Working Paper: Coalition Signals about Radical Parties

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Abstract

How are the perceptions of radical right and left parties affected by government partic-ipation? Recent studies suggest that voters estimate party positions is by using a coalition heuristic and perceive parties that serve together in cabinet to be more ideologically similar. Given that radical parties are characterized by both ambiguous and extreme positions on the left-right dimension, but also by avoiding to take a position at all, a coalition signal might be particularly informative if radical parties join coalition governments. Using survey data from the European Election Study (1989-2014), I examine how voters perceive the ideological distance between radical parties and their coalition partners. I find that the perceptions of the radical right is much more affected by governing in a coalition than perceptions of the radical left. This is most likely due to differences in their electoral strategies.

All parties are playing a balancing game: they must cooperate to govern but compete to win elections. Unless a single-party majority government can form, governing is inevitably associated with interparty compromises. However, the necessary policy concessions are rarely popular among party supporters. Most mainstream parties have managed to set the expectation that they will have to accommodate coalition partners once in office - that this is part of being a mature and responsible governing party. The same is generally not true for radical parties. Thus, an invitation to join a coalition government pose a strategic dilemma for all parties, but especially for radical parties.

In this paper, I argue that voters are using a coalition heuristic and interpret close association with other parties as a signal about policy positions. I examine to what extent the perceptions of

radical parties are altered by their government participation. Is there any evidence that the public perception of radical parties is more affected by government participation than the perception of mainstream parties? And if so, is this because their positions on the left-right scale becomes moderated, exposed or unambiguous?

First, I review the motivating literature and state my hypotheses. Next, I describe the data, methods, and results of an observational study using existing survey data from the European Election Study. I test the impact of coalition heuristics on the perceptions of dyads containing radical party families, extreme parties, and parties which de-emphasize and blur their positions on the left/right. Then I describe the research design of an original survey experiment that is currently in the field in Denmark. Finally, I conclude and discuss potential avenues for further research.

1 Coalition heuristics and party strategy

Traditional spatial models (e.g. see Downs, 1957; McKelvey, 1976) often assume that parties have spatial mobility and can manipulate voters' perceptions more or less freely. This assumption has proven quite unrealistic. Recent studies have demonstrated that voters are not particularly attentive to the strategic policy messages of parties (Adams et al., 2011; Adams, 2012), but that most do pay attention to who is in government (Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013b). Voters use this information to infer about the likely ideological positions of parties.

In a recent paper, Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a) show that voters perceive parties that serve together in cabinet to be more ideologically similar than what is reflected in the policy platforms they each campaign on (see also Fortunato and Adams, 2015; Adams et al., 2016). A party's status as a member of either the governing coalition or opposition is a cheap and widely available source of information about its ideological position. First of all, ideological similarity increases the probability of forming a coalition in the first place. Secondly, the experience of governing in a coalition creates incentives for policy compromises (Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013a). Hence, the choice of coalition partner is an important signal about both parties' ideology currently and in the near future.

Because voters tend to use coalition heuristics, governing parties will be constrained in terms of the policy positions they can credibly take. As the perceived ideological range of the coali-

tion shrinks, the policies of the coalition members become attractive to a narrower range of the electorate. This might contribute to the electoral cost associated with governing (Fortunato and Adams, 2015). This poses an urgent problem for parties in a coalition government: how can they compete against each other on separate ideological platforms come election time?

There have been some speculation about how this mechanism might affect parties differently. For instance, Fortunato and Adams (2015) suggested that association with other coalition members is particularly damaging to "niche" parties. Unfortunately, this argument suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity and consensus. Scholars are often tempted to use "populist", "niche", or "extremist" interchangeably about the same group of parties, although the theoretical implications when it comes to placing them spatially are quite different. With this project, I attempt to separate how three different party characteristics might moderate the use of the coalition heuristic.

