What's in a Brand? Party Rebranding in Europe

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Political parties are typically seen as conservative institutions which rarely change. Despite this common perception, parties do change, and on occasion, transform themselves by changing features such as the party name and logo, or their policy program. How can we conceptualize these kinds of changes? In this dissertation, I argue that feature changes and policy changes are instances of party rebranding, or situations where a party attempts to overhaul its entire image. I then test three empirical questions relating to party rebranding. First, I investigate why parties rebrand. I find that parties undergo a feature rebrand when there is a decrease in the party's vote share, or a change in the party leader. A combination of electoral changes and leader changes predicts all types of rebranding. Next, I test the electoral consequences of a party rebrand. The results indicate that feature rebrands increase party vote share for the election after the rebrand, while policy rebrands have no effect. Lastly, I test how partisans respond to a rebrand. Using an original survey experiment analyzing partisans of four political parties in the Netherlands, I find that partisans typically do not respond to a rebrand: partisan attachment does not significantly increase or decrease in the event of a label or policy change. The only exception to this trend is when both the label and policies are changed, where partisans of the far-right and, to a lesser extent, the green party did exhibit decreases in partisan attachment. These results have important implications for our understanding of party brands, the relationship between parties and voters, and for democratic representation.

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Preface

I would not have reached this point without the help of many people over the course of my graduate career. I am forever indebted to my PhD advisor, Professor Jae-Jae Spoon. I truly cannot imagine a more supportive mentor, and your years of guidance and advice not only enabled me to make it through graduate school, but have also made me a better and more thoughtful researcher. I also want to thank the rest of my dissertation committee. I want to thank Professor Chris Bonneau for your willingness to jump on board fairly late into the project and for your guidance and thoughts in the early stages of planning the research project. I want to thank Professor Danny Choi for your kind and encouraging words over the years, which have made me a more confident scholar. I also want to thank you for your invaluable advice on all parts of the project, but especially for your input on the experimental chapter, which would not have been possible without you. To Professor Pablo Fernandez-Vasquez, I want to thank you for your endless supply of knowledge and sharp suggestions, which challenged me to push my research forward in new and exciting ways. Your life advice has also proven to be invaluable at keeping my stress levels low when various aspects of graduate school became especially challenging. Last but not least, I want to thank Professor Steven Finkel. I was lucky enough to be able to take four classes from you and no one has taught me more about research methods than you have. Your influence can be felt in every single regression table in this document. Beyond my committee, I also want to thank both the former and present faculty members in the Department of Political Science. I learned a great deal from all of you, either through classes, speaker series and workshops, or from working with you as an RA or TA.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Empirical Puzzle

The 1992 British General Election was a historic nadir for the Labour Party. This election was the party's fourth consecutive loss, and as a result the party was facing an ignominious record of 18 years out of power. In response to this dire electoral situation, in 1994 the party leader, Tony Blair, spearheaded a comprehensive reform campaign. Blair and his officials moderated the party's policy position on a slew of issues including welfare and taxation, shifting these policies closer to the economic program popularized by Margaret Thatcher (Fielding, 2002). Blair also changed features of the party itself. Most notably, he successfully removed Clause 4 from the party constitution. Clause 4 called for state ownership of industries such as coal, and its removal was something that previous Labour leaders had attempted, but failed to do, going back to the 1960s (Fielding, 2002). These policy and party level reforms were then packaged under the unofficial party name "New Labour" in an attempt to distance the party from its socialist past (Heath, 2001). The reforms ultimately became perhaps one of the most successful reform endeavors ever undertaken by a party. Not only did Labour win the next election in 1997, but it went on to win the two elections after that, an unprecedented feat for a party that had never won even two consecutive elections, let alone three.

The changes made by New Labour violate one of the core assumptions of the literature on party change: that parties are fundamentally rigid and risk averse, and are thereby resistant to large changes (Michels, 1962; Harmel and Janda, 1994). Previous work examining New Labour has noted that while this example does violate the precepts of party immutability, it is highly aberrant

and an extreme case (Dalton, 2015). However, closer examination of other cases of large party changes draws this conclusion into question. More specifically, the last decade has seen several prominent instances of large party change that are strikingly similar to New Labour. In 2017, the *Österreichische Volkspartei* (Austrian People's Party) changed its name, becoming *Die neue Volkspartei* (The New People's Party), and changed its color from black to turquoise. In addition, the party moved to the right on several different prominent issues such as immigration. Even non-mainstream parties, which prior research shows are even more inflexible than mainstream parties (Adams et al., 2006), are not immune to these kinds of party restructurings. After her loss to Emmanuel Macron in 2017, Marine Le Pen changed her party's name from *Front National* to *Rassemblement National*, and, while she did not moderate the party's overall policies, she downplayed the cultural issues that her party was famous for in favor of a focus on inflation and the cost of living crisis (Washington Post 2022). Pulling the camera back from specific examples, I find that more than one-quarter of all European parties that have competed in an election since 1945 have changed their name, while 42% have changed their policies by an amount commensurate to the changes made by New Labour.[1] The sheer number of parties changing in these ways is evidence that New Labour was not a one-off exceptional case; rather, they are evidence of a wider phenomenon.

In this dissertation project, I undertake the first wide scale systematic analysis of these large party changes. I start by noting that seminal works in the political science literature have argued that parties operate like corporations, competing for votes in the same way that companies compete for consumers (Downs, 1957; Schlessinger, 1984). As such, parties also possess brands

[1] This value is explained in detail in Section 2.3.

(Grynaviski, 2010; Lupu, 2013; Lupu, 2016; Nielsen, 2014; Clarke, 2020). Furthermore, corporate brands are highly malleable, and corporations regularly update or change the brand when doing so is advantageous for the company (Keller 1999). So, if party brands are indeed comparable to corporate brands, it stands the reason then that parties can rebrand in a similar way. Drawing on this line of reasoning, the central argument of this document is that the aforementioned examples and instances of large party changes are instances of ``party rebranding," or an intentional attempt by the party to systematically shed the party's current brand and adopt a new one. I further argue that a party can do so in one of two major ways. First, the party can rebrand its features, or the prominent, visual elements of the party brand such as the party label or logo that are not directly tied to the party's policy platform. The second type of party rebrand is the policy rebrand, where the party categorically changes its policies in a way that would change how voters view the party. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I further conceptualize party rebranding by more explicitly defining feature and policy rebranding, while also providing more information on their use across time and countries.

1.2 A Rebranding Framework

1.2.1 Definition of Party Rebranding

In the remainder of this chapter, I further develop my core concept of a party rebrand. As mentioned, my data indicate that since 1945, 25% of all parties that have competed in more than one election in Western Europe have changed their name at least once, while 42\% have

significantly changed their policy positions.[2] In order to categorically explain these types of party transformations, I first draw on the party branding literature and note that features such as the party name as well as party policies form the core of what can be thought of as the "party brand." The political parties literature has long argued that parties, like corporations, possess brands (Downs, 1957; Aldrich, 2011), which have been defined as a set of definitions, prototypes or associations that voters have of parties (Grynavinski 2010; Lupu; 2016, Nielsen and Larson 2014; Clarke 2020). More simply, if a voter were asked to describe a specific party, the party brand would be the associations that come to the voter's mind when thinking of that party. The political science literature has typically conceptualized party brands as being synonymous with the party's overall policy profile (Snyder, 2002; Woon and Pope, 2008; Lupu, 2013; 2016; Butler et al. 2014). This, however, is an oversimplification. Scholars in the marketing literature have argued that brands include not just products (analogous to policies in the case of parties) but also other features such as the name, logo, or key leaders (AMA, 1960; Keller, 1999; Thomas and Kohli, 2009). Further research in political marketing has found that this conception of the brand also applies to parties, as voters associate parties not only with policies, but also features such as the name, logo, or specific leaders (French and Smith, 2009; Pich et al, 2020).

Using this conception of the party brand, I argue that the instances of brand change typified by the examples above are instances of the party intentionally shifting its overall brand, or "party rebranding." More specifically, parties that rebrand start with one set of associations and then change aspects of the brand (i.e., their features and/or policies) to break the previous set of associations and form new ones in the minds of voters. This is similar to how the concept of

[2] I describe how I arrived at this number in the Research Design Section of Chapter 2.

corporate rebranding has been discussed in the marketing literature, where corporations have been noted to rebrand by changing their name or specific products (AMA, 1960; Keller, 1992; Thomas and Kohli, 2009). For example, Facebook recently rebranded by changing its name to Meta, while Apple rebranded by introducing new products such as the iPod and iPhone (Thomas and Kohli, 2009). In the same way, the British Labour Party rebranded by adopting the name "New Labour" and then also by adding new issues to its policy profile that it had not emphasized at length in previous elections, thereby casting aside its old set of associations with socialism and adopting a new one of centrism.

One further point about party rebrands is that they are distinct from other conceptions of brand change. The main extant work on brand change comes from Lupu (2016), who introduces the concept of brand dilution, or a situation where brands weaken over time so that they become indistinguishable from one another. For Lupu (2016) then, the main dimension of change is the oscillation between strong and weak brands. In contrast, party rebranding involves a party shedding its stable, older brand and adopting a new stable brand, which is done by changing the party features or policy program. In the following sections, I examine each of these types of rebrand in more detail.[3]

[3] One aspect of the party brand that I have not mentioned in detail are party leaders. Party leaders can be thought of as being part of the party brand (French and Smith 2009; Smith and French 2010). As such, changing the party leader could be a way to rebrand. However, parties change their leader, on average, once per election cycle (Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu, 2018). Party rebrands are rare events, but based on these data, leader changes are common meaning that not all leader changes can be rebrands. Furthermore, in Chapter 2, I argue that leader changes are an antecedent to a rebrand rather than a rebrand in itself.

1.2.2 Feature Rebranding

I define a feature rebrand as a situation in which a party changes aspects of its brand that are not directly related to its policy program, such as the party name or logo. In this dissertation, I focus on name changes. As the most prominent element of a party brand, changing the party name implies a wholesale restructuring of the party's image since this would break, or at the very least dilute, the set of associations that had existed for that party up until the name change. Furthermore, if a party changes its name, by definition it would have to change the logo and other campaign material as well, otherwise these materials would bear the old name. As such, name changes are the "tip of the iceberg" of other feature changes and studying name changes thus allows me to capture additional types of feature changes. As an example of this process, in the 2017 Austrian elections, the center-right *Österreichische Volkspartei* (Austrian People's Party) campaigned under a new name: *Die neue Volkspartei* (The New People's Party) while also changing the official color from black to turquoise. In this example, measuring just the name change captures the changes to the color and changes to the logo since the logo was updated to have the new name. Feature rebrands can thus be thought of as changes to the party's prominent visual attributes that will be at the forefront of any election campaign.

A list of all name changes can be found in the supplemental material, but in Table 1 below I provide a breakdown of party name changes by country. In brief, I calculated the number of name changes per country by relying on the Comparative Manifestos Project (Volkens et al., 2018). One important point to note here is that in a few instances I deviated from this general rule because, on occasion, parties will campaign under a new name without officially changing the party name. I have included three instances of this: *Die Neue Volspartei* in Austria (name change in 2017), New Labour in the UK (1997-2010) and *De Nya Modernaterna* in Sweden (2006-2014). Each of these

name changes are de facto name changes since the party was using a new name but did not legally change the name so do not appear as such in the CMP.

Table 1: Feature Rebrands, 1945-2019

Country Name	Total Number of Parties	Number of Parties That Changed Name	Number of Name Changes
Austria	6	3	3
Belgium	21	9	10
Denmark	16	2	2
Finland	11	4	7
France	13	6	13
Germany	9	0	0
Greece	12	1	1
Iceland	12	1	1
Ireland	10	0	0
Italy	22	7	7
Luxembourg	8	3	3
Netherlands	22	1	1
Norway	9	4	4
Portugal	10	1	1
Spain	23	4	4
Sweden	8	6	9
Switzerland	17	6	9
United Kingdom	10	1	2
Total	**239**	**60**	**75**

The descriptive cross-national data indicates a great deal of heterogeneity across countries. Parties in some countries, namely Germany and Ireland, had zero name changes while in others such as France and Sweden more than half of all parties changed their name. Furthermore, it appears to be rare for parties to change their name more than once, though there are exceptions (France and Sweden again stand out). Furthermore, while there appears to be a tendency for

smaller parties to be more likely to change their name this is not an ironclad rule, as the (formerly) main center-right party in France, descended from the Gaullist party established at the beginning of the Fifth Republic, changed its name more than any other party at five times.

1.2.3 Policy Rebranding

The second type of rebrand that I investigate is a policy rebrand where the party significantly overhauls its policy profile. Based on the metaphor of corporate rebranding, a policy rebrand is akin to a corporation either overhauling its current products or the release of new products that a company was not previously known for (Thomas and Kohli, 2009). As such, if policies are conceptualized as the products that parties offer to the political market (Schlessinger, 1984), another way a party could rebrand would be to change its policies in some capacity, which I label a policy rebrand. Policy rebrands thus involve changes to the party's substance, rather than its visual marketing material.

There are three different ways in which a party might change its policies. First, it might undergo a positional rebrand, where it significantly changes its ideological position. I define a positional rebrand as a large[4] shift in the party's overall position on the left/right ideological scale, with the size of the shift making it distinct from simple policy changes. The shift needs to be large because, by rebranding, the party must break the preexisting associations that they have of the party, and it is unlikely that this could be accomplished with small policy adjustments. I selected the position on the left/right scale for several reasons, both methodological and theoretical.

[4] I define ``large" in the Data Analysis section of Chapter 2.

Methodologically, the left/right scale is widely used in the literature because it translates across different contexts, and for this paper it is necessary to use a measure of ideology that can apply to all parties across Western Europe (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Adams et al., 2011). Theoretically, research has found that parties in Europe primarily compete along the left/right dimension (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002), and this scale thus acts as an overall, aggregate measure of a party's position (Bohmelt et al. 2016; Budge. 1994; Dalton, 2015).

The second type of policy rebrand is the salience rebrand. This is a situation where the party's overall position on different issues remains largely the same, but the issues that the party is emphasizing in its campaign materials significantly changes. This can be a movement where the party focuses more on economic issues, or more of a focus on cultural issues. Furthermore, it also incorporates the addition of new issues to a party's policy profile and changes in the types of issues that the party is discussing. As an example, during the 2022 French Presidential Election, Marine Le Pen and the *Rassemblement National* focused their campaign on pocketbook issues such as the cost of living rather than immigration and Euroscepticism, despite the fact that RN is better known for its strident position on these latter issues. This new issue emphasis was undertaken even though the party's hardline stances on immigration/Euroscepticism remained intact. What had changed was that the party was not discussing these issues, which gave the perception that the party had moderated.[5]

[5] Policy rebrands are also distinct from feature rebrands in that there is a directional component where the party can change its policy in different ways. For example, a party could undergo a policy rebrand to an extreme position or a more centrist position. I discuss these in Appendix C.

The third and final type of policy rebrand is the programmatic rebrand, which combines changes in issue position with changes in issue salience. An example of the programmatic rebrand is the New Labour project, which combined a move towards the economic center (positional rebrand) with a new focus on crime and safety (salience rebrand), which had not been the focus of prior election campaigns. To provide a visual representation of this, using CMP data, in Figure 1.1 I have graphed these changes to the Labour Party's policy position across 40 years of electoral competition, and provided the other major parties as reference points. As can be seen, at the 1992 election the Labour Party was around 3.5/10, but by the 1997 election (red dotted line), the party

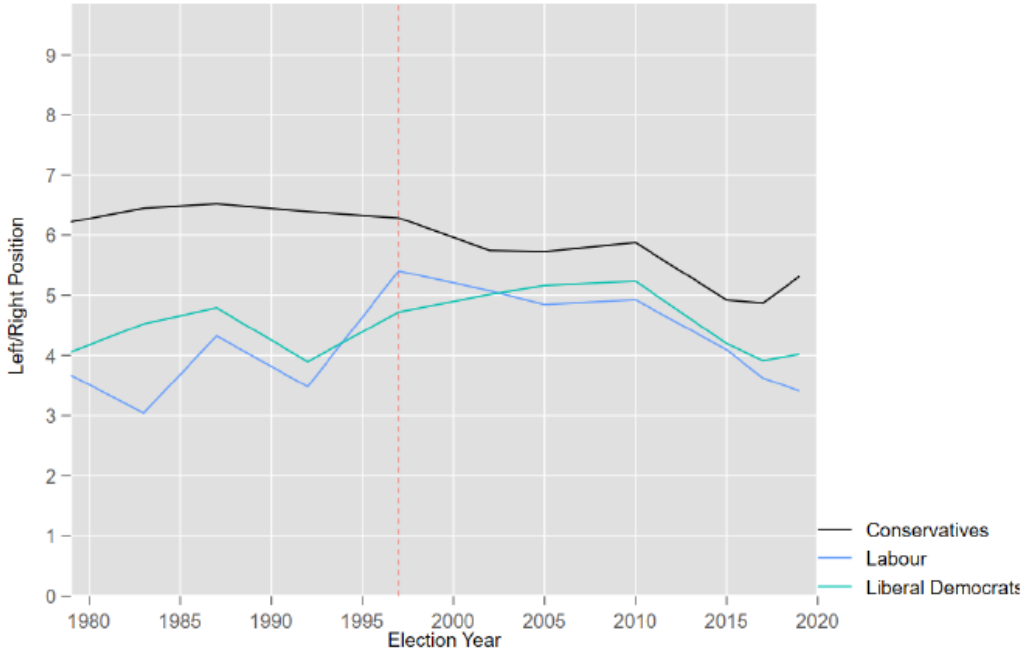

Figure 1: Labour Party Policy Position, 1980-2020

leap frogged the Liberal Democrats, becoming more centrist than this latter party until roughly 2005. This overlaps with the New Labour Project, which began in 1994 with the accession of Tony Blair as party leader.

One final possibility is that parties utilize both a feature and policy rebrand simultaneously in a kind of "tandem" rebrand. While these brand changes are possible, they seem to be quite rare: in my analysis, I find only 4 instances in which a party simultaneously changed its features and

policy position, and 8 instances of a feature rebrand and salience rebrand co-occurring. Indeed, even under a less restrictive definition of a policy rebrand (see the Appendices B and C), there are only 16 instances of these changes. As such, these feature and policy rebrands appear to be separate types of the rebranding phenomenon that rarely overlap. The likeliest explanation for this lack of overlap is that a tandem rebrand is too risky for the party. Party rebrands are already high-risk strategies, and the extent of the changes implied by a tandem rebrand would essentially result in a new party. It thus makes sense that parties would want to rebrand in a way that can appeal to new voters while also maintaining some continuity with the old brand, which is accomplished by only utilizing one of the two types of rebranding. That said, I do empirically analyze the tandem rebrand in Chapter 4. In sum, Figure 2 provides a visual representation of my rebranding framework, highlighting that feature and policy rebrands are separate types of rebrand and policy rebrands having distinct subtypes.

The rest of this dissertation unfolds as follows. In Chapter 2, I analyze why parties rebrand. My argument in this chapter is that there are three tracks which lead to a party rebrand: an external track, an internal track, and a combination of internal and external factors. In line with the extant literature on party change (e.g., Harmel and Janda 1994) I posit that the external track leading to a party rebrand are decreases to the party's vote share. In other words, the parties most likely to rebrand are the ones that are struggling electorally, meaning that a rebrand is a strategy to halt the downward trajectory of the party's vote share and add new momentum or energy to the party. The second track is internal party changes, where the party rebrands because a new party leader wishes to put their stamp on the party, cementing their own power over the party. The final track is a combination of external and internal factors, where a decrease in a party's vote share leads to a new leader who is then empowered to rebrand the party. Using a cross national dataset of 239

parties from 1945-2019, I generally find support for this argument, though the effects of the internal and external tracks vary by the type of rebrand. External and internal changes predict feature rebrands only, and the third track predicts both types of rebrand.

