

The changing political landscape in Europe

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Abstract

The rise of a new transnational divide on immigration and Europe raises fundamental questions about the character of party competition and the causal bases of voting. Using ESS data and panel data for the Netherlands, we find that those who vote for political parties established on the new cleavage—green and radical TAN parties—have more structured partisan preferences than supporters of mainstream political parties.

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Immigration and European integration have become deeply contested in Europe.¹ These issues are part of a wider conflict about the meaning and implications of national community (Cotta, this book; Hooghe and Marks 2018). Many use the term tribal to describe this conflict as each side seems socially distinct. At the same time, there is great fluidity in the system as many voters abandon mainstream parties for new parties. How can one make sense of tribal politics against the backdrop of large-scale voter shifts?

The answer bears on our understanding of the causal bases of voting and the nature of democratic conflict. Are we witnessing a stage in a process of destructurement in which political choice becomes short term, oriented to particular issues and personalities? Or are we seeing the development of a cleavage that, like previous ones, structures conflict between distinctive social groups?

Our strategy is to set out two contending approaches to democratic conflict—destructurement theory and cleavage theory—and then take some initial steps to evaluate their relative validity. Both theories respond to the decline of the cleavages that structured conflict in the post World War II era, but they do so in contrasting ways. The premise of destructurement theory is that the decline of classic cleavages has produced a flexible terrain of competition in which voters form preferences over ever-evolving issues. Voter attachment to political parties is increasingly individualized as formal group attachments lose their bite and values rather than class or status shape political choice. Cleavage theory, by contrast, conceives a succession of socially structured oppositions to major external shocks that upset the status quo. Party system change resembles a geological process in which socially structured divides overlay each other. In this theory, the formation of cleavages is an ongoing process punctuated by periods of dealignment as prior divides lose their grip and voters switch to new political parties.

The next section outlines these theories and subsequent sections examine their relative validity along three tracks. First, we estimate whether the political parties on the socio-cultural divide are more socially distinctive than political parties on prior cleavages, and whether structuration increases or decreases by age cohort. Using eight waves of the European Social Survey across fourteen countries, we find that cross-sectional variation in the social structure of political parties is broadly in line with cleavage theory. Second, we examine the social bases of vote choice by estimating the effects of education, occupation, rural/urban location, and gender by political party and age cohort. Third, we use panel data from the Netherlands to probe voter volatility, and we find systematic differences between the socio-cultural and left-right divides consistent with cleavage theory.

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Two approaches to democratic conflict

A point of departure for destructure theory is the decay of the social cleavages that Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) diagnosed as structuring political parties in the 20th century (Dalton, Flanagan, Beck 1984; Franklin et al. 1992). In the Lipset/Rokkan model each of the major party families – regionalist, Christian democratic, liberal, and socialist—was mobilized in opposition to the ruling status quo in the context of a major socio-political transformation. Peripheral communities resisted the imposition of national language, national education, and national culture. Catholics resisted the rise of national churches and secular control over education. The industrial revolution generated opposition to aristocratic domination by rising urban middle classes, followed by working-class resistance to capitalist exploitation. The result for European party systems was a sequential pattern of cleavages that structured political conflict over an extended time (Bartolini and Mair 1990).

These conflicts could shape voters' behavior over generations because they were socially rooted. The glue that binds individuals into groups is strongest when it is based on characteristics that are both life-long and inter-generational. The social transformations that produce cleavages affect individuals where it most counts – in the parts of their life that are imprinted on them by the community in which they live and how they work and survive. Nation building and the industrial revolution reshaped the social structure, creating and destroying ways of life and means of subsistence. A person born as Basque or Scot, Catholic or Protestant, manual worker or professional, is likely to die that way, and the child of such a person will have a greater than random chance of doing the same.

The oppositions that produced social cleavages involved both ideologies and interests. Catholicism, Protestantism, liberalism, conservatism, and socialism are ideologies that instill in their followers what it means to be human and how a society should be governed. These are creeds that cannot easily be compromised. They invoke commitments that their supporters should realize even at considerable personal cost.² They are existential as well as instrumental.

The point of departure for the study of voters and parties in Europe from the 1970s was the apparent decay in the foundations of cleavage theory. The structural bases of voting loosened as the closed social milieus that bonded voters to parties evaporated. The decline of religion, the diversification of working life, and greater occupational and spatial mobility weakened the social ties that bound individuals to traditional social. Trade unions have declined. Fewer people go to church. Because these trends are time-bound, their effect appears to increase with each new generation of voters (Dassonneville and Dejaeghere 2014; van der Brug 2010; Walzcak, van der Brug, De Vries 2012; see Langsaether 2019 for a critical view).

Political parties themselves have declined in membership and have lost some of their former functions (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). In most European countries, parties are no

² As Peter Blau's (1986: 271ff) notes, "[F]undamental reforms can occur in a society only if men are inspired by radical ideals for the sake of which they are willing to sacrifice their material welfare. Such ideals also serve as mediating links that bring together men who feel exploited and oppressed and unite them in a common cause."

longer able to cement loyalty by providing their supporters with patronage and jobs. With the growth of mass media and the internet, their role in providing political cues has weakened. Social democratic and religious parties were once almost closed societies within the broader society, with newspapers, pubs, sports teams, and much besides. A person could live much of their social life within the pillarized setting of a political party and its organizational offshoots. The postwar decades emasculated political parties as lifelong incubators of partisanship.

As the supply of organizational contexts for cleavage politics dried up, so apparently did the demand for them. Several observers point to mass education as a source of increasing political knowledge which would make voters less reliant on the political cues provided by social reference groups (Franklin et al. 1992: 9). Completion of secondary schooling became the norm in Europe in the postwar decades and tertiary education expanded. Mass education allowed voters to be better informed about politics, and this arguably loosens the effect of social background while enhancing individual choice.

The intensity of the class cleavage and religious cleavage has softened as cleavage parties have moderated their ideologies. Religious parties have come to accept that the state is secular. Socialist parties no longer wish to abolish wage labor. Prior to World War I, most socialist parties advocated the nationalization of the means of production, and the modal response of employers was to suppress both socialism as an ideology and workers' efforts to organize in the labor market. After World War II, worker demands tempered, and capitalist resistance became less harsh. As Lipset (1963: 442, 445) noted in an essay entitled the *End of Ideology*: "The fact that the differences between the left and the right in the Western democracies are no longer profound does not mean that there is no room for party controversy ... The democratic class struggle will continue, but it will be a fight without ideologies, without red flags, without May Day parades."

The virtue of democracy is that it can institutionalize the expression of contending political preferences, and lessen, if not resolve, those differences through the adjustment of public policy. The moderating effects of democracy on class conflict are evident both over time and across countries. Where "institutional access expanded, socialist parties were induced to reject revolutionary action in favor of reform. Civil rights—freedom to organize and freedom of expression—were decisive" (Marks et al. 2009: 631; Lipset 1983). Liberal democracy helps to de-pressurize political conflict, and this arguably diminishes socially structured partisanship. "Very gradually, then, to the extent that political solutions were found to social problems, former cleavages will have become increasingly irrelevant to emerging problems and issues. This will in due course have affected the relation between traditional cleavages and voting choice" (Van der Eijk et al. 1992: 432ff).

The rise of cultural issues can be interpreted as consistent with a theory stressing destructureation. Cultural issues related to postmaterialism, individual choice, and community have produced a dimension of political conflict that is only loosely associated with traditional left-right competition. Whereas preferences on the economic left-right were rooted in a person's class, occupation, and income, cultural preferences tend to be a matter of personal judgement. The same applies with even greater force to populism. Preferences over people's power or

charismatic leaders appear only weakly related to durable ideologies having a socio-structural basis (Gidron and Mijs 2019; Inglehart and Norris 2016).

Perhaps the most influential approach in the study of voting in the post World War II era is Anthony Downs (1957) who considered competition among political parties for votes as akin to competition among firms for consumers. The consumers are voters who evaluate parties on their short-run performance. Voters choose parties in accord with their utility functions, and political parties are similarly instrumental. Political parties in this schema “have no interest per se in creating any particular type of society” but “seek office solely in order to enjoy the income, prestige, and power that go with running the governing apparatus” (Downs 1957: 141, 137). Ideologies are not tied to class or status but are cognitive shortcuts that individuals find useful in a setting of incomplete information. “However, just as in the product market, any markedly successful ideology is soon imitated, and differentiation takes place on more subtle levels” (142).

The Downsian model proved to be an elegant baseline for the study of voting and parties. Consistent with destructure theory, the Downsian model theorizes voters as free-floating individuals who make short-run decisions. New issues are continually produced, and political parties respond by adapting their appeal to subsume them (Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995; Adams et al. 2004; Ezrow 2005). This process is only weakly constrained by partisan loyalties rooted in social structure.