First of all, radical parties might be characterized by their extreme position in policy space. An extreme position on the left/right dimension automatically creates the potential for a larger effect of coalition participation. For centrist parties, which are already close to each other according to their explicit manifesto positions, coalition formation is not as strong a signal. According to Fortunato and Adams (2015), extreme parties, more so than other parties, depend on maintaining a distinct policy profile. Parties with outlying policy positions might lose the purity of their messages when they cooperate with other parties, and thus be perceived as compromising (Adams et al., 2006). Fortunato and Adams (2015) speculated that coalition participation would be costly for extreme parties, but van Spanje (2011) found that there was only an election penalty for anti-establishment parties, and not for parties with radical or outlying ideologies.

Van Spanje and van der Brug (2007) demonstrated support for the hypothesis that anti-immigration parties would moderate if they were included in policy-making and coalitions by centrist parties. According to this inclusion-moderation thesis, inclusion into government has a moderating effect of radical right parties' policies, because it forces the party to only make promises to voters that they can actually deliver on and because participating in a coalition government inevitably requires compromise (Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2015). Of course, it is important to keep in mind that ideological convergence of the radical parties can also come from accommodation by centrist parties (Meguid, 2005; Wagner and Meyer, 2017). Previous research has found little to no effect of inclusion on radical right parties' manifestos, but to my knowledge no-one has examined the impact on the perceived ideological position of parties.

Hypothesis 1: Coalition formation has a larger impact on voters' perceptions' of the ideological distance between two parties, if at least one of the parties takes an extreme position on the left/right dimension.

Secondly, radical parties might strategically choose to emphasize a different set of issues than mainstream parties. Budge and Farlie (1983) argued that election campaigns are characterized by issue competition rather than positional competition. Parties are not discussing common topics, but try to change the public focus towards the issues where they each have a favourable reputation. Mainstream parties generally have an interest in maintaining a status quo in which issues of redistribution and the role of government defines the primary dimension. They emphasize economic issues and de-emphasize issues that are not aligned with the left/right (van der Brug and Berkhout, 2015). Contrary to that, radical parties might have incentives to emphasize cross-cutting issues such as immigration or environmental policies.

Rovny (2012, 276) argued that parties which participate in government become constrained. Coalition members have to make concrete decisions on economic issues and these positions become highly visible. This should shift issue salience towards economic positions. Likewise, Wagner and Meyer (2017) argued that radical parties accommodate mainstream coalition partners not simply on issue positions, but also in terms of issue emphasis. Radical parties might not deliberately emphasize the economic issues, but their economic policy is suddenly in the spotlight. If they want to be easy and attractive to cooperate with they cannot completely avoid taking a stance on economic issues (Wagner and Meyer, 2017, 89). Radical right parties generally take quite moderate positions on economic issues, but very right-wing positions on immigration (De Lange, 2016). As the salience gradually shifts towards economy, the overall impression of radical right parties might become more centrist. The same does not seem to apply to radical left parties.

Hypothesis 2: Coalition formation has a larger impact on voters' perceptions' of the ideological distance between two parties, if at least one of the parties de-emphasizes the left/right dimension.

Finally, the electoral strategy of radical parties might be defined by positional ambiguity. Like Budge and Farlie (1983), Rovny (2012, 2013) argued that parties will emphasize issues where they have an electoral advantage. But he further suggested that parties would use issue blurring instead of avoiding the issue completely. Issue blurring is the deliberate misrepresentation of party positions by taking vague, broad or mixed stances. Rather than simply de-emphasizing

the economic left/right dimension, radical parties might take vague or contradictory positions to attract broader support (Rovny, 2013). "Beclouding policy positions in a fog of ambiguity" is one of several broad-appeal strategies (Somer-Topcu, 2015, 843), which might help radical parties convince a larger group of voters that the parties will represent their interest once in office. This strategy does seem to work: Rovny (2012) found that parties which blur their position have voters with more dispersed economic preferences.

Now, if a party takes an unambigious left/right position in its manifesto, and all of the other party activities, policy initiatives, votes, and statements are in line with this position, then the coalition signal might not add much new information. However, if the signals are all over the place, there is more room for the coalition heuristic to have an independent effect.

Hypothesis 3: Coalition formation has a larger impact on voters' perceptions' of the ideological distance between two parties, if at least one of the parties takes an ambiguous position on the left/right dimension.