Chapter 3 flips the independent and dependent variables from the first empirical chapter and examines the electoral consequences of a party rebrand. More specifically, the chapter examines whether party rebrands are an effective electoral strategy that benefits the parties which change in these ways. In this chapter, I take an agnostic approach and posit that there are competing arguments on the effectiveness of party rebranding. The first argument is that the strategy is effective because it reenergizes the party and makes the party newsworthy. The other is that the strategy is ineffective, either because the rebrand damages the party's relationship with its partisans or that the rebrand leaves the party off balance and open to attack from its rivals. Using the same dataset as in the prior chapter, I find mixed evidence for each argument. Feature rebrands do indeed appear to increase the party's vote share, while policy rebrands have no effect. While the strategy is thus not outright detrimental to the party's electoral performance, it cannot be categorized as a successful strategy. Chapter 4 homes in on the relationship between partisans and their party, investigating how levels of partisan attachment change in the event that a party undergoes a rebrand. I test changes in partisan attachment in the event of a rebrand by experimentally analyzing partisans of four major parties in the Netherlands. I find that partisans generally do not respond to a feature or policy rebrand, but partisans of niche parties respond negatively to a tandem rebrand.

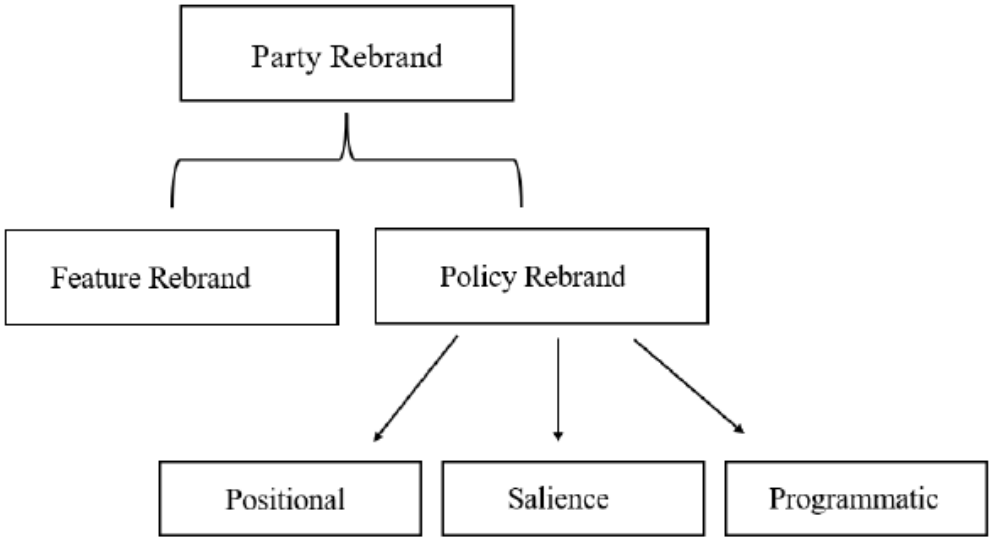

Figure 2: Overview of Rebranding

2.0 Why do parties rebrand?

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the central concept of this dissertation, the party rebrand. I argued that party rebranding is an explicit and intentional attempt by the party to strategically shed one set of associations and adopt another set. The running example established in the previous chapter was that of New Labour, where the party started with a set of associations centered around a socialist ideology, and then shed this association by changing the party's features such as the name and aspects of the party constitution, as well as the party's policies, thereby becoming a "Third Way" center-left party. As mentioned, party rebrands are quite puzzling phenomena because they violate one of the core assumptions about party change: That parties are highly conservative and risk averse institutions that rarely change and when they do change, do so incrementally (Michels, 1962). This is because parties derive electoral strength from having stable brands (Panebianco, 1988; Budge, 1994; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Tavits, 2007; Somer-Topcu, 2009; Dalton, 2015). Under this perspective, party rebrands are the last strategic move that would be expected because they uproot the party brand, risking a kind of "brand dilution" where voters become unaware of what the party stands for, leading to a loss in support (Lupu, 2013). Yet, while rare, I argued in the previous chapter that large changes in the party brand are exactly what parties are attempting to do when they change their features and policies.

Why would parties decide to make these kinds of changes? I begin my argument by noting that the party's status quo is to not rebrand. This can be considered the safe option, where voters are largely aware of what the party stands for and have longstanding understandings of what to

expect from the party. Rebranding is a high risk strategy, since the changes mean that voters' current understanding of the party is essentially out of date, and until they update their perceptions of the party they will be unsure of what the party stands for. Competing in an electoral environment where voters are no longer aware of what the party stands for is extremely risky for the party, as this could result in large scale defections from the party. Thus, I argue that there is a "risk threshold," and in order for the party to rebrand, it must be pushed past this threshold into a position where the party is more risk acceptant, thereby willing to adopt the high-risk strategy of rebranding.

The next stage of my argument is that there are three antecedents which can push parties into the risk acceptant position. This argument draws on the model of party change developed by Harmel and Janda (1994), who argue that party change is the result of external and/or internal stimuli. On the external front, I argue that electoral struggles will push a party past the risk threshold and into a position where it is willing to rebrand, especially since decreases in electoral performance have long been thought to be one of the main drivers of party change (Budge, 1994; Janda et al. 1995; Somer-Topcu, 2009; Adams et al., 2011). This argument closely aligns with that of Kim and Solt (2017), who argue that large "electoral shocks" lead a party to change their name.

The second antecedent to party change is internal stimuli, since in order to change, various factions within a party either need to agree on a direction for the party, or need to be overruled by the party leadership. I argue that the main internal factor which prompts party change is party leaders. As the most powerful actors within the party, party leaders can use their position to overcome internal opposition to a rebrand, thereby overcoming the internal factions which function as veto players who stymie change. Importantly, I argue that this pathway can be independent of

the external, electoral antecedent, meaning that parties can rebrand because of leadership dynamics acting in isolation from other factors.

The final factor which can predict a party rebrand is a combination of the previous two factors, where external and internal changes act in concert to produce a rebrand. In other words, a party experiences an electoral loss, which then prompts party leaders to act and rebrand their party. There are thus multiple avenues which might produce a party rebrand, and importantly, these vary by party in the sense that an election loss might prompt one party to rebrand but another might only rebrand because of internal dynamics. On the whole, prior work on the antecedents of party rebranding such as Kim and Solt (2017) partially explained why parties rebrand, but my theory is more expansive and incorporates several dynamics for party change, thereby provides a more holistic explanation of party rebranding.

The rest of this chapter unfolds as follows. First, I present a more detailed overview of my theoretical framework, as well as the main hypotheses. I then present my research design, including the operationalization of my main variables. I then discuss the results of the models before concluding with a brief discussion of the results.

2.2 Antecedents to Party Rebranding

I begin the analysis of why parties might rebrand by drawing attention to the peculiarity of rebranding. One of the core assumptions and findings of the literature on party change is that parties are conservative and risk averse institutions that avoid change (Panebianco, 1988; Budge, 1994; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Tavits, 2007; Somer-Topcu, 2009; Dalton, 2015). It is important to note that the literature does not argue that parties do not change at all; indeed, parties adjust or

tinker with their policies between elections (Laver, 2005). However, change is typically seen as slow and incremental (Michels, 1962) because large and significant changes to the party brand are inherently risky for two related reasons. From the perspective of spatial theory (Downs, 1957) voters would abandon a post-rebranded party in favor of an alternative closer to their ideal point (Downs, 1957; Budge, 1994; Cox, 1997; Adams et al. 2004). This would then naturally decrease the party's electoral performance. Relatedly, from the standpoint of cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) parties are the result of social relations and structures built into society. As such, different demographic groups vote for certain parties that reify their identity, with union worker support of Social Democratic Parties the quintessential example (Przeworski, 1986; Tavits and Potter, 2015; Koedam, 2022). A rebrand would call this identity into question.

Based on this reasoning, there are strong theoretical and empirical reasons for why it is disadvantageous for parties to significantly overhaul their brand. Yet, as documented in the introductory chapter, rebranding is, while far from a common strategy, widespread across Europe. In other words, there are dozens of cases of parties doing exactly the opposite of what would be expected based on the literature. This paradox begs the simple question of: why? Why would parties risk rebranding given the potentially catastrophic consequences for the party itself?

My core argument in this chapter is that parties rebrand when a political event leads to a party becoming more risk acceptant. I further posit that there is a spectrum of risk acceptance. At one end, parties are risk averse and rigid, unwilling to change the party in any way which might harm the party's electoral prospects. As parties move along the spectrum, they become more risk acceptant and more willing to change elements of the party brand. For example, Somer-Topcu (2009) makes the argument that parties change their policies when they become more risk acceptant, implying that the difference between a party not changing its policies vs. changing them

was some sort of movement from being risk averse to being more risk acceptant. Given how risk intensive a rebrand is, it stands to reason that party rebrands reflect a further movement along this spectrum. This reasoning implies that there is a point, or threshold, that represents the point at which a party becomes risk acceptant enough to rebrand. If the party does not pass the rebranding threshold, the party will not rebrand. On the other hand, if it does pass the threshold, it becomes risk acceptant enough to rebrand.

This argument can be seen visually in Figure 3, with the horizontal line representing movement along the risk spectrum with risk aversity on the left side of the line and risk acceptance on the right side of the line. The vertical red line is the rebranding threshold, or the level of risk acceptance the party needs to pass if it is to rebrand. If the party's level of risk assessment is at any point to the left of the vertical line, it will not rebrand, but if it is to the right of the vertical line, the party become risk acceptant enough to rebrand.

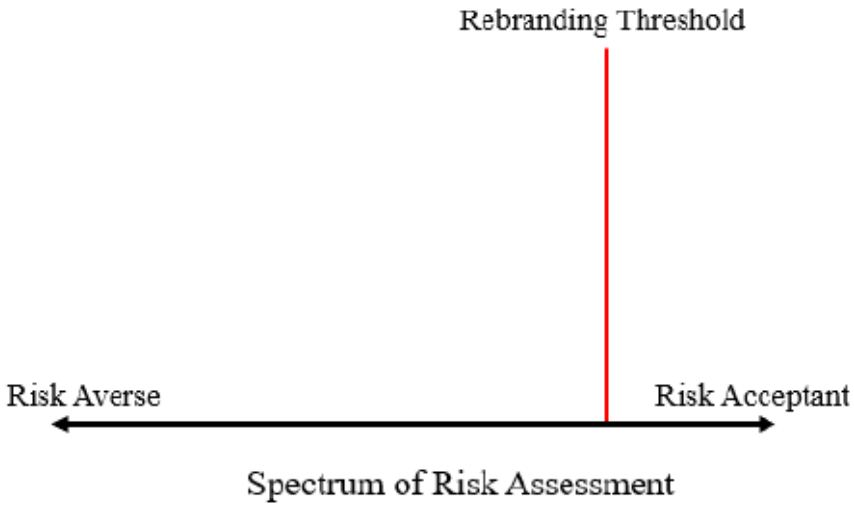

Figure 3: Party Risk Assesment

Based on this argument, there needs to be some factor or antecedent which makes the party more risk acceptant, thereby "pushing" the party along the spectrum and over the rebranding threshold, into territory where the party is willing to rebrand. In order to examine these antecedents,

I draw on Harmel \& Janda's (1994) seminal work on party change. Harmel and Janda's (1994) argument is that there are three paths to party change: an external path, and internal path, and a combination or interaction of the two. Applying this argument to rebranding, I argue that the main external antecedent to rebranding is decreases in a given party's electoral performance, and the main internal antecedent is the party leader. In the third track, these external and internal antecedents interact, meaning that decreases in electoral performance interact with party leader dynamics to produce a rebrand. I address each of these in turn.

2.2.1 External Track

I start by examining the external track to rebranding, which is decreases in a party's electoral performance. The mechanism behind this track is that decreases in electoral performance make it more difficult for the party to meet its primary goals (Janda et al., 1995). Scholars have long noted that parties possess a number of specific goals, namely votes, office, and policy, with votes being in the service of the other two goals (Strom, 1990; Stom and Muller, 1999), though importantly these goals are dynamic and can shift in relative importance over the course of a party's lifecycle (Spoon 2011). Parties thus want to either obtain office or enact policy, and losing votes puts both of these goals further out of reach. Losing votes inherently makes it more difficult to obtain office, since the more votes a party has the more seats or ministries it can control. On the policy front, some scholars have argued that policy goals supersede electoral ones, meaning that some parties care more about policy purity than electoral gain (Deschouwer, 1992). While it is true that parties care about electoral performance to different degrees, the enactment of policies also depends on a party's electoral performance. A party that obtains 12% of the seats in a legislature will have significantly more leverage in a legislature to enact policies than one that has 4% of the

seats. Furthermore, large losses or continuous decreases in vote share make the party less appealing as a coalition partner, and depending on the size or how sustained the losses are, puts the party's survival at risk.

Based on this argument, I assume that all parties will at the very least want to avoid electoral losses even if the party is not primarily concerned with office. As a result, decreases in electoral performance put all party goals further out of reach, meaning that decreases in a party's electoral fortunes would lead to changes to the party itself as it adjusts its electoral strategy to meet these goals. Indeed, there is a great deal of research investigating this question. On the policy front, Budge (1994) was one of the first to empirically analyze the idea that decreases in electoral performance lead to changes in a given party's policy. More specifically, he finds that if a party loses votes, it will shift its policies in the opposite direction from what its position was at the election at time t-1. Somer-Topcu (2009) and Budge (2010) provide similar results, as they find that decreases in electoral performance leads to changes in the parties policy position, meaning that parties become less risk averse after election losses. Pereura (2020) finds that parties even change their policies in response to short term changes in their standing in election polls prior to the actual election, indicating that parties are highly responsive to any changes in their electoral performance, even if these are potential changes rather than actual changes.

One expectation based on this literature is thus that decreases in vote share would predict a policy rebrand given that policy rebrands are essentially large policy changes. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, policy rebrands are only one type of rebrand, with the other being feature rebrands. As mentioned, feature rebrands have not been the focus on much scholarly work, but one illuminating article comes from Kim and Solt (2017). Kim and Solt (2017) argue and find strong evidence that large decreases in a party's average vote share, what they call an

electoral shock, predict party name changes, though importantly their work is not couched in a rebranding framework. As such, there is empirical evidence that decreases in electoral performance will predict both policy and feature rebrands.[6] My first hypothesis thus retests the findings of Kim and Solt (2017) and also adds policy rebranding to the overall model:

Hypothesis 1: A party will be more likely to rebrand its features and policies for the election at time t_0 following a large electoral loss.

2.2.2 Internal Track

In addition to the external track to a rebrand, based on the \cite{harmel1994} model, there is also an internal one. As such, I now turn to the internal track, specifically the party leader. I start with new party leaders. I expect that a new party leader will increase the likelihood that a party will rebrand either its features or policies independently of electoral performance because the new leader wants to become associated with the new brand. This strengthens the leader's position within the party and makes it less likely that they will be replaced, meaning that a rebrand would extend their time as party leader. A step by step explanation of this process will help explain this point. Imagine that a new party leader is elected, who then wants to remain the party leader for as long as possible. One way to do this would be to rebrand the party's features or policies. Doing so separates the current party from its past iterations, and since the new leader will be the primary spokesperson for the party (Andrews and Jackman, 2008) as voters tune into the rebrand they will come to associate the party with the new leader. This process played out with British leaders such

[6] An alternative possibility is that a sequence of losses would lead to a rebrand, though I do not find empirical support for this point

as Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, who each rebranded their parties in some capacity and then were seen as part of the party brand years after they had left office (French and Smith, 2010). Once voters associate the new brand with the new leader, it then becomes more difficult for the leaders' rivals to remove that leader because doing so could confuse voters, diluting the brand (Lupu 2016) as they become unsure of what the party stands for without the new leader. This, in turn, could harm the party electorally, which as mentioned is something all parties want to avoid. In sum, rebranding the party strengthens the party leader vis a vis the party, thereby extending their tenure over the party. As such, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2a (New Leader): A party with a new leader for the election at time t_0 will be more likely to rebrand than parties which did not change their leader.

While I expect that, in general, new leaders will be more likely to rebrand their party, there is an important confounding factor in this relationship, which is the fact that there is variation in the strength of party leaders which could affect how readily the party leader could rebrand the party. In general, I expect that parties with weak leaders will be less likely to rebrand than parties with strong leaders because parties with weak leaders lack the infrastructure or institutional powers which would enable a party leader to rebrand, regardless of whether a given leader wanted to rebrand. For example, a party with a strong leader might have the ability to remove party elites who disagree with them (Cross and Pilet, 2015). This would make a rebrand more likely because the leader could simply remove party officials who oppose the rebrand. In contrast, a party leader who does not have this authority would be weaker as there is no mechanism to remove party officials who might oppose the rebrand, thereby decreasing the likelihood that the party would rebrand since these officials could act as veto players (Tsebelis, 2011) especially in parties where leaders are directly accountable to elites (Katz and Mair, 1995).

While this argument has not been empirically investigated in terms of party rebranding, there is evidence that parties with stronger leaders are more likely to change. Ceron (2019) develops a formal model making this point, and finds that party leaders are able to overrule mid ranking elites, thereby bringing about party change (see also Katz and Mair, (1995); Katz (2001) for similar arguments). Similarly, in a cross-national study, Schumacher, (2018) find that parties with stronger leaders are indeed more likely change. As such, I posit that, in addition to changes in party leader, parties with stronger leaders will be more likely to rebrand, and that these variables will also interact.

H2b: Parties with stronger leaders will be more likely to rebrand for the election at time t_0 than parties with weaker leaders.

H2c: A party with a new leader for the election at time t_0 will be more likely to rebrand than parties which did not change their leader, conditional on the overall strength of the party leader.

I have thus far presented two tracks which can lead to a party rebranding: the external track and internal tracks. I now propose a third track, which is the interaction of the external and internal tracks. In this track, a party experiences a decrease in its electoral performance, which then prompts a leader to rebrand in order to recoup their losses. Note that while this track has a great deal of overlap with the previous tracks, there are some key differences. It is distinct from the external track because in the former track, the decreases in vote share alone were enough to prompt a rebrand. In the third track, the party experiences a decrease in electoral performance, but would not rebrand without the strong party leader. In other words, some parties will naturally rebrand in response to decreases in their vote share, while others will experience similar decreases in their electoral performance, but will need the addition of the party leader in order to rebrand. The

interaction track is also distinct from the internal track because of the mechanisms generating the motivation to rebrand. In the internal track, the party rebranded because the leader desired to maintain their position within the party. In the interaction track, the party leader is motivated by the decreases in vote share. Furthermore, I also expect that both the change in party leader and the leader's overall strength are important. Thus, my final hypothesis is:

H3: A party will be more likely to rebrand if it has a new leader, an effect that is conditional on the party experiencing decreases in its electoral performance and the overall strength of the party leader.

I conclude this section with an overall summary of my argument, which is also represented visually in Figure 4. There are three ways that a party might rebrand. First, some parties will experience a decrease in their electoral performance, which will then prompt them to rebrand for this reason alone. Among parties which experienced an electoral loss but did not rebrand, some will never rebrand. Similarly, independent of changes to the party's vote share, some parties will rebrand only because of leadership effects. However, not all parties under these leadership conditions will rebrand. Among the parties which did not rebrand solely due to leadership conditions, some will ultimately never rebrand. Others will rebrand, but only when interacted with decreases in the party's electoral performance. These three tracks, or pathways to a rebrand all make parties more risk acceptant, thereby overcoming the main obstacle to party change.