The common core is the idea that partisan choice is short term, oriented to particular issues and personalities that have little to do with a person’s social background. As the social moorings of conflict weaken generation by generation, party-political preferences become a matter of individual taste. Political parties compete to attract voters by strategically emphasizing issues that bolster their reputation, by performing well, or by having appealing candidates.

An alternative theory suggests that the decline of traditional cleavages is part of a process in which some cleavages recede while others intensify (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Rovny 2015). A cleavage may persist for a long time, but as the socializing effect of prior institutions diminishes from generation to generation, so it may loosen its grip, and a new cleavage may come to overlay the old (Blau 1986: 301ff).

The decline of the religious cleavage and the class cleavage is not inconsistent with a revised cleavage theory. What matters is whether the political parties competing on the *new* divide have distinct constituencies with recognizable social characteristics. Hence a revised cleavage approach builds on classic cleavage theory but relaxes the assumption that cleavages are frozen. Instead, destructure and restructure may coexist.

Whereas destructure theory considers political parties as market participants, cleavage theory conceives parties as rooted in social divisions. If cleavage theory used a market analogy it would emphasize the constraints on a firm that cannot change its brand image in the face of exogenous technological change – as for Polaroid cameras or Kodak film. This would be a story of how the sunk costs of impressing a brand in the minds of voters constrains party adaptability. Whereas destructure theory conceives of parties appealing to voters as

consumers, cleavage theory conceives parties as giving political voice to structurally rooted groups in conflict with one another.

The information technology revolution and the rise of a new cleavage

Each of the cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan was a reaction to major social change that disrupted the lives of large social groups. Over the past half-century, western societies have seen a great transformation—an information technology revolution—that has displaced industrial employment into the tertiary sector, polarized the returns to professional and manual work, and produced a global shift in the division of labor (Im et al. 2019; Rodrik 2017). The consequences for the structure of conflict are arguably no less transformative than the rise of the national state or the industrial revolution.

Like prior transformations, the effects of the information-technology revolution for the mobilization of oppositions has come in stages. The first was a postindustrial cleavage and the rise of green parties. Underlying this was the emergence of a class of public and professional employees and a widening gap between its market power and that of manual workers (Bornschiefer 2010; Gidron and Hall 2017). The rising salariat defied the expectation that more privileged employees would find their home on the economic right. Many supported social democratic parties, thereby increasing social heterogeneity across the occupational divide (Kitschelt 1994). In high income democracies with low barriers to party entry, a significant number of educated public and professional employees threw their support to “GAL” parties which raised Green-Alternative-Libertarian issues relating to the environment, democratic participation, gender and homosexuality.

The second stage of the informational technology revolution saw a transnational cleavage and the rise of TAN parties stressing traditionalism, authority, and most fervently, defense of the nation (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2006). Underlying this was the increasing flow of migration from less developed countries to Europe, as well as the globalization of finance and trade driven by a sharp decline in the cost of communication and ever more integrated financial and production networks. As with each prior transformation, technological change went hand in hand with a shift in power relations. Less skilled workers, who had the most to lose from globalization, were severely disempowered by the 1990s when globalization took off. Most educated employees worked in protected sectors, and were spared the threat of international competition, while they benefited as consumers.

National regulatory barriers were lowered in regional and global agreements of the early 1990s. These included NAFTA (1992), the World Trade Organization (1994), and more than thirty regional organizations (Hooghe, Lenz, Marks 2019). The European Union went furthest in overarching national boundaries. The Maastricht Treaty (1993) extended EU authority over wide ranges of public life, made it much easier for people to work in another EU country, created a common currency, and turned nationals into European Union citizens. The net effect was to diminish the cost of international trade and migration while diffusing authority away from national states.

The commingling of people with diverse beliefs, norms, and behavior increases the potential for group conflict. To this one may add the economic consequences of transnational exchange. Immigration, European integration, and trade tend to benefit those with human and financial capital, while intensifying competition for jobs and housing for those without such capital. Transnational exchange has become politically combustible because immigration, trade, and the reallocation of authority to the European Union are political choices that affect the life chances of identifiable groups (De Vries 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Rooduijn et al 2017).

Whereas occupation underpinned the class struggle, education appears to structure the transnational divide (Hakhverdian et al. 2013; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006). Education seems influential not for what it does, but for what it signifies. Panel studies find that the process of education has little effect on a young person's political affinities over time (Kuhn et al. 2017). Rather, education seems to be a social marker (Goldthorpe 2016). It tells us about a person's station in life, about the benefits that can be conveyed by one's parents, and about how a person was raised—in short, it tells us something important about a person's social and material background. The effect of education reaches into feelings of solidarity and group identity. Highly educated and less educated individuals appear to have distinct identities and divergent group consciousness (Ivarsflaten and Stubager 2012; Stubager 2009).

Hence the effect of education for the social structuration of voting on the transnational divide appears to be both cultural and economic. Cultural fears and economic loss are so interwoven that it has proven difficult to determine which is causally prior. Perhaps this is the point. Their joint effect is potentially far stronger than each in isolation.

There are also reasons for believing that a political party competing on the cultural or GAL-TAN³ divide will be occupationally distinctive (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). Professionals—e.g. managers, teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers—exercise discretion at work and are engaged in face to face relations with diverse others in which social skills are important. Such people tend to have GAL values. Manual workers, low-grade service workers, and those whose work is chiefly technical tend to be less GAL and more TAN. This is reinforced by an economic logic. Manual workers, in contrast to professional workers, are precariously placed in the international division of labor when they produce traded goods in competition with poorly paid workers in third world countries. For those who have financial or social capital, immigration from neighboring countries is a source of cheap labor. For those who sell their labor, immigration increases competition. For these reasons, the transnational divide cuts across social class, producing TAN parties that challenge socialist parties for the allegiance of workers (Oesch and Rennwald 2018). Lipset once noted that a signal attribute of socialist parties was to turn those towards the bottom of society in an internationalist cosmopolitan direction.⁴ Political parties have arisen on the new divide that do just the opposite.

These are the chief ways in which social background lies behind the cultural divide. Education and occupation are not merely choices that a person makes. They are related to inherited factors, and they shape a person's life, who one works with, who one's friends are, and

³ GAL (green, alternative, libertarian) vs. TAN (traditional, authority, national).

⁴ Personal communication.

in an increasing number of cases, who one marries. While it is true that organizational membership has declined, social networks of friends, family or co-workers may have a similar effect in reinforcing political preferences (Fitzgerald 2011).

In addition, one might expect political parties on the transnational cleavage to be distinguished by location, gender, and age. Cities have always been known for trade, the flow of ideas, and cultural openness (Maxwell 2019). In Lipset and Rokkan's historical exposition, peripheral localities opposed the centralizing power of the national state. Today rural localities seek national protection from foreign influence. TAN parties do exceptionally well in small towns and suburbs that are ethnically less diverse and economically peripheral, while GAL parties do best in cities.

Gender and age, inert characteristics on the conventional left-right, are clear markers on the transnational cleavage. Positive views on transnationalism tend to go together with positive views on gender and transgender equality, and younger people have been socialized under the conditions of social diversity and multi-level politics that characterize the transnational world.

Expectations

The expectations of destructure and cleavage theory are starkly different. They can be summarized as a response to three questions, each with a different unit of analysis. The first takes the political party as unit, and asks whether political parties on the left-right and GAL-TAN divides attract socially distinct groups. The second question takes the individual as unit, and probes the social structuration of individual voting and how this varies across generations. The third examines within-individual change, and asks how voter volatility varies for left-right and GAL-TAN political parties, and again, how this differs across younger and older voters.

On the first question, destructure theory predicts that the social distinctiveness of parties' voter bases will be quite weak following the softening of cleavages from the 1970s. With generational replacement, the social bases of partisanship decline as those socialized in traditional cleavages are replaced by those having more individualized preferences. Political parties will tend to become "catch-all," encompassing diverse groups on the basis of cross-class appeals to leadership and competence (Kirchheimer 1966). Correspondingly, on the second question, destructure theory predicts that as each new generation comes of age in an environment further removed from prior class and religious cleavages, their voting behavior will be more detached from their social background. Finally, voting will be increasingly volatile as the social moorings that sustained durable partisanship fade and are replaced by more fluid preferences.

Cleavage theory, by contrast, expects that the social structuration of GAL and TAN parties will be more marked than for Left/right parties, and that this difference will grow with each new generation. Cleavage theory claims that education, occupation, location, and gender are an important part of an explanation for individual voting for GAL-TAN political parties, and that these factors gain causal power for younger generations of voters. It also expects that the

electorates of parties on the rising GAL-TAN divide will be less volatile than those for mainstream political parties, and that younger voters will be relatively stable in their partisanship.

