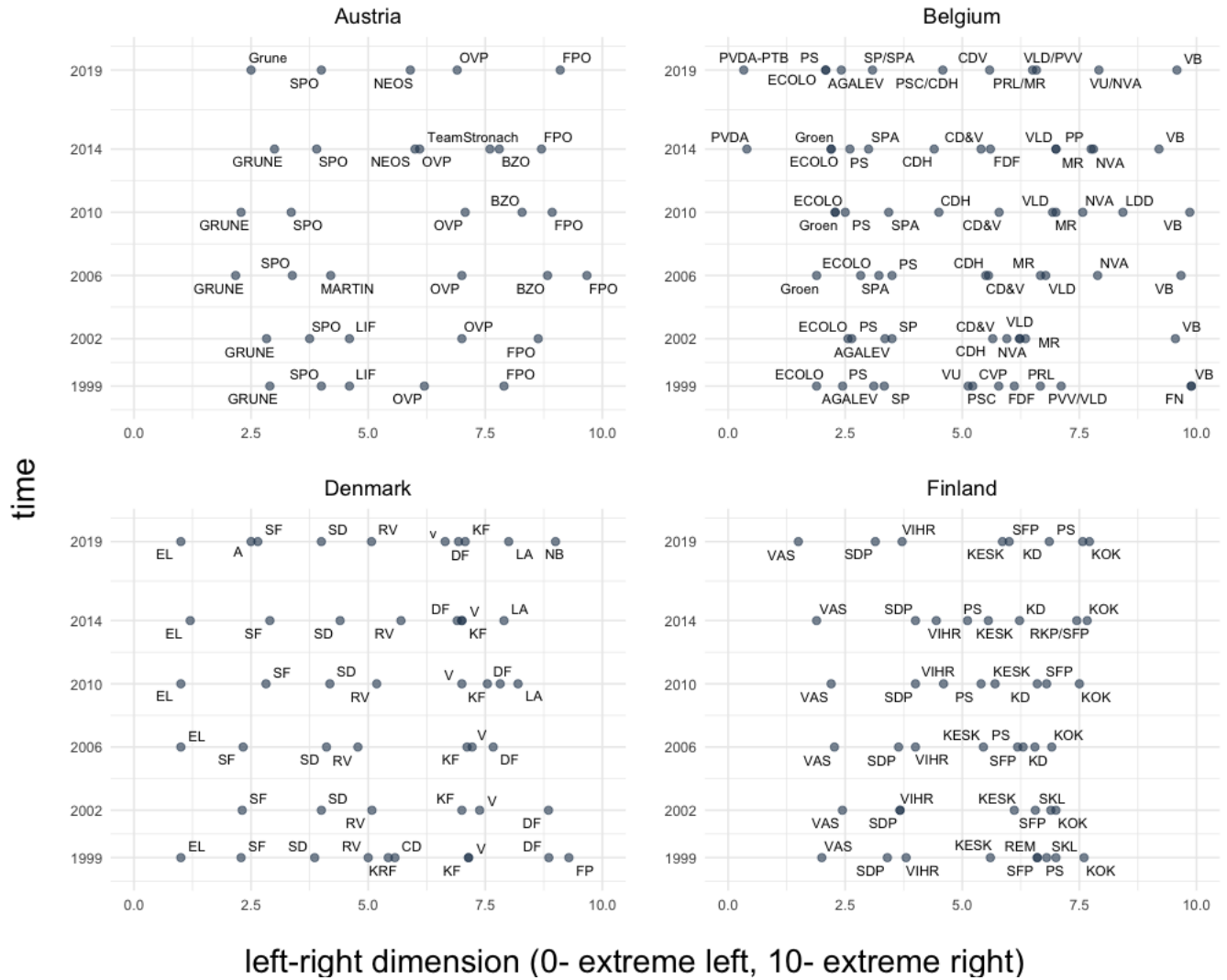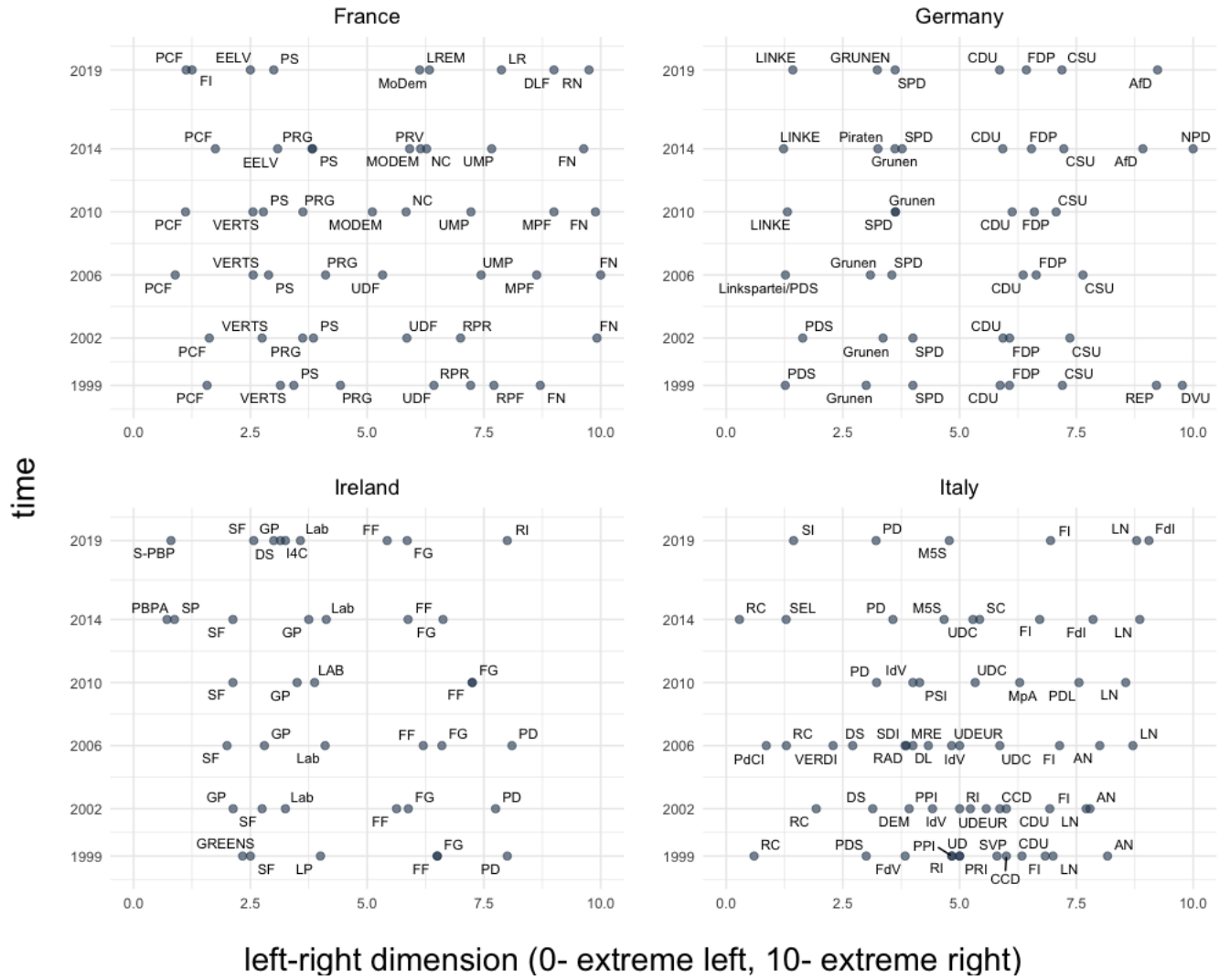
left-right dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

A.3.2 The Economic Dimension

economic dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

France

Germany

Ireland

Italy

economic dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

time

Netherlands

Portugal

Spain

Sweden

economic dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)

time

173

United Kingdom

economic dimension (0- extreme left, 10- extreme right)
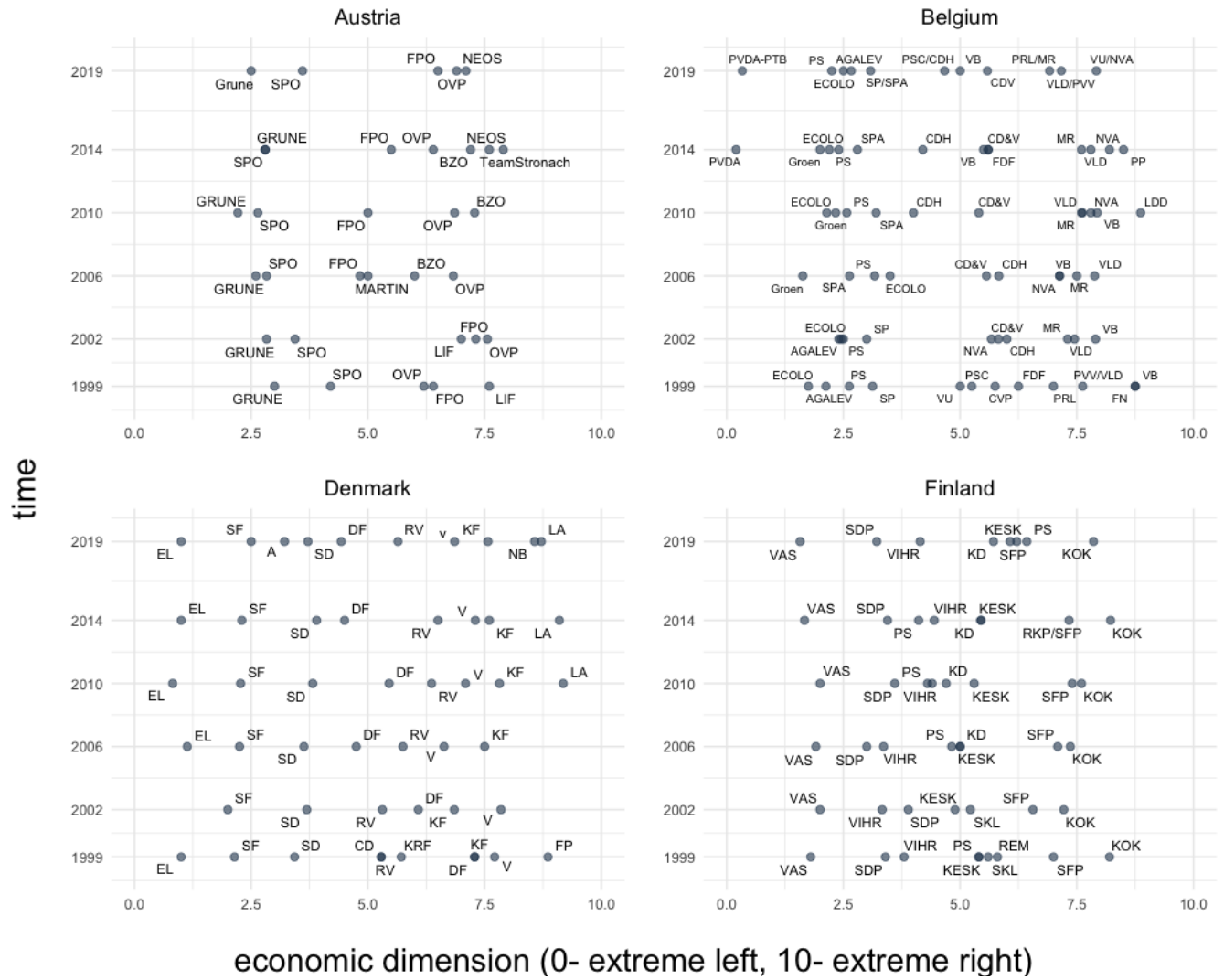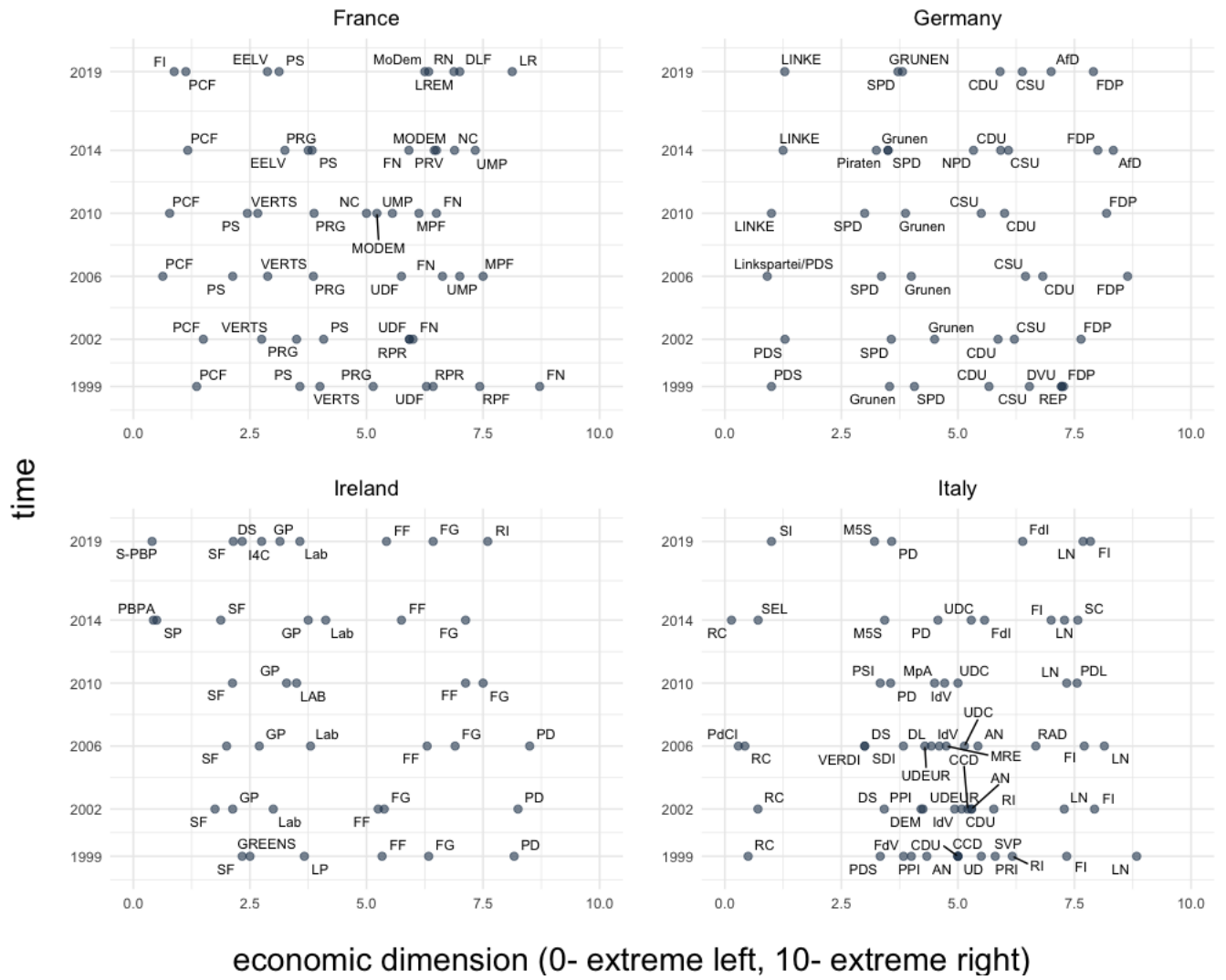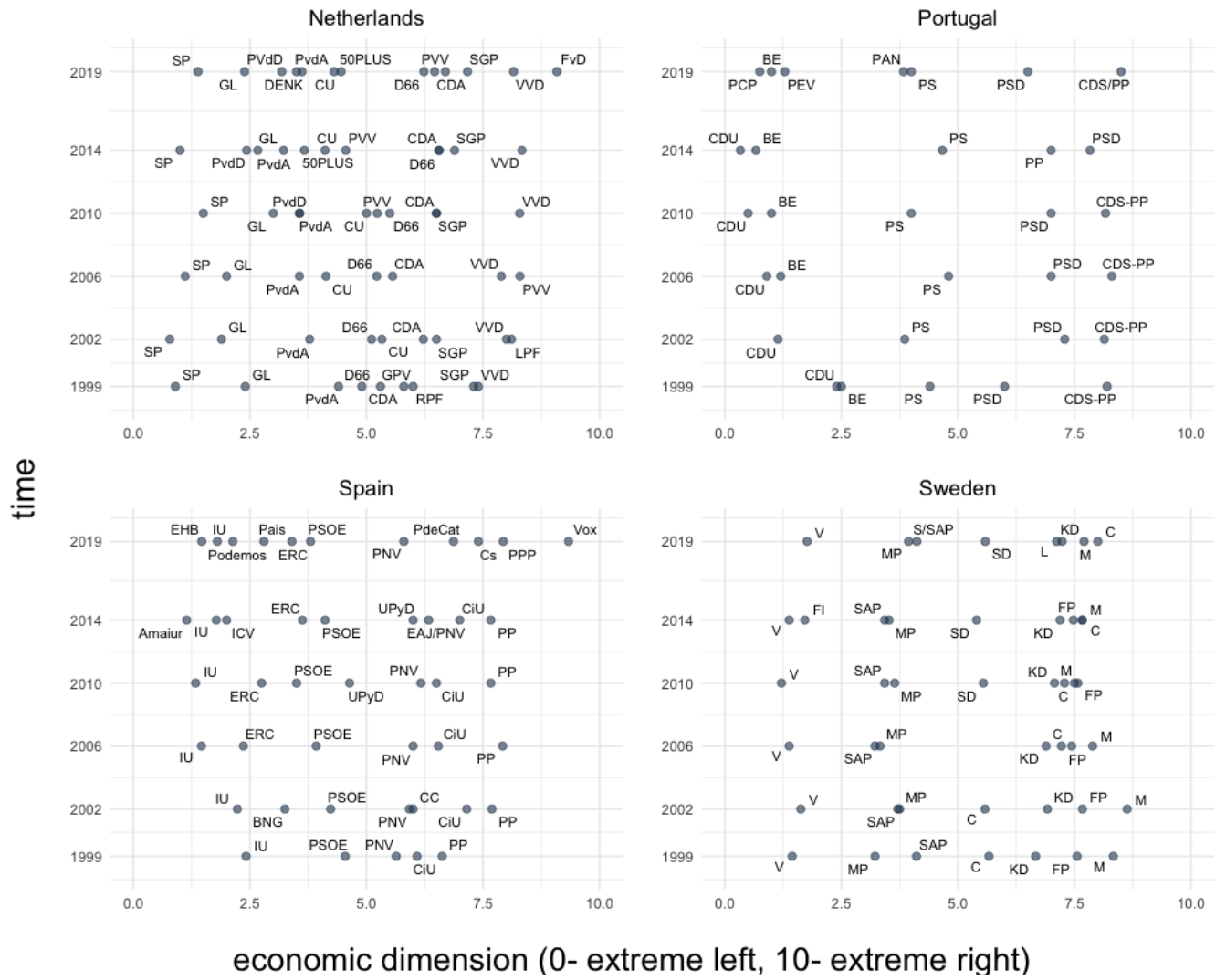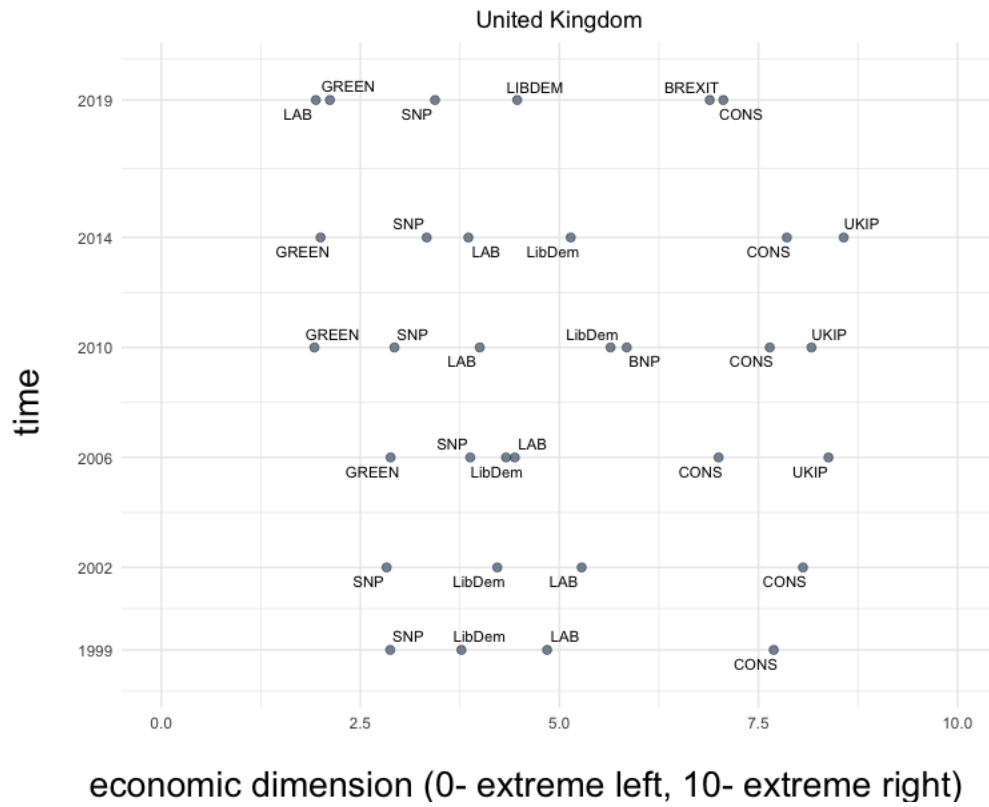
A.3.3 The GAL/TAN (authoritarian - traditional) Dimension