2 Observational Study

2.1 Method

The observational part of this project, is based on survey data pooled from the sixth most recent waves of the European Election Study (Schmitt et al., 1997, 2009, 2015; van Egmond et al., 2013; van der Eijk et al., 1993, 2002). This is a cross-national survey conducted every five years in all the member states of the European Union. A representative sample of approx. 500-1000 voters were surveyed in each nation in each of the six waves. I have limited my analysis to mature democracies, and thus I include Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, the UK, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Portugal 1989-2014, as well as Austria, Finland, and Sweden from 1999 onwards. I only include cases where the government at the time was a coalition government.

In each survey, respondents were asked about their perceptions of party positions with something resembling the following question: *"In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"*. Following Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a), I transform the data such that there is one observation per party-dyad (j) per respondent (i). Both are nested within countries (k) and respondents

are also nested within waves/years (l). The dependent variable is the perceived ideological distance between each pair of parties in the system. The main independent variable is a dummy variable specifying whether the parties are coalition partners. I regress the individual respondents' perceived ideological distance on the relationship of the party-dyad.

Furthermore, I hypothesize that the negative effect of coalition governing on perceived ideological distance is larger for radical parties than mainstream parties. I operationalize radical in two ways. First of all, I compare the two radical party families: the anti-immigration radical right and the socialist radical left, with mainstream parties: liberal, social democratic, christian democratic, and conservative parties. Secondly, to test my hypotheses I am primarily interested in parties which display certain radical characteristic. Specifically, I compare extreme parties with manifesto positions that are less than two or more than eight on a 0 to 10 left/right scale with centrist parties that are positioned within the same interval. The manifesto positions are evaluated with "rile" from the Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR) project (Volkens et al., 2011). I compare parties that de-emphasize the left/right by attributing less than 40 percent of their manifesto to the issues used to calculate rile, with parties that emphasize by attributing more than 40 percent. This threshold is admittedly pretty arbitrary, but it has previously been used by Somer-Topcu (2015). Lastly, I compare parties that "blur" their left/right positions with parties that do not. A party is blurring if it the standard deviation of voters' perception is more than 2.5 units of the 11-point left/right scale. Rovny (2013) also computed blurring based on survey data. I compare different groups of parties by subsetting the data into dyads with at least one radical party or none.

I include a number of control variables. Most importantly, I will control for the ideological distance of a party-dyad as indicated by the parties' manifestos. Essentially, there are two ways that voters can infer party positions - through the use of a coalition heuristic and through knowledge about the parties' policy platform. To prove the use of heuristics, I must control for the other option. Explicit policy platforms are evaluated with rile from MARPOR.

Furthermore, I control for dyad "familiarity" (Martin and Stevenson, 2010). For any pair of parties, the familiarity is equal to the fraction of days (since the first post-war democratic government and including the full government spell in progress) where the parties have been in coalition together. In other words, the measure captures a history of joint cabinet participation. I control for two variables at the party system level. The effective number of elected parties is

calculated as one over the sum of squared vote shares (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979). A high effective number of parties could cause respondent to perceive dyads as more similar, simply because they have to fit more parties on the same 11-point scale. Party system polarization is calculated as the Herfindahl index (Dalton, 2008). Polarization should cause dyads to be perceived as further apart. Vote shares v_i, seat shares s_i, and party positions p_i of parties are based on ParlGov data (Döring and Manow, 2012).

$$EffectiveParties = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} v_i^2}$$

$$Polarization = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{N}[s_i * (p_i - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} p_i}{5N})^2]}$$

I also control for the political views of the respondent, which will likely impact the way she perceives the political system. First of all, if a respondent is ideological extreme, she will tend to see all parties very different from herself but very similar to each other. Extremity is measured as the absolute distance between left-right self-placement and five which is the theoretical midpoint of the left-right scale. Secondly, if a respondent is located between a pair of parties, she will tend to see them as more different (Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013a, 469). The dummy variable indicating whether a respondent is between a party-dyad is based on the respondents perception of the parties relative to her left-right self-placement. Thirdly, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent intented to vote for one of the two parties in the dyad at the next general election. Respondents might be more motivated to distinguish between parties they support. Lastly, I include gender, age and education.