Expectations diverge most strongly on education. Some destructure theorists argue that the expansion of mass education has empowered a larger proportion of the electorate to step outside their social moorings and evaluate politics on the basis of personalities and performance. Education, therefore, is likely to lead to electoral volatility rather than stability, and this should be particularly apparent among higher educated individuals. Cleavage theory conceives that education is a positional good that predisposes individuals to GAL political parties.

Data and measurement

We use cross-sectional data and panel data to assess these expectations. We pair individual-level data from eight bi-annual rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2002 and 2016 with estimates on party positioning from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) over five waves (2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2017). To assess structuration across the left-right and GAL-TAN divides we examine party constituencies and voting choice in fourteen countries with political parties on both axes.⁵ The unit of analysis for vote choice is the individual who voted in the last national election and are at least 21 years old to avoid the confounding effect of respondents with incomplete education. This yields just under 104,000 respondents who have voted for 112 political parties in fourteen European countries.

We match individual-level information with the individual political party. Political parties are aggregated by ideology. Party family—TAN, conservative, liberal, Christian democratic, social democratic, radical left, and green—is a standard classification to “summarize the accumulated historical experience of cleavages” (Marks and Wilson 1999: 439). Our baseline is the categorization of political parties in party families in the CHES dataset which is consistent with Parlgo’s (Döring and Manow 2016) and Knutsen’s (2018) classifications (Polk et al. 2017; Bakker et al. 2015). A simplified categorization groups the seven party families in four party blocs—TAN, green, left (social-democratic, radical left), and right (conservative, liberal, Christian democratic).

A second source of information consists of ten waves of panel data from the Netherlands (2008-2017). The unit of analysis here is the party choice of a respondent across two consecutive panels. We use the response to the question, “If parliamentary elections were held today, for which party would you vote?” In annual panel data, a vote propensity question can pick up a change of intended support between elections. We treat responses that are missing, non-voting, ineligible to vote, or “do not know yet” as missing. Respondents are at least 21 years old at the time of the survey. This yields just over 34,000 responses of individuals who intend to vote for one of thirteen political parties.

⁵ Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. The unit of analysis for party structuration is the individual political party represented by at least 25 voters in one ESS round or 75 voters across ESS rounds and for which we have expert evaluations in the Chapel Hill expert survey. We impose a minimum number of respondents to reduce the possibility of drawing a biased sample of voters.

The key independent variables are five social characteristics hypothesized to structure support for green and TAN political parties: education, occupation, location, age, and gender.⁶ For both cross-sectional and panel analyses we transform education, occupation, location, and age into dichotomous measures to test for the sharp distinctions hypothesized by cleavage theory. This makes the analysis more directly interpretable, though results are robust when we use more refined categorizations. In the ESS analyses, *higher education* takes on a value of 1 if an individual has completed post-secondary or tertiary education.⁷ *Socio-professional* is derived from Oesch's ISCO categorization and takes the value of 1 for socio-cultural professionals and managers. *Urban* assigns a value of 1 to those who identify themselves as living in "a big city" or "suburbs or outskirts of a big city" and a value of zero otherwise. *Young* has a value of 1 if the individual is younger than fifty years old, and zero otherwise. *Female* takes on a value of 1 if the individual is female and zero if the individual is male. Multivariate analyses include controls for religiosity as well as country fixed effects.

Dichotomization in the Dutch panel analyses mirrors this. Hence *higher education* takes on a value of 1 if a respondent has completed higher vocational or university education. *Socio-professional* takes on a value of 1 if a respondent exercises a higher or intermediate academic or independent profession. *Worker* takes on a value of 1 if a respondent is a skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual worker.

Are political parties socially structured?

We begin by assessing the social distinctiveness of political parties grouped into the seven party families. Table 1.1 reports the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a social group by party family. The first column does this for the 34.1 percent of the ESS sample of respondents who have completed postsecondary or tertiary education. Each row shows, for the average party in a party family, the percentage difference in highly educated people relative to the sample mean. Hence, higher educated voters are 18.5 percent overrepresented in green political parties. In absolute terms, more than half (55.9 percent) of their voters have postsecondary or tertiary education. By contrast, just 22.3 percent of TAN voters have this level of education. Education produces the largest difference among all social characteristics.⁸

[Table 1.1: Socio-structural biases by party family]

Consistent with destructure theory, the social distinctiveness of mainstream party families is very weak. Social democratic, Christian democratic, and conservative parties tend to reflect the social structure of the electorate as a whole. Deviations from the overall mean do not

⁶ We exclude the religious cleavage because it does not discriminate between destructure and cleavage theory. Its inclusion does not affect our empirical findings.

⁷ When we examine education across cohorts, we use the full information available in ESS: years of education, a five-category ordinal variable, and a seven-category ordinal measure. We are interested in detecting commonality across different measures.

⁸ Results are robust when using narrower categorizations for education (tertiary educated vs. all others) or occupation (socio-cultural professionals vs. others; production workers vs. others). We prefer more encompassing categories because they divide the population into equivalently sized groups.

exceed ten percent for any social characteristic, with the partial exception of the liberal party family.⁹ The cleavage structure built on class and occupation is now only dimly evident in the party families that motivate Lipset and Rokkan's analysis.¹⁰

This is not so for political parties that anchor the GAL-TAN divide, as cleavage theory expects. TAN parties have the lowest concentrations of highly educated voters, socio-professionals and managers, females, and the second lowest concentration of urbanites. Green parties have the highest concentrations of those on all four characteristics. The social-structural gap between green and TAN parties is sharpest on education. Equally notably perhaps, green and TAN parties are more occupationally distinctive than parties that compete on the class cleavage. The gap between green (+11.0) and TAN (-12.0) parties in socio-professionals and managers is 23 percent, compared to 11.1 percent between the next two most dissimilar parties, liberals (8.3) and social democrats (-2.8).

Does the social structuration of political parties vary across generations of voters? To answer this, we split the sample into three similarly sized generational groups of voters: those born before 1950, those born between 1950 and 1970, and those born after 1970. Figure 1.1 compares the distinctiveness of each social characteristic averaged for green and TAN parties (the bars on the left in each frame) and for parties in the remaining party families (the bars on the right) for the pre-1950 generation (light bars) and for the post-1970 generation (dark bars). The figure makes two points. First, as noted above, green and TAN parties have exceptionally distinctive groups of voters. Second, the social structuration of green and TAN parties is greater for the post-1970 generation of voters than it is for the pre-1950 generation of voters. The old cleavage parties have a mixed pattern. Their average social differentiation is generally low; it increases slightly for younger generation voters on occupation and rural-urban and decreases for education and gender.

[Figure 1.1: Social distinctiveness of political parties across generations of voters]

Overall, these comparisons are in line with cleavage theory and fit poorly with destructure theory. Green and TAN parties are much more socially distinctive than parties founded on prior cleavages, and while the distinctiveness of the latter has diminished for the post-1970 generations of voters, that for green and TAN parties has increased.

Is voting socially structured?

Our first step in probing the structural basis of voting is to identify combinations of social characteristics that predict party choice using Classification and Regression Trees analysis (CART)

⁹ Because their cleavage location in the urban-rural divide arising from industrialization has faded away, liberal parties are the least programmatically grounded party family. Some liberal parties focus on the economic left-right dimension and champion market liberalism, while other liberal parties emphasize individual rights. While some have moved in a GAL direction (e.g. the Dutch D66 and the British Libdems), others have become TAN (e.g. the Austrian FPÖ).

¹⁰ This is not dependent on the way we operationalize occupation. If we juxtapose manual workers against all others, we find also that left and right parties are markedly less socially distinctive than green and TAN parties.

(Montgomery and Olivella 2018). We impose the same five dichotomous variables that describe party social structure, and we simplify party families in four blocs. As before we combine eight waves of the European Social Survey for countries that supply each of the party blocs.

Table 1.2 reports the three most distinctive social combinations for voters of each party bloc. The column on the right describes these social combinations, and the column on the left lists the ratio of the observed voters for a party bloc divided by the expected proportion of voters if voting were random. For example, the ratio of 2.19 for radical TAN voters is the ratio of 14.99 (observed proportion of voters in this social combination) to 6.84 (average proportion of radical TAN voters in the sample population).

[Table 1.2: CART analysis: Social profiles of voters]

Two things stand out. First, TAN and green parties have higher ratios, which implies that these parties' electorates are more highly structured than those of left and right parties. TAN and green parties are also the most structurally dissimilar.