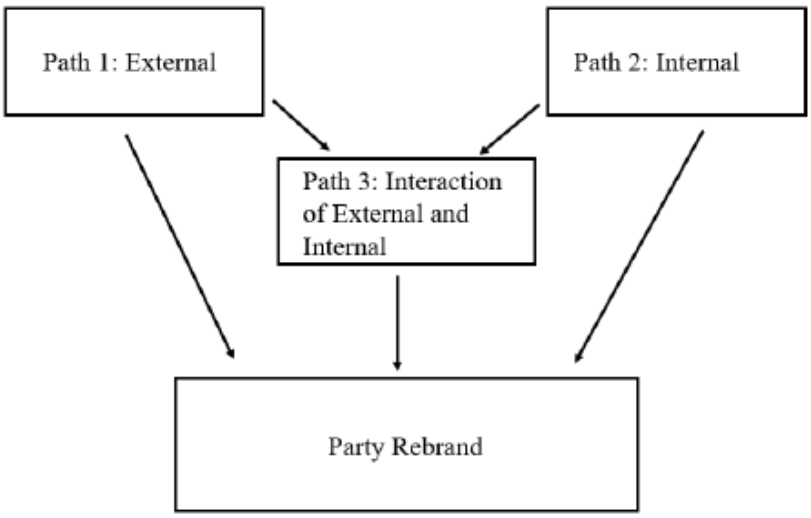

Figure 4: Pathways to a Rebrand

2.3 Research Design

2.3.1 Case Selection

I test my theoretical argument on 18 Western European countries from 1970-2019: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. I focus on Western Europe because, while Eastern European parties do change their name (Kim and Solt, 2017) the region's unique political history and relatively inchoate party system means that the logic and effects of rebranding might be different from Western Europe. I include all parties in these countries which competed in two or more elections. This was the only criteria for inclusion because a party must have competed in more than one election to have had the opportunity to rebrand.

2.3.2 Dependent Variables

My outcome variables are the feature rebrand and the policy rebrand. I operationalize a feature rebrand as a dummy variable equal to 1 if the party changed its name by a given election, and 0 if it did not (i.e., the name changed between the elections at time t-1 and time t_0). To measure the feature rebrand, I utilized the Comparative Manifesto Data (Volkens et al. 2018). In this dataset, each party is assigned an ID number, and I operationalize a name change as a situation when the listed name changes, but the ID number does not. The CMP is fairly strict in the assignment of a new ID number, and only does so when there was a legal change in the party's status, meaning that name changes are unlikely to be oversampled or conflated with related phenomena such as party splits or mergers.[7] Additionally, the total number of name changes in my data set is similar to that in the data set used by Kim and Solt (2017) and Borbath and Hutter (N.D.) despite the fact that these papers use data other than the CMP, indicating that my coding is robust to alternate data and operationalizations.

As mentioned in the Chapter 1, there are three types of policy rebrands. I define a positional rebrand as a large change in the party's overall left/right ideological position. To obtain a measure of a party's left/right position, I use the RILE scores taken from the CMP. The RILE scores are normally coded between -100 to 100, and as is standard practice I recoded these values so that they fall between 0-10 (Volkens et al. 2018). I then generated a "Shift" variable by subtracting the party's position at t$_0$ from its position at t-1, giving an indication of how much the party

[7] As of writing, the CMP does not provide written documentation on how coders decide when a party changes its name. This information was obtained via an email exchange with the current head of the CMP dataset

changed its position from election to election. Afterwards, I took the absolute value of this shift value, which then has a mean of 0.616 and a standard deviation of 0.646, and added these two values together to arrive at 1.26, and thus define a large policy shift as a shift greater than or equal to one standard deviation away from the mean of the shift. Lastly, like the feature rebrand, the policy rebrand is operationalized as a dummy variable with 1 equal to a shift greater than or equal to 1.26.[8]

For the salience rebrand, I also relied on the CMP dataset. In this situation, I followed Tavits and Potter (2015) and Koedem (2022) and added up 25 economic issues into one economic dimension and did the same with 25 cultural issues. I then use the salience measure developed by Koedem (2022) and subtract the economic dimension from the cultural dimension, and then divide this value by the economic dimension plus the cultural dimension. This produces a ratio of how much a given manifesto discusses economic vs. cultural issues, and ranges from -1 to 1 with -1 equal to a manifesto that only discusses cultural issues and 1 equal to a manifesto that only discusses economic issues. As with the policy rebrand, I am interested in how parties change their issue salience between elections. I thus subtracted the salience measure at t_0 from the salience measure at t-1, and then took the absolute value of this difference. Afterwards, I once again took the mean value of this change in salience measure, 0.228. and added the standard deviation, 0.226, to arrive at 0.454. A salience rebrand is thus a dummy variable equal to 1 if a party changed its overall salience by at least 0.454 points and zero otherwise. Finally, the third type of policy rebrand where the party changed both its left/right and salience positions is simply measured by multiplying the policy rebrand and the salience rebrand. Notably, I removed the programmatic

[8] In the Appendix I test alternate cutoff points. My main results are robust to this alternate operationalization

rebrands from the positional and salience rebrands to isolate the effects of the two latter types of policy rebrands.

As a final note, all types of policy rebrands were operationalized as a dummy variable for two reasons. First, feature and policy rebranding are two versions of the same electoral strategy, and since feature rebranding is naturally a dummy variable, operationalizing the policy rebranding in this manner made direct comparison of the effects more intuitive. More importantly, a dummy variable theoretically matches how I conceptualized a policy rebrand. The policy rebrand is a qualitative change in the party's policy profile, meaning that there is a categorical distinction between a policy shift that is routine, and one that is so distinct that it is a policy rebrand. From the perspective of the party, the party thus makes a decision to either change policy by a normal amount or decides to change by a significant amount. As such, while some variation is lost, a binary measure most closely resembles the concept of a policy rebrand.

2.3.3 Independent Variables

There are two main independent variables which might predict rebranding: decreases in electoral performance and leadership dimensions. Starting with decreases in electoral performance, following Kim and Solt (2017) I operationalize this variable as a large deviation from the party's average electoral performance, or "electoral shock," measured as the difference between the party's vote share at t-1 and its average performance, divided by the average, and then multiplied by negative 1. The one modification made to this formula is that I used the party's average over the three elections prior to the election at t-1 instead of its lifetime average since, theoretically, an older party is likely not making electoral decisions for the current election based on its performance 30 years ago.

The second independent variable is aspects of party leadership, of which there are two types: change in the party leader and leadership strength. Change in the party leader is measured as a dummy variable with 1 equal to a situation where the party had a new leader for a given election, and 0 otherwise. To obtain data on this, I consulted the election reports in West European Politics, Kessing's world archives, and other online databases. For the variable on leader strength, I obtained data from the V-Dem Party Dataset, which asks country experts to score parties in different countries on a variety of indicators (Lindberg et al., 2022). More specifically, I use the "Personalization of Party" variable. In the data set, the wording for this question is "To what extent is this party a vehicle for the personal will and priorities of the individual leader?" with higher values indicating a party where power is more concentrated around the party leader. The country expert responses are coded as a 0-4 ordinal scale, and then V-Dem converts these into a continuous measure which is the operationalization I utilized since this latter operationalization is recommended for cross sectional data (Lindberg et al. 2022).

2.3.4 Control Variables

I include several party level control variables which might affect both the independent and dependent variables (Wooldridge 2005; King and Zeng 2006). First, I include the effective number of political parties (ENPP) (Laakso \& Taagepera, 1979). Next, I include party age. Party age is measured as the log of the number of years since the party was founded. I expect that older parties will be less likely to rebrand since they have a longstanding association with a particular brand (Janda et al. 1995). I also include a dummy variable of whether the party was in the governing coalition immediately prior to the election at t_0 as I expect governing parties to be less likely to rebrand while in office since this would amount to a rejection of their own identity while in office

(and prior research has found that parties in government are less likely to change their policies, see, for example, Somer-Topcu 2009; Kluver and Spoon 2016).

Lastly, I include controls for party size, family, and type. I control for party size with a dummy variable of whether the party is small, with small parties being those with a vote share less than or equal to 5\% (West and Spoon 2013). Party family is operationalized as a series of dummy variables that takes on the value of 1 if a given party was a member of said party. I generally used the same party families as the CMP, and Social Democratic parties are omitted as the reference category. For party type, following Hobolt and Tilley (2016) and de Vries and Hobolt (2020), I use the distinction between challenger and non-challenger parties, with the former being parties which rarely participate in government. This feature is intended to capture the distinction between traditional parties such as Social Democratic Parties and newer parties such as Green parties and far-right parties.[9] For a measure of challenger parties, in general I use the measure of Hobolt and Tilley (2016) and categorize a challenger party as a party that has never served in government, and thus created a dummy variable that takes on a value of 1 if the party is a challenger party. However, I made a minor modification and also included parties which had only served in government once. This was done in order to incorporate parties such as 5Star and Syriza, which have served in government but otherwise fit the description of a challenger party.[10] This operationalization also addresses one of the main criticisms of the challenger party typology (see Spoon 2021 for more

[9] The alternative is the niche vs. mainstream party typology, which overlaps with the challenger party typology in that they both attempt to categorize more recent party types which differ in their behavior. As a robustness check, I use the niche party distinction and results are consistent.

[10] Results are consistent if the original operationalization is used.

information). As my dependent variables are binary, each model uses a logit estimation procedure with country and decade fixed effects, and standard errors clustered by country.[11]

2.4 Data Analysis

I begin the analysis by testing the external track hypothesis, which posited that, in line with Kim and Solt (2017), a large electoral loss would predict whether a party will rebrand. Models 1-4 in Table 2.1 test these hypotheses without any of the party leader variables to establish a baseline of results. The regression results verify the results of Kim and Solt (2017) in that electoral shocks predict feature rebrands (or name changes): the point estimate is significant and positive in Model 1. Interestingly, however, electoral shocks do not predict any of the different types of policy rebrand. Therefore, there is support for H1, but only for the feature rebrand.

To analyze the substantive effects, Figure 5 charts the changes in the predicted probability of a feature rebranding occurring at different levels of electoral shock: the minimum level of shock (-1.26), the mean (0.07), one standard deviation above (0.221) and below the mean (-0.21) and the maximum level of shock (1). At low levels (or a gain in vote share), there is almost a 0\% probability that a party will rebrand. The graph visually indicates that for low levels of the electoral shock variable (i.e., when a party's vote share greatly increases) there is almost no chance that a party will change its name. This probability increases to around 3\% by the mean value of an electoral shock, and then increases further to around 15% by the largest possible electoral shock.

[11] Given the small number of feature rebrands, an alternative specification is to use rare events logit. My main results are robust to this model and can be seen in Appendix B.}

Based on these results, it appears that while electoral shocks are strongly predictive of a feature rebrand, the probability of a rebrand occurring is extremely low. Most electoral shocks are clustered around the mean, and the maximum value of the electoral shock variable represents the single largest loss in vote share in the entire post war era, meaning that high values of the electoral shock variable are unlikely to occur. This model is consistent when the two leadership variables are added to the model, indicating that parties can rebrand for external dynamics independently of internal ones.

Table 2: Effects of an Electoral Loss

	Model 1: Feature	Model 2: Positional	Model 3: Salience	Model 4: Programmatic
(Intercept)	−1.82	−3.45**	−2.74**	−18.46***
	(1.06)	(1.15)	(0.89)	(2.17)
Electoral Shock	1.67***	0.04	0.30	−0.10
	(0.64)	(0.55)	(0.32)	(0.44)
ENPP	0.04	−0.17	−0.15*	−0.51*
	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.08)	(0.26)
Governing Status	−0.34	0.19	−0.22	−0.34
	(0.44)	(0.20)	(0.16)	(0.26)
Party Age	−1.02*	−0.51*	0.21	−0.38
	(0.41)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.39)
Small Dummy	0.47	−0.60	−0.01	−0.59
	(0.28)	(0.31)	(0.23)	(0.39)
Challenger Dummy	−0.40	−0.08	−0.02	−0.50
	(0.47)	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.38)
Socialist	0.33	0.06	−0.04	−0.09
	(0.51)	(0.35)	(0.40)	(0.57)
Green	0.37	−1.20	−0.05	−16.94***
	(0.42)	(0.76)	(0.47)	(0.73)
Conservative	0.91	0.38	0.25	0.01
	(0.54)	(0.49)	(0.27)	(0.77)
Christian Democrat	0.93**	−0.07	0.43	0.34
	(0.34)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.54)
Liberal	0.57	0.13	0.47*	1.02**
	(0.62)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.37)
Far-Right	0.68	0.22	0.42	1.14
	(0.36)	(0.22)	(0.37)	(0.63)
Agrarian	1.02	0.26	0.10	1.46*
	(0.63)	(0.57)	(0.42)	(0.59)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
AIC	614.36	844.89	1387.56	390.13
BIC	831.77	1062.26	1604.85	607.42
Num. obs.	1948	1946	1942	1942

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Moving on from the main effects, it appears that as parties age, they become less likely to undergo either a feature or positional rebrand. Interestingly, it also appears that Christian Democratic parties are significantly more likely to change their name when compared to Social Democratic parties. This finding may indicate that the Christian Democratic brand is more malleable that that of other parties, though further research is needed on that point.

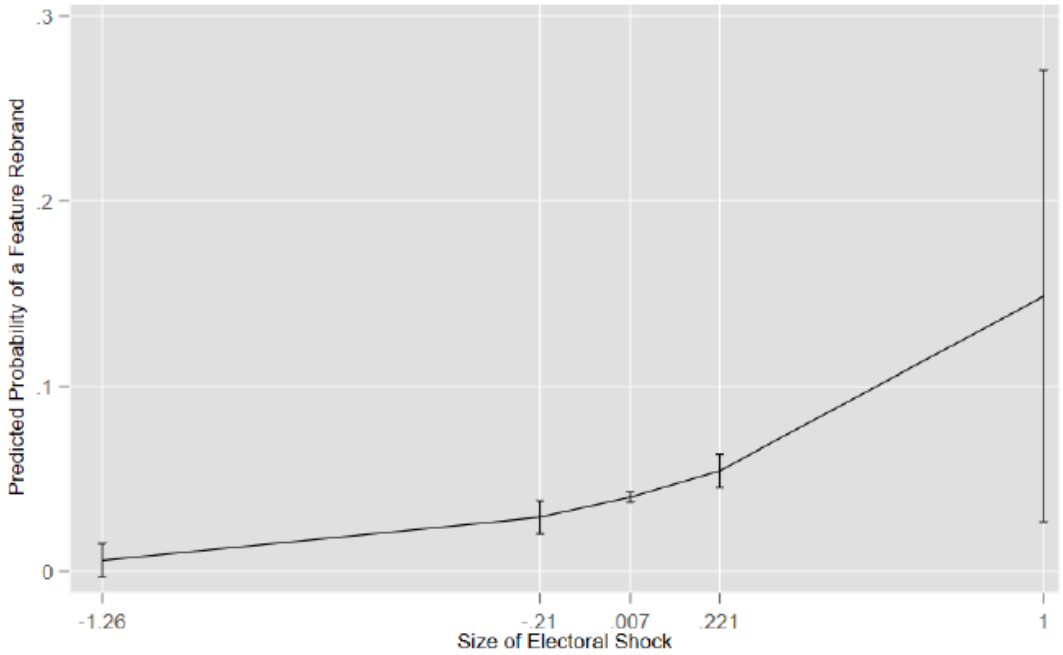

Figure 5: Predicted Probability of a Rebrand (External)

I now turn to an empirical investigation of the internal track, which posited that parties would rebrand either because of a change in the party leader (H2a) or because some parties institutionally stronger party leader (H2b), or the interaction of these (H2c). Note that because electoral shocks likely predict a change in party leader as well, I included this variable in the leadership models to control for this effect and to better isolate the effects of only the leadership variables. When tested in isolation (i.e., just the change in party leader variable or just the leader strength variable) there appears to be no significant effect of party leader dynamics on the probability of a party rebranding. The story is different, however, if the two leadership variables are interacted with one another, as the interaction term strongly predicts a feature rebrand. Once

again, there is no substantive effect for the three types of policy rebrand. This effect is graphed in Figure 2.4, which includes the predicted probability of a feature rebrand across the range of leader strength for parties which had a leader change (blue) and those that did not (black).

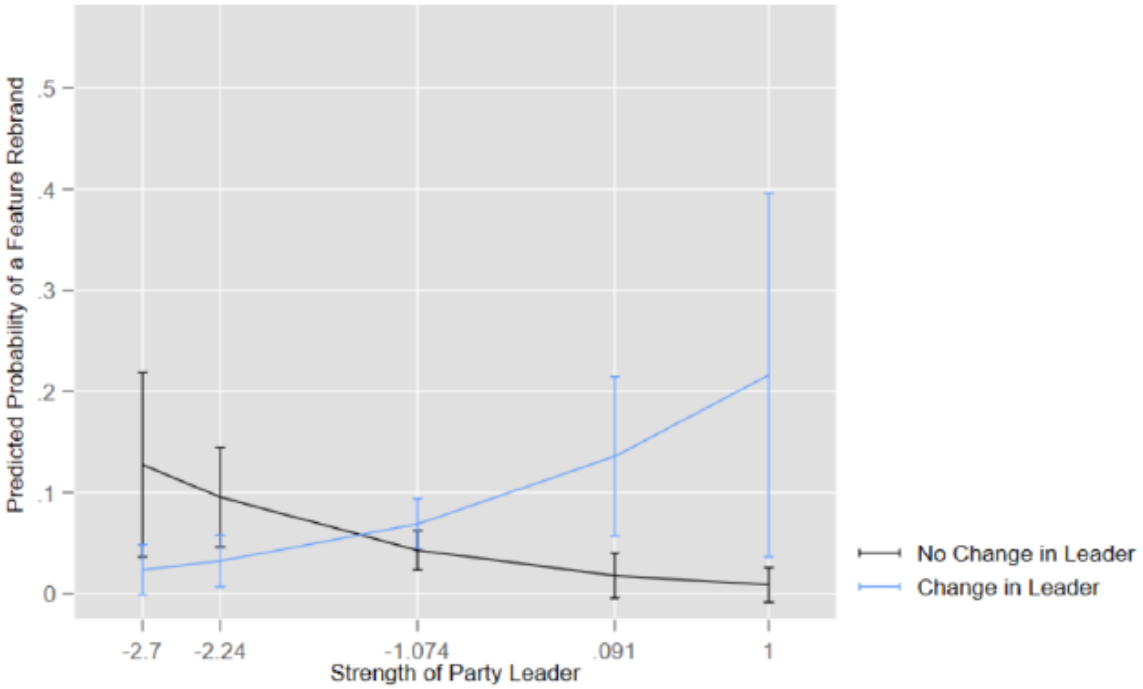

Figure 6: Predicted Probabilty of a Rebrand (Internal)

The results demonstrate that when party leaders are weak (-2.7 and -2.24), parties are more likely to rebrand when there is no change in the party leader (12% probability) than when there is a change in the party leader (2.3%). As party leaders increase in strength, this effect reverses, and the party becomes more likely to change its name when there is a change in the party leader, contingent on the strength of the leader. At the mean level of strength, there is a 4% probability that a party will change its name if there is no change in the leader, while there is a 6% of a feature rebrand if the party did change its leader. This grows even further as leader strength increases, as at one standard deviation above the mean (0.91) there is a 13% chance of a feature rebrand, though the estimates become increasingly imprecise as leader strength increases. Recall that this model included electoral shock as a covariate, so this leadership effect on feature rebranding exists when

controlling for changes in a party's vote share, providing evidence that parties can also rebrand for factors beyond changes in vote share, thereby providing support for H2c.

Thus far, both external and internal dynamics have predicted a feature rebrand, but neither of these pathways to a rebrand predicted any form of policy rebranding. The final pathway discussed in the theory section is an interaction of the external and internal dynamics. To test this theory, I interacted the change in party leader variable with electoral shock and used the leader strength variable as a covariate. A separate model reversed this, with the leader strength variable interacted with the electoral shock variable, but the results were insignificant across all four types of rebranding so I only present the results of the interaction between the change in leader and electoral shocks. As before, I plotted the changes across the minimum level of shock (-1.26), the mean (0.07), one standard deviation above (0.221) and below the mean (-0.21) and the maximum level of shock (1).