GAL/TAN (0- libertarian, 10- authoritarian)

GAL/TAN (0- libertarian, 10- authoritarian)

Netherlands / Portugal / Spain / Sweden

GAL/TAN (0- libertarian, 10- authoritarian)

time

United Kingdom

GAL/TAN (0- libertarian, 10- authoritarian)

178
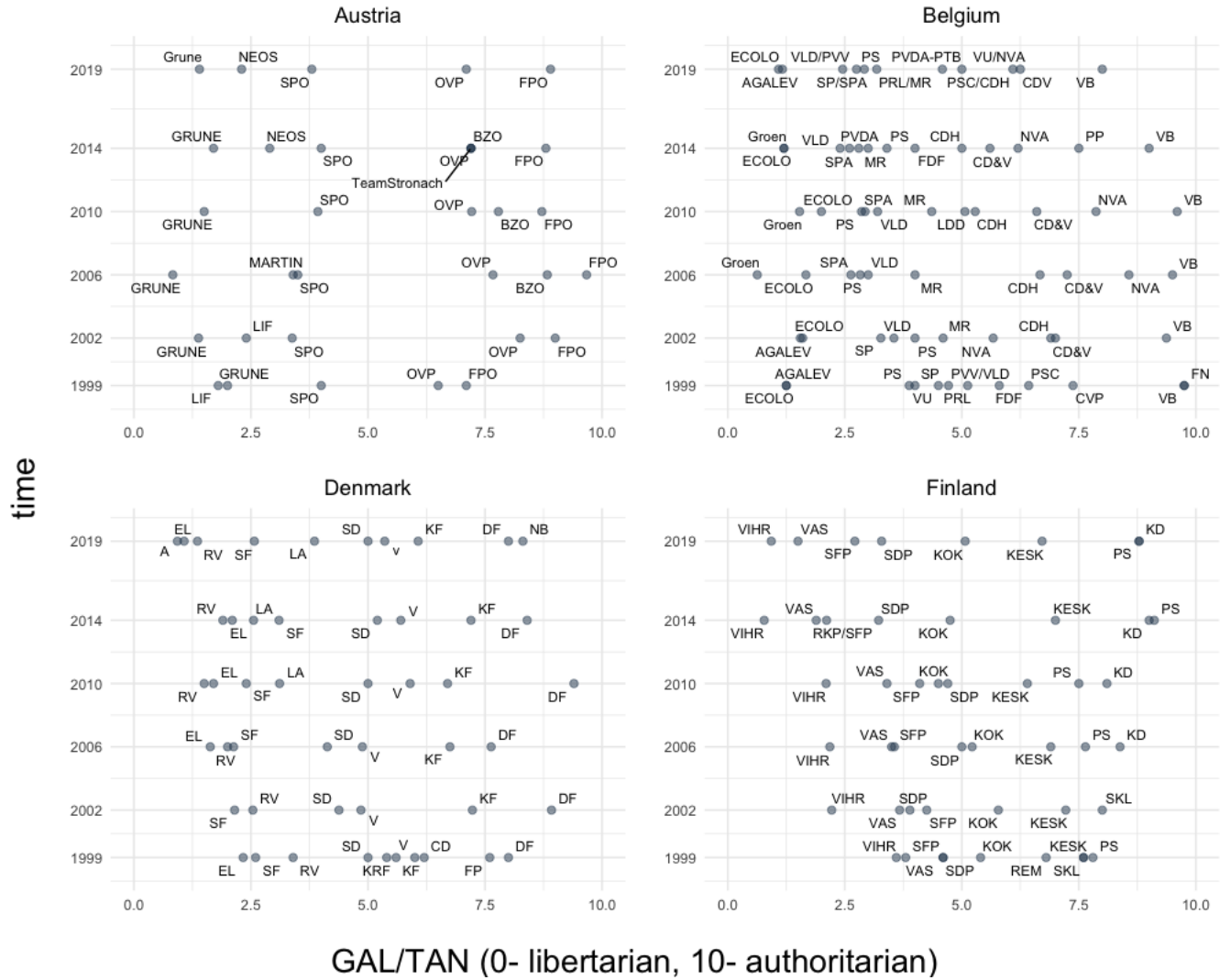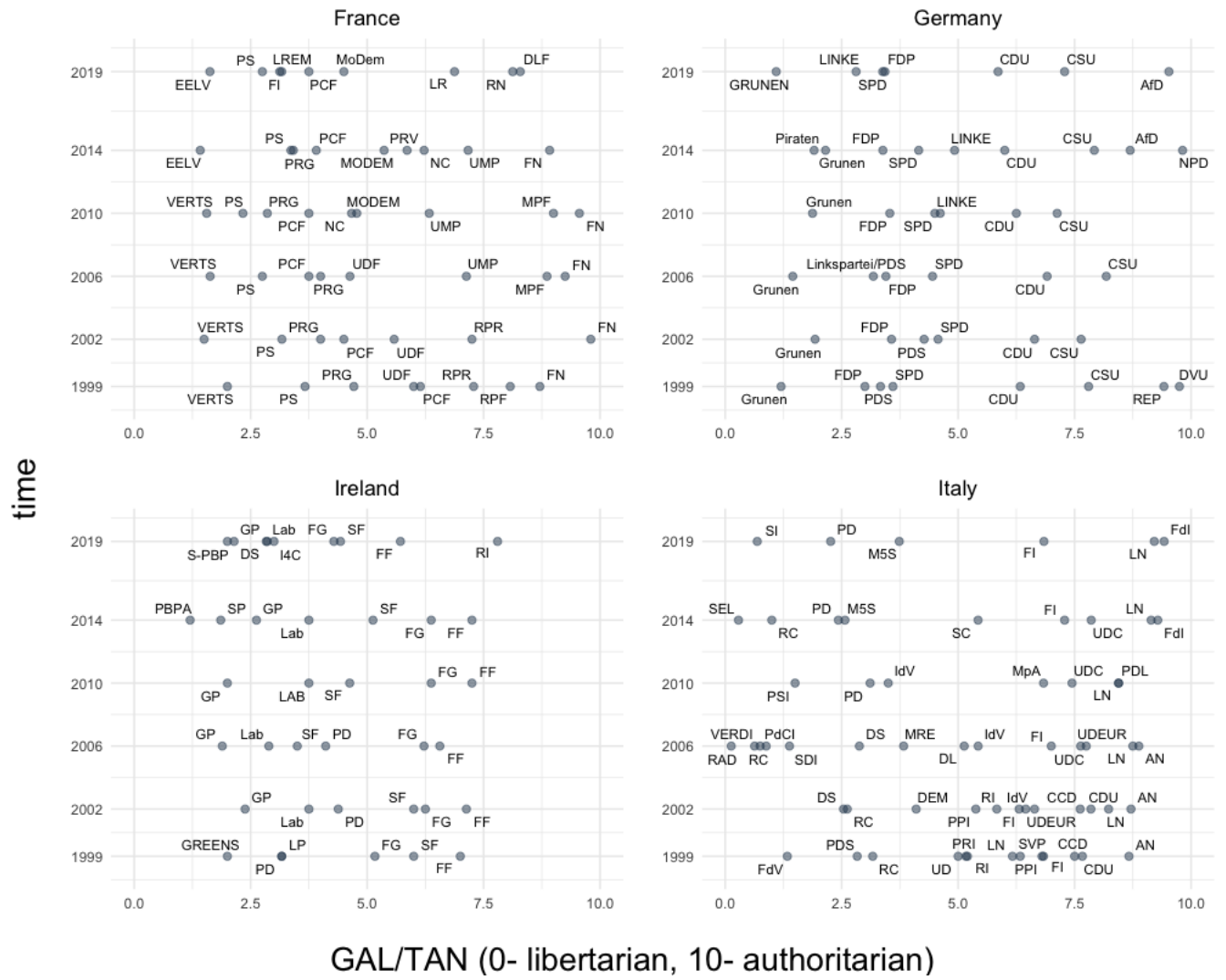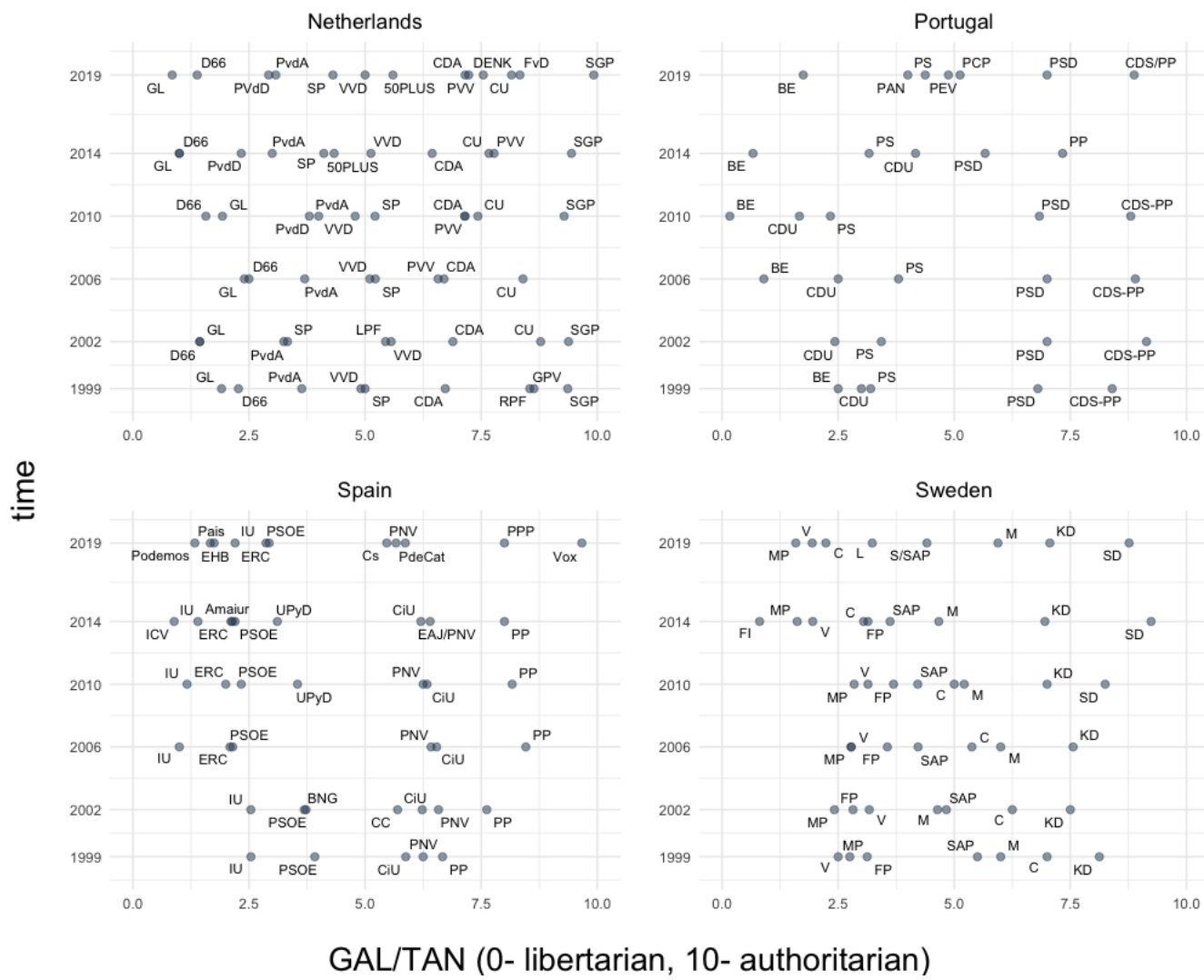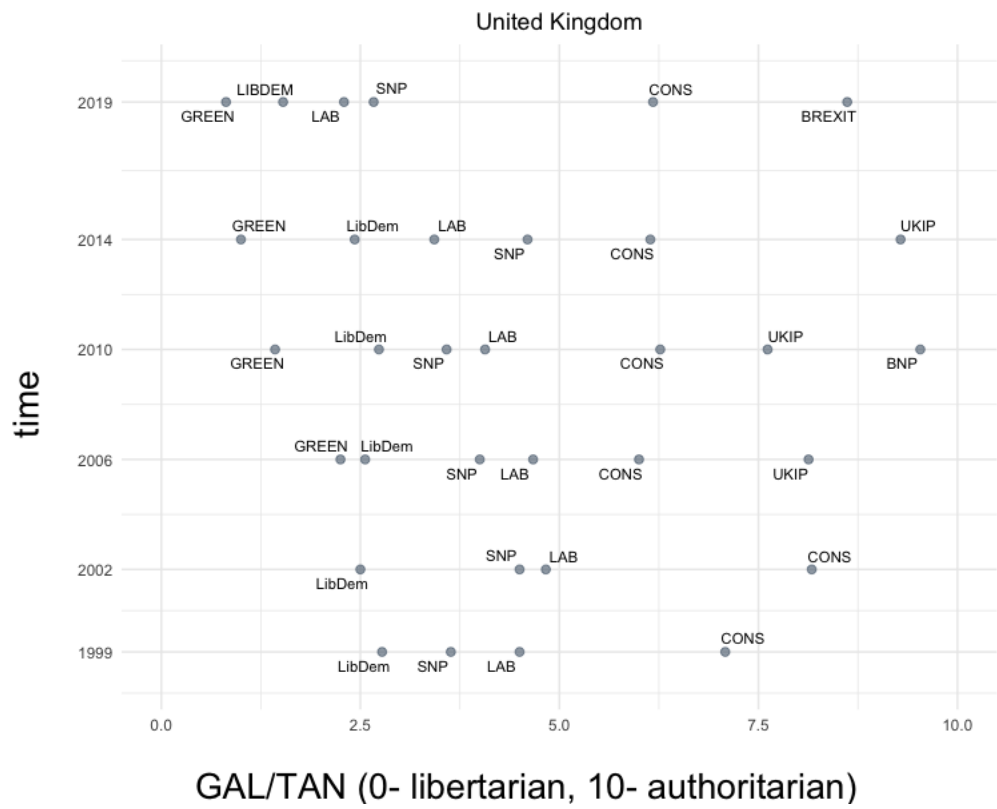
A.3.4 The European Integration Dimension

European Integration (1- strongly apposed, 7- strongly in favour)

France

Germany

Ireland

Italy

European Integration (1- strongly apposed, 7- strongly in favour)