Second, one can get a handle on the most relevant social characteristics by looking at what the top-three combinations or "leaves" for each party family have in common. For TAN parties, this is being young, having limited education, and being a manual or service worker. For green parties, this is being young, urban, and highly educated. The core for left parties consists of older, lower educated, workers. Right parties' core consists of highly educated, rural, men.

The broader implication is that different elements of social structure can combine to create groups with distinctive political allegiances. Competing camps on the transnational cleavage are defined by the layering of individuals' education, occupation, gender, age, and location. Contra destructure theory, the socio-structural complexity of postindustrial societies is associated with sharper, rather than diminished, political divisions between social groups.

A key question concerns how education interacts with other structural factors, above all occupation, which is the second-most powerful discriminator in the CART analysis. A destructure account would expect education to dampen the effect of social-structural attributes for voting, while a cleavage account suggests that education is an independent source of social differentiation across the GAL-TAN divide, though not across the left-right divide.

Figure 1.2 interacts education with occupation holding all other social characteristics constant in multinomial logistic regression with country fixed effects. The effect of education and occupation are far stronger for TAN and green voting than for left and right voting. This is evident when one compares the slopes. Although the *absolute* effect of occupational location is greater for the probability that a person will vote for a left or right party, the *relative* effect is much greater for green and TAN voting. A person who is less educated and is not a manager or socio-professional is 3.8 times as likely to vote TAN than a person with the opposite attributes. In reverse, a highly educated manager or socio-professional is 2.0 times as likely to vote green. For left voting and right voting the proportional change in probability produced by education in combination with occupation is just 1.3 and 1.2, respectively.

[Figure 1.2: Education interacted with occupation]

Moreover, the effects of education and occupation for TAN and green voting are complementary, which is not the case for left and right voting. The parallel fit lines for TAN and green voting in Figure 1.2 show that the effect of education does not diminish the effect of occupation, so that their joint effect is considerably greater than the effect of each considered separately. The converging fit lines for left and right voting reveal that education and occupation are partial substitutes. Given a person's occupation, the probability of that person voting for a left or right party is unaffected by that person's level of education.

How does generation bear on the social structuration of voting? Figures 1.3 and 1.4 implement a multinomial regression in which education and occupation are interacted with cohort. Care is needed in interpreting these results because the scales of the Y-axes vary. Overall, we find increasing destructure on the left-right by generation and increasing structure on GAL-TAN. As cleavage theory expects, education structures voting more strongly for younger green and TAN voters than for older voters of these parties. That is to say, younger people are more often occupying the trenches – the tribal politics alluded to earlier—than are older people. The light fit lines tracking those born after 1970 are steeper than the darker lines for older cohorts for green and, especially, TAN voters, indicating that the effect of education in structuring voting for green and TAN parties is greater for more recent generations. The reverse is the case for left and right voters. Education has a weaker effect for each younger generation on the left-right divide. The effect of occupation is also greater for younger TAN voters, while the effect does not reach significance for green voters.

[Figure 1.3: The structuring effect of education by cohort]

[Figure 1.4: The structuring effect of occupation by cohort]

Finally, we find partial support for destructure theory. The left has seen a marked decline in support among less educated voters which is compounded with each cohort, whereas the right has lost highly educated voters. The two have converged. A t-test shows that the difference in education is smallest for the post-1970 cohort.¹¹

Education has flipped sign between the GAL-TAN and the left-right cleavage. Higher education used to be an asset for the right. It is now a preeminent marker for voting green. Lower education used to guide voters to the left, but less educated voters are now flocking to TAN.

Voter volatility

Destructure theory predicts that younger generations are more volatile. Cleavage theory expects that voters on the new divide will be less volatile than those on the left-right divide, and that those born in more recent years will be less volatile in their party choice than people in prior generations. Moreover, when voters shift to parties on the new divide, they will not do so at random but engage in social sorting. As the electorate of new parties grows in size, it will retain its social structuration.

¹¹ The t-value is 5.14 for the post-1970 cohort against t=13.6 for the 1950-1970 cohort and t=21.7 for the pre-1950 generation.

We use panel data from the Netherlands to test this within-individuals hypothesis. Selecting the Netherlands is conservative for our purpose because, after the breakdown of its system of pillars, the Netherlands became an extreme case of voter volatility. If we find structuration here, it may well exist in less volatile party systems.

We begin by mapping change in party support alongside change in educational and occupational structuration (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). Political parties on the GAL-TAN divide have gained electoral support since 2008 (start of the Dutch panel), as one can infer in Figures 1.5 and 1.6 from the width of the bars for the PVV, a TAN party, and Groenlinks, a GAL party. It would be unremarkable if these parties became more socially diverse as they garnered more support, but the change we detect is small, and these parties remain far more structurally distinctive on education and occupation than the mainstream VVD and PvdA.¹² Remarkably, PVV supporters with higher education have become even fewer and far between: underrepresentation increased from 13.6 percent in 2008-9 to 26.4 percent in 2016-7 while the party's support grew from 7.2 percent to 13.2 percent.

[Figure 1.5: Structural bias on education among Dutch parties]

[Figure 1.6: Structural bias on occupation among Dutch parties]

Cleavage theory suggests that voters who move to parties on a new divide will sort themselves by their social characteristics. So voters moving to the PVV should have low education and low status occupations, and those who shift away from the party should have higher education and high-status occupations. Conversely, Groenlinks joiners and leavers should have the reverse characteristics. Political parties on prior cleavages should remain unstructured.

Figures 1.7 and 1.8 project this for education and occupation, respectively. The PVV, Groenlinks, and D66 have the most structurally distinctive leavers, joiners, and loyalists (i.e. those who retain their support for the party across successive panels). For all political parties but one, leavers and joiners are not statistically different from each other. The exception is the PVV which has been shedding its relatively small contingent of highly educated, socio-cultural professionals. Destructuration is present among political parties on the left-right divide, while social sorting has taken place on the TAN side of the GAL-TAN divide.

[Figure 1.7: Sorting by education]

[Figure 1.8: Sorting by occupation]

The evidence in this section engages change in voter behavior in an effort to shed light on social structuration. Green and TAN parties have distinct constituencies; voting for these parties is much more socially structured than voting for the remaining political parties; and voters tend to be more consistent in their support for green and TAN parties than voters for other parties. These findings are independent from each other, for it would be possible to find that parties are socially structured, but voting was not, or that both parties and voting was socially structured,

¹² The Y-axis measures under-representation (negative values) and over-representation of voters having higher education (Figure 1.5) and higher occupational status (Figure 1.6) in ratio to the overall sample. A political party that has twice the sample proportion of voters with higher education would score +0.33 on the scale and one that with half as many higher educated voters would score -0.33.

but volatility was high. Together the findings here suggest that far from being frozen, party systems are subject to exogenous shocks that can generate new political parties and socially structured divides.

Conclusion

The decline of the cleavages that structured political life in Europe raises deep questions about the character of political conflict. Our strategy in this paper is to evaluate two contending approaches to party systems and voting. Deconstruction theory perceives the individualization of politics as a facet of modernization. Partisan choice becomes short term and is increasingly divorced from a voter's social background. Cleavage theory conceives deconstruction and restructuring as recurrent processes. As the class cleavage has receded a new one has emerged in response to a major exogenous shock.

The evidence confirms that education and occupation have little power in structuring support for parties on the left-right divide, and that deconstruction on this divide is particularly marked among younger generations of voters. However, we also find that voters for political parties on the GAL-TAN divide are distinguished by education, occupation, location, and gender. These differences are more pronounced among younger than older voters. Panel data further suggest that voters are less volatile in supporting political parties on the GAL-TAN divide and that this phenomenon has legs across generations. As prior cleavages have softened, another has come into view which, like prior cleavages, divides society into structurally demarcated groups.

Lipset and Rokkan claim that the motive force in the rise of a cleavage lies in opposition to the ruling status quo. Like prior historical transformations, the information-technology revolution has produced two oppositions: first, an educated class that finds no place in the worker-employer world of industrial society, and which demands new personal and political freedoms; and, second, a manual class whose life chances have deteriorated as its market power has declined and its institutional defenses have been shattered. The party-political expressions of this tumultuous transformation, green parties and TAN parties, suggest that restructuring and deconstruction go hand in hand.