Starting with the feature rebrand models (7a), the regression line for the change in party leader model is mostly flat, indicating that there is little change in the predicted probability of a feature rebrand for parties which had a change in leader across levels of electoral shocks, though at the mean level of electoral shock, parties which changed their leader were slightly more likely undergo a feature rebrand (6%) than parties which did not (4%). At higher levels of electoral shock, a feature rebrand is significantly more likely when there is no change in the party leader (35\%). In other words, parties which experience an above average electoral shock and then do not change the party leader are more likely to change their name. This pattern repeats for the programmatic rebrand, where the slope of the change in party leader regression line is flat. When there is no change in party leader, the likelihood of a programmatic rebrand increases along with the size of the electoral shock. Thus, as with the feature rebrand, a party which did not change the party leader

is more likely to undergo a programmatic rebrand if it also experienced a larger than average electoral shock.

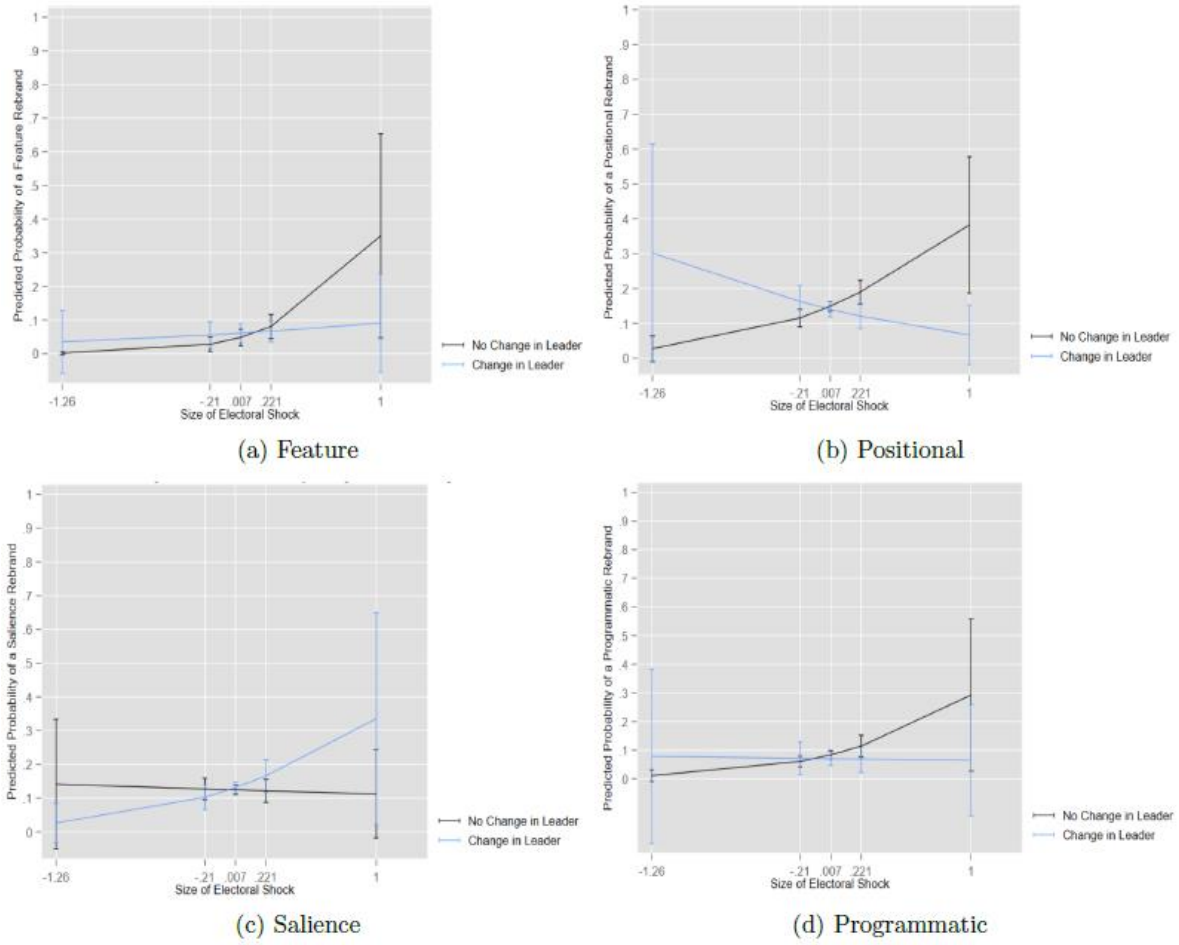

Figure 7: Predicted Probabilities, Interaction

The results of the positional and salience rebrands are different. Starting with the positional rebrand, the likelihood of this type of rebrand among parties that changed their party leader is higher at lower levels of electoral shock but declines as the size of the electoral shock increases. For example, at one standard deviation below the mean, the likelihood of a positional rebrand is 16%, but this value decreases to 14% at the mean. In contrast, for parties which did not change their leader, there is an 11% chance of a rebrand one standard deviation below the mean but 16% at the mean level of electoral shock. Once again, after the mean, the likelihood of a positional

rebrand increases among parties which did not change leaders, while decreases among those that did not.

Salience rebrands, on the other hand, exhibit a pattern distinct from the other types of rebrand in that the likelihood of a party undergoing this type of rebrand increased commensurate with an increase in the electoral shock if the party changed its leader. For example, at one standard deviation above the mean level of electoral shock, there is a 16% probability of a party rebranding if there was a change in the party leader and 12% if the party did not change its leader. In sum, a change in the party leader and the size of an electoral shock do interact with one another. For the feature, positional, and programmatic rebrand, parties which did not change their leader were most likely to rebrand at high levels of electoral shock, though for positional rebrands parties which did change their leader were more likely to rebrand at lower levels of electoral shock. Salience rebrands differed in that parties which changed their leader were more likely to undergo this type of rebrand at higher levels of electoral shock.

2.5 Discussion

This chapter examines why parties might rebrand, which I argued was an intriguing question because parties are typically seen as conservative and risk averse institutions. Prior work on this question had posited that one of the primary reasons that parties rebrand is because of ``electoral shocks,'' or situations where a party loses a significant amount of its vote share between two election cycles (Kim and Solt, 2017). I advance this argument in two ways. First, I re-test this argument on feature rebrands and policy rebrands, testing whether large decreases in vote share also lead to increases in the probability of a policy rebrand. Second, drawing on the arguments on

party change pioneered by (Harmel and Janda, 1994). I posited that parties might rebrand because of external factors (decreases in vote share) and internal factors, which I argue is driven by party leaders. I also examine whether the interaction of these two factors plays a role in the rebranding process.

In a cross national examination of this argument, I find support for the contention that all three tracks lead to party rebranding, though not all three tracks predict all types of rebranding. The external track of decreases in party vote share was highly predictive of a feature rebrand only, as was a test of the role of party leaders. In other words, parties might rebrand because of decreases in their electoral performance or because of a new party leader, but these factors can operate independently of one another. The interaction model testing the influence of the internal and external dynamics found evidence in favor of this track for all four types of rebranding, indicating that these two factors play a role in determining whether a party will rebrand.

One interesting dynamic that emerged from the results is that parties are more likely to undergo a feature, positional, and programmatic rebrands at higher levels of electoral shock when there was no change in the party leader, when an *a priori* assumption was that parties would be most likely to rebrand when there was a large shock and a new leader as this would provide the greatest impetus for a rebrand. One possible explanation for this finding is that a large electoral shock and a new leader are two destabilizing events, and that the new party leader does not wish to ``rock the boat'' and add a further destabilizing event. In other words, a new party leader has a more tenuous grip on their position as party leader, and a rebrand might weaken their position within the party, making them less likely to rebrand. There may also be self-selection involved, as party leaders who survive a large electoral loss and maintain their position are likely stronger leaders overall, thus leading to a rebrand and aligning with the results seen in Figure 7.

The one exception to this trend is for the salience rebrand, where a party which had a new leader was also more likely to rebrand if there was also a large electoral shock. Recall that the salience rebrand also includes situations where a party added new issues to its overall policy platform. It is thus possible that parties are more likely to add new issues to their policy profile following the accession of a new leader and an electoral shock. It is also possible that new leaders are able to take this action over other types of rebrand because this rebrand does not completely change the party in the same way as the other rebrands. Feature, positional, and programmatic rebrands might provoke backlash among different partisan groups (Lupu, 2016). A salience rebrand allows the party to keep its core issues and visual branding elements in place while still enabling the party to change in ways that are potentially beneficial.

3.0 The Party Level Consequences of a Rebrand

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter investigated why parties undergo one of the two major types of rebrand. I proposed a theory arguing that parties rebrand because of one of three factors. First is external changes, operationalized as decreases in a party's vote share. Second is internal changes, or changes in the position of party leader and the strength of the party leader. Lastly is a combination of the external and internal factors. The empirical models provide general support for these hypotheses. Changes in a party's vote share predict and leadership dynamics predict feature rebrands, and a combination of the internal and external dynamics predict feature and the three forms of a policy rebrand.

This chapter and the following one examine the downstream consequences of a party rebrand, or more simply what happens when a party undergoes a rebrand. This chapter investigates this question at the party level i.e., what are the electoral consequences of the different types of party rebrand? The interesting factor in this question is that it is unclear whether party rebrand are an effective or ineffective strategy without examining the data. I thus propose that a rebrand will either increase or decrease a party's vote share. Reasons for improvement could be that the rebrand increases attention, interest, and excitement for the party. Decreases could be the result of partisan backlash, negative media attention, or attacks from political rivals. Using the same dataset as in the previous chapter, I find differences between the two types of rebrand. Feature rebrands increase party vote share for the election immediately after the rebrand while policy rebrands are ineffective

and do not increase party vote share, regardless of whether the policy rebrand was in terms of position, salience, or both.

This chapter contributes both to our understanding of parties themselves and how voters respond to the strategic actions taken by political parties. In terms of parties themselves, the significant results for the feature rebrand provides evidence for one of the major contentions in this manuscript: that aspects of parties and party brands that are not directly related to policy are important elements of parties more generally. The literature on political parties, especially research on party brands, has focused on party policies (Snyder and Ting, 2002; Butler et al., 2014; Lupu, 2016), but the finding that changes in party features can lead to increases in party performance while the same cannot be said for party policies demonstrates that parties are more than mere vehicles for policies, and possess other important attributes worthy of investigation. In terms of voter responses to party strategies, it is important to note that party features contain many notable visual elements that are at the forefront of any election campaign, whereas policies are more abstract. The overall implication is thus that, since voters appear to respond to changes in the visual elements of a campaign rather than the substance of a campaign, voters are most likely to respond to prominent and easy to digest signals.

3.2 The Party Level Effects of a Rebrand

In this section, I outline a theoretical framework developing the logic behind why a party rebrand might either increase or decrease a party's vote share. Before doing so, however, it is important to keep in mind the main finding in the last chapter, that decreases in a party's vote share is a powerful indicator in whether a party will rebrand. Because decreases in vote share are driving

a rebrand, it stands to reason that the main goal of rebranding is to recover the party's lost vote share, or at the very least, prevent further erosion in the party's performance. The overall question in this chapter is thus: does the rebrand accomplish its primary goal of reversing downward electoral trends?

My first argument related to this question is that the rebrand itself exerts a direct effect on a party's electoral performance where voters update their assessments of the party upon learning of the party rebrand. In other words, as soon as voters learn of either the change in name or policies, they will begin changing their perception of the party itself, leading to changes in voting behavior. What might vary is where the voters learn of the rebrand. Many, if not most, will likely learn of the rebrand from the news, as rebrands are covered or discussed in news articles (e.g., see the Guardian (2018) for an article on the *Front National* changing its name). Parties also want voters to learn of the rebrand, and after the rebrand will go on extensive speaking tours, appearing on TV or radio (Campbell et al. 1960; Mandelson, 2010). Other voters might learn from other promotional campaign materials such as campaign ads or pamphlets. Lastly, individuals might learn of the rebrand from associates in their social network who can often exert strong effects on voting preferences (Baker et al. 2016). As such, while the sources of the information of the rebrand might vary extensively, the information itself is likely what induces a change in voting behavior and, by extension the party's electoral performance.

A key question arising from this argument is the extent to which voters notice and respond to rebrands when they occur given the long-standing finding in the literature that voters are poorly informed on political issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Zaller, 1992) as well as the mixed evidence that they update their knowledge of party positions after policy shifts occur (Adams et al. 2011; see also Fernandez-Vazquez (2014) for different findings). That said, research has found that

voters do respond to some signals. For example, voters use governing coalitions to infer a given party's ideological position, indicating that voters respond to highly visible signals (Adams et al., 2016; Fortunato, 2019; Kluver and Spoon, 2020). If voters do respond to notable signals, it seems likely that rebrands are another highly visible signal that voters are likely to notice. As mentioned, feature rebrands are quite rare, making it likely that these changes would be discussed in the media. Furthermore, the party name and its visual campaign materials such as the logo are at the forefront of any electoral campaign, making it likely that voters do notice and respond to feature rebrands. While the evidence on voter response to policy shifts in general is mixed, it seems likely that voters would also respond to policy rebrands given that, by definition, these are complete overhauls in how the party is positioning itself ideologically.

While fully establishing this link is beyond the scope of this project, to provide some evidence of the link between voter attention and rebranding, in Figure 8 I chart Google trends data for Marine Le Pen's *Rassamblement National*, a French far-right party that changed its name from the *Front National* in 2018. The party announced the name change following its party conference in March of that year, and based on the data, searches for both party names were highest in the days following the name change, and searches for either party name never came close to the peak seen in March of 2018. As such, these data suggest that, at the very least, feature rebrands have the potential to generate interest in the party, though it is important to keep in mind that this is one of the largest parties in France, and feature rebrands for less prominent parties might not generate similar levels of interest. Google trends data are based on relative searches over a period of time, so the peak search in March of 2018 was point at which most people were searching for the party names, and all other data are relative to this peak.

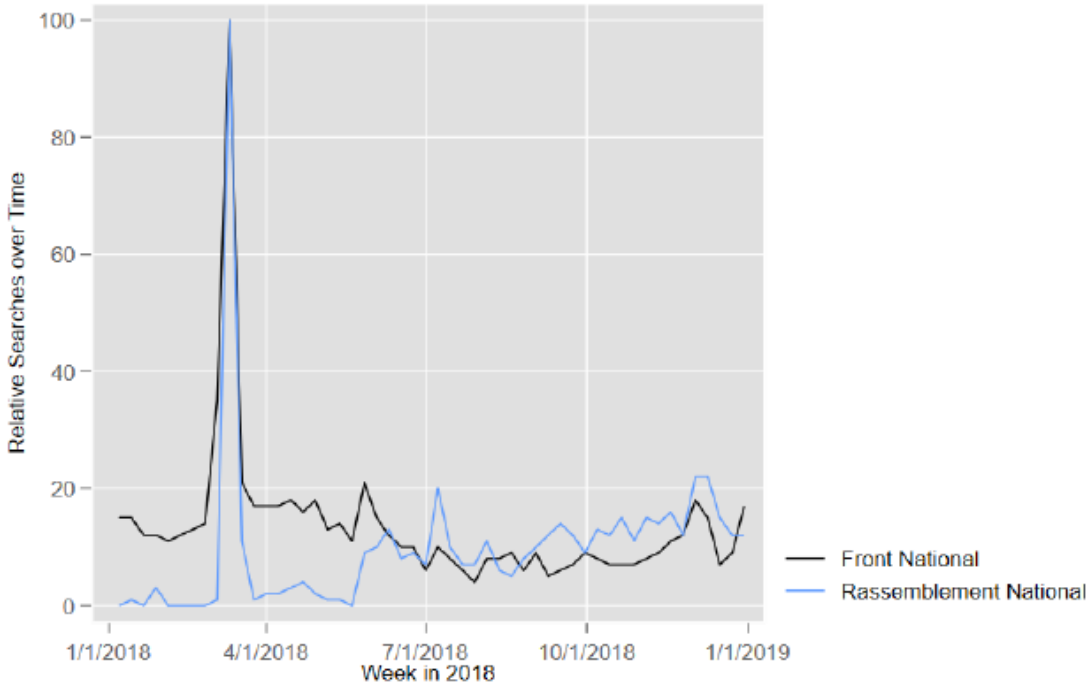

Figure 8: Google Searches for FN/RN, 2018

After the rebrand occurs and voters incorporate the information into their assessments of the party, there are two competing arguments for the effects on the party's electoral performance: the rebrand either has a positive effect on electoral performance, as desired by the party, or a negative one. I first explore why rebrands might increase vote share. One reason could simply be that a rebrand, especially a feature rebrand, is vague enough that voters can project their own desires onto the party, leading them to see the party as closer to their own preferences even if this is not the case. Second, as attention to the party increases, more voters will be discussing the party, which might increase interest in the party. The rebrand also makes the party feel new or fresh, and research has found that new parties benefit simply by being new (Sikk, 2012). This, in turn, draws in new voters while also leading voters who had previously discounted the party to reevaluate, and possibly support, the party. Furthermore, parties often benefit simply by being in the public eye, as this prevents them from being ignored or forgotten about. Indeed, smaller and lesser-known parties often take actions specifically to increase the amount of attention they receive. For example,

research on small parties has found that these types of parties run in presidential elections that they cannot hope to win or take extreme positions on different issues because taking these kinds of actions allows them to remain relevant (Huckfeldt et al., 2005; Wagner, 2012; West and Spoon, 2013; Abou-Chadi and Orlowski, 2016). As such, rebranding is another method which will increase the amount of attention parties are receiving, thereby increasing their electoral support.

The other alternative is that rebranding will have negative consequences for the party, an effect which might stem from several different sources. First, the rebranding could be framed negatively within the media itself, with pundits or commentators speculating that the party is desperate, or taking these actions because it is out of touch with the electorate. In this latter situation, negative media attention would then lead to decreased electoral support for the party since voters would likely distrust the party or become further disillusioned by its prospects. Second, changes to the parties' features and/or policies might prompt backlash among party members or activists, thereby decreasing the party's support among its current and most committed members. As an example, after the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (Italian Communist Party) rebranded to the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (Democratic Party of Left) in the 1990s, many activists were so upset with the rebrand that they broke off and formed a splinter party known as the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation Party) (Kertzer, 1996). Lastly, a rebrand opens the party to attack from its rivals, who can accuse the party of not having a strong identity or not standing up for its values (see Somer-Topcu, (2017) for a similar argument). Both the argument that rebrands increase vote share and the inverse argument that it decreases vote share thus make theoretical sense, and it is impossible to know which is more accurate without analyzing the data. As such, I propose competing hypotheses for each direction, as well as each type of rebrand to leave open the possibility that feature and policy rebrands differ in their effects:

H1a: Parties which undergo a feature rebrand will have better electoral performance than parties which did not rebrand at the next election.

H1b: Parties which undergo a feature rebrand will have worse electoral performance than parties which did not rebrand at the next election.

H2a: Parties which undergo a policy rebrand will have better electoral performance than parties which did not rebrand at the next election.

H2b: Parties which undergo a policy rebrand will have worse electoral performance than parties which did not rebrand at the next election.

3.3 Research Design

The design portion of this chapter is similar to that of the prior chapter, as the empirical analysis of this chapter utilizes the same data (239 parties from 18 countries), only in this analysis the data extend back to 1945 instead of 1970 since, in the previous chapter, data on party leader strength began in 1970. The main dependent variable of the previous chapter, the different types of party rebranding, becomes the independent variable in this chapter and its operationalized the same way. In this chapter, I am interested in how party rebranding affects electoral performance, and as such my primary dependent variable is party vote share for the election at time t_0. In general, the control variables are also the same, which include the effective number of parties, the governing status of the party, party age, party family, and party type. I also add the party's current policy positions as an additional control, as this could affect rebranding and its electoral

performance also depends on its policies at a given election. This variable is operationalized as the party's current left/right score multiplied by its salience score.