$$Distance_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DyadRelationship_{jl} + \beta_2 Manifesto_{jl} + \beta_3 Familiarity_j +$$
$$\beta_4 EffectiveParties_{kl} + \beta_5 Polarization_{kl} +$$
$$\beta_5 RespodentExtremity_i + \beta_6 RespondentBetween_i +$$
$$\beta_7 Vote_{ji} + \beta_8 Female_i + \beta_9 Age_i + \beta_{10} Education_i$$

My data structure has variance as multiple different levels: country (k), year (l), dyad(j), respondent (i) as well the combinations country-year (kl), dyad-year (jl), and dyad-respondent (ji). I cannot possibly handle all these dependencies adequately, but in line with the recommendations of Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a), I can control for the two sources that are most likely to

have an effect. Thus, I run hierarchical linear models with random intercepts for party dyads and country-years.

2.2   Results

Table 1 displays the results of an hierarchical linear regression analysis with country-year and party dyad random effects on the full sample and three subsamples. The first column shows the result for the entire sample with data pooled from the six most recent waves of the European Election Study. As expected there is a negative effect of participating in a coalition government together even when controlling for the distance in the party manifesto. Voters perceive two parties as 0.15 units closer together on a 11-point left-right scale, than they would have if one party was in government and the other in opposition. This effect is approximately three times smaller than the effect estimated by Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a), but it is nevertheless consistent with their general theory.

As expected there is also a significant, but small, positive effects of the ideological distance between the two parties' manifestos, and a large negative effect of party dyad familiarity. Both of the system level variables are completely insignificant. Contrary to expectations, there is a strong positive effect of the respondents' ideological extremity. For every unit the respondent self-places away from the ideological center, she will perceive party dyads as 0.3 units further from each other. Respondents who place themselves further from the center, also tend to place parties at more extreme values. This is probably an artifact of respondents interpreting the end-points of the scale in different ways. If the respondent places herself between the two parties in a dyad, this has a large positive effect on perceived ideological distance. There are small but signicant effects of all remaining variables.

In the next column are the results from a subsample where both parties in the dyad are mainstream parties. If both parties belong to either the liberal, social democratic, christian democratic or conservative party families, there is a very small negative effect of coalition participation. It is unclear whether an effect of 0.09 units on a 11-point scale is substantially significant, but it is definitely miniscule compared with the effects found previously (Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013a). Most of the other effects are comparable to the full sample, except for an insignificant positive effect of vote choice.

Column three and four show the results of the same regression analysis but on subsamples

where at least one party in the dyad belonged to the radical left or radical right respectively. There is a consistent significant negative effect, but the size of the effect differs considerably. The effect of coalition partnership is the same for the radical left as it is for the full sample, while the effect of coalition partnership of the radical right is huge in comparison. In other words, it is not as informative of left/right positions when a radical left party participates in a coalition government as it is when a radical right party does. If a radical right party is in a coalition government, voters on average perceive the two coalition partners as 0.63 units closer together on the left/right scale than they would have if one party was in government and the other in opposition. This is exactly seven times the effect for mainstream parties. In short, while the effect of coalition participation is a minor for mainstream parties, it is a really big deal for radical right parties.

The dyad familiarity measure also has a very different effect on dyads with radical right parties. If the dyad has governed together in a coalition before they are perceived as much closer together, meaning that either the radical right partner is perceived as much more extreme than its manifesto belie, or the coalition partner is perceived as much more radical. This effect is more than eight times stronger than the effect for mainstream dyads. There is a counter-intuitive, but not significant, positive effect for radical left parties.