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Table 1: Socio-structural biases by party family

	Education	Occupation	Urban-rural	Gender
	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Socio-professional or manager</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Female</i>
Greens	+18.47	+11.04	+10.55	+7.99
Liberals	+13.07	+8.34	+0.57	-2.46
Radical left	3.37	1.35	+7.71	0.81
Social democrats	-5.68	-2.76	+1.93	+1.40
Christian democrats	-2.44	+0.11	-9.13	0.06
Conservatives	-0.48	-0.83	2.12	-0.21
Tan	-15.10	-11.99	-6.02	-10.06
<i>Overall electorate</i>	<i>37.38%</i>	<i>28.56%</i>	<i>31.54%</i>	<i>51.39%</i>

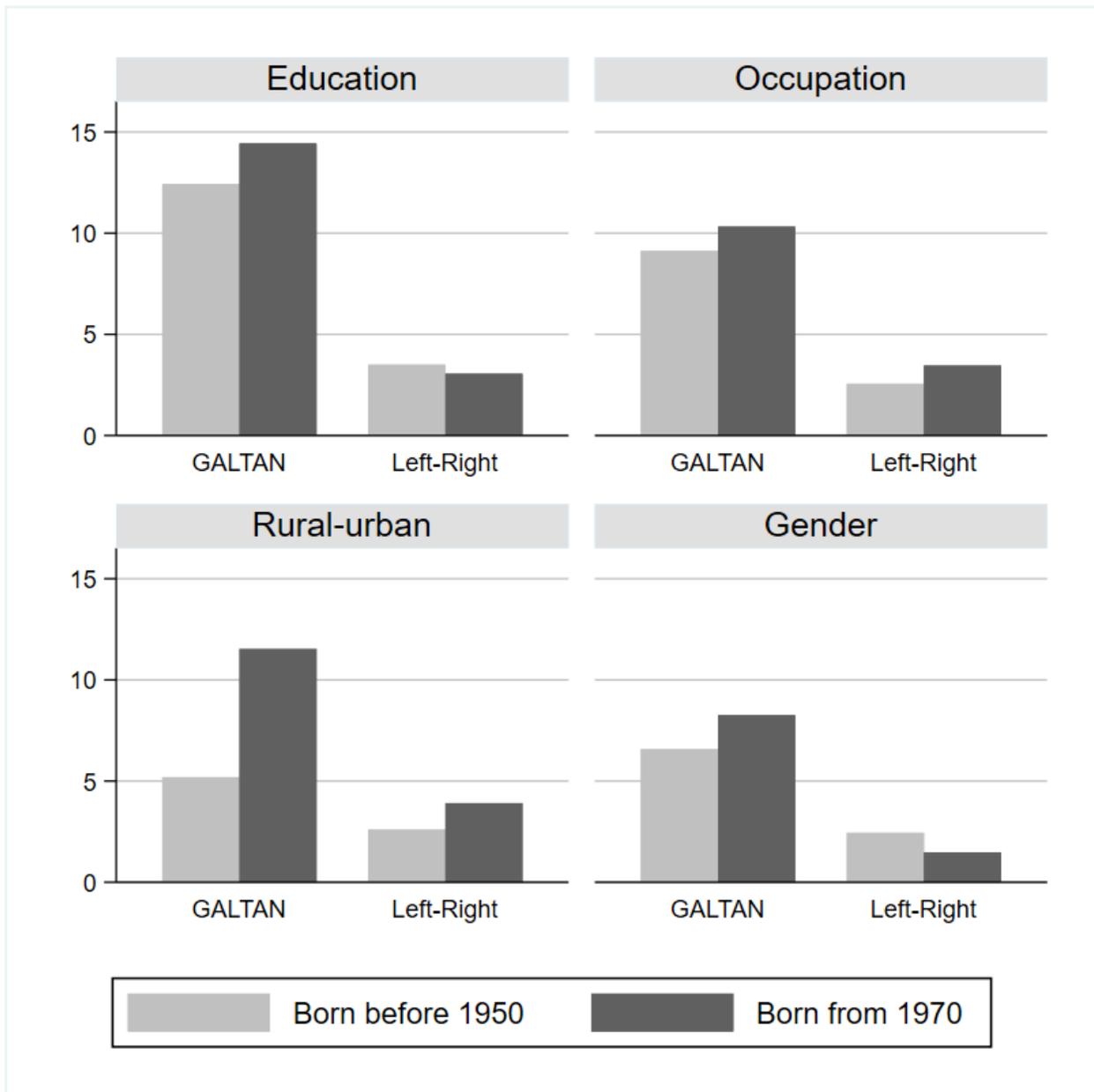
Note: Each cell shows the overrepresentation (+) or underrepresentation (-) of a group having this characteristic in a party family compared to the overall population (21 years or older). *Source:* ESS (2002-2016) for fourteen countries.

Table 2: Social profiles of voters

Party bloc	Ratio	Description of the leaf
TAN	2.19	Lower education, Worker, Younger , Rural, Male
	1.68	Lower education, Worker, Younger , Urban, Male
	1.51	Lower education, Worker, Younger , Rural, Female
Green	2.47	Higher education , Non-worker, Younger, Urban , Female
	2.38	Higher education , Worker, Younger, Urban , Female
	1.64	Higher education , Non-worker, Younger, Urban , Male
Left	1.47	Lower education, Worker, Older , Urban, Male
	1.35	Lower education, Worker, Older , Urban, Female
	1.31	Lower education, Worker, Older , Rural, Male
Right	1.25	Higher education, Non-worker , Younger, Rural, Male
	1.23	Higher education, Non-worker , Older, Rural, Male
	1.20	Lower education, Non-worker , Younger, Rural, Male

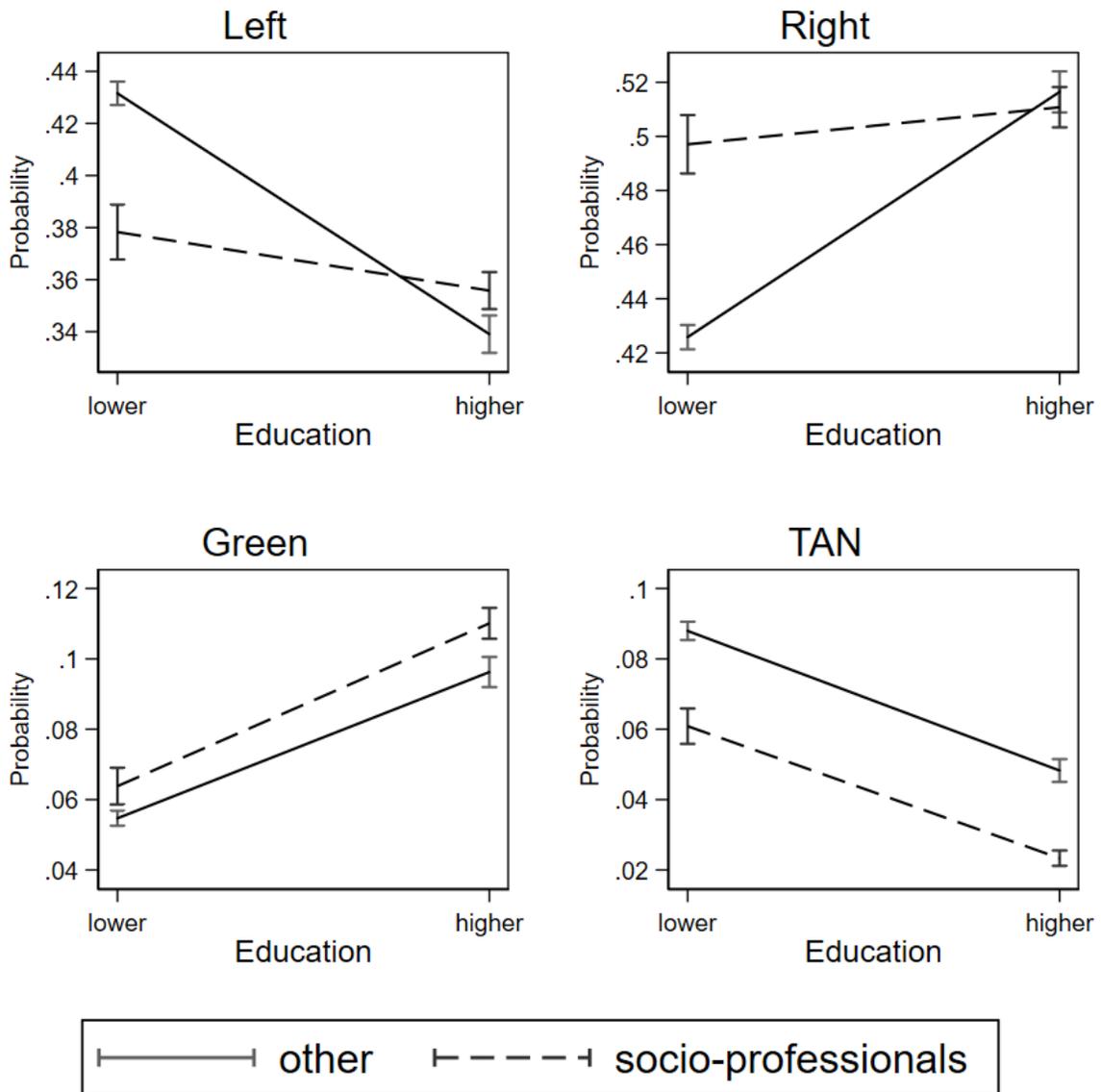
Note: The ratio summarizes the extent to which an individual with given social characteristics is overrepresented among a party bloc’s voters relative to the overall proportion of votes for that bloc. Classification and Regression Trees (CART) analysis with a 0.01 significance level cutoff. *Source:* ESS (2002-2016) for fourteen countries.