The findings from the previous chapter are also important here because they have implications for the empirical model. In short, because parties are likely to rebrand because of changes in their vote share and/or changes in the party leader, there will be selection bias in the model because not all parties are equally likely to rebrand. Furthermore, among parties that are struggling or have a new leader, some will rebrand while others will not (and the parties on a downward electoral trend or have a new leader that do not rebrand are the counterfactual group). As such, to control for this process, I add an electoral history control variable, measured as the average of the party's electoral performance across elections t-1, t-2, and t-3, and the change in leadership dummy variable that was used as an independent variable in Chapter 2.The overall model is an OLS with party and decade fixed effects, and standard errors are clustered by country.

3.4 Data Analysis

I begin the analysis by testing H1a and H1b, which posited that a feature rebrand would either increase (H1a) or decrease (H1b) party vote share. Figure 3.2 presents the regression results for a model testing the effects of feature rebrands on the party's vote share at election t_0. The results of the models provide support for H1a: feature rebrands appear to increase vote share at the current election. The point estimate, significant at the 0.05 level, indicates that parties which underwent a feature rebrand had a vote share that was 0.74 percentage points higher than parties that did not undergo a feature rebrand. Since I control for electoral history, this point estimate likely reflects a regression to the mean electoral performance of the party, or an overall stabilization in the party's

performance. The other covariates are all in the expected direction: as the ENPP increases, vote share decreases as the party system becomes more crowded, parties in government tend to lose vote share, and small parties by definition have lower vote shares. One interesting finding is the leadership dummy, which indicates that parties which changed their leader had a vote share roughly 1.68 percentage points lower than parties which did not change their leader, which is noteworthy since on average parties change their leader every election.

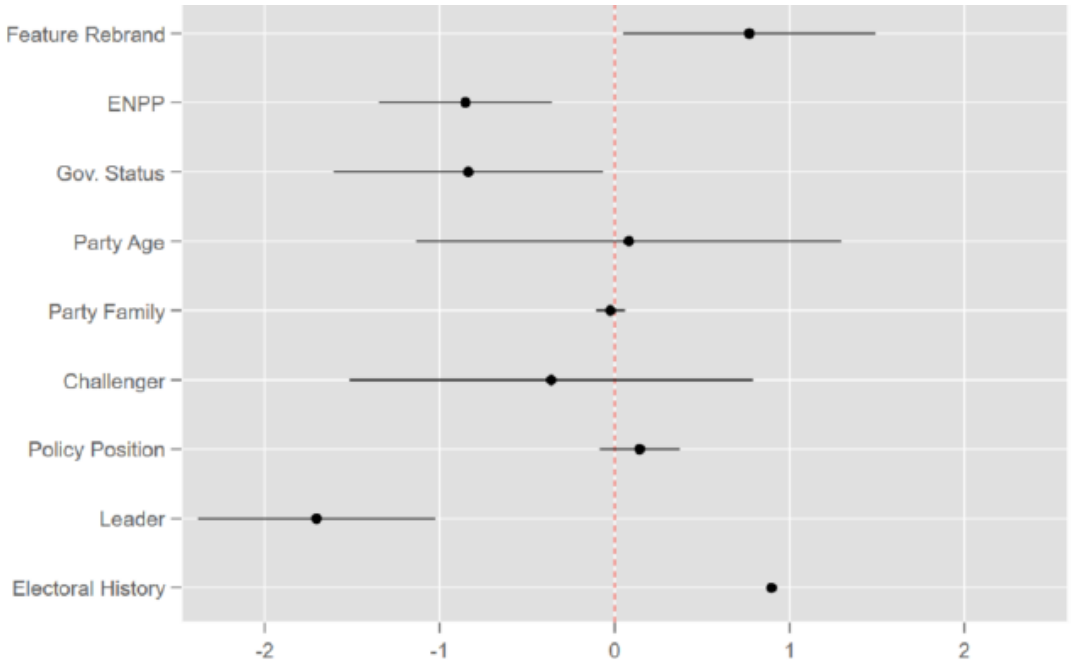

Figure 9: Electoral Effects of a Feature Rebrand

While these results do support H1a in the sense that the point estimate is significant and positive, it is important to note that the overall effect is small, as a less than 1 percentage point increase in vote share is unlikely to be decisive even in close elections. This result initially implies that this is not a hugely beneficial electoral strategy that remakes the entire electoral environment. However, before discounting this result as negligible, it is important to keep two points in mind. First, this overall effect depends on the size of the party. An increase in performance of this size would benefit small parties more so than large ones. Furthermore, this increase could be the factor

which allows a party to obtain a seat in the legislature. For example, if a Green party were in a country with a 5% threshold and the party was averaging 4.5% before the rebrand, the rebrand could conceivably push the party into a position where it can gain seats in the legislature. The second point is that since parties on downward electoral trends are the ones most likely to rebrand, any increase in vote share is beneficial since this represents an improvement, or an overall stabilization in the party's electoral standing. In other words, even if a feature rebrand does not produce a large increase in vote share, after rebranding, parties are no longer hemorrhaging support, which in turn places the party in a more competitive position than it was prior to the rebrand. From this perspective, feature rebrands are indeed effective electoral strategies because it allows parties to live on and "fight another day."

Next, I test hypotheses H2a and H2b, which posited that policy rebrands would either increase or decrease party vote share. Table 3.1 contains the results of several models testing these hypotheses. Model 2 tests the positional rebrand, Model 3 tests the salience rebrand, and Model 4 tests the programmatic rebrand, which was the interaction of the two prior models. As mentioned, Models 2 and 3 omit the cases in which a party underwent the programmatic rebrand to isolate the effects of rebranding in a given way. The dependent variable in each model is party vote share at t_0. Each type of policy rebrand was operationalized as a dummy variable, so all point estimates are the intercept differences between rebranding vs. not rebranding.

Despite the point estimates being negative, the models indicate that, across the board, policy rebrands have no effect on party vote share, regardless of whether the independent variable is a change in position, a change in salience, or both. As such, while the results do not directly map onto H2b, which predicted that policy rebrands would decrease vote share, the results do point in the direction of this being an ineffective electoral strategy in that it does not allow the party to

reverse its downward electoral trend. There is thus a difference between the two types of rebrand, with feature rebrands appearing to be an effective strategy and policy rebrands an ineffective strategy.

Table 3: Electoral Effects of Policy Rebranding

	Model 2: Positional Rebrand	Model 3: Salience Rebrand	Model 4: Programmatic Rebrand
(Intercept)	5.62**	5.51**	5.60**
	(1.95)	(1.96)	(1.95)
Positional Rebrand	−0.48	-	−0.74
	(0.58)		(0.61)
Salience Rebrand	-	−0.10	−0.20
		(0.30)	(0.29)
Programmatic Rebrand	-	-	0.92
			(0.78)
ENPP	−0.82***	−0.82***	−0.81***
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Governing Status	−0.84*	−0.81*	−0.84*
	(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.36)
Party Age	0.01	0.10	0.01
	(0.64)	(0.63)	(0.64)
Party Family	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05
	0.04	0.04	0.04
Challenger	−0.78	−0.73	−0.76
	(0.49)	(0.52)	(0.49)
Policy Position	0.12	0.13	0.13
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)
Change in Leader	−1.69***	−1.63***	−1.69***
	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.32)
Electoral History	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86	0.86	0.86
Num. obs.	1336	1340	1336

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

3.4.1 Robustness Checks

In this section, I test whether the results presented in the prior section are robust to either alternate specifications of the model or whether the results vary across different traits. I begin with

the feature rebrand. There are two possible ways that the results might vary. First is time: Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) find that policy changes affect future vote share rather than current vote share, and something similar might occur here where the effects of the name change carry forward and affect future vote share as well. I tested this possibility by including a lag of the feature rebrand variable as a covariate, and the results of the feature rebrand at t$_0$ are consistent, but the lagged feature rebrand is insignificant, indicating that the effects of the rebrand are limited to the election immediately after the rebrand, and thus do not carry long term benefits in creating a consistent increase in vote share. As mentioned in the design section, it is also possible that the effects of a rebrand vary across party size, type, and family. I tested these possibilities with interaction models between the feature rebrand and each of these characteristics, and the resulting models were insignificant.

Next, I test alternatives for the policy rebrand. Timing and variation by the aforementioned party traits might also impact a policy rebrand, and to test this possibility, I ran the same models for the policy rebrand (a lagged IV and interaction models) and also found insignificant results, meaning that policy rebrands do not affect current/future or vary by different party traits. One key difference between feature and policy rebrands is that for policy rebrands, there is a directional component where the party can rebrand its position in different ways. For example, a party could rebrand by moving to a more extreme position or rebrand by moving towards the center. Similarly, a party could rebrand its salience by emphasizing economic issues or cultural ones. To test this possibility, I created alternate operationalizations of the policy rebrand to account for the direction of the rebrand. The results of these directional models are also insignificant, so the effects of the policy rebrand do not depend on the subtype used by the party.

There are several other alternative models that are important to examine because of the way that the policy rebrand variables were originally operationalized. First, the policy rebrands were distinguished from routine policy shifts by denoting a policy rebrand as one that was greater than the mean plus one standard deviation of all policy shifts. To test whether the results are robust to alternate cutoff points, I created models where the cutoff was the mean plus 0.5 standard deviations, mean plus 0.75 standard deviations, and the mean plus 1.25 standard deviations. The results do not change based on these alternate operationalizations. Second, scholars have found that the CMP dataset is prone to measurement error (Benoit et al. 2009). To address the possibility of measurement error I ran the models using simulation-extrapolation (simex) techniques (Benoit et al. 2009) and the results are also robust to these models. Lastly, I tested whether the policy rebrand results are robust to the Chapel Hill Election Survey (CHES) dataset, and I operationalized the policy rebrands in the same way for these data, and the results are consistent with the results from the models using the CMP.

As a final set of robustness checks, I examine whether the types and subtypes of rebrand interact in some way. For example, it is possible that voters learn of a feature rebrand and then infer that the party's policy position changed in some way even if it did not. To address any potential interaction or overlap in effects, I ran a full model that includes all forms of rebranding and their lagged effects. The only consistently significant form of rebranding is in line with prior models: feature rebranding at time t$_0$ increases vote share for that election only, and policy rebrands do not have an effect on party vote share at the current and future elections. The results of all alternate model specifications discussed in this section can be seen in Appendix C.

3.5 Discussion

This chapter analyzed the party-level downstream consequences of a party rebrand. I began by taking an agnostic approach and presented arguments that a party rebrand could either increase or decrease a party's overall electoral performance. The results provide evidence that feature rebrands increase party vote share, indicating that feature rebrands are an effective electoral strategy. While the overall effect size is small, at less than one percentage point, it should be noted that feature rebrands are typically used by struggling parties. As such, even small increases in vote share can be seen as beneficial for the parties most likely to rebrand since rebranded parties perform better electorally than they would have had they not rebranded. In contrast, the results for the policy rebrand indicate the opposite: large changes in both position and/or salience have no effect on vote share. Based on these results, rebranding is a beneficial strategy for parties, but only if the party rebrands its features.

While further research is needed to understand the mechanisms behind these findings, it is still worthwhile to speculate on some possible explanations for my two main findings. In terms of the significant, positive results for the feature rebrand, one interesting possibility that was touched on in the theory section is that feature rebrands are vague enough that it enables voters to project their own biases and thoughts onto the party, meaning that they perceive the party as being closer to their own preferences than the party actually is. In terms of the null results for the policy rebrand, these findings should not be seen as the final word on the effectiveness of this form of rebranding. In many ways, analyzing policies cross nationally represented a “hard test” of the theory given how policies can be country specific. In other words, one possibility is that, given cross national variation in party systems, rebranding to an extreme position might be effective in some contexts while rebranding to the center might be effective in others, which essentially cancels

out the effects. Future research at the voter level will thus attempt to more directly home in on policy rebrands.

There are two more general implications of these findings. First, as noted, feature rebrands involve changes to the most prominent visual aspects of the party brand that will be at the forefront of virtually all of the party's campaign materials. In contrast, policy rebrands involve changes to the substance of the party, and lack the straightforward visual cues contained in the feature rebrand, meaning that it likely takes more work on behalf of the voter to realize that the party changed these substantive aspects of the party brand. When combined with the significant results of the feature rebrand and the null results of the policy rebrand, the findings in this paper imply that voters are more likely to respond to prominent and easily digested party changes and use these as heuristics when making decisions at the voting booth. Indeed, this line of reasoning is similar to research on party coalitions, which also finds that voters respond to prominent signals such as coalition membership/the prime minister's party to infer a given party's ideology (Fortunato and Stevenson, 2013; Fortunato and Adams, 2015) or use coalition membership as a heuristic when making decisions at the voting booth (Kluver and Spoon, 2020). Feature rebrands may be a similar, prominent heuristic that voters can readily tap into, proposing the possibility that parties need to use easy to access and direct signals when communicating with voters. That said, more research is needed to fully make this connection. The most promising avenue of future research is with a survey experiment that directly assess voter responses to rebrands, and then analyzes how voters update their understanding of the political parties that rebrand.

The final implication of this chapter is that the findings provide evidence of my larger argument that elements of the party brand not directly related to policy are essential components of a party brand. As noted, the literature on party brands, and political parties more generally, has,

for good reason, focused on analyzing the policies of parties. Yet, this focus has also led to scholars ignoring other aspects of the party brand. The results of my analysis highlight that parties can strategically manipulate their features for electoral gain. In turn, this finding implies that parties are more than vehicles of policies, and future research should investigate all aspects of the party brand rather than its constituent parts.

4.0 Partisan Response to Party Rebranding

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 of this dissertation was the first empirical investigation into the downstream consequences of party rebranding. This chapter undertakes the second investigation, albeit at the voter rather than party level. The core question in this chapter is: How do partisans respond when their party rebrands? This question is related, but slightly different, from the one at the core of the prior chapter. By examining party level vote share, in the last chapter I examined the electorate at large whereas this chapter is specifically concerned with partisans. Examining partisan response to a rebrand is an important additional analysis for a number of reasons. First, the findings of prior work conflict with one another. Baker et al., (2016) find that partisanship remains stable and that rebrands do not lead to changes in the partisan-party relationship. On the other hand, Lupu (2016) finds that partisanship declines in the event of brand change. As such, further work is needed to settle this question. Second, this prior work only examined rebranding from the perspective of policy changes, overlooking changes to the party's features. The final reason is that vote choice, essentially the outcome variable in Chapter 3, is only one element of the voter/party relationship, and is arguably the most calcified. As such, a rebrand might change a partisan's relationship with their party even if this does not lead to overall changes in their vote choice. For example, trust in their party might decline while vote share does not, an important empirical point that is missed by only investigating vote share. This could have important consequences, leading to a softening in partisan attitudes, thereby intersecting with the well documented finding that partisanship is

declining across Western Europe (Dalton, 2004). As such, an additional analysis investigating partisan response is an important next step.

I begin my analysis of partisan response to party rebranding by positing that, similarly to the last chapter, there are two mutually exclusive outcomes when a party changes its brand: There is either ``partisan backlash,'' exhibited by a decline in partisan attachment, or ``partisan stability'' where partisans are unmoved by the change in the party brand. I further argue that partisan backlash stems from the concept of partisanship itself, where voters choose their party either because of support for its policy program or because supporting their party is an inherent part of their identity. As such, rebranding would sever these ties by moving the party away from its prior policies or by changing how voters relate to the party. Partisan stability on the other hand stems from partisan motivated reasoning, where partisans view a party rebrand through the lens of partisanship and then interpret the brand change as being consistent with the party's prior brand.

I test these competing arguments with an original survey experiment[12] of partisans of four parties in the Netherlands. The experiment utilizes three different treatment conditions corresponding to different types of party rebranding. The first treatment condition corresponds to a feature rebrand, so partisans are informed via an original video that their party changed its name. Similarly, in the second condition partisans are shown a video describing a policy change. As a final treatment condition, I examine the tandem rebrand where parties simultaneously change both their name and policies. In Chapter 1, I noted that these types of changes are rare, but this is an important treatment condition for two reasons. First, it is possible that the apparent lack of tandem

[12] The study was pre-registered with AsPredicted and approved by the University of Pittsburgh's Internal Review Board (STUDY22010079).

rebranding is an artifact of how the policy rebrand was operationalized. Second, even if the tandem rebrand is rare, it is important as it represents the greatest extent to which a party can rebrand. As such, it is a hard test of the hypotheses, as if a partisan does not respond to a tandem rebrand it is unlikely that there is any type of change that would prompt a response.

The results of the experiment are generally in line with the partisan stability hypothesis: for each treatment group, partisan's attachment to their party was statistically indistinguishable from that of the untreated group, meaning that partisans stay with their party even when it undergoes substantial changes. The only instance in which this did not consistently occur is for partisans of the far-right (PVV) and green party (GL), where there was evidence of backlash but only in the case of a tandem rebrand. It thus takes an abnormally large change in the party brand to induce partisan backlash, which, again, does not apply to mainstream parties.

This chapter thus provides experimental evidence that partisans are rigid and unwilling to abandon their party. Since partisanship is an identity, the results of this chapter indicate that abandoning this identity is difficult since partisans remain with their party even when it is no longer representing their interests. Along this point, this paper also has important implications for democratic representation. Political parties are typically conceptualized as the primary linkage between the electorate and their government (Lawson, 1980). Yet, if parties can essentially change their overall brand with little to no consequences, they are not truly implementing the policies desired by their supporters; rather, they are changing in response to external stimuli, and voters then simply go along with these changes. As such, the policies implemented at the governmental level may not truly represent the interests of the general electorate.

4.2 Possibilities of Partisan Response

In this section, I outline theoretical arguments for two, mutually exclusive possibilities of partisan response. The first possibility is that partisanship remains stable in the event of a rebrand, meaning that a rebrand does not change the partisan/party relationship. The other is partisan backlash, where partisans respond negatively to a rebrand and either defect from their party or experience some sort of decline in their levels of partisan attachment. The important point here is that there is prior empirical evidence for each of these possibilities. In a study of PT under Lula, Baker et al. (2016) find that PT's move to the electoral center, essentially rebranding as a Third Way party, was overall beneficial. While some partisans defected, most remained with the party while the move also enabled the party to capture voters in the center. In contrast, Lupu (2016) argues that brand change is negative; when parties change their brand, partisans and the general electorate become unsure of what the party stands for, weakening attachment to the party and leading to electoral decline for the rebranded party. Based on these results, either outcome is reasonable, and thus I take an agnostic approach and note that either ``partisan backlash'' or ``partisan stability'' are equally plausible outcomes. Not only is there extant empirical evidence for each outcome, but there are also strong theoretical arguments underpinning each possibility. In the next section, I outline these theoretical arguments, first for ``partisan backlash'' and then for “partisan stability."

4.2.1 Outcome 1: Partisan Backlash

The first possible outcome in the event of a party rebrand is that there will be partisan backlash where partisans defect from the party en masse. The possibility of partisan backlash stems

from how partisanship structures the party-voter relationship. In general, partisanship is considered to be one of the key variables predicting vote choice (Fiorina, 1981; Bartels, 2000; 2002, Huber et al, 2005; Clarke and McCutcheon, 2009; Huddy et al., 2015). There are two general models on the sources of partisanship. The first is the retrospective/instrumental model where partisans vote for a party based on which policy platform they most agree with, and then establish a ``running tally,'' continuously voting for a party so long as the party's platform aligns with their own (Fiorina, 1981; 2002; Bartels, 2000). The second model is ``expressive partisanship'' where voters support a party because doing so is a core component of their identity (Greene et al, 2002; Green, 2002; Klar, 2014; Huddy et al., 2015). In other words, partisans support a given party because the party acts as a shared group identity (Tajfel et al., 1979), and supporting their party is an important act in reifying this identify (Schuessler, 2000).