time
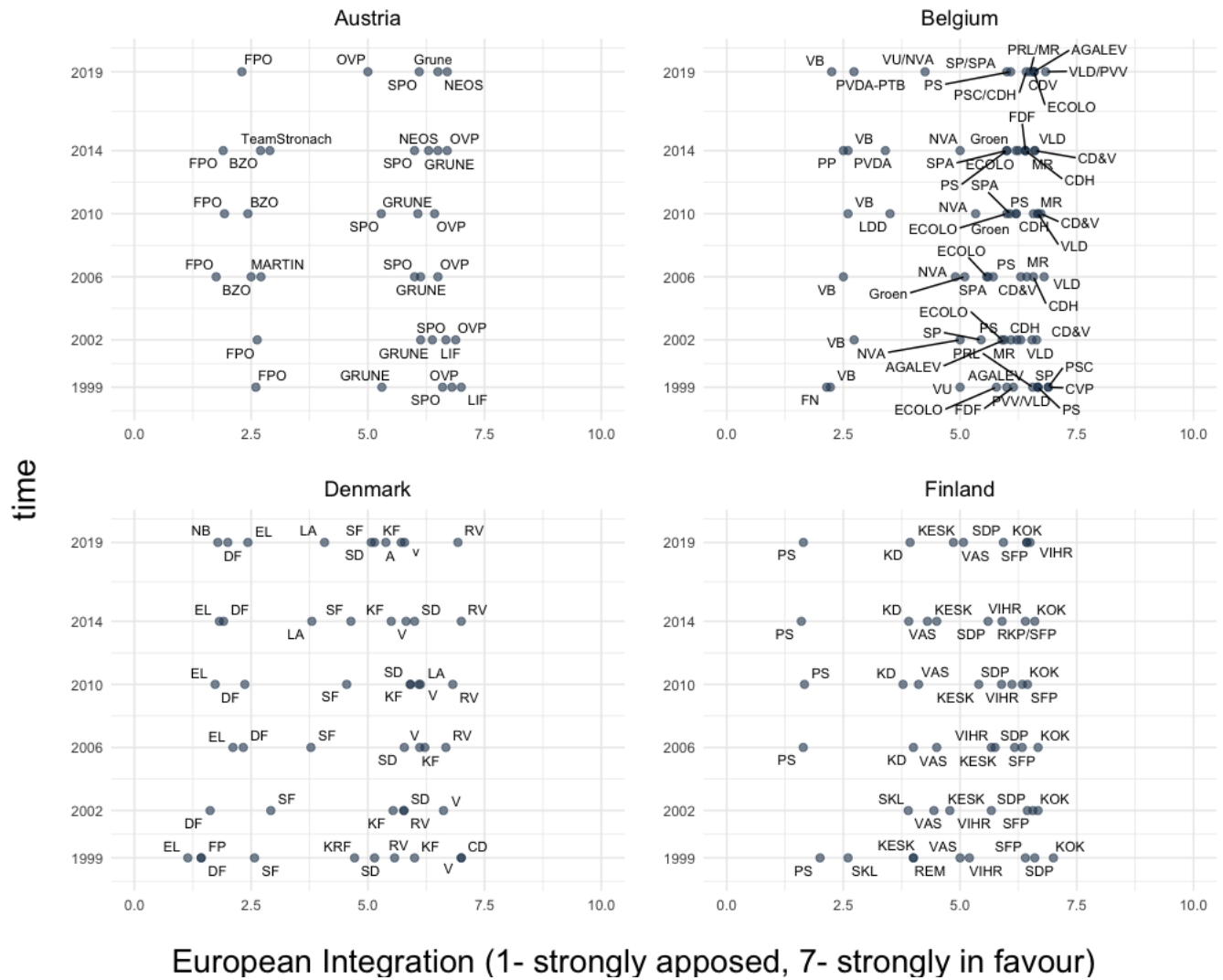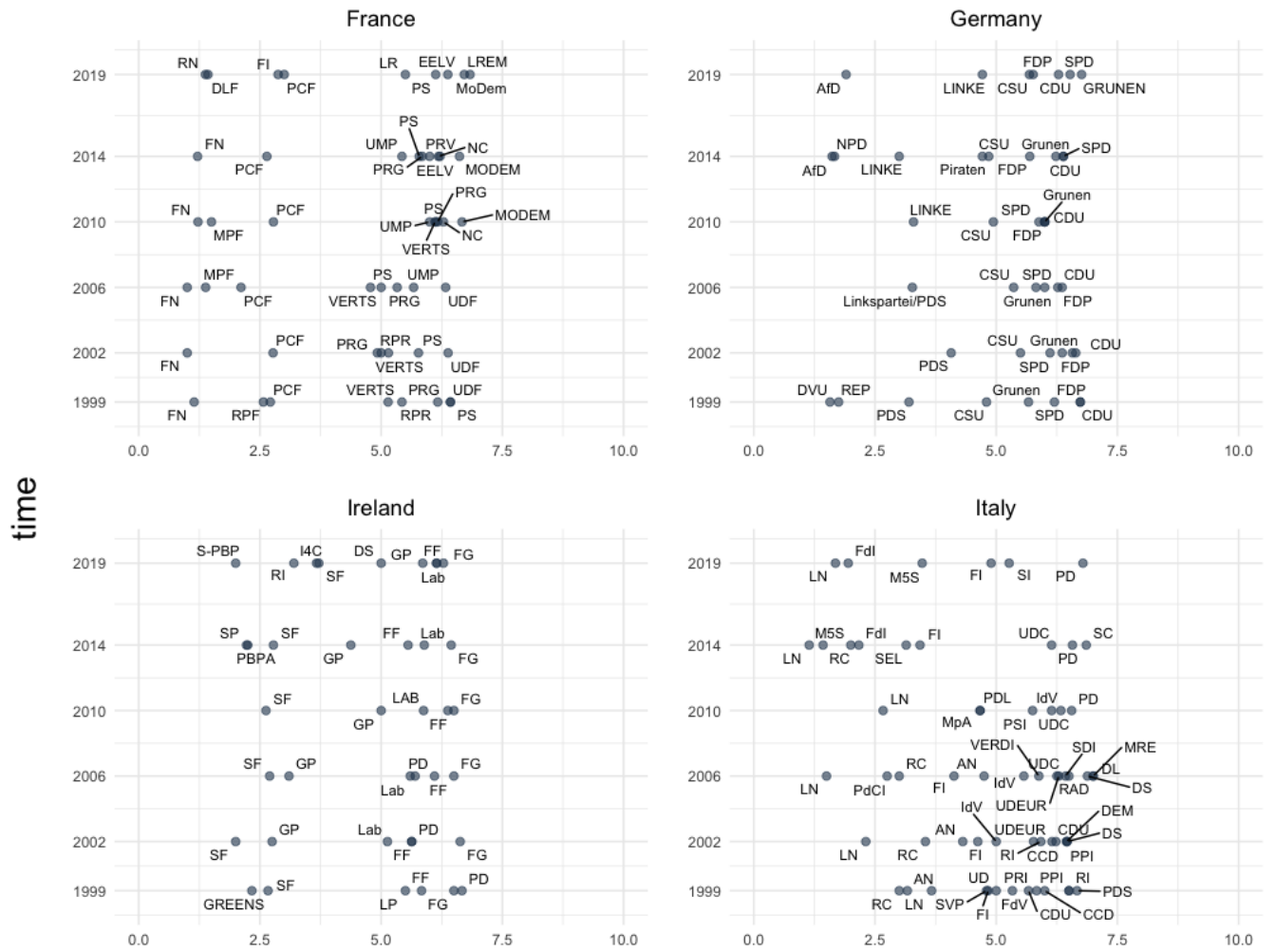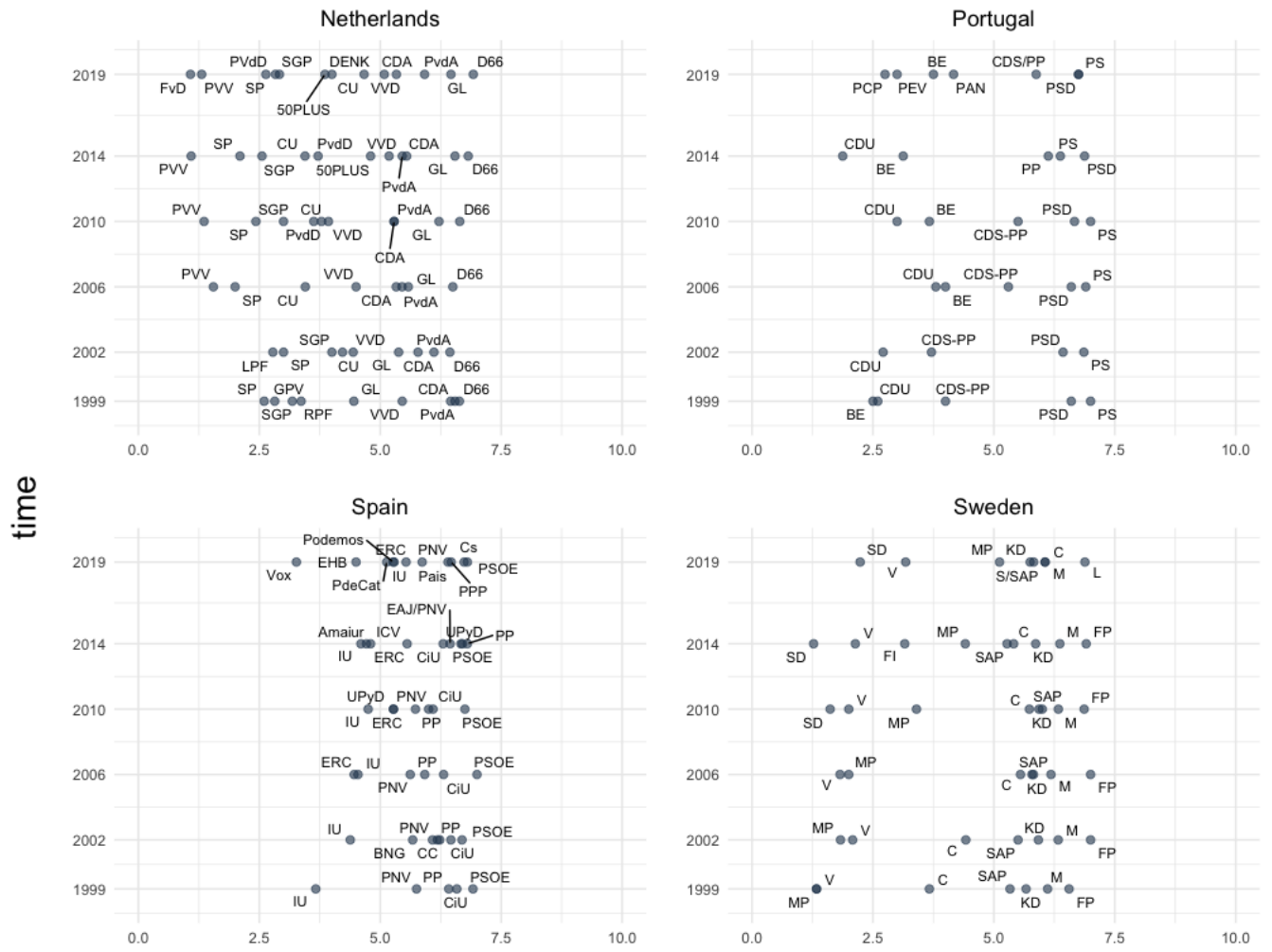
European Integration (1- strongly apposed, 7- strongly in favour)
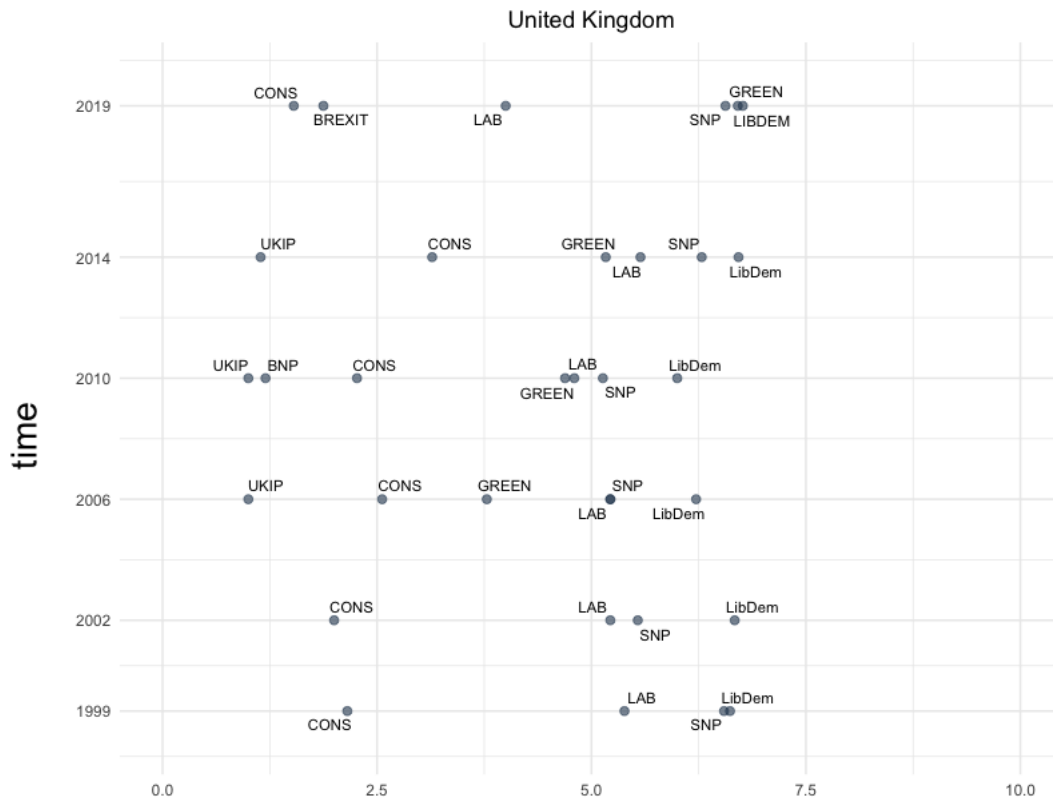
European Integration (1- strongly apposed, 7- strongly in favour)

Appendix B

B.1   Who Perceived the Shift?

In this Appendix, I focus on whether the perceptions of the Labour Party's position change differ among partisan groups. Figure B.1.1 shows the evolution of the mean perception of the Labour Party's left-right position over time. Dashed vertical lines indicate the three general elections that took place during the panel study. As it can be seen, when Jeremy Corbyn got appointed as the new leader of the party (between wave 6 and wave 7), the electorate's mean perception of its position leadership change took place became immediately more left-wing. The electorate saw the Labour Party's left-right position as increasingly more left-wing.

Distribution of the perceived shift of the party's position between wave 6 and wave 7 is plotted among Labour identifiers in Figure B.1.2, independents in Figure B.1.3, and other party identifiers in Figure B.1.4. It is clear that each group perceived the left-wing shift it the Labour Party's position in such a short time period.

Figure B.1.1. Perception of Labour Party's Position according to Respondents
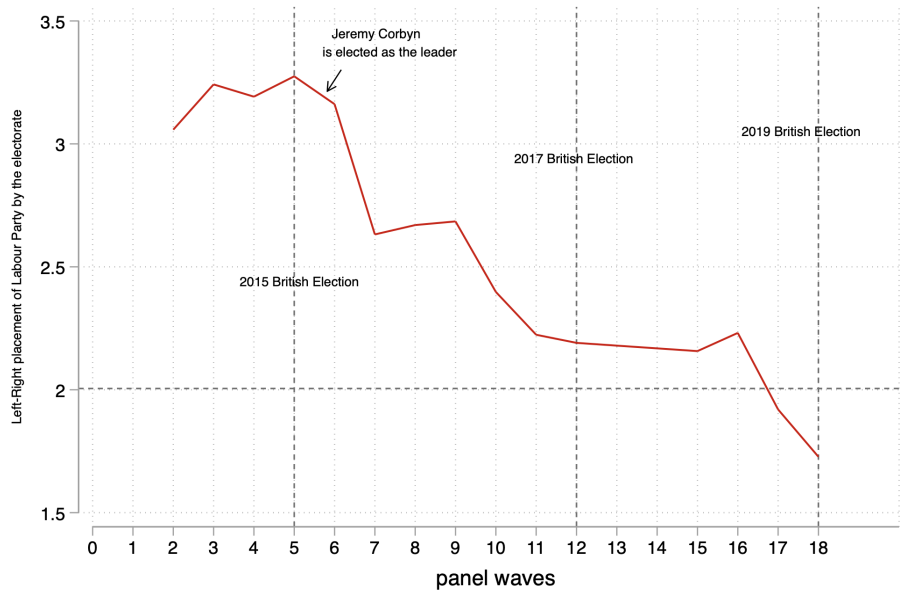
Figure B.1.2. Distribution of Perceived Shift among Labour Identifiers
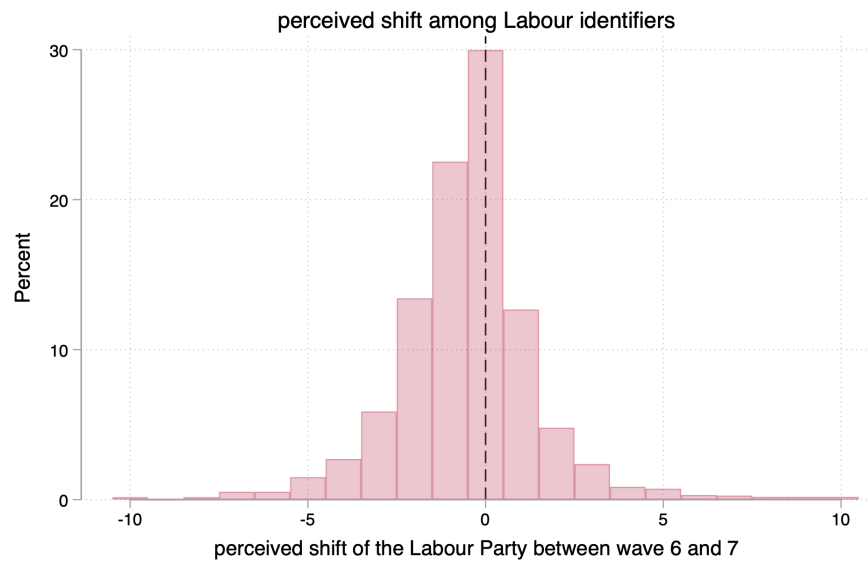
Figure B.1.3. Distribution of Perceived Shift among Independents

Perceived shift among independents

perceived shift of the Labour Party between wave 6 and 7
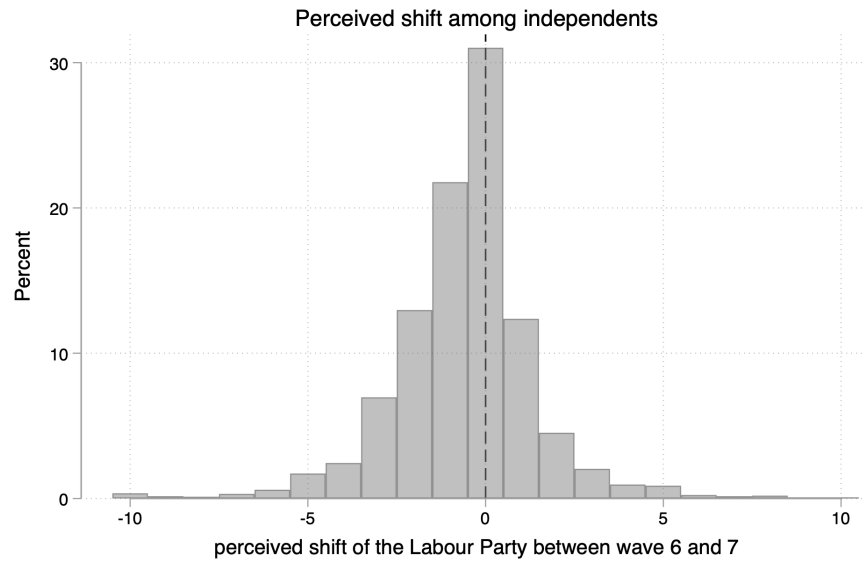
Figure B.1.4. Distribution of Perceived Shift among other Identifiers

Perceived shift among other identifiers

perceived shift of the Labour Party between wave 6 and 7
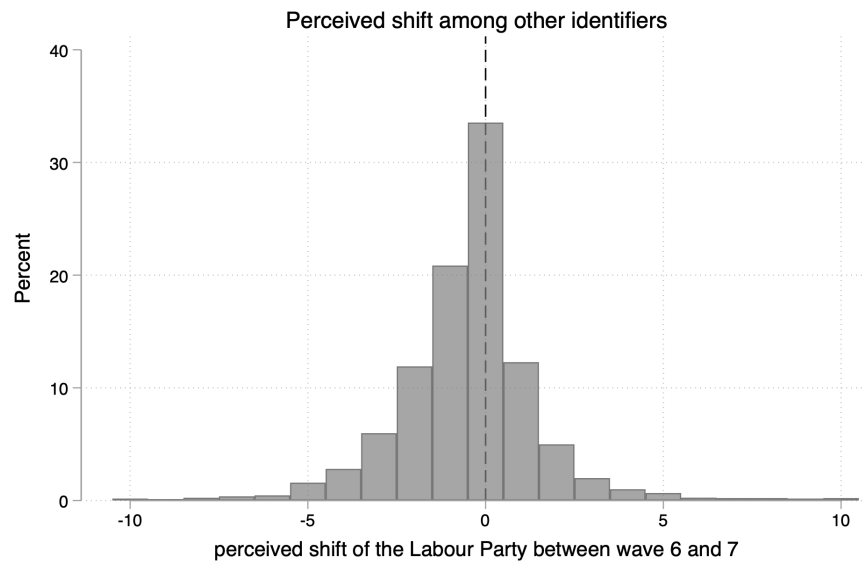
Table B.1.1 presents three models where the dependent variable is the perceived shift of the Labour Party's left-right position and the independent variable of interest is the party identification. Model 1 focuses on the immediate perceived change (between wave 6 and wave 7), Model 2 focuses on the perceived change between wave 6 and wave 12 (2017 General Elections), and Model 3 focuses on the perceived change between wave 6 and wave 18 (2019 General Elections).

Table B.1.1. Who perceived the shift?

	Model 1 perceived shift	Model 2 perceived shift	Model 3 perceived shift
PID (ref=ind)			
Conservative PID	0.266***	0.443***	0.534***
	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.104)
Labour PID	0.254***	0.383***	0.566***
	(0.073)	(0.074)	(0.101)
Liberal Democrat PID	0.249**	0.128	0.109
	(0.094)	(0.087)	(0.117)
UKIP PID	0.334**	0.430***	0.506***
	(0.120)	(0.115)	(0.146)
other PID	-0.270**	-0.334***	-0.362**
	(0.086)	(0.090)	(0.131)
Left-Right	0.041**	0.051**	0.046*
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.022)
Political attention	-0.095***	-0.090***	-0.111***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.017)
Education	-0.053**	-0.058***	-0.048*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.024)
Sex	0.095*	0.200***	0.162**
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.057)
Age	-0.003	-0.004*	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Constant	0.011	-0.617***	-1.042***
	(0.171)	(0.175)	(0.250)
N	9671	9624	5742

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure B.1.5. Who perceived the leftward shift of the Labour Party?

perceived change in the Labour Party position
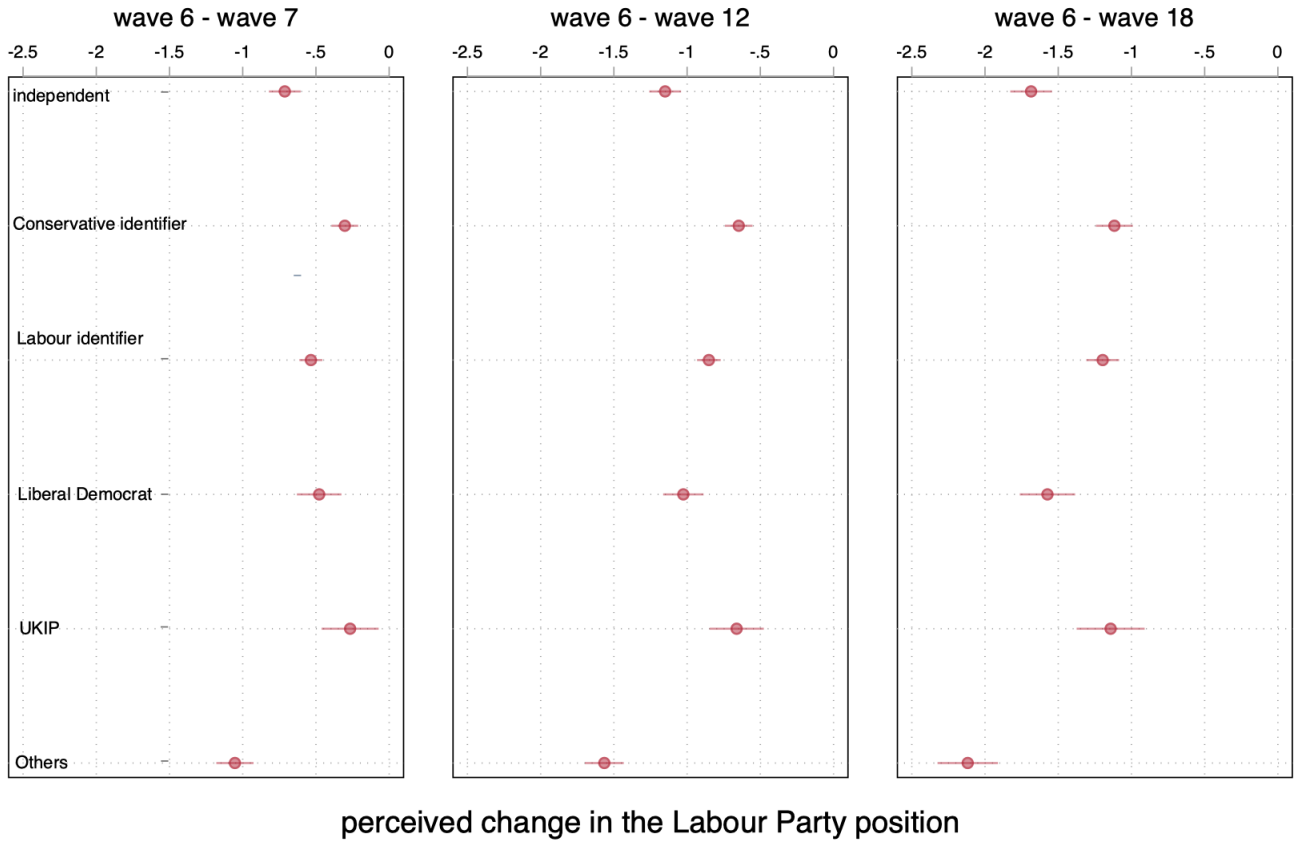
B.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table B.2.1. Descriptive statistics for wave 6 and wave 7

	count	mean	sd	min	max
party identification in wave 6					
independent	21084	0.20	0.40	0	1
labour	21084	0.29	0.45	0	1
conservative	21084	0.28	0.45	0	1
libdem	21084	0.068	0.25	0	1
UKIP	21084	0.065	0.25	0	1
others	21084	0.11	0.31	0	1
party identification in wave 7					
independent	21084	0.20	0.40	0	1
labour	21084	0.28	0.45	0	1
conservative	21084	0.26	0.44	0	1
libdem	21084	0.064	0.24	0	1
UKIP	21084	0.071	0.26	0	1
others	21084	0.095	0.29	0	1
Left-right self-placement in wave 6	17916	4.99	2.49	0	10
Left-right self-placement in wave 7	17459	4.94	2.39	0	10
Attention to Politics in wave 6	20827	7.07	2.24	0	10
Attention to Politics in wave 7	17279	7.06	2.30	0	10
Education level	17858	2.97	1.39	0	5
Gender	21081	1.49	0.50	1	2

B.3 Replication Using Full Scale of Left-Right Placement

In this Appendix, I replicate hypothesis 3 with a different operationalization of one's spatial location prior to the position-change. Note that in the main analyses, I resorted to an operationalization with three categories for the sake of simplicity (left-wing, centrist, right-wing), but I now present the results using the full scale of left-right self-placement that runs from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). This measure takes into account any possible differences in behavior due to spatial positions of individuals. For example, individuals at the extreme ends of the scale might differ from those who are located further away from the poles.