Figure 1: Social distinctiveness of political parties across generations of voters



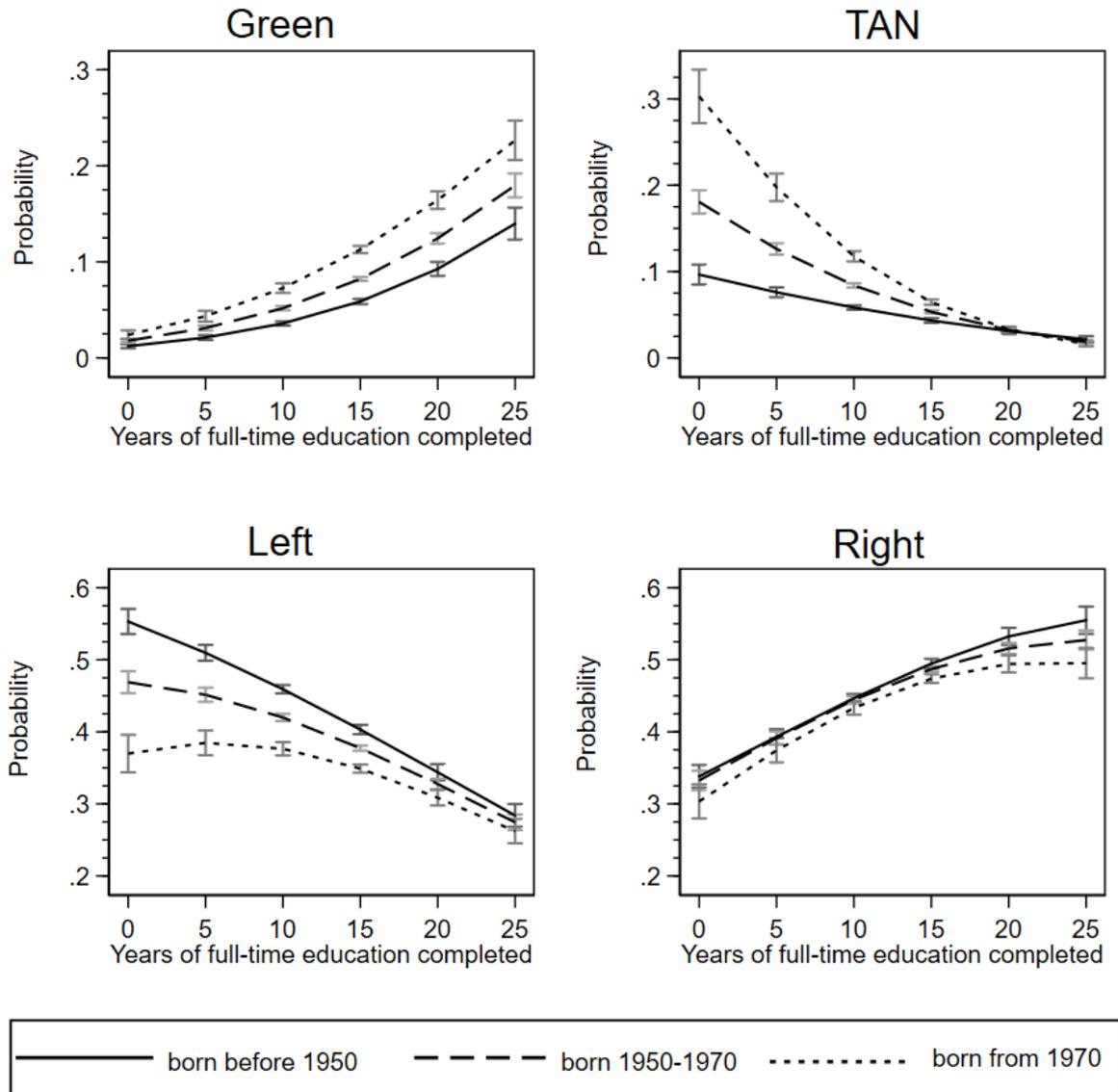
Note: 2002-2016 ESS voting data aggregated to the party family. Structural distinctiveness is estimated by averaging the percentage deviation from the population mean on a given social characteristic for each GALTAN party family (left bars) and for each Left-Right party family (right bars).

Figure 2: The interaction between education and occupation



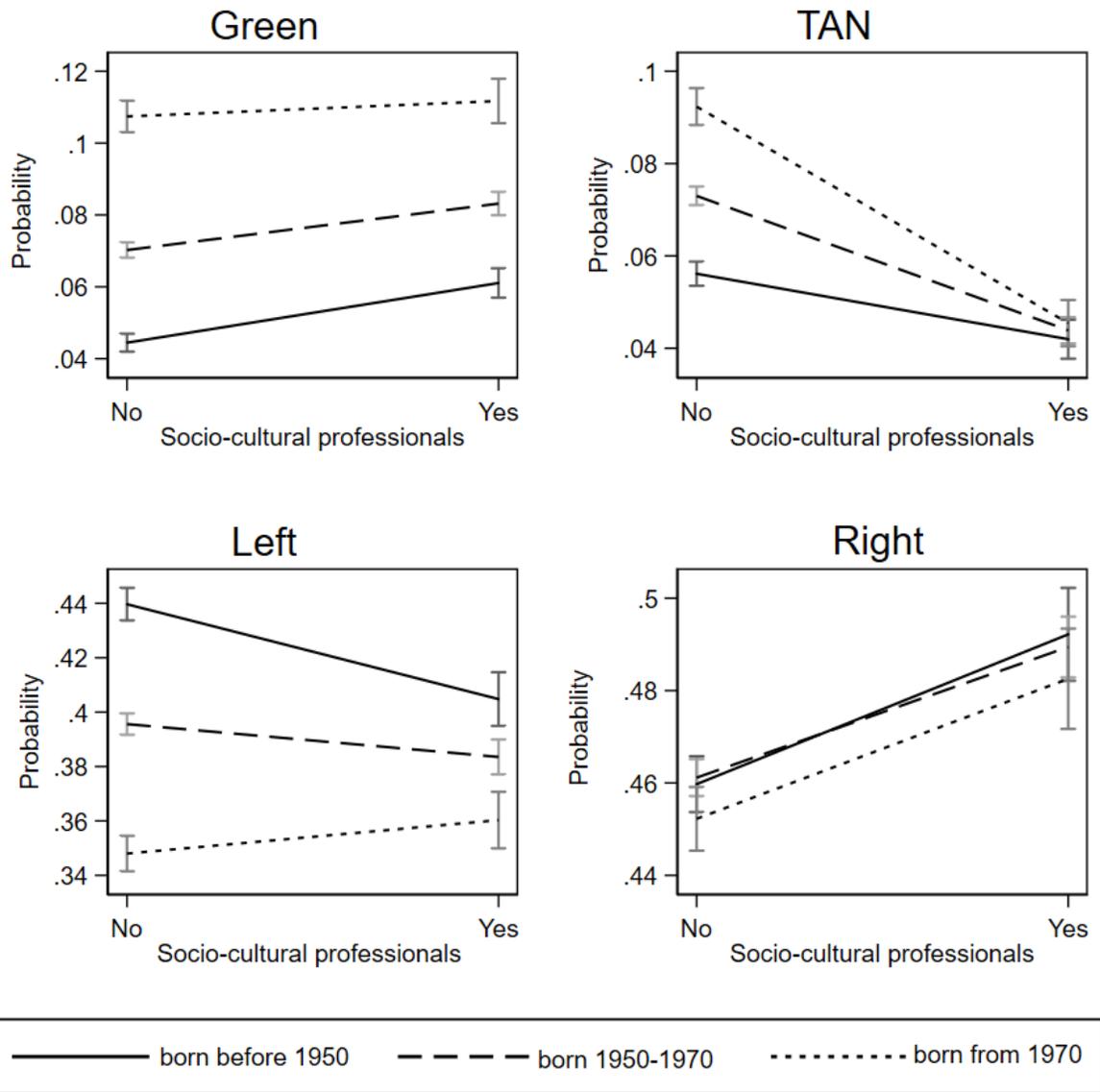
Note: Calculated from a multivariate multinomial logit in which education is interacted with occupation (controlling for gender, age, religion, urban-rural and country fixed effects). The fit lines depict the predicted probability that an individual in a socio-professional occupation (light line) or an individual in a non-socio-professional occupation (dark line) has voted for a left, right, green or TAN party. Source: ESS data for fourteen countries.