While the empirical evidence is generally more in line with the expressive model (e.g., Huber et al., 2005; Huddy et al., 2015) there are reasons to expect that partisans would negatively respond to party brand changes regardless of which model of partisanship is more accurate. For the instrumental model, brand changes might disrupt the cognitive running tally, making partisans unsure of what the party stands for (which is the argument made by Lupu (2016). In the case of the expressive model, a brand change might lead to a situation where core supporters no longer see supporting the party as an inherent component of their political identity. For example, based on cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), working class voters vote for a social democratic party because this party family claims to advocate for this segment of society, so working class voters might then identify as a member of a social democratic party (Przeworski and Sprague, 1986). If a social democratic party were to change its brand, it would inherently appeal to a separate segment of society, thereby severing the identifying ties that partisans had with their party. Indeed,

there appears to be historical evidence of this as in the 1990s and early 2000s, several social democratic parties rebranded as ``Third Way'' centrist parties, potentially explaining social democratic parties' recent electoral struggles (Karreth et al, 2013; Benedetto et al, 2020; Rennwalkd and Pontusson, 2021). Based on this logic, a rebrand might strain the ties between party and partisan, and as such, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: A party rebrand will decrease feelings of attachment to a partisan's party.

4.2.2 Outcome 2: Partisan Stability

The second possibility is that partisans will essentially go along with the rebrand, meaning that there would be no significant change in their levels of attachment. The main theoretical explanation for this possibility is ``partisan motivated reasoning,'' or the idea that partisanship acts as a lens which colors how partisans interpret political information (Bolsen et al, 2014; Fernandez-Vazquez and Theodoridis, 2020). The most prominent instance of this effect is the consistent finding that, in the US context, Democrats and Republicans rate the economy more/less positively when their respective party is in office (Campbell et al., 1960; Bartels, 2000; 2002; Lewis-Beck et al, 2008; Gerber and Huber, 2010).

This partisan lens affects other types of political information as well. For example, Henderson and Theodoridis (2018) find that partisans were less receptive to political ads criticizing their party, meaning that they discount information that conflicts with their partisan identity. Based on these findings, we can extrapolate the idea that partisans seek to maintain their partisan identity and interpret information in a way that accomplishes this goal. As such, in the case of brand change, partisans may interpret these changes as being in line with their partisan identity, thereby avoiding any cognitive dissonance that might accompany information that they are uncomfortable

with. Since they then interpret the brand change as being consistent with the party's prior brand, they do not defect from the party.

A related argument is that, rather than essentially following the party, partisans may simply go along with brand changes if these are touted by the leader of the party. Lenz (2013) finds robust evidence of this relationship in that when a prominent politician or leader changes their party's policy position, the party's supporters follow suit and adopt the new party position, a finding largely consistent with more recent work (Agadjanian, 2021). One important point to note here is that this extant work was largely conducted in the US, so it is unclear whether Lenz's ``follow the leader" framework applies to less candidate centric party systems. That said, there is reason to expect a similar process to unfold in Europe. Scholars have recently argued that parties in Europe have become more “presidentialized" as power has become more concentrated in the party leader, making them the most powerful and important intra-party actor (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Bittner, 2011; Pilet and Cross, 2015; Garzia, 2017). This can be seen in leader dominated parties such as *Rassemblement National* and *Partij voor de Vrijheid*. The latter is so leader-centric that it has only one formal member: party leader Geert Wilders. As such, it stands to reason that partisans might simply follow their party leader, providing a second mechanism for why partisans would not defect from their party after a rebrand.

The final mechanism for why there might be no change in levels of attachment to a party after a rebrand is that in recent years, elections have become highly polarized and conflictual, leading to affective polarization where a voter casts their ballot for a given party not because they support a specific party platform but because they do not want another party in the system obtaining office (Iyengar et al., 2012; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016). While voting against a hated party is perhaps most prominent in the US context, recent work has found that it extends to

Europe as well (Mayer, 2017; Garzia and sa Silva, 2021; Wagner, 2021; Anderson et al., 2022). In particular, there appears to be a dividing line between mainstream parties and far-right parties in that far-right voters support this party family because of its anti-system qualities, and mainstream voters support mainstream parties specifically to keep the far-right from office. This dynamic can be seen in the 2022 French Presidential Election, where supporters of the far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Melanchon, voted for Emmanuel Macron in the run-off election to prevent Marine Le Pen from winning. The French case is not a one-off; Melendez and Kaltwasser (2021) report similar findings in a cross national study. As such, in this final situation, partisans might remain with their party even if they dislike a new party brand because beating the other party takes precedence over other considerations. While I do not investigate which, if any, of these mechanisms is most accurate, they all lead to the same outcome: partisan attachment would remain stable, which is my second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: A party rebrand will have no effect on partisan attachment.

4.2.3 Party Heterogeneity

An underlying assumption in H1 and H2 is that partisans across different party families and party types will respond in similar ways to a rebrand. While this is reasonable since all parties face a similar set of pressures (Strom 1990) there are also reasons to expect that there will be some degree of heterogeneity across parties. I expect that the main division will be across party type, with partisans of niche parties (Meguid, 2005) responding more negatively to a brand changes than partisans of mainstream parties. Mainstream parties, by definition, are “catch-all" (Kirchheimer, 1966) and thus draw their electoral support from multiple groups within society. Furthermore, research has found that they exhibit this ``broad appeal" across society by blurring their issue

positions and being intentionally vague (Somer-Topcu, 2015). In contrast, niche parties are more focused on a key issue or a key set of issues (Meguid, 2005; Wagner, 2012) and display strong associative issue ownership over their key issues (Petrocik, 1996; Walgrave, 2012; Wagner and Meyer, 2014).

Because of these differences, it is likely built into the minds of partisans of mainstream parties that their party will either change or obfuscate its position in some way. In contrast, partisans of niche parties support their party because of its strong position on a key issue. For example, partisans of far-right parties support these parties for their strident immigration policies (Arzheimer, 2009; Golder, 2016). Indeed, Adams et al. (2006) find that mainstream parties possess ``costless spatial mobility'' and can change their issue positions without electoral repercussions while niche parties are punished if they change in similar ways. As such, if the partisan backlash hypothesis holds, I expect that the effects will be more prominent among niche party partisans over mainstream party partisans. This line of reasoning leads to my final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Partisans of niche parties will respond more negatively to a party rebrand than partisans of a mainstream party.

4.3 Research Design

I test my hypotheses using an original survey experiment conducted in the Netherlands.[13] I elected to use an original survey experiment because my theoretical hypotheses require nuanced,

[13] The survey was fielded by Qualtrics in September 2022. The survey was conducted in Dutch, but an English version can be found in Appendix D.

voter level data on how voters respond to a rebrand. Since this dissertation is one of the first empirical investigations into party rebranding, there are no prior surveys asking participants about this phenomenon. Furthermore, the existence of different types of rebranding and the possibility that there are variations in voter response to these lends itself to an experimental setup.

The Netherlands is an ideal case for the survey experiment for a few reasons. First, Dutch parties are relatively stable and rarely change their name and/or policies by a significant amount (see Chapter 1 and Appendix A), making the Netherlands an ``extreme'' case which can be helpful for making generalizable inferences (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). This means that partisans will not have been pretreated by prior instances of large party changes. Furthermore, the Netherlands is unique in terms of its electoral system, as it has a highly proportional system and, at the time of writing, 17 unique parties with parliamentary representation. This multitude of parties has cascading effects on partisans because scholars have found that partisanship, while present, functions differently in the Netherlands when compared to other European countries (e.g., LeDuc, 1981; Rosema, 2006). In particular, partisanship tends to be weaker because if a voter dislikes a given party, they can easily switch to another party with a similar profile. For example, voters of the far-right *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom, PVV) can switch their vote to the *Forum voor Democratie* (Forum for Democracy, or FVD), without sacrificing their ideals because these parties are extremely similar. These characteristics make the Netherlands an ideal case for studies of partisanship (LeDuc, 1981; Rosema, 2006) because if partisan attachment does not change in the Netherlands it is unlikely to do so in other contexts.

After answering basic demographic questions, survey respondents were given a list of four Dutch political parties and asked to choose the party they were most likely to vote for: the *GroenLinks* (Green Links, or GL), the center-left *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party, PvdA), the

liberal/center-right *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD), and the far-right *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom, PVV). I thus have the largest party on the center-right (VVD), a major center-left party (PvdA)[14] and the largest niche party on the right (PVV) and left (GL). While there are considerably more parties, these parties provide a useful spread of parties based on size, ideology, and type, allowing me to test my hypotheses across a wide array of party characteristics. After selecting their party, participants were randomly sorted into one of 4 experimental groups (control group and 3 treatment conditions - see below) so the randomization occurs at the party level.

4.3.1 Experimental Manipulation

In the experiment, my treatment conditions correspond to three different types of rebranding. The first is a feature rebrand, where the party changes its label and/or other elements of the party brand that are not related to the party's policy position. Second is the policy rebrand, where the party changes its policies by an amount that overhauls its policy program. Lastly, for the first time in the dissertation, I empirically investigate a tandem rebrand. Even though these are rare, they do occur, so it is substantively important to examine how partisans react in these instances. Second, it is difficult to conceive of a party changing in a way greater than the changes represented by the tandem rebrand. As such, this treatment condition represents an attempt to

[14] In the most recent elections, the Socialist Party has had a slightly higher vote share than the Labour Party, which has historically been the dominant party on the left. However, it is unclear at the time of writing whether the SP has permanently eclipsed the PvdA or if this is a short term development. I thus utilized the PvdA over the SP because of its prior position as the dominant party and previous participation in coalitions

``push" a partisan into a situation where they would defect from their party. In other words, if a partisan does not respond to a tandem rebrand, it is unlikely that there is any type of change that a party could undergo which would produce a change in partisan attachment.

For the survey, the treatments were different videos simulating a newscast informing partisans that their party had changed in the manner described in Table 4. As such, one treatment group was informed that their party changed its name, one that the party changed its policies, and

Table 4: Treatment Conditions

Condition	Dimension of Change
1: Feature Rebrand	Party Name Change
2: Policy Rebrand	Party Policy Change
3: Tandem Rebrand	Party Name and Policy Change

the last that the party changed both. I selected a video as the treatment medium over text-based vignettes for several reasons. First, if a party were to rebrand, as with other political phenomena (Bridgman et al., 2021) most voters will likely learn of a rebrand through the news or social media, so a video accurately models this process. Second, a video is more interactive, enhancing the likelihood that participants are attentive to the treatment. Lastly, videos are a stronger treatment than informational vignettes, meaning that participants are more likely to properly receive the treatment with this format (Mutz, 2021).

Each video was between 25-35 seconds in length, and I endeavored to have each video be as similar as possible. All videos began with a pan over of a nondescript audience listening to a speaker. There were two shots of the same crowd in every video. The final shot in the video was

(a) Capture 1: Crowd Pan Over

(b) Capture 2: Interview with Mark Rutte

Figure 10: Sample Screen Captures

an interview with a given party's leader. The interview with the leader naturally varied across the parties, but I attempted to capture similar shots across all the parties. Shots of the party leader intentionally had microphones visible to give the impression that the leader was in an interview, with multiple microphones visible to prevent any sort of media effect. Sample screen shots can be seen in Figure 4.1 above. I also designed the videos to be as realistic as possible. While some scholars note that realism can weaken experimental treatments (e.g., Mutz, 2021) in this experiment the realism actually enhances the strength of the treatment because the realism increases the plausibility of the experiment, increasing the likelihood that participants answered the outcome questions while under the impression that their party actually changed in the manner described in the videos.

The treatment component of the videos came from the narration. Each narration was delivered in Dutch and began by noting that at a recent party conference, the party changed either its name, policies, or both depending on the treatment condition. For the feature rebrand treatment bloc, the narration states that the party announced that it decided to change the party name at the conference. All party names were changed by simply adding the word “New" to the party's current

name (i.e., ``New PvdA," ``New VVD" etc.). This standardized the change to the name across the parties, eliminating the degree of name change as a confounding variable. For the policy rebrand bloc, it was impossible to standardize these as by definition parties have different policy profiles. Thus, for each party I selected an issue that forms the core of that party's ideology. For the VVD, the issue was economic policy, for the PvdA the policy was the welfare state, for the PVV the issue is immigration, and environmental issues for the GL. Each policy change was towards the center under the logic that since rebrands are an electoral strategy, a rebrand to the center would enable a party to obtain more voters. The tandem rebrand narration is a combination of the feature and policy rebrand narration. The exact wording of the treatment scripts can be seen in Appendix D.

As alluded to above, participants were not informed prior to viewing the video that the rebrands did not actually take place, meaning that when taking the survey participants were likely under the impression that the changes were real. It was important for participants to be under the impression that the changes were real in order to accurately measure changes in partisan response. Had I been upfront that these changes were fictitious, the entire experiment would have been hypothetical which introduces several measurement issues into the experimental design (Mutz, 2021). The use of deception ensures that I am more accurately measuring how partisans do respond to brand change rather than how they think they would respond, which is a different, and less useful, outcome of interest. To address any potential ethical concerns that partisans would move forward thinking their party's brand had changed, I included a debrief at the end of the experiment informing participants that the changes were fictional as well as my reasons for using deception. All participants were also given the option of not having their responses included after being informed of the deception.

After viewing the video, participants were asked a battery of questions relating to different aspects of partisan attachment, asking how likely they are to vote for their party, how close they feel, how competent they think the party is, and how much they trust the party. Each question was intended to gauge different aspects of partisan attachment and to assess whether the treatments might affect partisan attachment in different ways. The control condition for the experiment was a null setup where the control group was given the same set of outcome questions as the three treated groups, but with no intervention. My main method of analysis is pairwise t-tests between the control group and each treatment bloc.

Table 5: Dimensions of Party Rebranding

Variable Name	Question Wording
1: Vote Choice	How likely are you to vote for the [party] in the next election?
2: Closeness	How close do you feel to the [party]?
3: Competence	How competent do you think the [party] would be in handling the issues that are most important to you?
4. Trust	How much do you trust the [party]?

4.4 Data Analysis

I begin the analysis section by examining differences between the control and rebranding in general without distinguishing between the different types of rebrand or the different parties. Figure 4.2 below charts the differences in means between the control group (no rebrand) and the treatment bloc (any type of rebrand) across all four indicators of partisan attachment. For three of the four outcomes, there is no statistical difference between the means of the control and treatment groups, indicating that rebranding in general does not lead to partisan backlash. For the intent to

vote variable however, there is a difference that is statistically significant at the 0.1 level, which is an interesting finding since the intent to vote variable should the hardest outcome to change. As such, there is support for both the partisan stability and partisan backlash hypotheses, though the evidence for partisan stability is slightly stronger since more outcomes were unaffected by the

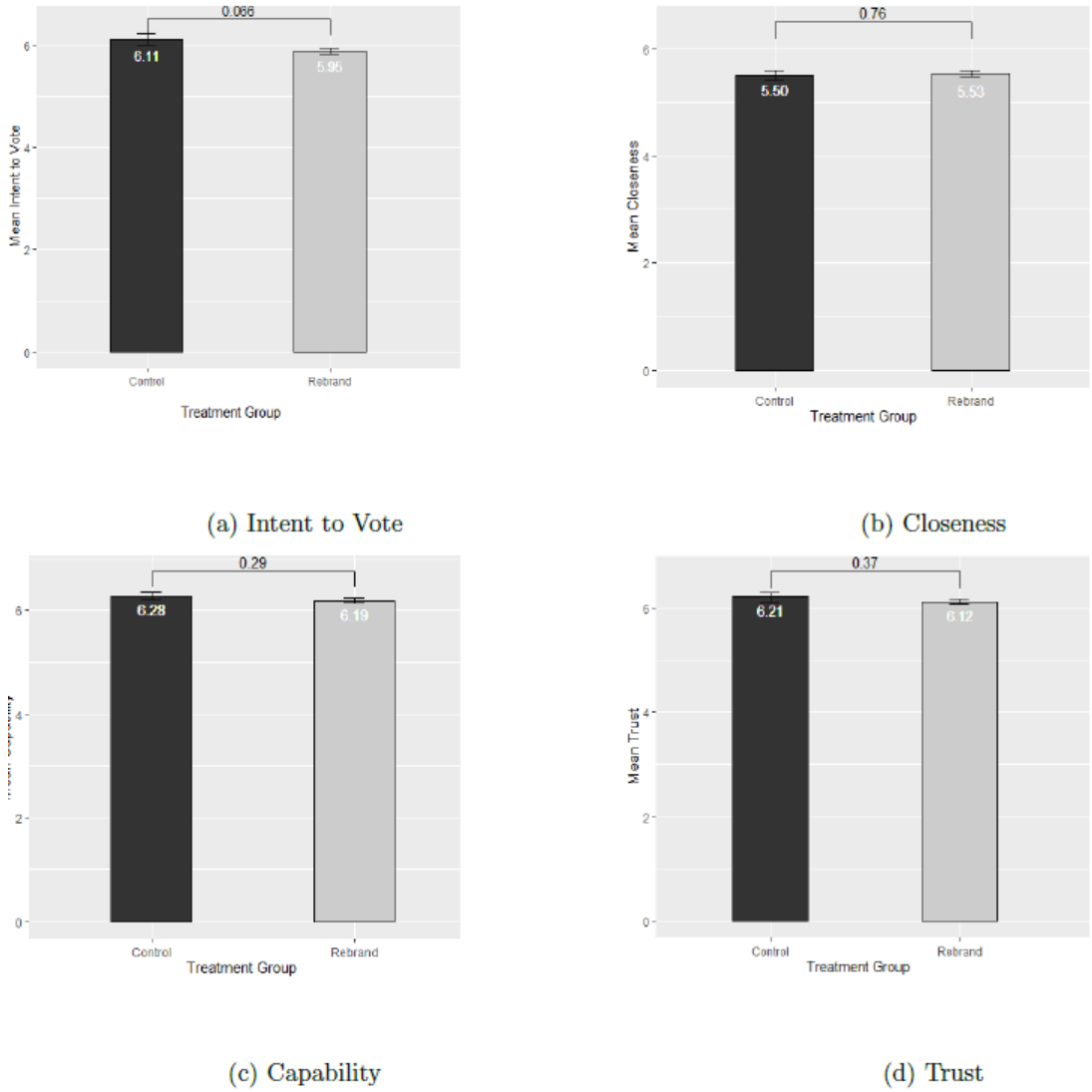

Figure 11: Pairwise t-test, any rebrand

rebrand.

The next stage in the analysis is to disaggregate the rebrand treatment into its three constituent components since there is a strong possibility that the types of rebrand vary in their

effects. Similarly with Figure 4.2, Figure 4.3 charts the differences between the control group and the three different treatment blocs. As can be seen, the means for the control, feature, and policy rebrands for all outcomes are all fairly close to one another and the results of the pairwise t-tests verify that these are indeed statistically indistinguishable from one another. This indicates that the feature rebrand and policy rebrand did not result in significant changes in a partisan's intent to vote for their party. This provides support for H2: brand changes do not produce any significant level of partisan backlash. The story, however, is different for the tandem rebrand. For the t-test between this treatment group and the control, there is a significant, negative difference in the support for three of the four outcomes (intent to vote, capability, trust). The ATE for each of these is -0.43 ($p = 0.0048$), -0.21 ($p = 0.054$), and -0.27 ($p = 0.027$) respectively. As such, tandem rebrands do appear to prompt partisan backlash. There is thus evidence for both hypotheses: partisanship appears to remain stable in the event of either a feature or policy rebrand, but partisans also exhibit a decrease in attachment if their party were to undergo a tandem rebrand.

The results can be broken down further to examine any heterogenous effects by party. I do this in Table 4.3, which contains the ATE comparing each treatment bloc to the control group for each party for the vote choice outcome only. As before, across all parties, the feature and policy rebrands appear to exhibit no effect: there is no significant change in a partisan's intent to vote for their chosen party if their party underwent either a feature or policy rebrand. This further verifies the pooled analysis, as no partisan group for any party responded to a rebrand, supporting H2 in that partisanship appears to be stable. The results of the tandem rebrand treatment demonstrate different findings, however. Supporters for both niche parties, Groenlinks and the PVV, both expressed that they would be less likely to vote for their chosen party in the next election. This effect does not exist for supporters of mainstream parties, meaning that the results seen in Figure

4.3 are driven exclusively by drops in support among niche voters. This difference across parties is evidence in support of H3: partisans of niche parties are indeed more likely to rebel against their party in the event of a tandem rebrand only.