Model 1 is the replica of the analyses presented in the main text and tests hypotheses 1 and 2. Model 2 interacts self-placement in wave 6 with Labour identification in wave 6 to explain the change in self-placement between wave 6 and wave 7. The effect of Labour identification is visualized in Figure B.3.1 at different values of the left-right scale. These results corroborate the findings from the main analyses that the more right-wing a Labour partisan is, the more likely they are to adopt a more left-wing stance. This effect is mostly limited to those who are located at 6, 7 and 8, which represents approximately 7.5 percent of all Labour identifiers.

Figure B.3.1. Who among Labour partisans became more left-wing?
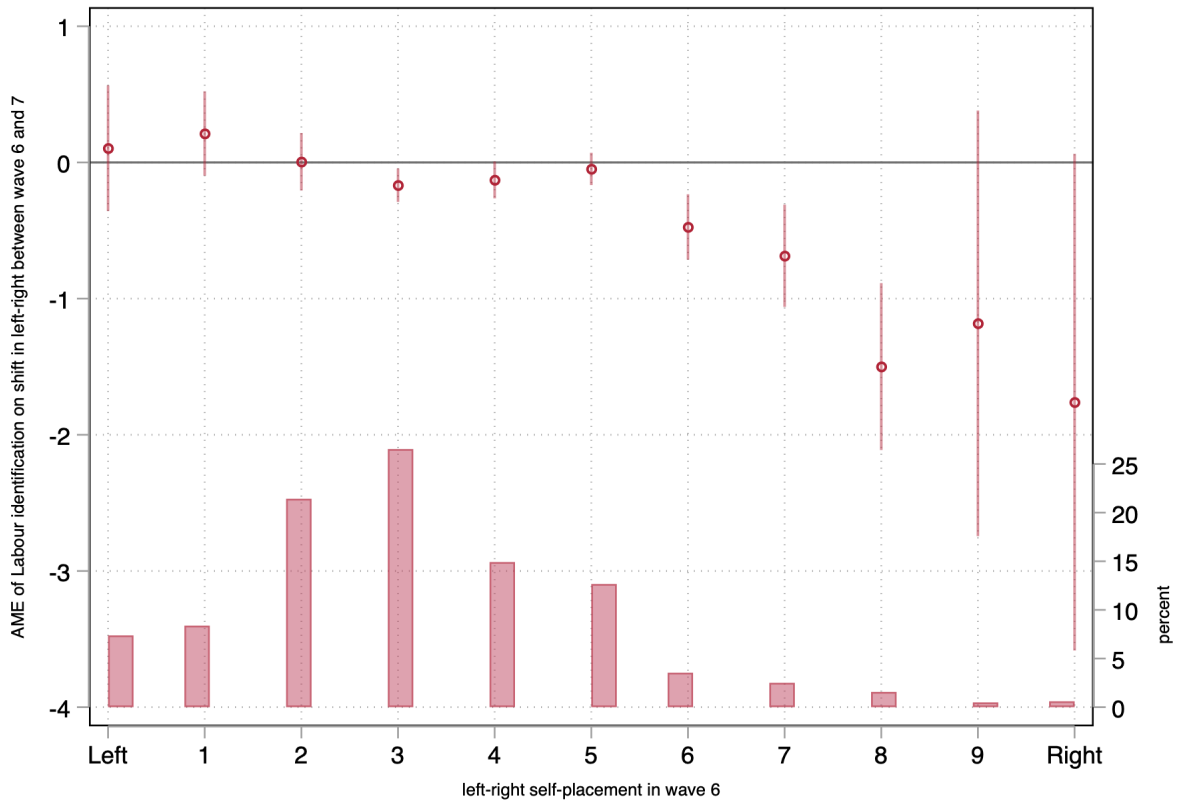
Table B.3.1. Replication with full left-right self-placement scale

	(Model 1) shift in LR (wave 6 - 7)	(Model 2) shift in LR (wave 6 - 7)
party identification (ref=ind)		
Labour identification	0.182***	0.105
	(0.031)	(0.235)
Conservative identification	-0.198***	
	(0.029)	
other identification	0.084**	
	(0.031)	
LR self-placement in wave 6 (ref= 0)		
1		-0.242
		(0.266)
2		-0.405
		(0.246)
3		-0.480*
		(0.230)
4		-0.663**
		(0.230)
5		-0.829***
		(0.225)
6		-1.091***
		(0.229)
7		-1.323***
		(0.235)
8		-1.580***
		(0.256)
9		-2.259***
		(0.591)
10		-2.671***
		(0.727)
LR self-placement in wave 6 x Labour identification		
Labour identification x 1		0.108
		(0.283)
Labour identification x 2		-0.099
		(0.259)
Labour identification x 3		-0.272
		(0.244)
Labour identification x 4		-0.233
		(0.245)
Labour identification x 5		-0.152
		(0.243)
Labour identification x 6		-0.579*
		(0.265)
Labour identification x 7		-0.790**
		(0.303)
Labour identification x 8		-1.604***
		(0.391)
Labour identification x 9		-1.286
		(0.831)
Labour identification x 10		-1.865
		(0.959)
intercept	-0.060*	0.789***
	(0.024)	(0.223)
N	16774	7345

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Party identification and left-right self-placement are measured before the Labour Party changed its position (wave 6). Model 1 includes party identification testing hypothesis 1 and 2 while Model 2 tests hypothesis 3. Party identification in Model 2 is operationalized as Labour identification versus independents, hence in this model, the sample is restricted to Labour identifiers and independents only.

B.4 Do Strong Partisans Follow the Party?

In this Appendix, I explore the heterogeneity in the results based on the strength of party iden-
tification. The rationale behind this is that while weak partisans may not necessarily follow the
party, strong partisans might do so due to their stronger psychological attachment to the Labour
Party. The stronger the attachment, the stronger the urge to decrease dissonance by reducing the
ideological distance between them and the party.

Table B.4.1. Do Strong Partisans Follow the Party?

	(1) shift in LR	(2) shift in LR
Labour identification (ref=independent)		
weak Labour identification	0.151***	-0.101
	(0.033)	(0.060)
strong Labour identification	0.255***	0.268
	(0.047)	(0.185)
spatial location (ref=center)		
left-wing		0.355***
		(0.051)
right-wing		-0.469***
		(0.056)
Labour identification x spatial location		
weak Labour identification x left-wing		0.088
		(0.075)
weak Labour identification x right-wing		-0.696***
		(0.132)
strong Labour identification x left-wing		-0.231
		(0.192)
strong Labour identification x right-wing		-1.781***
		(0.351)
intercept	-0.060*	-0.041
	(0.024)	(0.033)
N	7320	7320

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Model 1 in Table B.4.1 tests hypothesis 1 and Model 2 tests hypothesis 3. Model 1 reveals a
surprising finding that, compared to independents, strong partisans move to the right more than the
weak partisans. This finding goes against the expectation that Labour partisans should move to the
left after their party adopts a more left-wing ideological stance. Moving to Model 2, weak and strong
Labour identification now fall short of statistical significance. Compared to the centrist respondents,
left-wing (right-wing) respondents tend to move to the right (left). Interaction terms for weak and
strong Labour identification with being right-wing are negative and statistically significant, meaning
that right-wing Labour identifiers moved to the left compared to their independent counterparts.
Overall, there is evidence in favour of hypothesis 3. Moreover, there is heterogeneity in that strong
Labour identifiers move to the left more than weak identifiers. These effects are visualized in Figure
B.4.1.

Figure B.4.1. Do Labour Partisans Follow the Party (by partisanship strength)?
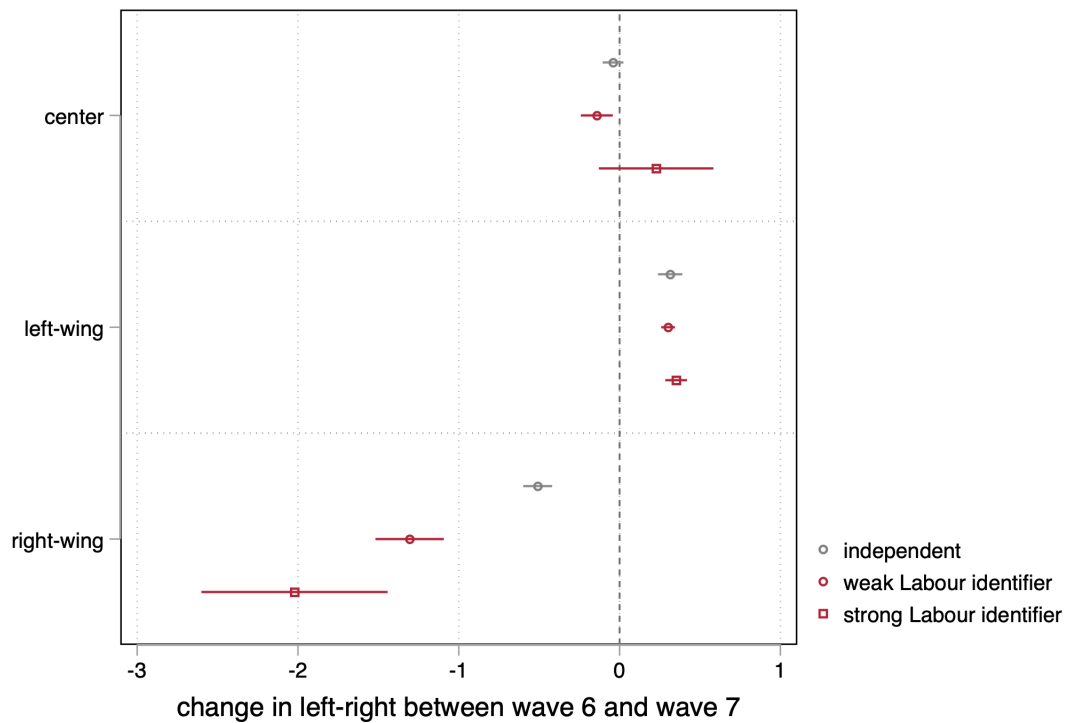
Next, making use of OLS panel data analyses with individual fixed effects, I also check the over-time trends of the evolution of left-right self-placement for weak and strong Labour partisans. The results of these models are plotted in Figure B.4.2. The immediate right-wing shift after the Labour Party adopted a more left-wing position is visible both for weak and strong Labour identifiers. Moreover, the over-time trends show that these partisans continued to moderate their ideological stance gradually. Note however that while interpreting the over-time trend, I am careful not to attribute the effect to the immediate position change, as there might be time-variant confounders that are not taken into account influencing the trend.

Figure B.4.2. Evolution of left-right placement among weak and strong Labour identifiers
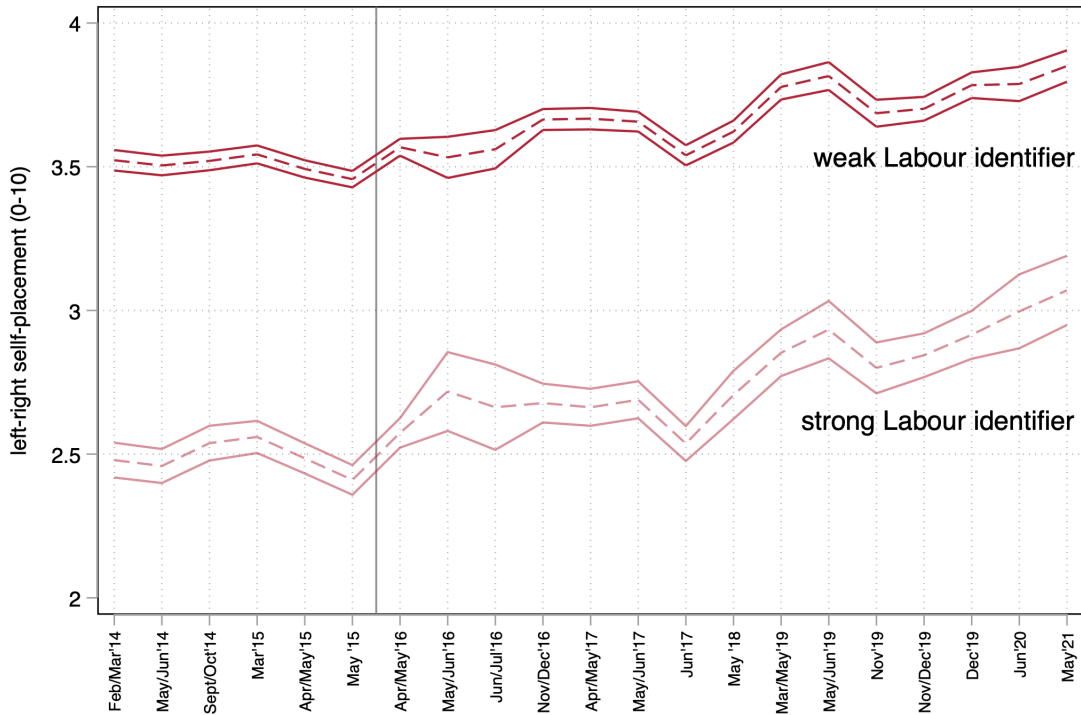
Note: Estimates are from OLS Panel data analysis with individual fixed effects with robust clustered errors at the individual level. Party identification and its strength are measured before the change in the Labour Party's position (in May 2015, wave 6).

Overall, these findings corroborate the main findings that only Labour identifiers that were right-wing became more left-wing when the party adopted a more left-wing stance. However, there is a general tendency to move to the left in the electorate—left-wing independents and Labour identifiers. Because more Labour partisans are moving to the right than to the left, as the right-wing Labour partisans are a very small minority, Labour partisans ended up being more right-wing than they were before.

B.5 Does Partisan Sorting on the Brexit Issue Drive the Patterns of Moderation?

In this Appendix, I report whether the moderation trends observed among Conservative and Labour identifiers are still present when considering only those who did not change their views on Brexit between wave 6 (May 2015) and wave 12 (May/Jun 2017). As Figure B.5.1 illustrates, the observed patterns in the main text cannot be explained by sorting on the Brexit issue. When focused only among those who did not change their Brexit stances throughout two years, the results still demonstrate a slight moderation effect.

Figure B.5.1. Evolution of Left-Right Self-Placement among Labour and Conservative Identifiers
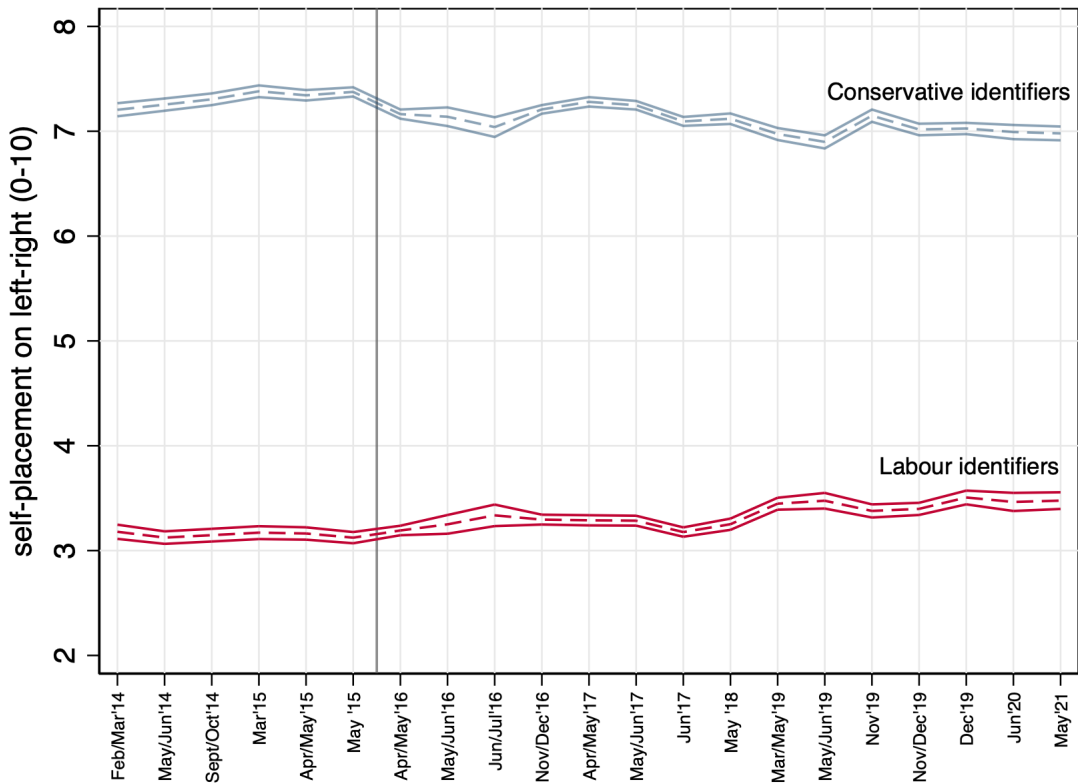
B.6 Did Those who Consistently Identified with the Labour Party Prior to Party Position Change Adopt more Left-Wing Positions?

In this Appendix, I address the possibility that more loyal partisans might have followed the party. I focus on respondents that have consistently identified with the Labour Party since the first wave to the sixth wave (until the leadership change). If these consistent identifiers, who are more likely to be loyal to the party, did not follow the party to the left, then we can be more certain that the follow-the-party effect did not occur among the Labour identifiers.

Table B.6.1. Consistent Labour partisans did not follow the party

	(1) shift in LR	(2) shift in LR
party identification		
Labour identification (ref = independents)	0.152***	-0.120
	(0.035)	(0.078)
spatial location (ref = centrist)		
left-wing		0.355***
		(0.051)
right-wing		-0.469***
		(0.056)
Labour identification x spatial location		
Labour identification x left-wing		0.075
		(0.090)
Labour identification x right-wing		-1.246***
		(0.205)
intercept	-0.060*	-0.041
	(0.024)	(0.033)
N	4946	4946

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Model 1 in Table B.6.1 tests hypothesis 1 and Model 3 tests the hypothesis 3. Coefficient for Labour identification is positive and statistically significant, meaning that consistent Labour identifiers moved to the right compared to independents. That is, even partisans that always indicated to identify with the Labour Party did not move to the left. This finding provides further evidence that Labour identifiers did not follow the party to the left. Model 2 interacts Labour identification with one's spatial location (i.e., left-wing, centrist or right-wing). In general, Labour identification is no longer statistically significant, left-wing respondents tend to move to the right and right-wing respondents tend to move to the left. Moreover, left-wing and centrist Labour partisans do not differ from their independent counterparts, but right-wing Labour identifiers, compared to their independent counterparts, moved to the left and this is statistically significant and substantially meaningful. These results from Model 2 are plotted in Figure B.6.1.

Figure B.6.1. Hypothesis 3 - consistent Labour Identifiers
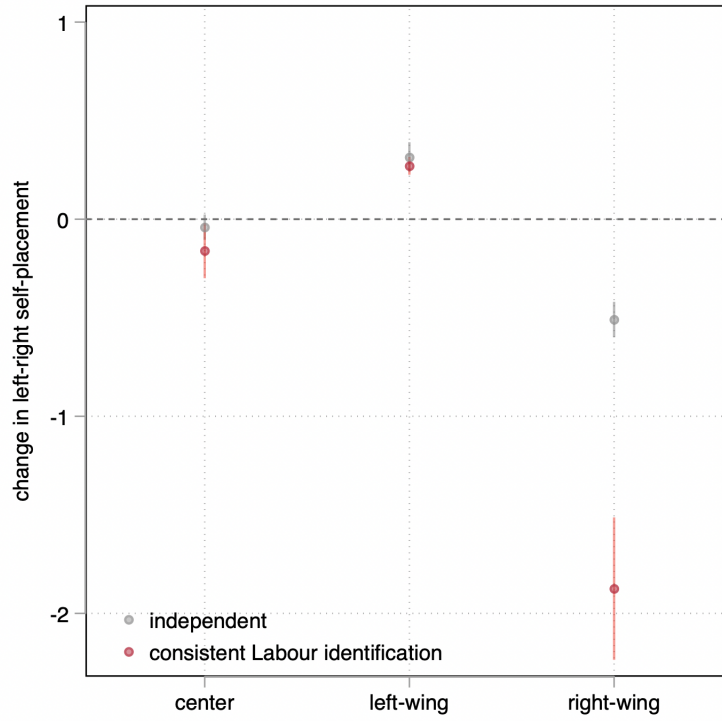
B.7 Did Those who Continued to Identify with the Labour Party after the Party Position Change Adopt more Left-Wing Positions?

In this Appendix, I check whether Labour identifiers in wave 6 (prior to the position change) who stayed with the party by consistently identifying with the Labour Party in the following waves (from wave 6 to wave 12) became more left-wing or at least did not moderate their ideological stance. The idea behind this is simple: if partisans stay with the party despite party's moving away from them to the extreme, they might resort to motivated reasoning and align their left-right positions with the new position of the Labour Party.