The difference in effects for radical left and radical right parties might point to considerable differences in their party characteristics. For each of the party families, table 2 shows the percentage of party dyads which contain at least one party with an extreme position, one party with low emphasis on left/right issues, and one party with an ambiguous position on the left/right. Much more than the radical right, dyads with a radical left party were often coded as having extreme positions in their manifestos. In terms of blurring, radical left dyads were no different from the mainstream, while the majority of radical right dyads took an ambiguous position. All three types of dyads had a similar percentage of dyads with parties that de-emphasized economic policy. Furthermore, table 2 shows that the percentage of radical dyads which were coalition partners was rather low. Only two percent of the 249 observed radical left dyads were governing, while the same was true for five percent of the radical right dyads. In short, there are only five governing dyads with a radical left party and 10 with a radical right party.

Table 3 show the results of an hierarchical linear model with country-year and party dyad random effects on subsets with either no or at least one party with the characteristics of a radical party. Again the results show that there is a strong negative effect of two parties being in coalition

Table 1: Perceived distance between two parties by party family

	All dyads	Mainstream	Radical Left	Radical Right
(Intercept)	1.96***	2.03***	1.10	3.28
	(0.49)	(0.51)	(0.83)	(1.68)
Coalition partners	−0.15***	−0.09***	−0.14	−0.63***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.14)	(0.06)
Manifesto distance [0-10]	0.05***	0.06***	0.03*	0.08***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Dyad familiarity [0-7]	−2.69***	−2.16***	1.63	−22.18***
	(0.24)	(0.29)	(1.44)	(1.02)
Eff. number of parties [2.5-9.8]	−0.04	−0.05	0.10	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.07)
System polarization [0.3-0.5]	−0.89	−1.60	−0.05	−3.97
	(1.07)	(1.11)	(1.79)	(3.58)
Respondent extremity [0-5]	0.32***	0.33***	0.29***	0.30***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Respondent between dyad	1.74***	1.52***	2.12***	2.24***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Voter	−0.02***	0.02*	−0.07***	0.06***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Female	0.05***	0.11***	−0.02*	0.06***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age [15-99]	0.00***	0.00***	0.01***	−0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education [1-3]	0.07***	0.01	0.19***	0.14***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-1526477.10	-601695.88	-352070.86	-259211.99
N	733037	295792	164035	120446
Variance: Party dyad	1.38	0.86	1.87	1.25
Variance: Country-year	0.10	0.09	0.15	0.37
Variance: Residual	3.75	3.41	4.25	4.30

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

Table 2: Percentage of dyads in a party family with radical characteristics

	N	Extreme	Non-economic	Blurring	Governing
Mainstream Dyads	448	23%	15%	29%	20%
Radical Left Dyads	249	56%	19%	29%	2%
Radical Right Dyads	190	36%	19%	61%	5%

together on the perceived ideological distance. But this effect varies substantively across the six subsamples.

There is no significant difference between the effect of coalition participation for dyads with only centrist parties and dyads with at least one extreme party. Thus, I find no support for hypothesis 1. Both effects are approx. equivalent to 0.2 units on the 11-point scale. This could explain why the effect of coalition participation is also similar between radical left and mainstream dyads in table 1. The extreme party dyads do differ in terms of the effect of dyad familiarity. If an extreme party has governed together with another party in 10 percent of the days since 1945, the perceived distance between the two parties decreases by 0.7 units. Additionally, there is a small significant effect of voting for dyads with extreme parties. These voters are probably more likely to think that a radical party is moderate. All of the other effects are virtually identical.

There is a large difference between the effect of coalition participation on perceived distance on dyads which emphasize economic issues and dyads that do not. For parties that compete on economic positions the effect is the same as for the full sample, but for niche parties, which emphasize other issues the effect, is much larger. Dyads with parties that attribute less than 40 percent of their manifesto to left/right issues are perceived as a full unit closer to each other if they join a coalition together. It seems that the coalition heuristic is especially helpful if one of the parties are not emphasizing left/right issues. Voters effective replace the information they lack in manifestos with the signals they receive from coalition formation. This provides strong support for hypothesis 2. For dyads with at least one party that does not emphasize economic issues, there is no significant effect of familiarity, but a relatively large negative effect of voting for one of the dyad members.