Table 6: Vote Choice ATE By Party

Party Name	Feature Rebrand	Policy Rebrand	Tandem Rebrand
GroenLinks (Green)	0.08	-0.21	-0.50*
	(0.28)	(0.31)	(0.30)
PvdA (Social Democratic)	-0.15	-0.35	-0.3
	(0.34)	(0.36)	(0.33)
VVD (Liberal)	-0.24	0.35	0.16
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)
PVV (Far-Right)	-0.29	-0.19	-1.01***
	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.29)

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Lastly, I examine the results for the other three indicators and find relatively similar results: there were no consistently significant differences between the control and each treatment group for partisans of the GL, PvdA, and VVD.[15] I do, however, find consistently significant results for the PVV. These results can be seen in Table 4.4, where once again there are insignificant differences for the feature and policy rebrand but significant differences for the tandem rebrand. Based on these results, a tandem rebrand does provoke backlash among partisans of the PVV only, providing some, albeit conditional, support for H1 and H3. Overall though, there is stronger support for H2. Partisans of three of the four parties exhibited little to no backlash against their party. Even among partisans of the PVV, there was only evidence of backlash in the unlikely event

[15] The results for the remainder of the outcome variables can be seen in Appendix tables D.1-D.3. While there are some significant results for some outcomes, there are no other consistent, systematic results that extend across the outcomes, parties, or treatment groups.

that the party significantly changes its brand. As such, party brand changes can prompt backlash, but only for certain parties and in the event of an extreme amount of change. The empirical results

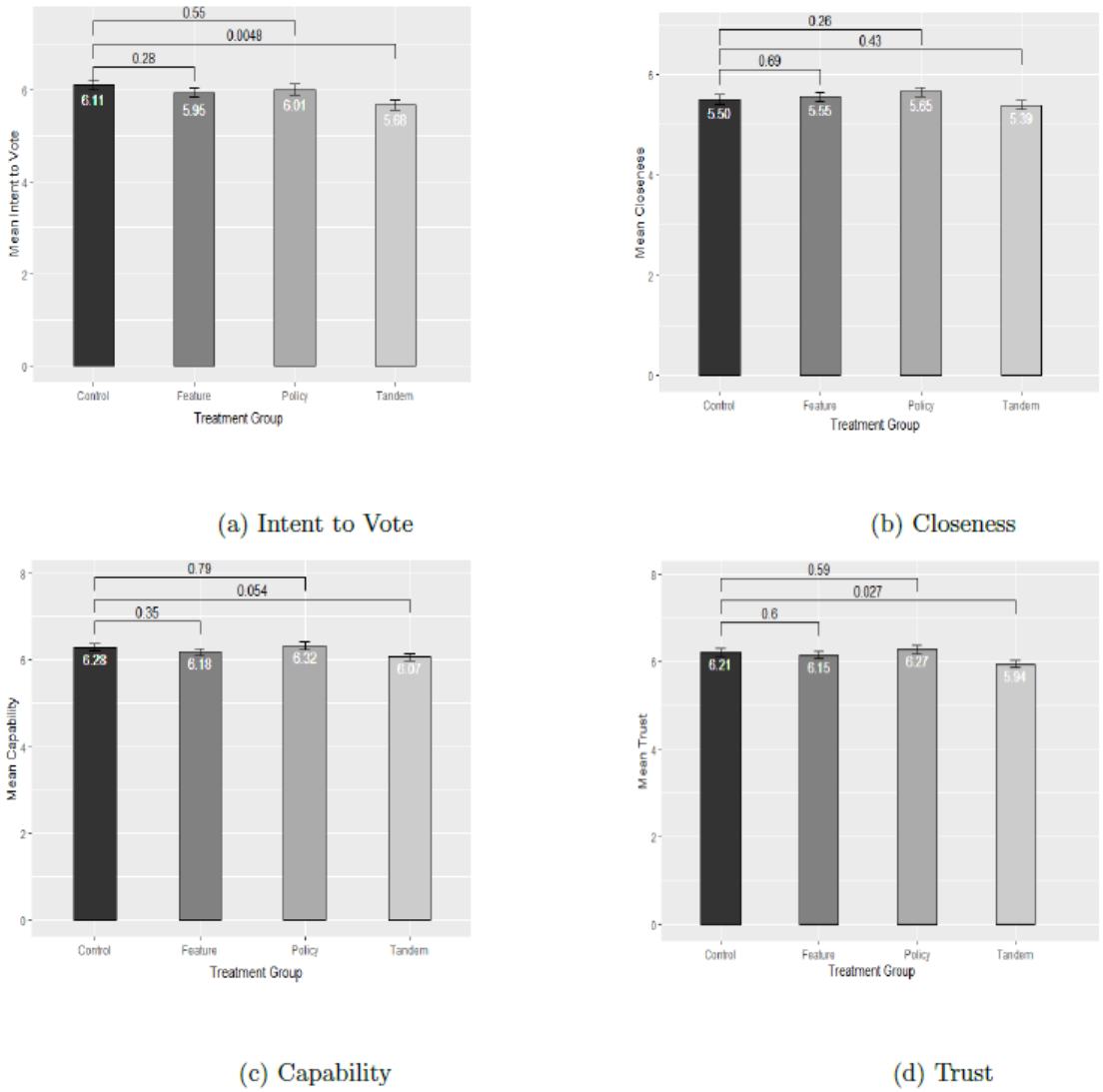

Figure 12: Pairwise t-test, Control vs. All Rebrands

of the experiment are thus stronger evidence of partisan stability rather than partisan backlash.

4.4.1 Robustness Checks

In this section, I examine whether my findings are robust to alternate specifications and different possibilities. First, many of my main findings are null results, so it is important to conduct

a compliance test to examine whether the null results are driven by subjects failing to comply with the treatment. Within the survey, the final question for all treated participants was a manipulation check asking about the content of the video, specifically whether the party changed its name policies, or both. The compliance test used this question as an instrument to estimate the complier average treatment effect, or the ATE for those who correctly answered the manipulation check. The results of this analysis are consistent with that presented above. Additionally, the control group was a null setup in that the participants in the control group were not given any information (Mutz, 2021) but one possibility is that the differences between the control and tandem groups is due to the act of seeing a video rather than the content of the video. That said, there is still a significant difference between the feature-tandem (e.g., $p = 0.07$ for intent to vote) and policy-tandem groups (e.g., $p = 0.03$ for Intent to Vote), indicating that the decrease in the tandem rebrand is not solely due to the act of participants seeing a video.

Another important supplemental examination is to test whether the main results are confounded by different individual level factors among the survey participants. In particular, differing levels of partisanship might affect the results presented above. Strong partisans, by definition, are more invested in their party, and thus might be more likely to defect from their party in the event of a rebrand, whereas weaker partisans might be more willing to go along with the rebrand. As such, after selecting the party, all participants were asked to rate how close they felt to their party using a 0-10 feeling thermometer to gauge how strong of a partisan they are. This also controls for the fact that partisans chose one party from a list of four when they live in a system with 17+ parties, meaning that it is likely that partisans of other parties were included as partisans in my four main parties.

Differing levels of partisanship are the likeliest heterogeneous effect, but there are other possibilities. The second major possibility is that differing levels of approval in the party leader might affect receptiveness to a rebrand since a party rebrand is a leader driven process. As such, if a partisan significantly likes a party leader, they will be more likely to "follow the leader" (Lenz 2013) as discussed above. If the party leader is unpopular or disliked, then partisans might be less likely to go along with a rebrand. I also test for heterogeneous effects based on political interest, which was examined with standard 0-10 feeling thermometer.

I examine each of these with interaction models where the individual level factors are interacted with the treatment variables. Each of the treatment variables were converted to dummy variables, with 1 being equal to a participants receiving a treatment and 0 if the participant was in the control group, and then multiplied by the heterogeneous variable. These models indicate that, in general, there are no systematic differences across the interaction models.[16] As a supplementary test, I dummied out the individual level variables, with 1 equal to values greater than or equal to 7, and 0 otherwise (i.e., "strong" vs. "weak" partisans, strong vs. weak leader approval, etc.). These results were also insignificant. Lastly, following the recommendations of Hainmueller et al. (2019) I modeled the interactions as nonlinear relationships and also found insignificant results.

[16] See Appendix D. Some interaction models are significant, but as before these are not systematic in that they do not consistently extend across parties, treatment groups, or outcomes.

4.5 Discussion

This chapter focused on the effects of party rebranding on partisan attitudes and partisan's relationship to their party. This is an important question for several reasons. First, while this question has been investigated by the extant literature, prior work produced conflicting results, with Lupu (2016) finding that brand change strains partisan's relationship with their party, while Baker et al. (2016) find that the overall changes in partisan's attitudes are minimal. Second, prior work did not investigate partisan response to different types of rebranding, ignoring feature changes in favor of a focus on policy rebranding. Third, the cross national analysis on the effects of rebranding described in Chapter 3 focused on vote choice, but this is only one element of the partisan-party relationship.

To investigate this question, I tested whether “partisan backlash" or “partisan stability" is a more accurate hypothesis for how rebranding would change partisan attitudes. Using an original survey experiment in the Netherlands, I find support for both hypotheses, though there is stronger and more robust evidence in favor of partisan stability. Levels of partisan attachment across two of the three treatment conditions were statistically indistinguishable from the control group for all four parties. Since these treatment conditions are the most common types of party brand change, in general parties across the ideological spectrum appear to be able to change their brand with few repercussions from their partisans. The results of the tandem rebrand were consistent for the mainstream parties in that these partisans also did not defect in the instance of a brand change, meaning that mainstream parties can change their brand in any way, free of backlash. For partisans of the niche parties, and especially the far right, the tandem rebrand does appear to provoke backlash. That said, tandem rebrands are the least likely type of brand change to occur, so even though partisan backlash can occur, it is very rare and only affects some parties.

There are two major implications that are important to highlight. The first relates to the difference between mainstream and niche parties. As mentioned, I do find that niche parties are more restricted in the ways that they can change, as the tandem rebrand appears to be one step too far for these voters. This is some evidence in favor of Adams et al.'s (2006) contention that mainstream parties possess ``costless spatial mobility," but these results also indicate that partisans of niche parties relate to their party differently from partisans of mainstream parties. Future work will attempt to further investigate partisans of far-right parties and their relationship with their party.

The other major implication relates to the lack of partisan backlash. Not only does this finding have important ramifications for parties, but also raises broader questions around democratic representation. Based on my findings, parties and partisans are much more malleable than previously thought. As such, we should expect parties to undergo radical changes, and should not dismiss these strategies as being ineffective or damaging for the party. While this paper is built around one experiment in one country, the findings do raise troubling questions for democratic representation. As noted, parties are the primary linkage between voters and their government, meaning that parties are supposed to represent the interests of their constituents. My findings conflict with this formula, indicating that rather than parties following voters, voters instead follow parties, or at least do not care if the party is radically different than it used to be. By extension, the policies desired by the public are not neatly translated into policy programs.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Key Findings

In this dissertation, I examine an under explored phenomenon: ``party rebranding," which I defined as a situation in which a party sheds one stable brand and adopts another one. While prior work has investigated individual cases of rebranding (e.g., Kertzer, 1996; Coates, 2005; Baker et al., 2016) to my knowledge this is the first project to systematically analyze party rebranding in a cross national setting. The first stage of the analysis was the formal conceptualization of the concept of party rebranding. I argued that prior work on party brands had focused on party policies (e.g., Snyder, 2002; Woon and Pope, 2008; Butler and Powell, 2014; Lupu, 2016) which is understandable, but this focus has led to the literature overlooking the prominent, visual elements of a party brand.

As such, my conceptualization of party rebranding argues that there are two significant types of rebranding. The first is feature rebranding, operationalized here as a change to the party name, and policy rebranding, where the party significantly changes its policies. Within policy rebranding, there are three types: positional, which is a change in the party's left/right position, salience, or a change in the types of issues a party discusses, and a programmatic rebrand, involving a change to both the party's position and salience. I note that there is a third type of rebranding, a tandem rebrand, defined as a situation where the party changes both its features and policies. This form of rebranding took on a lesser role, however, as it is quite rare and thus was only empirically analyzed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2 took the party rebranding framework and analyzed the antecedents to a rebrand, or more specifically, why a party might rebrand. This is an important question because parties are well known for being resistant to large changes (Michels, 1962; Panebianco, 1988; Somer-Topcu, 2009) making the decision to rebrand quite puzzling. In order to explore this question, I drew on prior work on party changes (Harmel and Janda, 1994) and argued that there are three antecedents to a party rebrand. The first is external shocks, defined here as a large decrease in a party's electoral performance. The second antecedent is internal shocks, which I analyzed as changes in a party's leadership or the strength of the party leader. Lastly is a combination of the external and internal factors.

The results of Chapter 2 generally align with this argument, though there are important heterogenous effects. The external and internal effects only predict a feature rebrand, while the combination of external and internal effects predict all types of rebranding. As such, despite being less common, it seems that there are more antecedents predicting a feature rebrand than a policy rebrand. This is also puzzling because, *a priori* it seems that it would be easier for a party to change its policies rather than the name.

Chapter 3 examined the downstream consequences of a party rebrand, investigating whether rebranding is a beneficial strategy and increases a party's vote share. Using a cross national dataset of 239 political parties across 18 countries, I once again find heterogeneity across the different types of party rebranding. Feature rebrands increase party vote share, while policy rebrands have no effect. This finding is consistent across all the different sub-types of policy rebranding.

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the effects of rebranding on partisans. I argued that a rebrand would either lead to a situation of partisan backlash, or a decrease in partisan attitudes towards

their party, or partisan stability, where there is no significant change in partisan attitudes towards their party. I tested this argument with an original survey experiment conducted in the Netherlands. The results of the experiment indicate that partisanship generally remains stable in the event of a rebrand: Across the feature and policy rebrand treatments, all partisans did not respond to a rebrand. For the tandem rebrand, mainstream partisans still did not respond, but partisans of niche parties did express some decrease in their levels of attachment to their party. One important point here is that the results of Chapters 3 and 4 somewhat conflict, as Chapter 3 found that party rebrands are effective, while Chapter 4 found that partisans do not respond to feature rebrands. I discuss this further in section 5.3.

5.2 Implications

While each empirical chapter highlighted some implications of each respective analyses' results, I wish to now highlight some implications of the project as a whole. First, as stressed throughout this document, party features do appear to be an important element of the party brand given that changes to the party features led to an overall increase in a party's vote share. This aligns with prior work from the marketing discipline which finds that the visual components of a brand have important implications for consumer behavior and attitudes (e.g., Walsh et al., 2010; Mueller et al., 2011;, Jiang et al., 2014).

A related point is that a party's features may even be more important than a party's policy platform given the consistent finding that voters do not respond to policy rebranding in either a cross national or experimental setting. The lack of response in the experimental setting is especially notable because it solves a major endogeneity issue in empirical analyses of voter responses to

party shifts. This issue is the possibility that voters do not respond to policies because they are not aware/do not receive the change in policy. However, in the experimental setting, partisans were explicitly told that their party changed its position, meaning that this issue cannot explain my results. This finding is even in place for a far-right policy rebrand, which is surprising given that these parties are typically seen as being particularly wedded to immigration and are unable to change their positions on this issue (Adams et al., 2006). Overall, these findings cast serious doubt on the importance of policy positions, and that party features, individual campaign strategies, or calcified emotional ties to a party may determine vote choice more so than changes in policies.

A related implication relates to the relationship between parties and voters. As mentioned in the discussion section of Chapter 3, voters appear to respond to prominent, visual cues from parties rather than substantive changes to the party's positions. This, in turn, is further evidence that voters have a limited capacity to digest party signals, and thus ``low hanging fruits'' that are easily digestible are the ones that can have the most impact. A similar implication comes from Chapter 4 in that parties may not neatly translate partisan attitudes into policies. In an ideal or normative representative government, voters elect representatives based on their policy positions, who then implement these polices on behalf of the voters. The implication is that if parties are no longer enacting or campaigning on the policies desired by voters, voters will switch to another party. My results instead indicate that parties can change their positions in ways that should be counter to the desires of their own core supporters without suffering any sort of backlash. In turn, the polices enacted by government may actually be not be in alignment with the desires of voters, which in turn could contribute not only to the decline of partisan affiliation, but also have a deleterious effect on the quality of government and democracy in Western Europe.

5.3 Future Work

There are several avenues of further work on the topic of party rebranding. The first project would attempt to rectify the conflicting findings between Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 found that feature rebrands are electorally beneficial, while Chapter 4 found that feature rebrands have no effect. I suspect that these different findings stem from partisans remaining stable in their support while swing voters migrate to the rebranded party. In order to test this, a second survey experiment analyzing responses of the electorate at large rather than just partisans could be paired with either Chapters 3 or 4. Further work could extent the concept of feature rebranding to include other types of feature changes such as logo or slogan changes.

Further extensions could shed more light on the mechanisms behind rebranding. For example, in Chapter 3 I posited that the mechanism linking rebranding and voters was media attention, but I only provided suggestive evidence of this link. An additional analysis could conduct a content or text analysis of newspapers or social media posts on rebranding to better demonstrate that this is indeed something that is followed in the media. A second method to investigate the mechanisms behind rebranding could be an in depth case study of prominent cases of rebranding, using process tracing to examine the steps and elite-level decisions which resulted in a rebrand. Similarly, I could conduct a survey of party elites, asking various questions about when and why they might elect to rebrand their party. Lastly, it is important to investigate whether rebranding, or indeed the concept of party brands, travels to other contexts. Parties across the world, including those in Latin American, Africa, and East Asia have all changes in ways that align with my basic concept of party rebranding, so future research should investigate how well the concept travels to other contexts.