Table B.7.1. Consistent Labour partisans did not follow the party

	(1) shift in LR	(2) shift in LR
Labour identification	0.145***	-0.059
	(0.040)	(0.089)
left-wing		0.355***
		(0.051)
right-wing		-0.469***
		(0.056)
Labour identification x left-wing		-0.025
		(0.102)
Labour identification x right-wing		-1.227***
		(0.265)
intercept	-0.060*	-0.041
	(0.024)	(0.033)
N	3868	3868

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table B.7.1 tests the immediate effect of position change on identifiers who identified with the Labour Party in wave 6 and indicated to stay with the party later. Labour identification hence captures the individuals who remained loyal to their party after the latter adopted a more left-wing position under the new leadership. The coefficient in Model 1 shows that even these partisans moderated their positions in the subsequent wave compared to independents. Figure B.7.1 presents the results of Model 2, which yield similar results to the main findings presented in the main text. Labour partisans, regardless of whether they are left-wing or centrist, did not differ from their independent counterparts. Only right-wing Labour identifiers adjusted their position to be more left-wing.

Figure B.7.1. Hypothesis 3 - Consistent Labour Identifiers
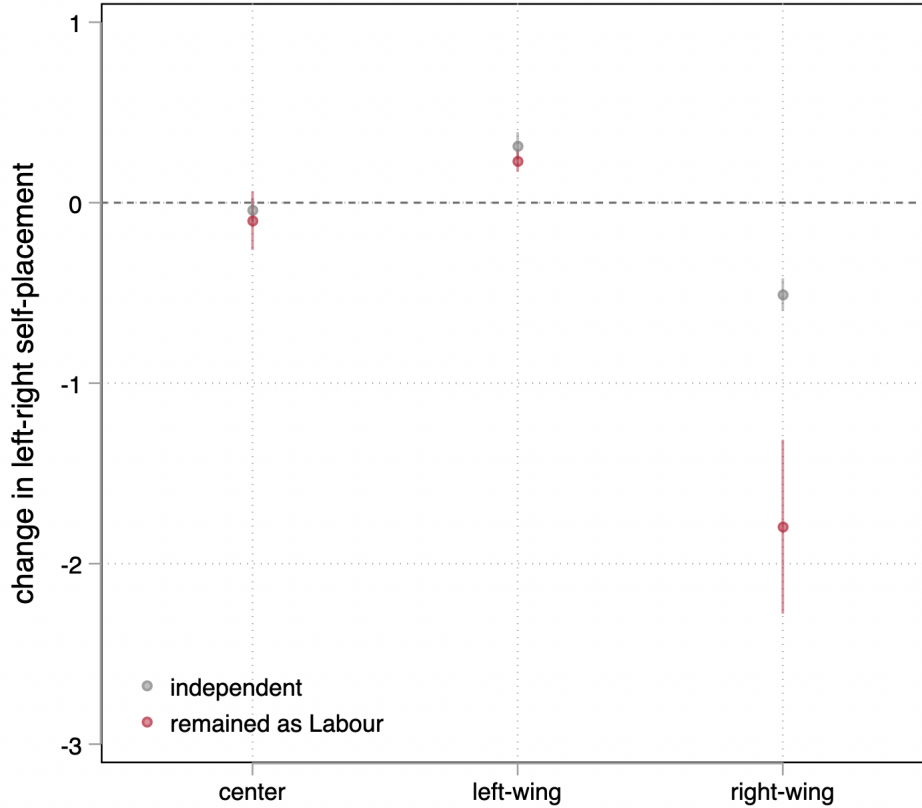
In order to rule out the possibility that the effect of following the party is lagged, I next turn to over-time trend among these loyal Labour identifiers. Individual fixed effects panel data analyses with cluster robust standards errors at the individual level show that even these identifiers who stayed with the Labour Party did not become more left-wing (See Figure B.7.2). In contrast, they became more centrist, although the difference is small. Overall, these results corroborate the main findings that Labour identifiers (in-partisans) did not adopt more left-wing position when the Labour Party adopted a more extreme position to the left.

Figure B.7.2. Hypothesis 3 - Consistent Labour Identifiers
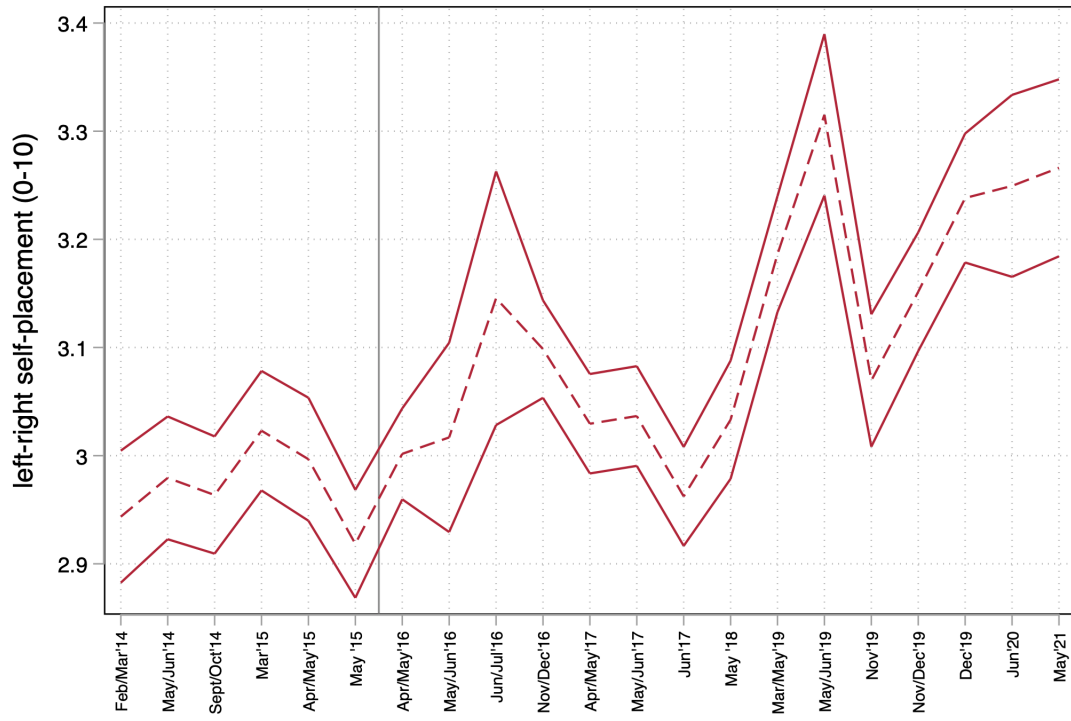
B.8 Over-time Analyses with all Survey-Takers

In this Appendix, I replicate the time series analyses reported in Figure 3.5 with a sample limited to all survey-takers. This means that respondents who sporadically participated in the waves will be excluded from the analysis. In other words, if there is a missing value for a respondent in any wave, this respondent will be dropped from the analyses. While this leads to a loss of observations, it ensures that the over-time trends are not due to some respondents dropping out from some waves and returning at other waves. That is, the analyses will be focusing on the within individual change among same respondents.

I create two different samples. First, I limit the sample to individuals who took all the waves until the 13th wave. This leaves me with 1,654 Labour identifiers, 1,629 Conservative identifiers, and 1,083 independents as defined by their identification in wave 6, who took each of the 12 waves. I estimate panel data analysis with fixed effect for individuals and robust standard errors clustered at the respondent level. Figure B.8.1 plots the results based on this sample, which reveal similar results to those reported in Figure 3.5. Limiting the sample to first 12 wave-takers does not alter the results.

Second, I limit the sample to all wave-takers (from 1 to 20), which leaves me with 231 Labour identifiers, 231 Conservative identifiers, and 223 independents as defined by their identification in wave 6. Similarly, I estimate panel data analysis with fixed effect for individuals and robust standard errors clustered at the respondent level. I plot the results of these analyses in Figure B.8.2. These results also confirm that when the Labour Party adopted a more extreme ideological position, both Labour identifiers and Conservative identifiers perceived the shift in party's position, but neither the in-partisans followed the party nor the out-partisans lashed back to it.

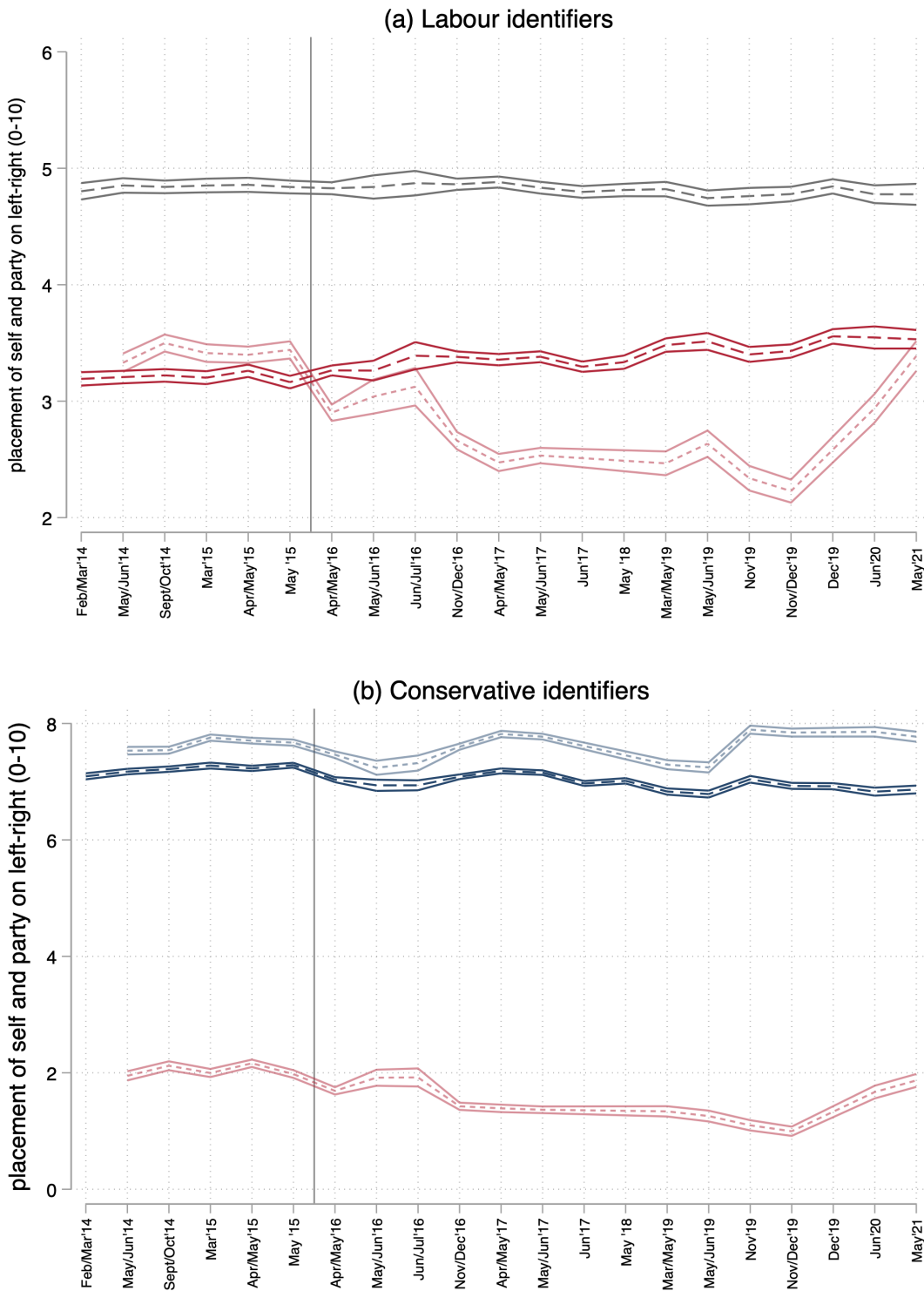Figure B.8.1. Over-time patterns among respondents who took the first 12 waves

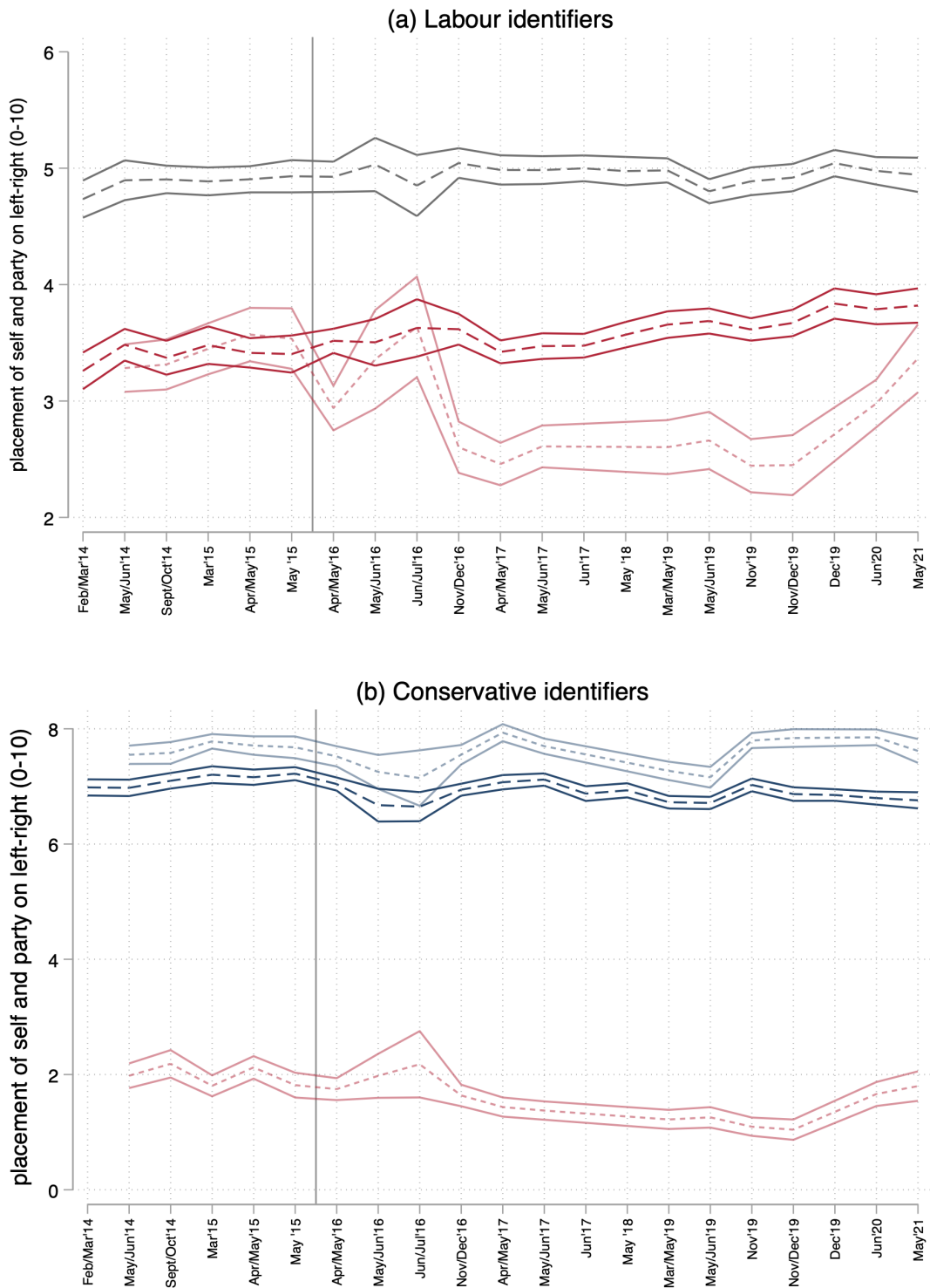Figure B.8.2. Over-time patterns among respondents who took all of the 20 waves

(a) Labour identifiers

(b) Conservative identifiers

Table B.8.1. Table of descriptives - unlimited sample

	count	mean	sd	min	max
Education level	25538	3.01	1.37	0	5
Gender	103702	1.55	0.50	1	2
independent6	30258	0.19	0.39	0	1
labour6	30258	0.29	0.45	0	1
conservative6	30258	0.27	0.44	0	1
libdem6	30258	0.070	0.26	0	1
UKIP6	30258	0.060	0.24	0	1
others6	30258	0.12	0.33	0	1
Left/right position: Self	25709	4.90	2.49	0	10
Attention to Politics	30543	7.01	2.27	0	10

Table B.8.2. Table of descriptives all first 12 wave-takers

	count	mean	sd	min	max
Education level	4926	2.97	1.41	0	5
Gender	5823	1.45	0.50	1	2
independent6	5823	0.20	0.40	0	1
labour6	5823	0.29	0.45	0	1
conservative6	5823	0.28	0.45	0	1
libdem6	5823	0.069	0.25	0	1
UKIP6	5823	0.052	0.22	0	1
others6	5823	0.099	0.30	0	1
Left/right position: Self	5033	4.98	2.45	0	10
Attention to Politics	5767	7.06	2.24	0	10

Table B.8.3. Table of descriptives all 20 wave-takers

	count	mean	sd	min	max
Education level	772	2.75	1.34	0	5
Gender	898	1.47	0.50	1	2
independent6	898	0.28	0.45	0	1
labour6	898	0.27	0.44	0	1
conservative6	898	0.27	0.44	0	1
libdem6	898	0.059	0.24	0	1
UKIP6	898	0.061	0.24	0	1
others6	898	0.068	0.25	0	1
Left/right position: Self	715	5.12	2.29	0	10
Attention to Politics	890	6.30	2.37	0	10

The characteristics of sporadic survey-takers and those who took the first 12 waves are quite similar. In terms of education, attention to politics, party identification, both samples resemble each other. 12 survey-takers seem to be slightly more centrist (4.98 versus 4.90) and the composition of gender differs (55 percent female in the unlimited sample versus 45 percent in the 12 survey-takers).

However, when the sporadic survey-takers are compared to those who took all the surveys, the difference is starker. For example, those who took all surveys are less educated (3.01 versus 2.75), slightly less partisan (73 percent versus 81), and less attentive to politics (6.30 versus 7.01). The composition of gender also differs (47 percent female versus 55). These differences, however, do not present a challenge to the interpretations of the results. If anything, it shows that even when focused on a less educated and less attentive sample, the perceived position of the Labour Party

tracked its real position change (i.e., position change was clear), but the Labour identifiers did not follow it. Similarly, there is no backlash effect from Conservative identifiers. Overall, all three samples produce the same results: Labour identifiers perceived the left-wing shift in the Labour Party's position, but did not themselves adopt a more left-wing position.

Appendix C

C.1   How Much Change Occurs in Affective Polarization between Waves?

In this Appendix, I report descriptive statistics regarding the change in affective polarization that takes place between consecutive waves. Note that affective polarization is measured as the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. Negative changes in affective polarization indicate a decrease in affective polarization, while positive changes in affective polarization indicate an increase in affective polarization. The variable ranges from -10 to 10, but these extreme values are very rare. Rather, the observed values range between -5 and 5.