Lastly, there is also a large difference in the use of coalition heuristics between dyads that blur their issue position and parties that do not. This difference is not quite as big, but it is still highly significant. The effect on perceived distance of governing together is four times as large if one

of the parties' perceived position has a standard deviation above 2.5, i.e. if voters are uncertain about where to place it. If other issue signals are mixed, then coalition participation can have an independent effect on the voters' perceptions of party dyads. In short, the coalition heuristic is more useful for voters when parties have not already taken a clear stance of economic issues. This count as support for hypothesis 3. Furthermore, given that radical right parties tend to blur their left/right positions more than both mainstream and radical left parties, the relationship demonstrated here suggests that voters are more prone to take coalition participation into account when evaluate radical right parties.

3   Survey Experiment

With the research design outlined above, I cannot evaluate whether respondents think that the radical right moderated or whether they started to perceive the coalition partners as more radical. That type of observational analysis would require panel data, which is not available cross-nationally. However, I can examine this question using a survey experiment.

I have recently fielded a survey experiments in Denmark. In the survey, I manipulate respondents' perceptions of a parties' left/right positions by giving them treatments where they are specifically asked to consider a fictional coalition signal. In the "coalition realization" treatment, the center-right party, Venstre, forms a coalition with another party post-election. I expect that respondents in the treatment group will place this party closer to the center-right than respondents in the control group. Secondly, in the "coalition rejection" treatment, respondents are asked to consider a scenario where the center-right party announces that it cannot possibly form a coalition with the other party. I expect that respondents in this treatment group will place the party further from the center-right party.

I present respondents with one of four parties. Liberal Alliance is a relatively new liberal party, which takes a strong pro-market stance. The Danish People's Party is a classic radical right party, which has traditionally been most vocal about immigration as well as law and order. Confusingly, the Radical Left (Radikale Venstre) is a social liberal party with a moderate stance on most issues. The name was appropriate when the party formed in 1905 by members who split from Venstre but today the party is broadly considered to be centrist. Lastly, the Alternative is a brand new green party, which due to its lose party organization seem to have taken positions in many different

Table 3: Perceived distance between two parties by party characteristics

	Position		Emphasis		Ambiguity	
	Centrist	Extreme	High	Low	Unambiguous	Blurring
(Intercept)	1.86**	2.10**	2.04***	0.36	2.48***	1.66*
	(0.59)	(0.79)	(0.49)	(1.40)	(0.65)	(0.75)
Coalition partners	−0.17***	−0.22***	−0.15***	−1.02***	−0.12***	−0.48***
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.19)	(0.01)	(0.06)
Manifesto distance [0-10]	0.03***	0.16***	0.04***	0.03*	0.06***	0.02
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Dyad familiarity [0-7]	−1.44***	−6.80***	−1.83***	−0.32	−0.30	−3.86***
	(0.25)	(0.61)	(0.31)	(0.84)	(0.30)	(0.53)
Eff. number of parties [2.5-9.8]	−0.05	0.07	−0.02	0.01	−0.11*	−0.05
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.05)	(0.05)
System polarization [0.3-0.5]	−0.61	−2.97	−1.32	2.66	−1.24	−0.49
	(1.31)	(1.66)	(1.10)	(2.73)	(1.42)	(1.75)
Respondent extremity [0-5]	0.32***	0.32***	0.33***	0.31***	0.31***	0.34***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Respondent between dyad	1.70***	1.84***	1.74***	1.74***	1.53***	2.19***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Voter	−0.01	−0.11***	0.01	−0.18***	−0.07***	0.10***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Female	0.05***	0.03***	0.05***	0.03**	0.06***	0.03***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age [15-99]	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education [1-3]	0.07***	0.10***	0.08***	0.05***	0.05***	0.15***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-1262738.31	-535657.59	-1251455.53	-273838.88	-1041367.36	-477114.75
N	608322	255722	601062	131975	513688	219349
Variance: Party dyad	1.31	1.36	1.29	1.66	1.60	1.04
Variance: Country-year	0.16	0.15	0.10	0.19	0.18	0.19
Variance: Residual	3.70	3.84	3.75	3.68	3.35	4.51

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

Table 4: Summary statistics for Danish parties included in survey experiment

	Perceived	Position	Emphasis	Blurriness
Center-right (Venstre)	6.84	4.31	59.0%	2.55
Liberal Alliance	7.39	9.41	74.7%	2.62
Danish People's Party	7.05	7.79	59.9%	2.56
Social Liberals (Radikale Venstre)	4.73	5.28	55.9%	1.80
The Alternative	3.01	-	-	2.34

directions. This experimental set-up lacks a radical left party to match the discussion above. While there is a successful radical left party in Denmark (Enhedslisten), I deemed a coalition between this party and the center-right to be too unrealistic to be worth the trouble.