Figure 3: The structuring effect of education by cohort



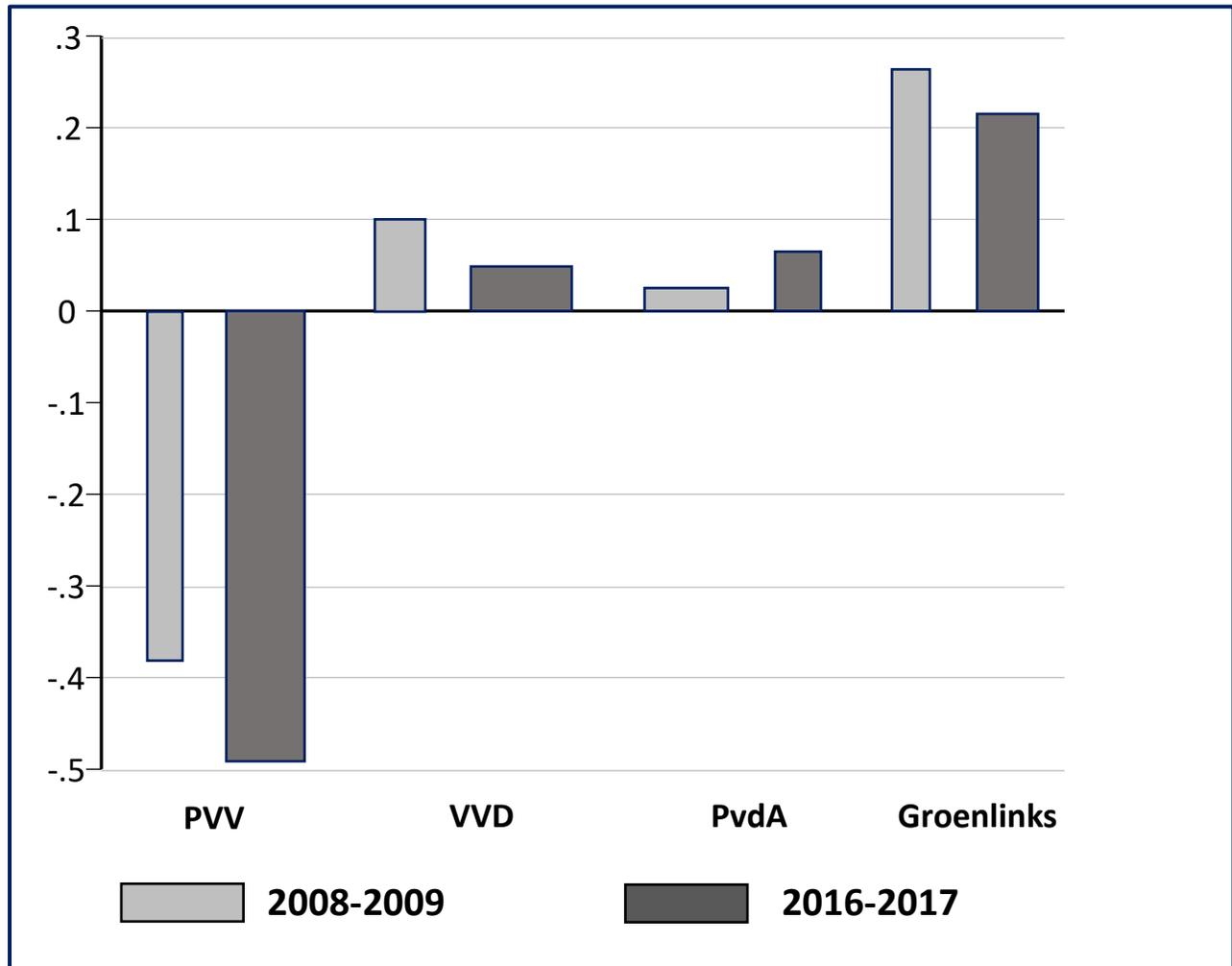
Note: Calculated from a multivariate multinomial logit in which education is interacted with cohort (controlling for gender, religion, urban-rural, and country fixed effects). The fit lines depict the predicted probability that an individual in a particular age cohort has voted for a left, right, green or TAN party. Source: ESS data for fourteen countries.

Figure 4: The structuring effect of occupation by cohort



Note: Calculated from a multivariate multinomial logit in which occupation is interacted with cohort (controlling for gender, education, religion, urban-rural, and country fixed effects). The fit lines depict the predicted probability that an individual in a particular age cohort has voted for a left, right, green or TAN party. Source: ESS data for fourteen countries.

Figure 5: Structural bias on education among Dutch parties

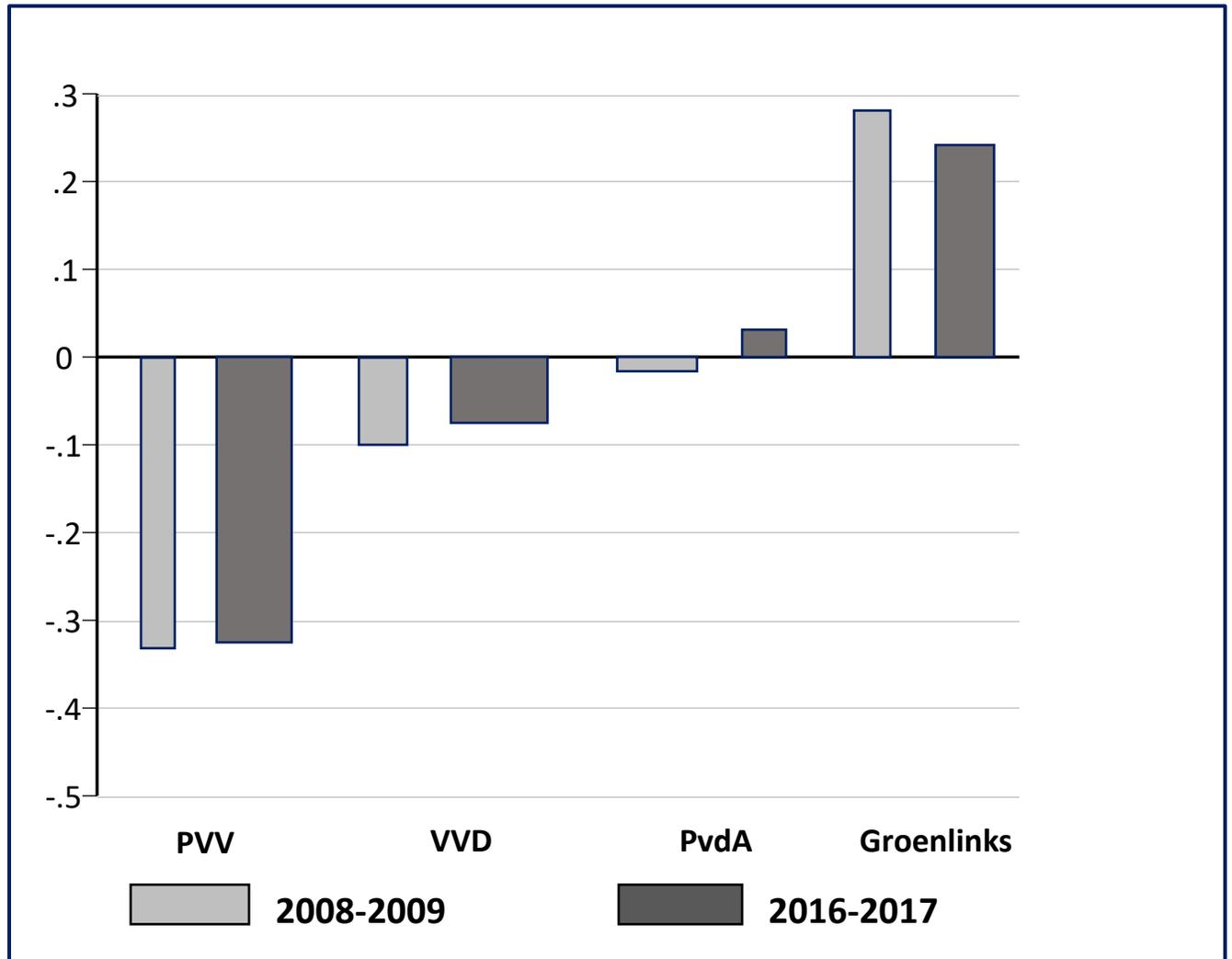


Note: The height of the bars depicts to what extent higher educated voters are under- or overrepresented in a party compared to the overall sample. The metric is a standardized ratio ranging from -1 (no supporter is highly educated) to +1 (all supporters are highly educated), which is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Party's education bias}_{ij} = \frac{\text{Proportion higher educated in party}_{ij} - \text{Proportion higher educated in sample}_j}{\text{Proportion higher educated in party}_{ij} + \text{Proportion higher educated in sample}_j}$$

The width of the bars reflects the size of a party's voting bloc relative to all voters. Source: LISS data for Dutch voters (21 years or older) comparing wave 1 & 2 (2008–9) with wave 9 & 10 (2016–17).