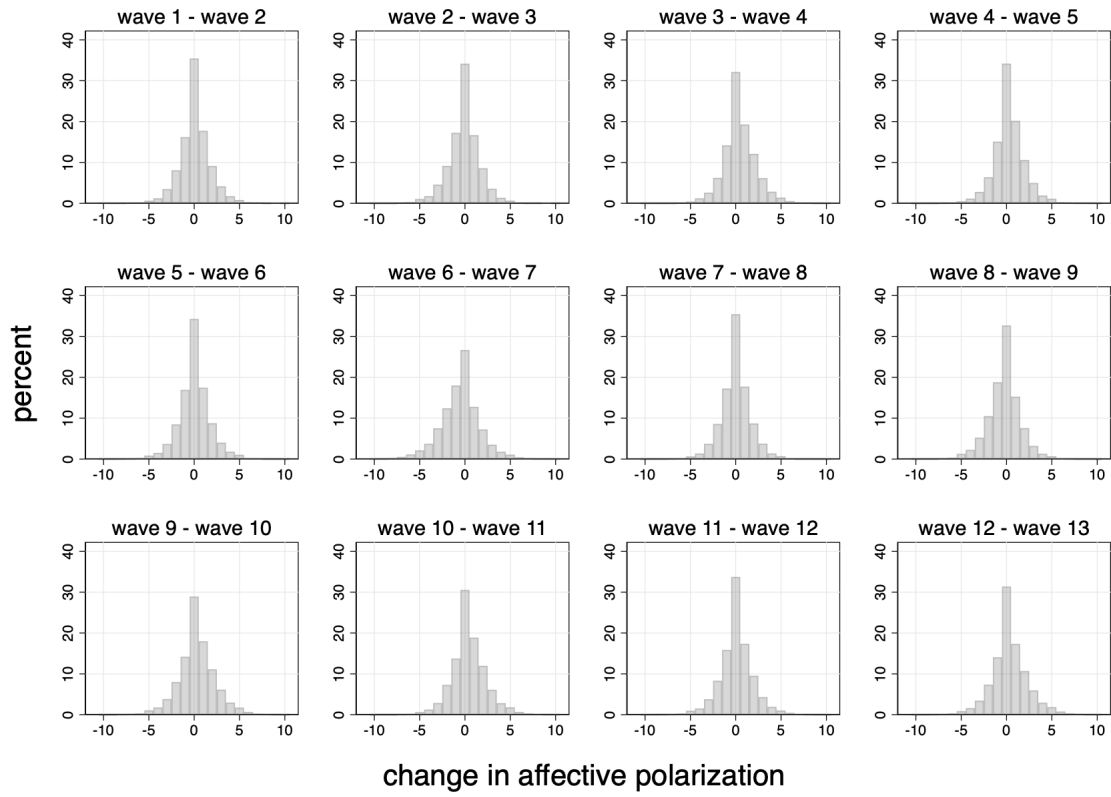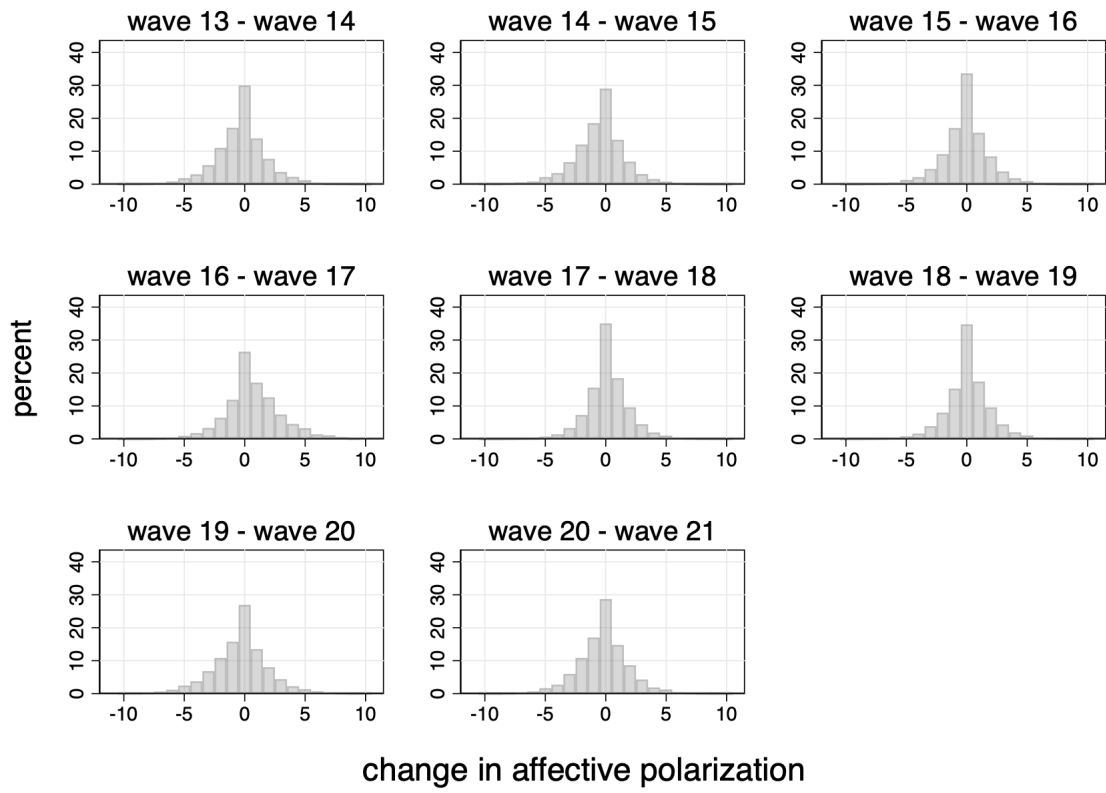Figure C.1.1. Distribution of change in affective polarization between waves

percent

change in affective polarization

Figure C.1.2. Distribution of change in affective polarization between waves

change in affective polarization

C.2 Does Partisan Sorting Drive the Patterns Observed in In-Party and Out-Party Feelings?

In this Appendix, I examine whether the trends in in-party and out-party evaluations among Labour identifiers are driven by individuals sorting into and out of Labour identification in subsequent waves. The main analysis focuses on how the evaluations of individuals who identified with the Labour Party prior to the change in elite ideological polarization (in wave 6) evolved as elite ideological polarization increased. However, one can wonder whether these patterns are driven by partisan sorting. For instance, if a respondent who identified with the Labour Party in wave 6 no longer identifies with it in subsequent waves, their evaluation of the party is likely to be less positive. Conversely, if a respondent who was not a Labour identifier in wave 6 becomes one in subsequent waves, their evaluation of the party may become more positive. To test this, I analyze models for Labour identifiers based on both wave 6 identification (fixed) identification measured at each wave (dynamic partisanship). The former allows us to focus on how the affective evaluations of those who already identified with the party evolve over time, while the latter takes into account partisan sorting by including new Labour partisans at each wave and excluding those who opt out of Labour partisanship at each wave.

Figure C.2.1 plots the evolution of Labour Party evaluations by Labour partisans based on both the fixed and dynamic operationalizations of Labour identification. Figure C.2.2 plots the evolution of Conservative Party evaluations by Labour partisans using fixed and dynamic Labour partisanship. The results indicate that when accounting for partisan sorting, in-party evaluations among Labour partisans are slightly more positive, and there is slightly higher level of affective polarization among Labour partisans. However, the overall patterns remain consistent. Affective polarization among Labour identifiers follows the trends of in-party enthusiasm trends rather than out-party animosity.

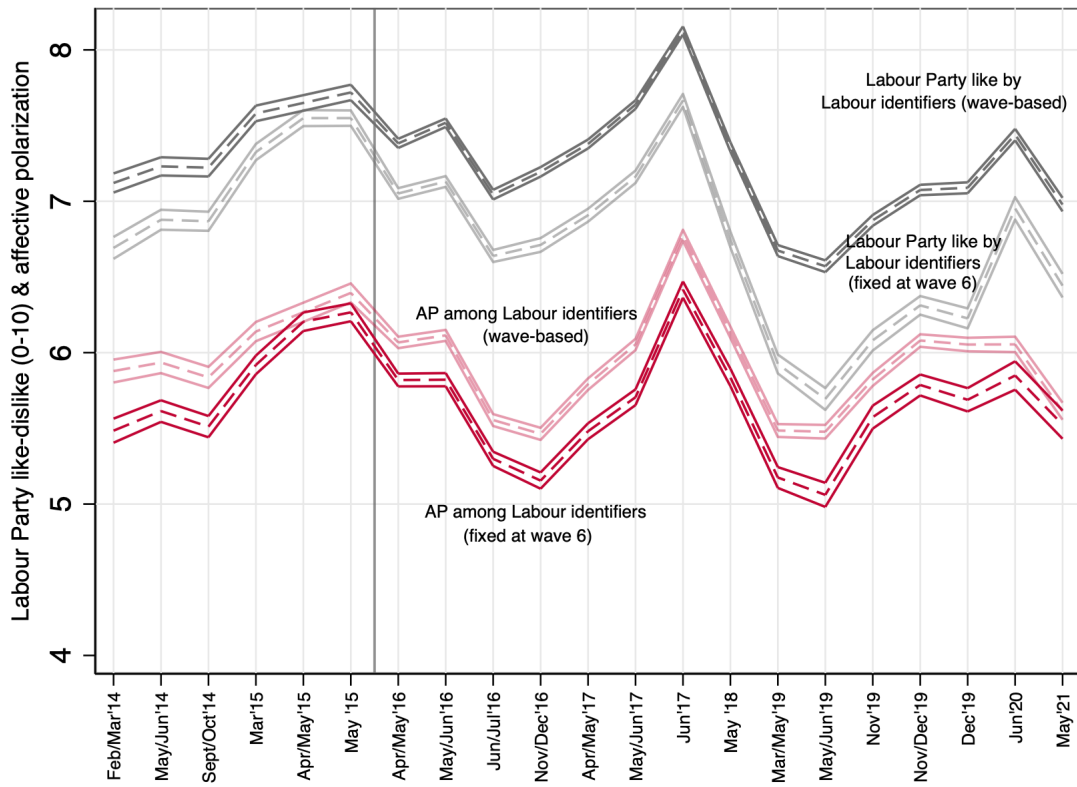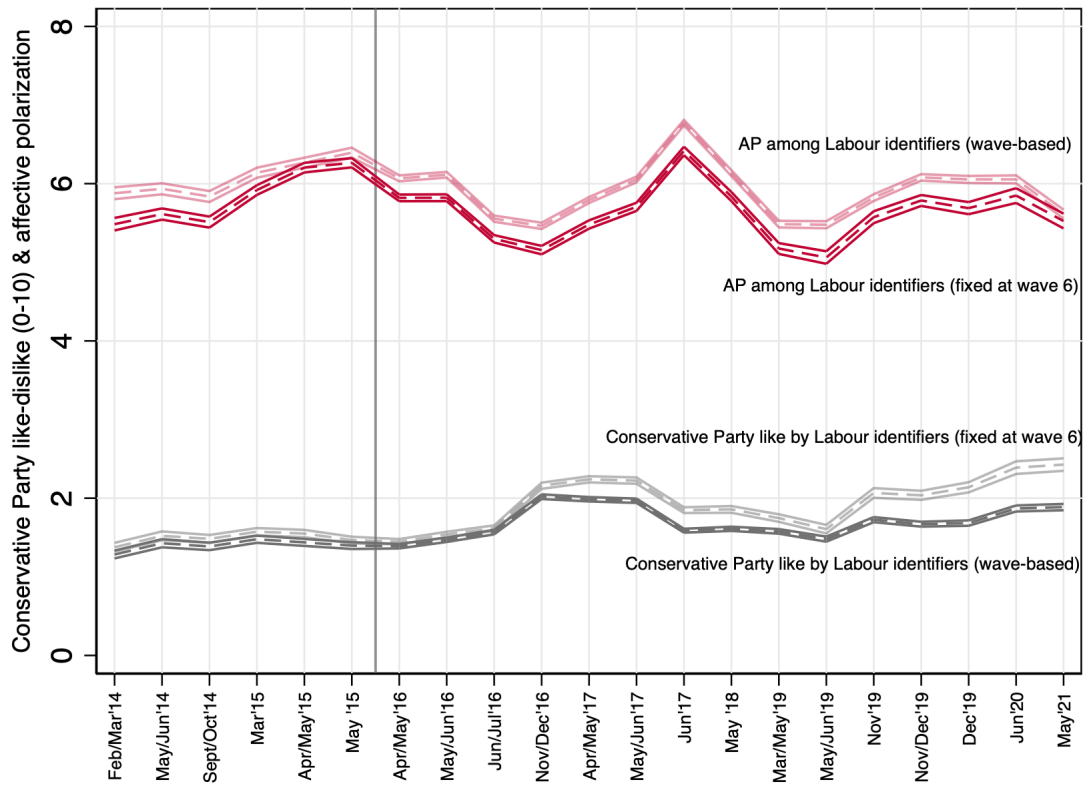Figure C.2.1. Evolution of In-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization among Labour Identifiers

Figure C.2.2. Evolution of Out-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization among Labour Identifiers

C.3 Replication of Results Using an Alternative Measure of Affective Polarization

In this Appendix, I replicate the main analyses with a measure of affective polarization that is based on the spread of affective party evaluations for each respondent. See Wagner (2021) for more details and the application of this measure as well as how it compares to other operationalizations of affective polarization in multiparty systems. Overall, the spread captures the average absolute difference between feelings towards different political parties. Higher scores indicate higher affective polarization, meaning that the individual feels differently for different parties. Lower scores indicate lower affective polarization, meaning that the individual has similar feelings towards parties. This measure allows integrating respondents without a party identification in the analyses as well. Note that I do not weight the polarization index by their vote share. In this specific case, weighting by vote share would produce results quite similar to those presented in the main text, as the Conservative Party and the Labour Party together obtain a large majority of the votes. Research shows that radical right parties are the least liked by the electorate (Gidron, Adams and Horne 2022), hence, including the United Kingdom Independence Party would inflate affective polarization index. Therefore, I exclude feelings toward the UKIP from the analyses. In the following analyses, I only consider feelings towards 3 parties: the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrats.

Figure C.3.1. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time
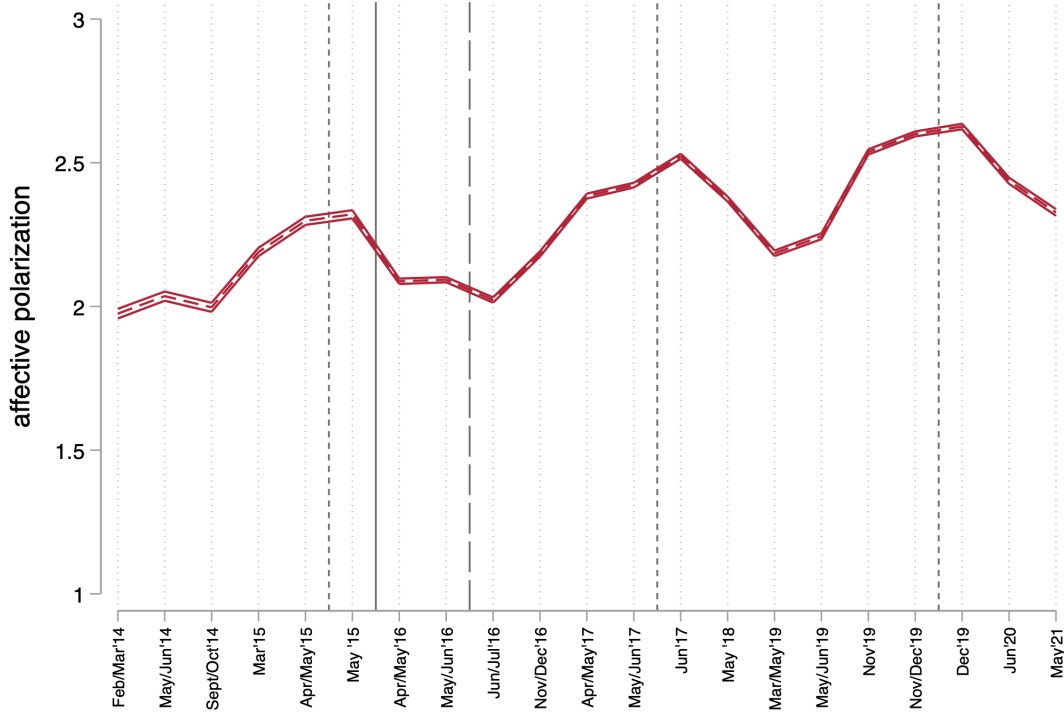
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization— spread of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. A higher spread indicates that there is a greater difference in how warm one feels towards these three parties, meaning a higher affective polarization. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Figure C.3.1 presents the results from panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects with cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The estimates are average within-individual estimates. 95 percent confidence intervals are shown in the figure. The appointment of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the Labour Party (i.e., start in the increase in elite ideological polarization) is indicated by vertical solid line, 2016 referendum is indicated by vertical long dashed line, and three general elections are indicated by vertical short dashed lines. The results show similar patterns in that affective polarization increased since the beginning of the increase in elite polarization.

Given that affective polarization peaks in electoral context and reverts back to its previous lev-

els in non-electoral contexts, we can compare affective polarization between non-electoral contexts both before and after the increase in elite polarization. We can also compare them between electoral contexts before and after the increase in elite polarization. When compared between September/October 2014 and April/May 2016, March/May 2019 (all of them are non electoral contexts), affective polarization increasingly grew. Note that this measure is based on the spread and that an increase of 0.2 point is meaningful although not large. The same pattern emerges when we compare affective polarization between electoral contexts. These results support the expectations that mass affective polarization increased in the increased elite polarization period.

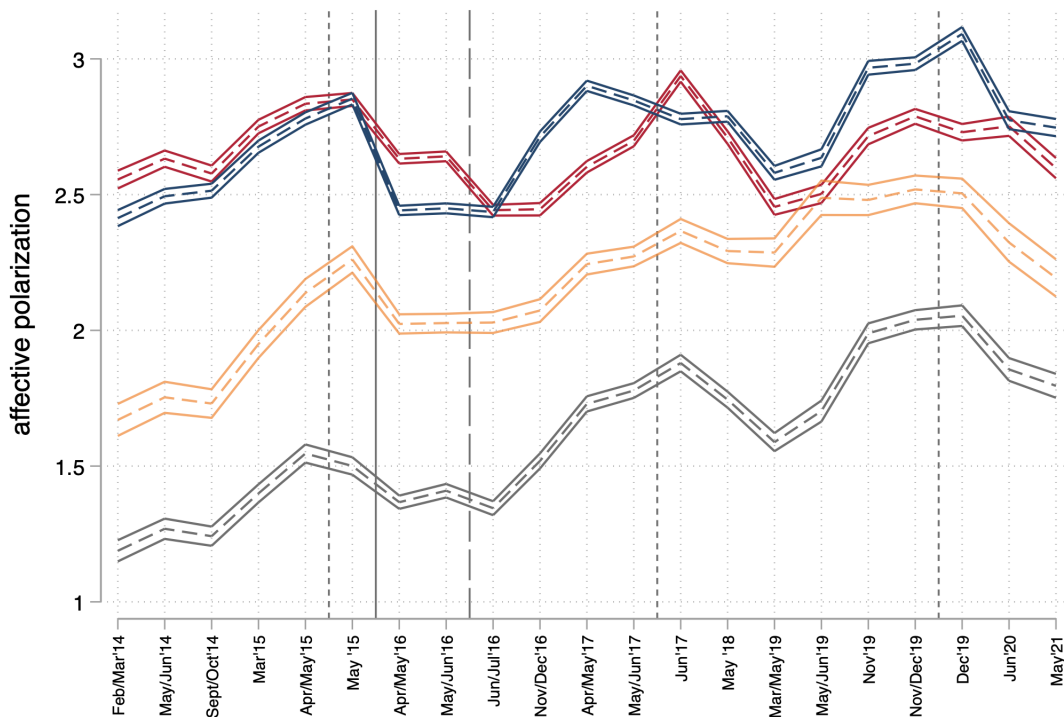Figure C.3.2. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time by Party Identification

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for each partisan group. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—spread of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. A higher spread indicates that there is a greater difference in how warm one feels towards these three parties, meaning a higher affective polarization. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization among Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue), among Liberal Democrats (in orange) and independents (in gray) as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Figure C.3.2 focuses on the heterogeneity based on different partisan groups based on estimates from panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects with cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The average within-individual estimates with 95 percent confidence intervals are plotted for independents (in gray), Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue) and Liberal Democrats identifiers (in orange). Note that party identification is fixed to respondents' expressed identification in May 2015 (wave 6). While the trends in affective polarization was similar prior to the increase in elite ideological polarization, they start diverging afterwards. All partisan groups became more affectively polarized except for Labour identifiers. The largest increase in affective polarization took place among independents and Liberal Democrat identifiers, who were previously less affectively polarized compared to Labour and Conservative identifiers.

Next, I turn to whether in-party feelings drive the affective polarization trends rather than out-party feelings or vice versa. I operationalize in-party likes based on panelists' indicated party identification in wave 6. Note that because independents do not have an in-party based on identification, they are not included in the analyses. As there are more than one out-parties, the affective distance between in-party like and out-party likes are averaged to calculate the out-party like. Figure C.3.3 plots the evolution of in-party (in red) and out-party (in blue) feelings along with the evolution of overall affective polarization (in gray) based on the spread measure. The estimation strategy is the same as above. If in-party feelings drive affective polarization, the increase in in-party like should be accompanied with increase in affective polarization. By the same token, if affective polarization is driven by out-party feelings, when animosity toward the out parties increases (i.e., when out-party like decreases), affective polarization should also increase. The trends presented in Figure C.3.3 show that when in-party like increases, so does affective polarization, but when the out-party dislike increases, affective polarization does not increase. Therefore, the results show that affective polarization is driven by in-party enthusiasm rather than out-party animosity in the United Kingdom.

Figure C.3.3. Evolution of In-Party, Out-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization over Time
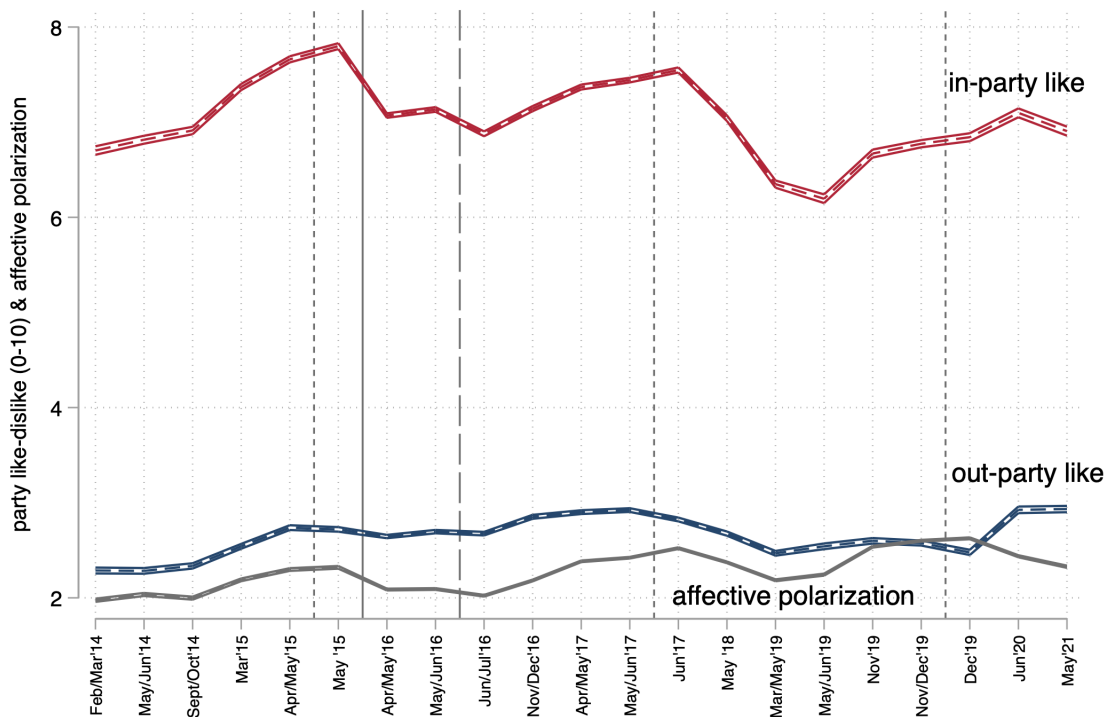

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for three dependent variables: the feelings toward the in-party (in red), the average feeling toward the out-parties (in blue), and affective polarization—the distance between in-party feeling and the average out-party feelings (in gray). In-party is the party that one identifies with in wave 6 (May 2015) and the out-parties are the other two parties. Note that analyses are limited to independents, Labour identifiers, Conservative identifiers and Liberal Democrat identifiers. The estimates indicate within-individual averages. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Lastly, I replicate whether perceived elite polarization of the system causes affective polarization or vice versa. First, using the logic in the formula of elite-level ideological polarization in Chapter 1, I calculate the perceived elite polarization based on the Conservative Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrats. This is based on the average perceived distance between parties on the left-right dimension. In Figure C.3.4, I show that the perceived elite ideological polarization increased over time, which yields a similar trend based on the perceived difference between the Conservative and Labour Party (as shown in the main text). Hence, voters realized that the political elites became ideologically more polarized.