The parties are selected to illustrate the effect of different party characteristics. The Social Liberals represents a mainstream party, Liberal Alliance represents a party with an extreme position on the left/right, Danish People's Party represents a party which emphasizes off-dimensional issues and de-emphasize the left-right, and lastly, the Alternative is considered a party that blurs it left/right position. I expect the perception of the two latter parties to be more affected by the coalition treatments than the two former.

Summary statistics are presented in table 4. The mean and standard deviation of perceived position comes from the Danish National Election Study 2015 (Hansen and Stubager, 2016), while the rile measures are based on manifestos issued prior to the Danish 2011 general election. Unfortunately, this was before the Alternative ran for election. These summary statistics does not quite match expectations, but they are still indicative of some interesting variation among parties.

4   Preliminary conclusion

This paper is based on the theory of coalition heuristics put forward by Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a). As an extension, I examine the moderating effect of various characteristics that are usually connected to radical right and radical left parties. I argue that voters will perceive two coalition partners as even more similar if one of them is a radical party. Specifically, I hypothesize that coalition formation has a larger impact on perceptions of ideological distance if at least one party takes an extreme position, if at least one party de-emphasizes, and if at least one party takes

an ambiguous position on the left/right dimension.

I find that there is a significant but very small effect of coalition participation on the perceived distance in a mainstream dyad and in dyads with at least one radical left party. But while the effect proposed by Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a) is miniscule for the mainstream, it is a really big deal when it comes to radical right parties. Governing together brings the perception of a radical right party and its coalition partners 0.6 units closer together on an 11-point left/right scale. In other words, voters rely heavily on the coalition heuristic when a radical right party joins a government.

I do not find any support for hypopthesis 1, which is a version of the inclusion-moderation thesis. There is not a significantly larger effect of coalition participation on dyads with an extreme party than on dyads with only centrist parties. I find strong support for both hypotheses 2 and 3. The coalition heuristic is especially useful for making inferences about parties that engage in issue competition rather than positional competition (Budge and Farlie, 1983). Dyads with parties that emphasize other issues than the left/right are perceived as a full unit closer, while dyads with parties who have an ambiguous left/right position are perceived as half a unit closer to each other if they join a coalition government together.

The main aspect by which radical left parties differ from mainstream parties is their extreme ideology. My results suggest that because the radical left already take a clear and consistent position on the left/right, coalition formation does not alter voter perceptions of radical left parties much. Radical right parties, however mainly differs in terms of the issue blurring on the left/right dimension and voters are uncertain about their positions. This might be a successful strategy, but it is not entirely consistent with coalition governing. Voters will compensate for the positional information they are lacking by using the coalition heuristic.

I do advise caution when interpreting these preliminary findings. First of all, the results of the observational study does not show which perceptions are moving. It could be that radical right parties are perceived to moderate their left/right position, but it could also be that the coalition partners are radicalizing to accommodate the radical right. There are sound theoretical arguments for both hypotheses. The survey experiment that I discuss should be able to address this question. Secondly, this paper is extending the results of Fortunato and Stevenson (2013a) and evaluating potential moderating effects. I was not able to run the analysis on the original data since it is no longer readily available. Fortunato is currently working on assembling a more comprehensive

dataset, and I look forward to testing my hypotheses on that. Lastly, when discussing different party strategies the unavoidable question is of course whether these changes in voter perceptions have electoral consequences. Do radical parties lose support when their ideological appeal becomes more moderate and narrower? This question deserves a prominent place in further research on this topic.

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