Figure 6: Structural bias on occupation among Dutch parties

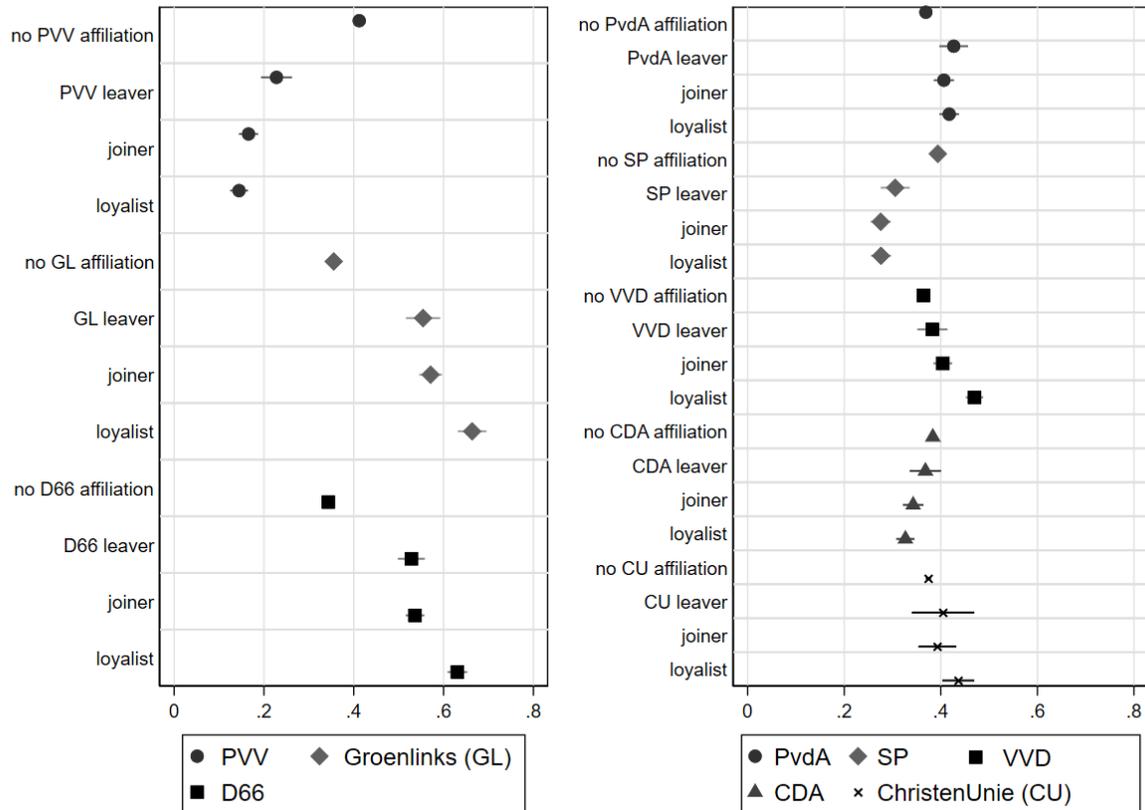


Note: The height of the bars depict to what extent individuals with a socio-professional occupation are under- or overrepresented in the party compared to the overall sample. The metric is a standardized ratio ranging from -1 (no supporter is a socio-professional) to $+1$ (all supporters are socio-professionals), which is calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Party's occupation bias}_{ij} = \\
 & \frac{\text{Proportion socio-professionals in party}_{ij} - \text{Proportion socio-professionals in sample}_j}{\text{Proportion socio-professionals in party}_{ij} + \text{Proportion socio-professionals in sample}_j}
 \end{aligned}$$

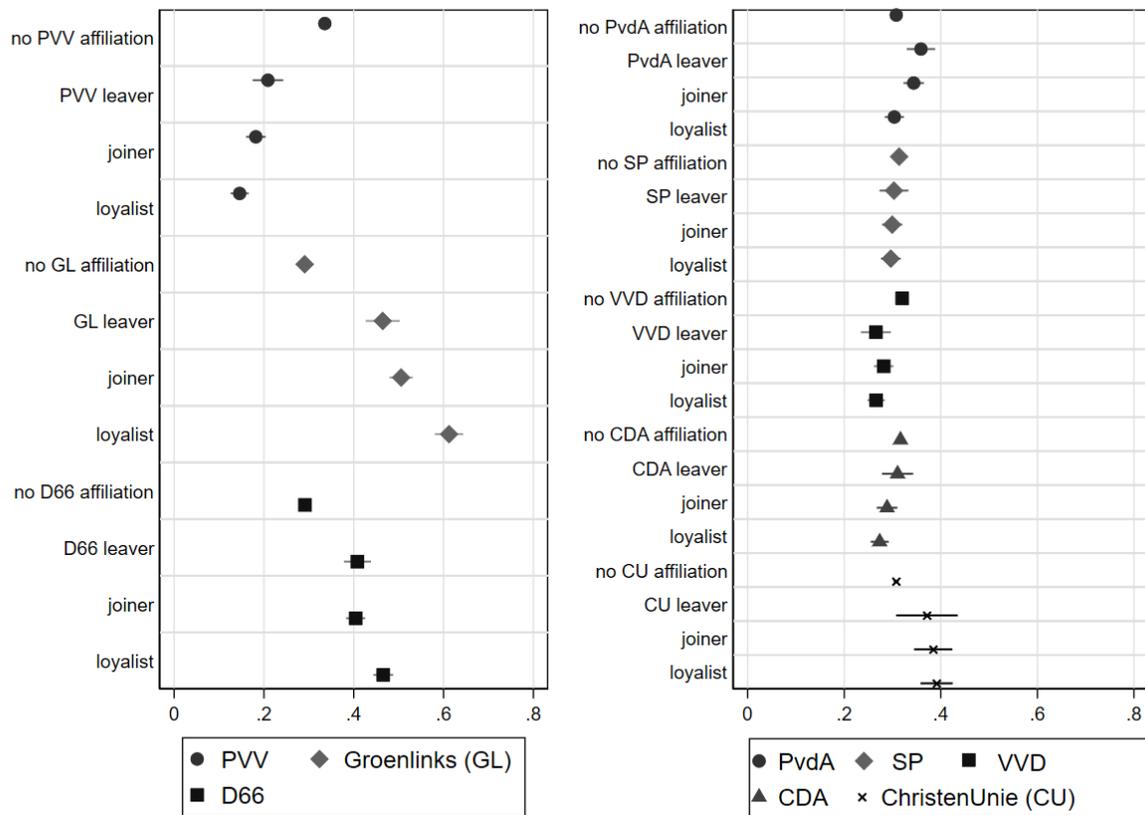
The width of the bars reflects the size of a party's voting bloc relative to all voters. Source: LISS data for Dutch voters (21 years or older) comparing wave 1 & 2 (2008–9) with wave 9 & 10 (2016–17).

Figure 7: Sorting by education



Note: Education is a dichotomous variable tapping whether respondents have completed higher vocational or university education. For each party we compare four groups: respondents who never intended to vote for party X (no affiliation), respondents who intended to vote for party X at time t-1 and abandon party X at t (leavers), respondents who intended to vote for a different party at time t-1 and intend to vote for party X at t (joiners), and voters who intended to vote for party X at t-1 and intend to vote for that same party at t (loyalists). The symbols represent the proportion of higher educated in each subgroup with 95 percent confidence bands. Source: N=32,927 from LISS (all waves); only parties with at least 1,500 prospective votes are presented here.

Figure 8: Sorting by occupation



Note: Occupation is a dichotomous variable tapping whether respondents have a socio-professional occupation. We compare four groups: respondents who never intended to vote for party X (no affiliation), respondents who intended to vote for party X at time t-1 and abandon party X at t (leaver), respondents who intended to vote for a different party at time t-1 and intend to vote for party X at t (joiner), and voters who intended to vote for party X at t-1 and intend to vote for party X at t (loyalist). The symbols represent the proportion of socioprofessionals in each subgroup with 95 percent confidence bands. Source: N=30,049 from LISS (all waves); only parties with at least 1,500 prospective votes are presented here.