Figure C.3.4. Perceived Elite Ideological Polarization
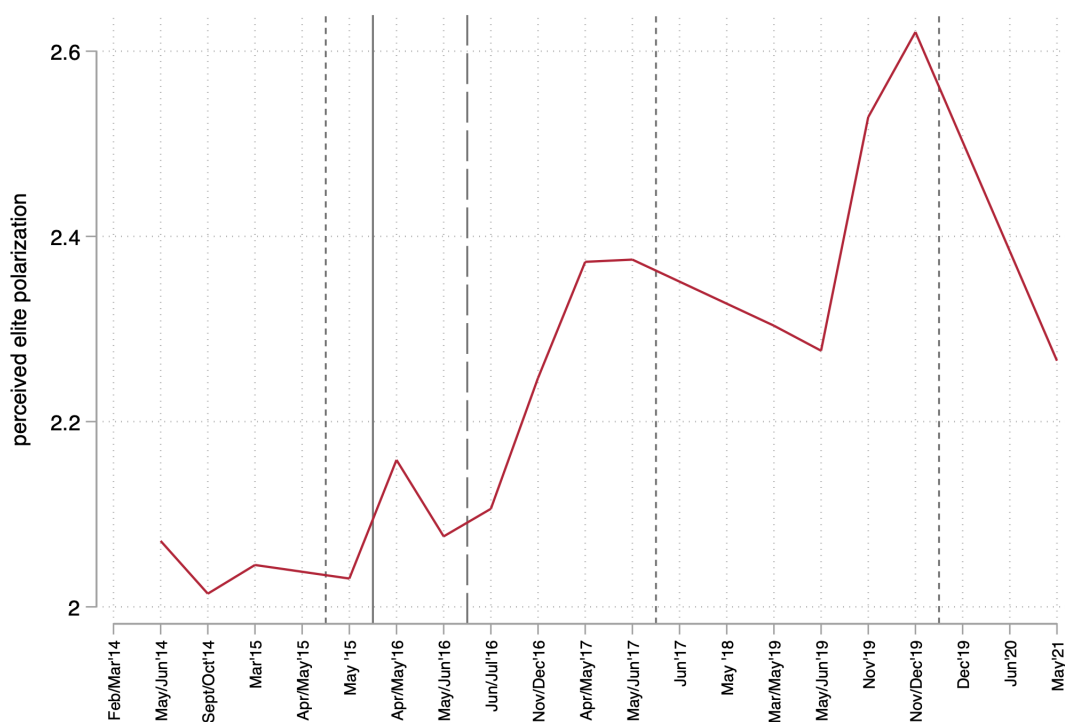
Note: Calculations are made with the formula of elite ideological polarization used in Chapter 1. It captures the extent of distinction between political parties (the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. Higher values indicate higher elite ideological polarization.

Second, in Table C.3.1, I replicate the cross-lagged models using perceived elite polarization and affective polarization in Table C.3.1. These models focus on three different time points between 2016 and 2019. Model 1 and 2 focus on waves 7 (t-1 values - April/May 2016) and 8 (t values - May/June 2016), Model 3 and 4 focus on waves 11 (t-1 values - April/May 2017) and 12 (t values - May/June 2017), and Model 5 and 6 focus on waves 17 (t-1 values - November 2019) and 18 (t values - November/December 2019). Consistent with the main analyses presented in the text, replicating the results with this alternative affective polarization measure yields similar results. All models show the existence of bidirectional influence between perceived elite polarization and mass affective polarization. Previous level of perceived polarization explains both current level of perceived polarization and affective polarization. Similarly, previous level of affective polarization

also explains both current level of affective polarization and perceived polarization. Effect sizes are quite similar as well. In short, we can conclude that the masses perceived the increasing elite ideological polarization and these changing perceptions led to changes in affective polarization.

Table C.3.1. Does Perceived Elite Polarization Lead to Mass Affective Polarization of vice versa?

	non-electoral context		2017 General Elections		2019 General Elections	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$
Affective polarization$_{t-1}$	0.0535***	0.7399***	0.0865***	0.7726***	0.0788***	0.7623***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Perceived polarization$_{t-1}$	0.5952***	0.0770***	0.5601***	0.0662***	0.5592***	0.0967***
	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	1975	1975	4868	4868	3661	3661

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. †$p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. In Model 1 and 2, t-1 variables are measured in wave 7 (first post-Corbyn wave) and t variables are measured in wave 8 (second post-Corbyn wave). In model 3 and 4, t-1 variables are measured in wave 11 and t variables are measured in wave 12 (pre 2017 General Election wave). In model 5 and 6, t-1 variables are measured in wave 17 and t variables are measured in wave 18 (pre 2019 General Election wave). Control variables are all measured at t-1 and they include age, education, gender, party identification, ideological extremity, and referendum vote intention.

Overall, these replications provide evidence that the results presented in the main text are robust to an alternative operationalization (i.e., based on the spread of party likes) of affective polarization.

C.4 Replication of Results Using an Alternative Measure of Affective Polarization 2

In this Appendix, I replicate the main analyses with a measure of affective polarization that is based on the feelings toward the in-party (i.e., the party with which one identifies) and the out-parties (i.e., other parties than the one with which one identifies). As there are more than one out-party, I take the distance between in-party feelings and average out-party feeling. Higher scores indicate that individuals feel more differently toward out-parties compared to the in-party. In contrast, lower scores indicate that individuals feel more similarly to out-parties compared to the in-party. This measure is very similar to the one that Wagner (2021) uses, but slightly differs from it. Wagner (2021) takes the most liked party as the in-group, but I take the party that the respondent identifies with in wave 6 (May 2015) as the in-party. These are likely very similar as individuals are most likely to like their own party more than others, but this way of operationalization allows me to connect the results of this study to the literature that anchors affective polarization to party identification.

Figure C.4.1. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time
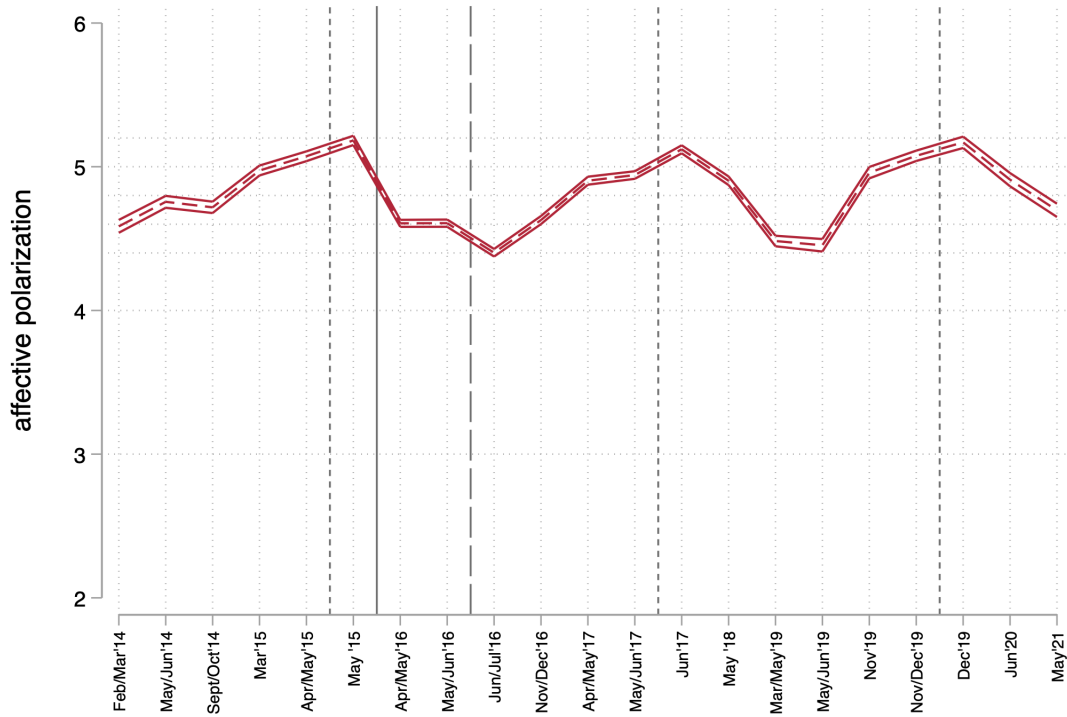
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—based on the distance between in-party (party that one identifies with) and the average out-party feelings. A larger distance indicates that there is a greater difference in how warm one feels towards their own party and other parties, meaning a higher affective polarization. Note that independents are not included in these estimations. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

For the reasons mentioned in Appendix C.3, (1) I limit the sample to the Labour Party, Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats and (2) I do not weight the estimates by party vote shares. As in-party is defined by party identification, those who do not identify with a political party are not included in the analyses. However, note that Appendix 3 replicates the results by the same measure that also includes independents by assigning the party that they intend to vote as the in-party.

Figure C.4.1 presents the results from panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects with cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The estimates are average within-individual estimates. 95 percent confidence intervals are shown in the figure. The appointment of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the Labour Party (i.e., start in the increase in elite ideological po-

larization) is indicated by vertical solid line, 2016 referendum is indicated by vertical long dashed line, and general elections are indicated by vertical short dashed lines. The results differ from both the main results in the text and those in Appendix 1. Affective polarization seems to fluctuate as predicted by the literature, increasing in electoral contexts and decreasing in non-electoral context. However, affective polarization, overall, did not increase since the beginning of the increase in elite polarization.

Figure C.4.2 plots the average within-individual estimates with 95 percent confidence intervals from panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects with cluster robust standard errors at the individual level are plotted for Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue) and Liberal Democrats identifiers (in orange). Based on these estimates, I show that this is because Labour partisans became affectively less polarized over time even though partisans of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats became more affectively polarized. Further analyses indicate that this is driven by the decreasing affective distance toward the Liberal Democrats as the out-party among Labour identifiers. Overall, affective polarization trends follow the same path prior to the increase in elite ideological polarization, but start to differ with increased ideological difference between parties. Relying on a measure based on party identification and average distance between in- and out-parties reveal heterogeneous effects: While Labour partisans depolarized, Conservative and Liberal Democrats partisans polarized when the elite polarization increased. In short, the results for Conservative and Liberal Democrats identifiers are consistent with the those in the main text and in Appendix C.3, but they differ for Labour identifiers.

Figure C.4.2. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time by Party Identification

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for each partisan group. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—based on the distance between in-party (party that one identifies with) and the average out-party feelings. A larger distance indicates that there is a greater difference in how warm one feels towards their own party and other parties, meaning a higher affective polarization. Note that independents are not included in these estimations. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization among Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue) and among Liberal Democrats (in orange) as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

What about the results on whether the trends of affective polarization follows that of in-party enthusiasm or out-party animosity? Figure C.4.3 plots the evolution of in-party (in red) and out-party (in blue) feelings along with the evolution of overall affective polarization (in gray) based on the spread measure. As explained in Appendix C.3, if in-party feelings drove affective polarization, an increase in in-party like should be associated with an increase in affective polarization. However, if out-party feelings are responsible for the fluctuations in the affective polarization level, an increase in average animosity toward the out parties should be associated with an increase in affective polarization. The trends show similar results in that affective polarization is driven by in-party

enthusiasm rather than out-party animosity. That is, affective polarization increases when in-party like increases, but when the out-party dislike increases, affective polarization does not increase. Therefore, the results show affective polarization is driven by in the United Kingdom.

Figure C.4.3. Evolution of In-Party, Out-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization over Time
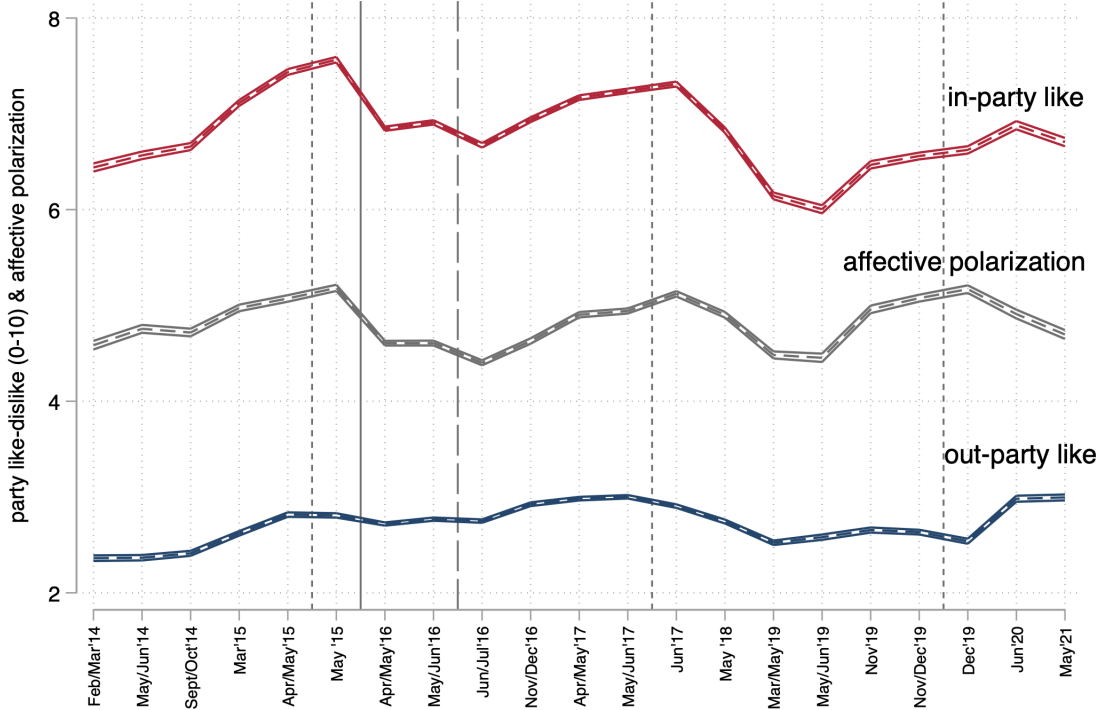

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for three dependent variables: the feelings toward the in-party (in red), the average feeling toward the out-parties (in blue), and affective polarization—the distance between in-party feeling and the average out-party feelings (in gray). In-party is the party that one identifies with in wave 6 (May 2015) and the out-parties are the other two parties. Note that analyses are limited to Labour identifiers, Conservative identifiers and Liberal Democrat identifiers. Independents are excluded from the analyses. The estimates indicate within-individual averages. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Lastly, in Table C.4.1, I turn to replicating the cross-lagged models based on perceived elite ideological polarization of parties and this operationalization of affective polarization. Recall that the objective is to investigate whether perceived elite polarization of the system causes affective polarization or vice versa. These models focus on three different time points between 2016 and 2019. Model 1 and 2 focus on waves 7 (t-1 values - April/May 2016) and 8 (t values - May/June

2016), Model 3 and 4 focus on waves 11 (t-1 values - April/May 2017) and 12 (t values - May/June 2017), and Model 5 and 6 focus on waves 17 (t-1 values - November 2019) and 18 (t values - November/December 2019). The results provide similar interpretations as the ones in the main texts and in Appendix 1. There are slight differences, however. For instance, effect sizes are substantially larger for perceived polarization while smaller for affective polarization. The influence of perceived elite polarization on affective polarization is larger than that of affective polarization on the perceived elite polarization. In Model 2, although perceived elite polarization is not statistically significant at 0.05 level, it is at 0.10 level ($p < 0.057$). This means that there is only 5.7 percent chance (compared to less than 5 with a p value of 0.05) that we would get an estimate of 0.1014 if there was no real effect (i.e., if it was due to random chance). Therefore, I interpret these results as consistent with the main findings. Overall, previous level of perceived polarization explains both current level of perceived polarization and affective polarization. Similarly, previous level of affective polarization also explains both current level of affective polarization and perceived polarization.

Table C.4.1. Does Perceived Elite Polarization Lead to Mass Affective Polarization of vice versa?

	non-electoral context		2017 General Elections		2019 General Elections	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$
Affective polarization$_{t-1}$	0.0230**	0.7519***	0.0421***	0.7973***	0.0253***	0.8190***
	(0.009)	(0.019)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.011)
Perceived polarization$_{t-1}$	0.5896***	0.1014†	0.5515***	0.1642***	0.5463***	0.1597***
	(0.025)	(0.057)	(0.014)	(0.034)	(0.016)	(0.035)
Controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	1125	1125	3156	3156	2607	2607

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. †$p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. In Model 1 and 2, t-1 variables are measured in wave 7 (first post-Corbyn wave) and t variables are measured in wave 8 (second post-Corbyn wave). In model 3 and 4, t-1 variables are measured in wave 11 and t variables are measured in wave 12 (pre 2017 General Election wave). In model 5 and 6, t-1 variables are measured in wave 17 and t variables are measured in wave 18 (pre 2019 General Election wave). Control variables are all measured at t-1 and they include age, education, gender, party identification, ideological extremity, and referendum vote intention.

In sum, these replications provide similar interpretations with a slight difference for the heterogeneity of affective polarization among different partisan groups. First, Labour identifiers depolarized while Conservative and Liberal Democrats partisans polarized. Second, the fluctuations in affective polarization is associated with changes in-party feelings rather than out-party feelings. Third, causal influence between perceived elite polarization and affective polarization flows both ways although perceived elite polarization leads to affective polarization more than affective polarization causes perceived polarization.

C.5 Replication of Results Using an Alternative Measure of Affective Polarization 3

In this Appendix, I replicate the main analyses with the same measure of affective polarization that I used in Appendix C.4, but with a slight modification. I assign in-parties for independents based on their vote intention in wave 6. This way, independents are also included in the analyses. Recall that party identification is measured in wave 6 (May 2015). The results are very similar to those in Appendix C.4, ensuring that they are not driven by who is included and how in the analyses. In addition to the results of Appendix C.4, Figure C.5.2 shows that affective polarization among independents increased as elite polarization increased, which is also consistent with the results based on the spread measure in Appendix C.3. The only partisan group that did not become affectively more polarized is the Labour identifiers. As for whether in-party feelings drive fluctuations in affective polarization more than out-party feelings, Figure C.5.3 shows that affective polarization trend follows more in-party feeling trends than out-party feeling trends. Lastly, Table C.5.1 shows that causal influence between the perceived elite polarization and the affective polarization flows both ways, but the former having a larger impact on the latter.

Figure C.5.1. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—based on the distance between in-party (party that one identifies with) and the average out-party feelings. A larger distance indicates that there is a greater difference in how warm one feels towards their own party and other parties, meaning a higher affective polarization. Note that independents are included in these estimations and that in-party is assigned based on independents' vote intention in wave 6. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Figure C.5.2. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time by Party Identification

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for each partisan group. he dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—based on the distance between in-party (party that one identifies with) and the average out-party feelings. A larger distance indicates that there is a greater difference in how warm one feels towards their own party and other parties, meaning a higher affective polarization. Note that independents are included in these estimations and that in-party is assigned based on independents' vote intention in wave 6. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization among Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue), Liberal Democrats (in orange) and independents (in gray) as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Figure C.5.3. Evolution of In-Party, Out-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization over Time
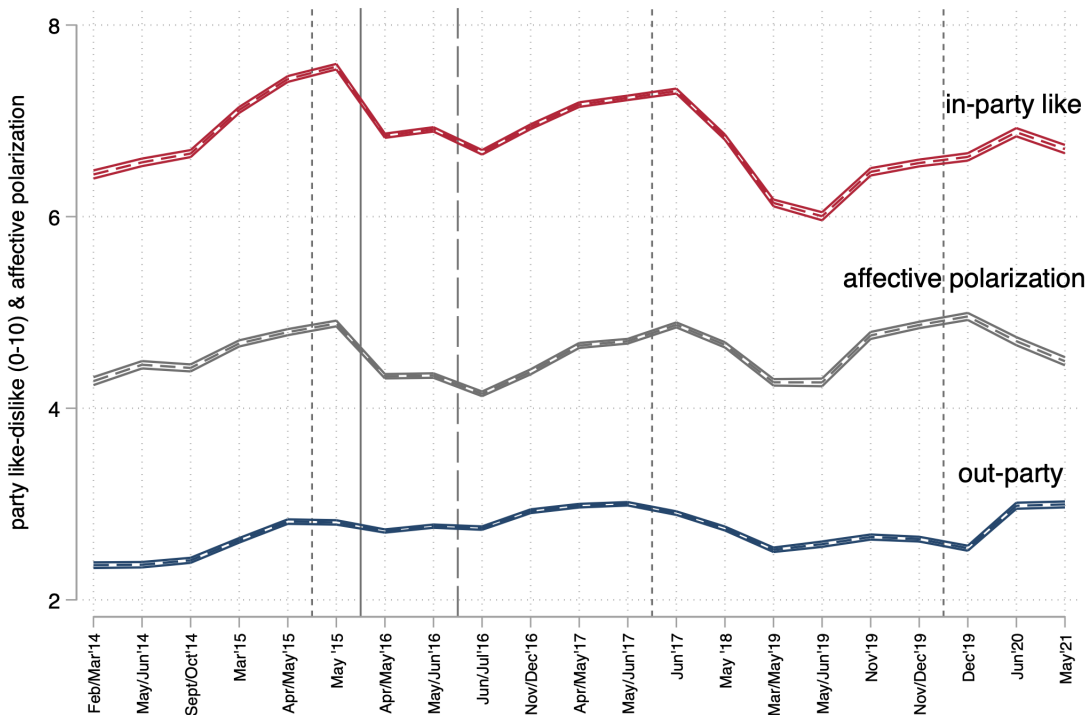

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The model is run separately for three dependent variables: the feelings toward the in-party (in red), the average feeling toward the out-parties (in blue), and affective polarization—the distance between in-party feeling and the average out-party feelings (in gray). In-party is the party that one identifies with in wave 6 (May 2015) and the out-parties are the other two parties. Note that independents are included in these estimations and that in-party is assigned based on independents' vote intention in wave 6. Therefore, analyses include Labour identifiers, Conservative identifiers, Liberal Democrat identifiers and independents. The estimates indicate within-individual averages. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Table C.5.1. Does Perceived Elite Polarization Lead to Mass Affective Polarization of vice versa?

	non-electoral context		2017 General Elections		2019 General Elections	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$	Perceived polarization$_t$	Affective polarization$_t$
Affective polarization$_{t-1}$	0.0255**	0.7569***	0.0385***	0.7961***	0.0252***	0.8196***
	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.011)
Perceived polarization$_{t-1}$	0.5920***	0.1040*	0.5613***	0.1481***	0.5519***	0.1579***
	(0.024)	(0.053)	(0.013)	(0.032)	(0.015)	(0.032)
Controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	1246	1246	3542	3542	2955	2955

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. $†p < 0.1$, $* p < 0.05$, $** p < 0.01$, $*** p < 0.001$. In Model 1 and 2, t-1 variables are measured in wave 7 (first post-Corbyn wave) and t variables are measured in wave 8 (second post-Corbyn wave). In model 3 and 4, t-1 variables are measured in wave 11 and t variables are measured in wave 12 (pre 2017 General Election wave). In model 5 and 6, t-1 variables are measured in wave 17 and t variables are measured in wave 18 (pre 2019 General Election wave). Control variables are all measured at t-1 and they include age, education, gender, party identification, ideological extremity, and referendum vote intention.

C.6 Replication of Results with All Survey-Takers

In this Appendix, I replicate the main analyses with with a sample limited to all survey-takers (from wave 1 to wave 20). This leaves me with 231 Labour identifiers, 231 Conservative identifiers and 223 independents as defined by their identification in wave 6. Note that the main analyses assume missing values across waves at random. This means that some panelists took the surveys sporadically, hence, one can wonder whether the results would hold when the sample is limited to the panelists who took all waves. By limiting the sample to those who consistently took the surveys, I remove sporadic survey-takers from the analyses. That is, the analyses will be focusing on the within individual change among same respondents that took each wave.

Figure C.6.1. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time
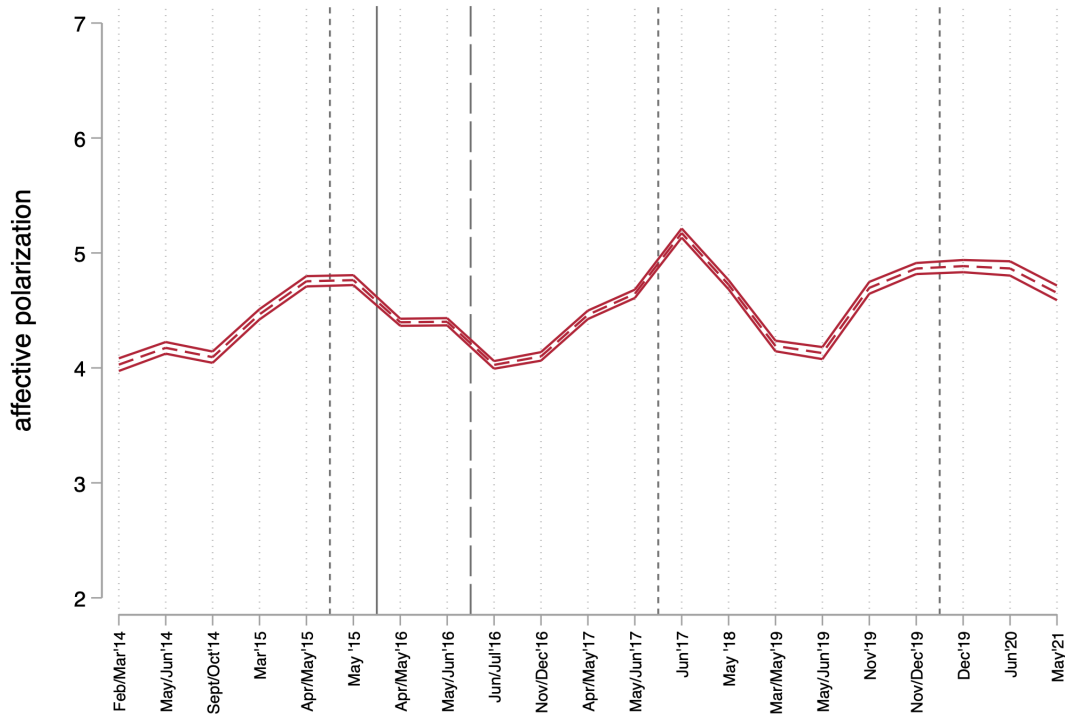
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The estimation is limited to panelists that took all the surveys. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. A larger distance indicates higher affective polarization. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

I estimate panel data analysis with fixed effect for individuals and robust standard errors clustered at the respondent level. First, Figure C.6.1 plots the evolution of affective polarization. These results reveal similar results to those reported in Figure 4.2 in that affective polarization increased in the period where elite ideological polarization was higher. Second, Figure C.6.2 plots the trends by respondents' party identification in wave 6. While affective polarization trends did not differ prior to the increase in elite ideological polarization, they started to differ afterwards. The difference in affective polarization among Conservative and Labour partisans increased in that while Conservatives became slightly more polarized, Labour partisans slightly depolarized. Furthermore, affective polarization among independents increased. All in all, the interpretation of the results remains similar when the sample is limited to all survey-takers.

Figure C.6.2. Evolution of Affective Polarization over Time by Party Identification
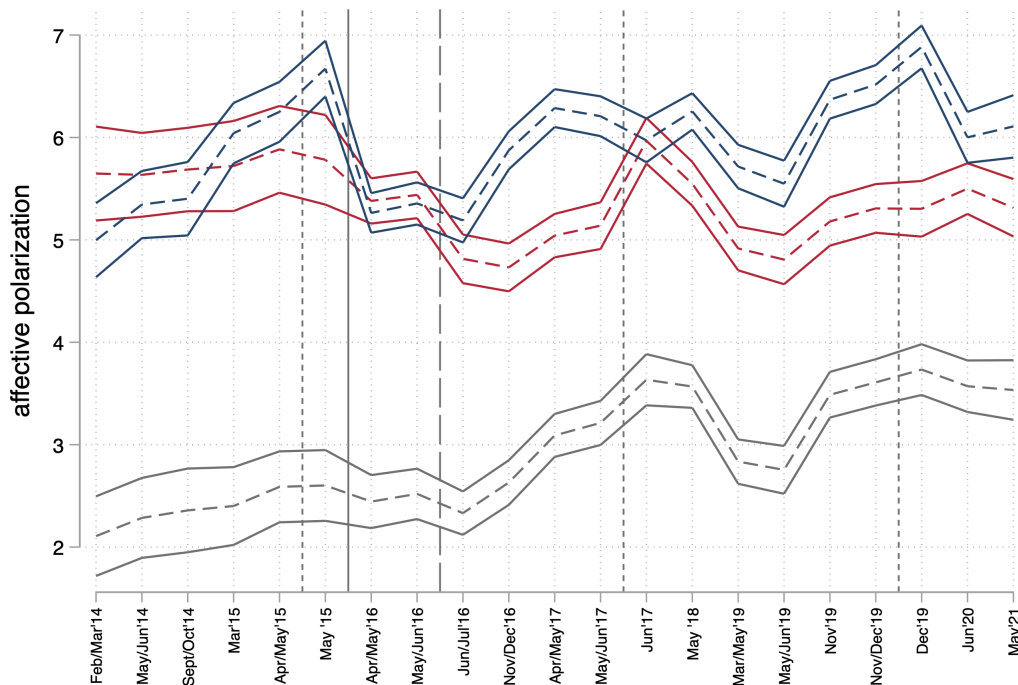
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The estimations are limited to panelists that took all the surveys. The model is run separately for each partisan group. The dependent variable in this estimation is affective polarization—the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. A larger distance indicates higher affective polarization. The estimates indicate within-individual average affective polarization among Labour identifiers (in red), Conservative identifiers (in blue) and independents (in gray) as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

Figure C.6.3 plots the evolution of in-party like, out-party like and affective polarization among Labour identifiers (left panel) and Conservative identifiers (right panel). First, left panel focuses on Labour identifiers and how they evaluate the in-party (i.e., the Labour Party, indicated in red), out-party (i.e., the Conservative Party, indicated in blue) and the level of affective polarization among Labour partisans. Second, right panel focuses on Conservative identifiers and how they evaluate the in-party (i.e., the Conservative Party, indicated in blue), out-party (i.e., the Labour Party, indicated in red) and the level of affective polarization among Conservative partisans. Results are quite similar to those in the main analyses in that in-party feelings drive the trend in affective polarization more than out-party feelings.

Figure C.6.3. Evolution of In-Party, Out-Party Feelings and Affective Polarization over Time
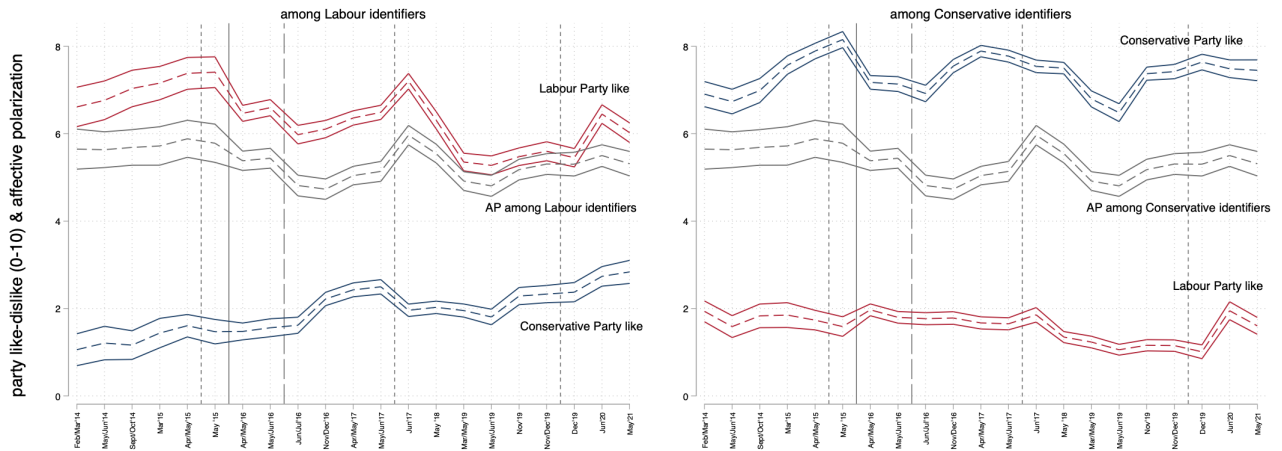
Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. The models are limited to panelists that took all surveys and run separately for each partisan group as measured in wave 6 (May 2015). The dependent variables are the feeling toward each party (Labour Party in red, Conservative Party in blue) and affective polarization (i.e., the affective distance between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party). The left panel presents the results among Labour identifiers and the right panel presents those among Conservative identifiers. The estimates indicate within-individual averages. 95 percent confidence intervals are indicated.

All in all, the analyses presented in this appendix show that the results are not driven by some individuals dropping off at some surveys and returning later.

C.7 Estimates used in Time-Series Trends

In this Appendix, I present the coefficient estimates and lower/upper bounds from panel data OLS regressions with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. These estimates are used to plot Figure 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 in Chapter 4.

Overall affective polarization (Figure 4.2)			Independent (Figure 4.3)			Conservative (Figure 4.3)			Labour (Figure 4.3)		
Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound
4.40975	4.36588	4.45362	2.22252	2.13177	2.31328	5.17117	5.10112	5.24121	5.48477	5.40518	5.56436
4.54612	4.50592	4.58633	2.37482	2.28952	2.46013	5.30298	5.23838	5.36757	5.61419	5.54288	5.6855
4.50307	4.46415	4.54198	2.28394	2.20205	2.36582	5.33538	5.27326	5.3975	5.51129	5.44118	5.5814
4.8937	4.85848	4.92892	2.61206	2.5352	2.68893	5.76889	5.71394	5.82384	5.91922	5.85749	5.98096
5.21442	5.1793	5.24954	2.90598	2.82822	2.98374	6.15064	6.09555	6.20573	6.2042	6.14309	6.26532
5.27915	5.24552	5.31278	2.83203	2.75766	2.9064	6.33267	6.28132	6.38403	6.26647	6.20733	6.32562
4.68273	4.6578	4.70767	2.60924	2.55543	2.66305	5.26438	5.22382	5.30493	5.81937	5.77709	5.86164
4.68638	4.66062	4.71213	2.63768	2.58231	2.69306	5.27272	5.22996	5.31547	5.8215	5.77807	5.86494
4.41416	4.38729	4.44104	2.43609	2.37984	2.49233	5.19867	5.1538	5.24354	5.29863	5.25164	5.34562
4.65117	4.62163	4.6807	2.76924	2.70789	2.83059	5.77377	5.7281	5.81944	5.15512	5.10133	5.20892
5.03621	5.00679	5.06563	3.204	3.14076	3.26725	6.20016	6.1544	6.24592	5.48095	5.42829	5.53362
5.09891	5.07047	5.12735	3.31009	3.24802	3.37215	6.02611	5.98163	6.0706	5.7056	5.65356	5.75764
5.41123	5.37964	5.44281	3.63832	3.56549	3.71115	5.892	5.84378	5.94022	6.41671	6.36299	6.47044
5.15547	5.12421	5.18673	3.3588	3.29142	3.42617	6.04146	5.99364	6.08928	5.83678	5.779	5.89456
4.64867	4.61189	4.68545	2.92213	2.84945	2.9948	5.58133	5.52231	5.64035	5.17545	5.10671	5.2442
4.59616	4.55334	4.63899	2.93377	2.852	3.01553	5.54274	5.47192	5.61357	5.06076	4.98117	5.14035
5.19267	5.15158	5.23376	3.58765	3.50269	3.67261	6.20919	6.14615	6.27222	5.57431	5.49843	5.65018
5.32586	5.28807	5.36366	3.70816	3.62532	3.791	6.2702	6.21249	6.32791	5.78669	5.7175	5.85587
5.43319	5.39154	5.47484	3.87404	3.78582	3.96225	6.56801	6.50602	6.62999	5.68877	5.61172	5.76582
5.15941	5.10929	5.20953	3.55749	3.45934	3.65564	5.76441	5.68547	5.84335	5.849	5.75524	5.94276
5.02836	4.97819	5.07853	3.53799	3.43504	3.64094	5.80749	5.7301	5.88488	5.52502	5.43139	5.61866

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. First three columns are the estimates used in Figure 4.2, following six columns are the estimates used for Figure 4.3

among Labour identifiers (Figure 4.4)								
Labour Party Like			Conservative Party Like			Affective polarization		
Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound
6.69194	6.61969	6.76419	1.37618	1.32075	1.43161	5.48477	5.40518	5.56436
6.87797	6.81203	6.94392	1.52128	1.46493	1.57763	5.61419	5.54288	5.6855
6.86795	6.80493	6.93097	1.48289	1.43358	1.53221	5.51129	5.44118	5.5814
7.32493	7.27125	7.37861	1.57383	1.5275	1.62016	5.91922	5.85749	5.98096
7.54929	7.49643	7.60214	1.55084	1.50421	1.59747	6.2042	6.14309	6.26532
7.54929	7.49844	7.60014	1.46778	1.42548	1.51008	6.26647	6.20733	6.32562
7.05161	7.01644	7.08678	1.4465	1.41281	1.48019	5.81937	5.77709	5.86164
7.13073	7.09521	7.16625	1.53815	1.50324	1.57306	5.8215	5.77807	5.86494
6.63861	6.59868	6.67853	1.61873	1.58308	1.65438	5.29863	5.25164	5.34562
6.71144	6.66609	6.75679	2.15827	2.11896	2.19759	5.15512	5.10133	5.20892
6.9079	6.86515	6.95064	2.24034	2.20089	2.27979	5.48095	5.42829	5.53362
7.16193	7.12109	7.20278	2.22357	2.18315	2.26399	5.7056	5.65356	5.75764
7.66632	7.62381	7.70882	1.84818	1.81181	1.88455	6.41671	6.36299	6.47044
6.7475	6.6955	6.7995	1.85769	1.81505	1.90034	5.83678	5.779	5.89456
5.92511	5.86289	5.98733	1.74729	1.69894	1.79564	5.17545	5.10671	5.2442
5.69421	5.62219	5.76622	1.60622	1.55202	1.66041	5.06076	4.98117	5.14035
6.08119	6.01415	6.14822	2.06675	2.00488	2.12863	5.57431	5.49843	5.65018
6.31265	6.2512	6.37411	2.03667	1.97925	2.09409	5.78669	5.7175	5.85587
6.22655	6.16063	6.29247	2.1386	2.07402	2.20318	5.68877	5.61172	5.76582
6.9529	6.87893	7.02688	2.38861	2.30807	2.46916	5.849	5.75524	5.94276
6.44252	6.36453	6.5205	2.42758	2.34826	2.50691	5.52502	5.43139	5.61866

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. These estimates are used to plot Figure 4.4 panel a (among Labour identifiers)

among Conservative identifiers (Figure 4.4)								
Conservative Party Like			Labour Party Like			Affective polarization among Conservative identifiers		
Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound	Coefficient	Lower bound	Upper bound
6.91132	6.85078	6.97186	1.88606	1.83544	1.93668	5.17117	5.10112	5.24121
6.95298	6.89611	7.00984	1.8602	1.81046	1.90994	5.30298	5.23838	5.36757
7.14569	7.09418	7.1972	1.93298	1.88625	1.9797	5.33538	5.27326	5.3975
7.55049	7.50859	7.59239	1.90098	1.85798	1.94398	5.76889	5.71394	5.82384
7.88854	7.84774	7.92934	1.82747	1.78462	1.87031	6.15064	6.09555	6.20573
8.12683	8.08896	8.16469	1.81473	1.77521	1.85425	6.33267	6.28132	6.38403
7.14657	7.11271	7.18044	1.98593	1.95596	2.01589	5.26438	5.22382	5.30493
7.17029	7.1345	7.20608	1.98941	1.95961	2.01922	5.27272	5.22996	5.31547
7.10581	7.06961	7.14202	1.99324	1.96116	2.02532	5.19867	5.1538	5.24354
7.60258	7.56852	7.63664	1.92065	1.88418	1.95712	5.77377	5.7281	5.81944
7.90009	7.86644	7.93375	1.86	1.82576	1.89424	6.20016	6.1544	6.24592
7.8184	7.78634	7.85046	2.01388	1.97948	2.04828	6.02611	5.98163	6.0706
7.54246	7.50712	7.5778	1.95687	1.91937	1.99437	5.892	5.84378	5.94022
7.38448	7.34762	7.42134	1.59428	1.55765	1.63091	6.04146	5.99364	6.08928
6.73362	6.68195	6.7853	1.37004	1.33113	1.40896	5.58133	5.52231	5.64035
6.52067	6.45808	6.58327	1.19864	1.15367	1.2436	5.54274	5.47192	5.61357
7.27966	7.22519	7.33414	1.37423	1.33103	1.41743	6.20919	6.14615	6.27222
7.29842	7.2468	7.35005	1.40353	1.36337	1.44369	6.2702	6.21249	6.32791
7.58475	7.52935	7.64016	1.31552	1.27452	1.35652	6.56801	6.50602	6.62999
7.40358	7.33722	7.46994	2.23665	2.17242	2.30088	5.76441	5.68547	5.84335
7.49062	7.42721	7.55403	2.1047	2.04654	2.16287	5.80749	5.7301	5.88488

Note: Estimates are based on panel data OLS regression with individual fixed effects and cluster robust standard errors at the individual level. These estimates are used to plot Figure 4.4 panel b (among Conservative identifiers)