Appendix A – Chapter 1 Material

Table 7: A.1 - List of Party Name Changes

Country	Initial Name	New Name	Year
Austria	Green Alternative	Green	1994
Austria	League of Independents	Austrian Freedom Party	1956
Belgium	Live Differently	Green	2007
Belgium	Flemish Socialist Party	Socialist Party Different	2003
Belgium	Liberal Party	Party of Liberty and Progress	1961
Belgium	Party of Liberty and Progress	Flemish Liberals and Democrats	1995
Belgium	Flemish Liberals and Democrats	Open Flemish and Liberals	2007
Belgium	Party of Walloon Liberty	Liberal Reformation Party	1981
Belgium	Brussels Liberal Party	Liberal Party	1977
Belgium	Christian Peoples Party	Christian Democratic Flemish	2003
Belgium	Christian Social Party	Humanist Democratic Center	2003
Belgium	Flemish Christian People's Union	People's Union	1958
Denmark	New Alliance	Liberal Alliance	2011
Denmark	Christian People's Party	Christian Democrats	2005
Finland	National Progressive Party	Finnish People's Party	1951
Finland	Finnish People's Party	Liberal People's Party	1966
Finland	Finnish Christian Union	Christian Democrats in Finland	2003
Finland	Agrarian Union	Centre Party	1966
Finland	Centre Party	Finnish Centre	1991
Finland	Finnish Smallholders Party	Finnish Rural Party	1970
Finland	Finnish Rural Party	True Finns	1999
Finland	True Finns	Finns Party	2011

France	The Greens	Europe Ecology – The Greens	2012
France	French Section of the Workers Party	Socialist Party	1973
France	Democratic Center	Progress and Modern Democracy	1968
France	Rally for the French People	Union for the New Republic	1958
France	Union for the New Republic	Democratic Union of the Fifth Republic	1967
France	Democratic Union of the Fifth Republic	Union for the Defense of the Republic	1968
France	Union for the Defense of the Republic	Union of Democrats for the Republic	1973
France	Union of Democrats for the Republic	Rally for the Republic	1978
France	Rally for the Republic	Union for the New Majority	1981
France	Republican Party of Liberty	National Center of Independents	1951
France	Union for French Democracy	Democratic Movement	2007
France	Union for Presidential Majority	Union for a Popular Movement	2007
France	Union for a Popular Movement	The Republicans	2017
Greece	Centre Union	Union of Democratic Centre	1977
Iceland	United Socialist Party	People's Alliance	1956
Italy	Italian Communist Party	Democratic Party of the Left	1992
Italy	Radical Party	Pannella List	1992

Italy	Socialist Party of Italian Workers	Italian Democratic Socialist Party	1953
Italy	Christian Democrats	Italian Popular Party	1994
Italy	Union for the Christian and Center Democrats	Union of the Center	2008
Italy	Italian Social Movement	National Alliance	1994
Italy	Northern League	League	2018
Luxembourg	Green Left Ecological Initiative	The Greens	2004
Luxembourg	Patriotic and Democratic Group	Democratic Group	1951
Luxembourg	Action Committee for Democracy and Pension Justice	Alternative Democratic Reform Party	2009
Netherlands	Freedom Party	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	1948
Norway	Socialist People's Party	Socialist Left Party	1977
Norway	Norwegian Labour Party	Labour Party	2013
Norway	Farmer's Party	Centre Party	1961
Norway	Anders Lange Party	Progress Party	1977
Portugal	Popular Democratic Party	Social Democratic Party	1979
Spain	Communist Party of Spain	United Left	1986
Spain	Popular Alliance	People's Party	1989

Spain	Aragonese Regionalist Party	Aragonese Party	1993
Spain	Canarian Coalition	New Canaries	2019
Sweden	Communist Party of Sweden	Left Communist Party	1968
Sweden	Left Communist Party	Left Party	1991
Sweden	People's Party	Liberal People's Party	1991
Sweden	Liberal People's Party	Liberals	2018
Sweden	Christian Democratic Coalition	Christian Democratic Community Party	1991
Sweden	Christian Democratic Community Party	Christian Democrats	1998
Sweden	Right Party	Moderate Coalition Party	1970
Sweden	Moderate Coalition Party	New Moderates	2006
Sweden	Agrarian Party	Centre Party	1958
Switzerland	Greens	Federation of Greens	1983
Switzerland	Federation of Greens	The Green Party of Switzerland	1987
Switzerland	Radical Democratic Party	FDP: The Liberals	2011
Switzerland	Conservative People's Party	Conservative Christian People's Party	1959
Switzerland	Conservative Christian People's Party	Christian Democratic People's Party	1971
Switzerland	National Action Against Foreign Domination	National Action for the People and the Fatherland	1979
Switzerland	National Action for the People and the Fatherland	Swiss Democrats	1991
Switzerland	Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Party	Swiss People's Party	1971
Switzerland	Swiss Motorists Party	Freedom Party of Switzerland	1995

Table 8: A.2 Policy Rebrands, 1945-2019

Country Name	Number of Parties	No. Positional	No. Salience	No. Programmatic
Austria	6	5	3	3
Belgium	21	4	10	1
Denmark	16	12	12	8
Finland	11	6	8	7
France	13	4	5	2
Germany	9	2	0	2
Greece	12	5	5	5
Iceland	12	5	6	3
Ireland	10	3	4	2
Italy	22	9	9	9
Luxembourg	8	4	3	1
Netherlands	22	5	1	1
Norway	9	2	1	1
Portugal	10	7	5	4
Spain	23	0	3	1
Sweden	8	4	6	2
Switzerland	17	7	5	5
United Kingdom	10	2	4	1
Total	**239**	**86**	**90**	**62**

Appendix B – Chapter 2 Material

Table 9: B.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Feature Rebrand	0.035	0.18	0	1
Positional Rebrand	0.13	0.34	0	1
Salience Rebrand	0.133	0.34	0	1
Programmatic Rebrand	.0457	0.209	0	1
Electoral Shock	.00712	.214	-1.26	1
Leader Dummy	.411	.492	0	1
Leader Strength	-1.07	1.17	-2.74	3.35
Party Age (log)	1.45	0.531	0	2.17
ENPP	4.87	1.63	2	10.9
Gov Status	0.33	0.471	0	1
Small Dummy	0.26	0.438	0	1

Table 10: B.2 Firth Logit

	Model B.1
(Intercept)	−1.42
	(0.93)
Electoral Shock	1.51***
	(0.51)
Party Age (log)	−0.92***
	(0.32)
Governing Status	−0.28
	(0.31)
ENPP	−0.071
	(0.13)
Small	0.37
	(0.32)
Challenger	−0.28
	(0.40)
Center Right	−0.002
	(0.35)
Ecological	−0.42
	(0.57)
Nationalist	−0.20
	(0.50)
Socialist	0.61
	(0.54)
Country FE	✓
Decade FE	✓
Num. obs.	1958

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 11: B.3 Different Cutoff Points

	Model B.2 (+0.5 SD)	Model B.3: (+0.75 SD)	Model B.4: (+1.25 SD)
(Intercept)	-1.42^{***}	-2.29^{***}	-3.65^{***}
	(0.52)	(0.69)	(0.83)
Electoral Shock	0.072	0.21	0.15
	(0.20)	(0.27)	(0.37)
Party Age	-0.13	-0.19	-0.14
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.36)
Gov. Status	0.099	0.023	.042
	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.24)
ENPP	-0.0019	0.016	-0.0226
	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.18)
Small	-0.17	-0.34	-0.408^{*}
	(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.23)
Challenger	-0.11	-0.26	0.06
	(0.21)	(0.28)	(0.34)
Center Right	0.45^{***}	0.31^{**}	0.42^{**}
	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.18)
Ecological	-0.06	-0.01	-0.15
	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.38)
Nationalist	0.299	0.225	0.319^{*}
	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Socialist	0.19	0.21	0.073
	(0.25)	(0.350)	(0.403)
Other	-0.432^{*}	-0.33	0.036
	(0.25)	(0.46)	(0.38)
Pseudo Adj. R^2	0.08	0.09	0.12
Num. obs.	1955	1886	1886

$^{***}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{*}p < 0.1$

Table 12: B.4 CHES Data

	Model B.5 (+0.5 SD)	Model B.6: (+0.75 SD)	Model B.7: (+1 SD)	Model B.8: (+1.25 SD)
(Intercept)	1.21	0.25	0.261	0.25
	(0.97)	(0.97)	(1.09)	(1.67)
Electoral Shock	0.85	1.68	1.50	1.74
	(0.32)	(0.55)	(0.59)	(1.083)
Party Age (log)	-0.35	-0.15	-0.19	-0.27
	(0.30)	(0.46)	(0.57)	(0.56)
Governing Status	-0.52^{*}	-0.34	-0.57	-0.43
	(0.31)	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.39)
ENPP	0.130	0.18	0.076	-0.045
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.30)
Small	0.92^{***}	1.02^{**}	$0.869*$	1.12^{**}
	(0.23)	(0.46)	(0.47)	(0.53)
Challenger	-1.07^{**}	-1.07^{***}	-0.59^{**}	-0.53^{*}
	(0.47)	(0.34)	(0.29)	(0.29)
Center Right	-0.17	0.034	0.022	-0.01
	(0.27)	(0.47)	(0.55)	(0.73)
Ecological	-0.14	-0.028	-0.049	-0.27
	(0.60)	(0.62)	(0.64)	(0.62)
Nationalist	1.33^{**}	1.51^{**}	1.54^{**}	1.93^{***}
	(0.52)	(0.66)	(0.67)	(0.73)
Socialist	0.33	0.48	-0.092	-0.027
	(0.45)	(0.498)	(0.65)	(0.68)
Other	0.16	0.35	-0.17	-0.14
	(0.61)	(0.54)	(0.48)	(0.61)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pseudo Adj. R^2	0.08	0.10	0.14	0.18
Num. obs.	299	299	299	278

$^{***}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{*}p < 0.1$

Appendix C – Chapter 3 Material

Table 13: C.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Party Vote Share	15.2	13.02	0.1	54.5
Feature Rebrand	0.035	0.18	0	1
Positional Rebrand	0.13	0.34	0	1
Salience Rebrand	0.133	0.34	0	1
Programmatic Rebrand	.0457	0.209	0	1
Center Rebrand	0.055	0.229	0	1
Extreme Rebrand	0.062	0.240	0	1
Economic Rebrand	0.134	0.341	0	1
Cultural Rebrand	0.120	0.325	0	1
Leader Dummy	.411	.492	0	1
Party Age (log)	1.45	0.531	0	2.17
ENPP	4.87	1.63	2	10.9
Gov Status	0.33	0.471	0	1
Small Dummy	0.26	0.438	0	1
Policy Position	0.129	1.18	-8.9	8.02
Electoral History	16.9	13.1	0.26	50.45

Table 14: C.2 Feature Rebrand

	Model C.1
(Intercept)	8.59^{***}
	(1.54)
Feature Rebrand	0.74^{**}
	(0.35)
ENPP	-0.85^{***}
	(0.21)
Governing Status	-0.86^{*}
	(0.37)
Party Age	-0.13
	(0.62)
Party Family	-0.01
	(0.36)
Challenger	-0.42
	(0.54)
Policy Position	0.12
	(0.10)
Change in Leader	-1.68^{***}
	(0.32)
Electoral History	0.90^{***}
	(0.01)
Country FE	✓
Decade FE	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86
Num. obs.	1341

$^{***}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{*}p < 0.1$

Table 15: C.3 ADL Model

	Model C.2
(Intercept)	5.72**
	(1.84)
Feature Rebrand t_0	0.43
	(0.76)
Feature Rebrand t_{-1}	0.08
	(0.58)
Positional Rebrand t_0	−0.1
	(0.35)
Positional Rebrand t_{-1}	0.5
	(0.45)
Salience Rebrand t_0	0.13
	(0.50)
Salience Rebrand t_{-1}	−0.10
	(0.49)
Programmatic Rebrand t_0	−0.01
	(1.01)
Programmatic Rebrand t_{-1}	0.57
	(0.91)
ENPP	−0.63***
	(0.16)
Governing Status	−1.90**
	(0.50)
Party Age	−0.77
	(0.49)
Party Family	−0.04
	(0.33)
Challenger	−1.01
	(0.49)
Policy Position	0.14
	(0.08)
Change in Leader	−1.03**
	(0.33)
Party Vote Share t_{-1}	0.89***
	(0.02)
Country FE	✓
Decade FE	✓
Adj. R^2	0.87
Num. obs.	1453

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 16: C.4 Interaction Model 1

	Model C.3	Model C.4	Model C.5	Model C.6
(Intercept)	10.38***	10.57***	10.41***	10.59***
	(1.47)	(1.47)	(1.49)	(1.51)
Feature*Small	−0.66	-	-	-
	(1.22)			
Positional*Small	-	1.41	-	-
		(0.95)		
Salience*Small	-	-	0.04	-
			(0.86)	
Programmatic*Small	-	-	-	1.80
				(1.11)
Feature Rebrand	0.69	-	-	-
	(0.43)			
Positional Rebrand	-	−0.65	-	−0.57 -
		(0.66)		(0.62)
Salience Rebrand	-	-	−0.04	−0.03
			(0.37)	(0.30)
Programmatic Rebrand	-	-	-	0.09
				(0.88)
Small	−3.43***	−3.55***	−3.47***	−3.51***
	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.53)	(0.60)
ENPP	−0.96***	−0.96***	−0.96***	−0.97***
	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.23)
Governing Status	−0.73	−0.77	−0.73	−0.76
	(0.41)	(0.40)	(0.41)	(0.40)
Party Age	−0.47	−0.59	−0.48	−0.60
	(0.64)	(0.64)	(0.64)	(0.65)
Party Family	0.20	0.18	0.19	0.17
	(0.40)	(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.40)
Challenger	−0.21	−0.30	−0.23	−0.30
	(0.54)	(0.52)	(0.54)	(0.53)
Policy Position	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Change in Leader	−1.51***	−1.58***	−1.51***	−1.57***
	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.32)
Electoral History	0.86***	0.86***	0.86***	0.86***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87
Num. obs.	1341	1336	1340	1336

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 17: C.5 Interaction Model 2

	Model C.7	Model C.8	Model C.9	Model C.10
(Intercept)	8.59***	8.71***	8.61***	8.65***
	(1.54)	(1.54)	(1.58)	(1.56)
Feature*Challenger	−0.67	-	-	-
	(1.77)			
Positional*Challenger	-	−1.16	-	-
		(0.89)		
Salience*Challenger	-	-	2.13	-
			(1.45)	
Programmatic*Challenger	-	-	-	−0.41
				(0.89)
Feature Rebrand	0.93	-	-	-
	(0.63)			
Positional Rebrand	-	−0.22	-	−0.64
		(0.54)		(0.61)
Salience Rebrand	-	-	−0.37	−0.12
			(0.50)	(0.31)
Programmatic Rebrand	-	-	-	0.90
				(0.83)
Challenger	−0.38	−0.43	−0.64	−0.46
	(0.51)	(0.53)	(0.45)	(0.51)
ENPP	−0.85***	−0.85***	−0.85***	−0.84***
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Governing Status	−0.86*	−0.90*	−0.87*	−0.90*
	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.36)
Party Age	−0.13	−0.22	−0.12	−0.23
	(0.63)	(0.63)	(0.63)	(0.64)
Party Family	−0.01	−0.04	−0.02	−0.04
	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.36)
Policy Position	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.12
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Change in Leader	−1.68***	−1.72***	−1.69***	−1.73***
	(0.32)	(0.31)	(0.32)	(0.31)
Electoral History	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86
Num. obs.	1341	1336	1340	1336

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 18: C.6 Interaction Model 3

(Intercept)	8.59***	8.67***	8.80***	8.67***
	(1.54)	(1.56)	(1.62)	(1.64)
Feature Rebrand*Party Family	2.96	-	-	-
	(0.87)			
Positional Rebrand*Party Family	-	0.66	- -	-
		(1.13)		
Salience Rebrand*Party Family	-	-	−2.09	-
			(1.50)	
Programmatic*Party Family	-	-	-	−0.62
				(3.64)
Feature Rebrand	0.35	-	-	-
	(0.37)			
Positional Rebrand	-	−0.56	-	−0.64
		(0.60)		(0.61)
Salience Rebrand	-	-	0.45	-−0.12
			(0.39)	(0.31)
Programmatic Rebrand	-	-	-	1.03
				(1.10)
Party Family	−0.08	−0.08	0.23	−0.02
	(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.35)
ENPP	−0.85***	−0.85***	−0.87***	−0.85***
	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.23)
Governing Status	−0.86*	−0.90*	−0.88*	−0.90*
	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)
Party Age	−0.14	−0.22	−0.20	−0.24
	(0.62)	(0.64)	(0.65)	(0.65)
Challenger	−0.41	−0.48	−0.43	−0.46
	(0.53)	(0.50)	(0.54)	(0.51)
Policy Position	0.13	0.11	0.13	0.12
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Change in Leader	−1.66***	−1.73***	−1.65***	−1.72***
	(0.32)	(0.31)	(0.32)	(0.31)
Electoral History	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86
Num. obs.	1341	1336	1340	1336

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 19: C.7 Directional (Position)

	Model C.15	Model C.16
(Intercept)	5.61^{**}	5.71^{**}
	(2.03)	(1.94)
Positional Rebrand - Extreme	0.10	-
	(0.26)	
Positional Rebrand - Center	-	−0.10
		(0.26)
ENPP	-0.82^{***}	-0.82^{***}
	(0.21)	(0.21)
Governing Status	-0.84^{*}	-0.84^{*}
	(0.36)	(0.36)
Party Age	0.01	0.01
	(0.64)	(0.64)
Challenger	−0.76	−0.76
	(0.50)	(0.50)
Policy Position	0.13	0.13
	(0.10)	(0.10)
Change in Leader	-1.68^{***}	-1.68^{***}
	(0.32)	(0.32)
Electoral History	0.90^{***}	0.90^{***}
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Country FE	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86	0.86
Num. obs.	1336	1336

$^{***}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{*}p < 0.1$

Table 20: C.8 Directional Model (Salience)

	Model C.17	Model C.18
(Intercept)	5.49**	5.45**
	(1.99)	(1.99)
Salience Rebrand - Economic	0.08	-
	(0.39)	
Salience Rebrand - Cultural	-	0.39
		(0.32)
ENPP	−0.82***	−0.81***
	(0.21)	(0.21)
Governing Status	−0.81*	−0.81*
	(0.37)	(0.37)
Party Age	0.10	0.07
	(0.62)	(0.62)
Challenger	−0.72	−0.69
	(0.52)	(0.51)
Policy Position	0.13	0.16
	(0.09)	(0.11)
Change in Leader	−1.63***	−1.63***
	(0.33)	(0.33)
Electoral History	0.90***	0.90***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Country FE	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86	0.86
Num. obs.	1340	1340

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 21: C.9 Alternate Policy Rebrand Cutoff Points

	Model C.19 (+0.5 SD)	Model C.20: (+0.75 SD)	Model C.21: (+1 SD)	Model C.22: (+1.25 SD)
(Intercept)	5.63**	5.58**	5.55**	5.63**
	(1.86)	(1.86)	(1.84)	(1.85)
Positional Rebrand	−0.61	−0.56	−0.41	−0.04
	(0.31)	(0.38)	(0.43)	(0.62)
ENPP	−0.81***	−0.81***	−0.81***	−0.82***
	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.21)
Governing Status	−0.84*	−0.85*	−0.84*	−0.84*
	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.37)
Party Age	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.01
	(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.61)
Party Family	−0.09	−0.08	−0.07	−0.05
	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.33)
Challenger	−0.79	−0.80	−0.79	−0.77
	(0.49)	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.50)
Policy Position	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.13
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)
Change in Leader	−1.69***	−1.69***	−1.69***	−1.69***
	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.33)
Electoral History	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86
Num. obs.	1336	1336	1336	1336

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 22: C.10 CHES Data

	Model C.24 (+0.5 SD)	Model C.25: (+0.75 SD)	Model C.26: (+1 SD)	Model C.27: (+1.25 SD)
(Intercept)	5.58	5.47	5.78	5.66
	(3.12)	(3.16)	(3.20)	(3.29)
Positional Rebrand	−0.33	−0.17	−0.56	−0.53
	(0.59)	(0.65)	(0.80)	(1.13)
ENPP	−0.51	−0.51	−0.52	−0.52
	(0.61)	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.61)
Governing Status	−2.59**	−2.56**	−2.62**	−2.60**
	(0.98)	(0.96)	(0.95)	(0.97)
Party Age	0.39	0.40	0.40	0.38
	(1.41)	(1.44)	(1.41)	(1.43)
Party Family	−0.17	−0.16	−0.21	−0.15
	(0.99)	(1.01)	(0.97)	(0.97)
Challenger	−1.22	−1.18	−1.26	−1.20
	(0.95)	(0.95)	(0.93)	(0.91)
Policy Position	−0.01	−0.02	−0.01	−0.01
	(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.33)
Change in Leader	−2.62***	−2.61***	−2.64***	−2.62***
	(0.68)	(0.68)	(0.69)	(0.68)
Electoral History	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86
	(0.75)	(0.79)	(0.76)	(0.76)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decade FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adj. R^2	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82
Num. obs.	261	261	261	261

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Appendix D – Chapter 4 Material

D. 1 Treatment Scripts

Green: Feature Rebrand

After a lively debate at the GreenLeft party congress over the weekend, party members voted to change its name to the "New GreenLeft.” Party leader Jesse Klaver later said the new name was part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bring about real, positive change for the country.

Green: Policy Rebrand

After a lively debate at the GreenLeft party congress last week, the party announced an updated policy profile. While the party reiterated its desire to curb carbon emissions, the party decided to abandon its calls for a tax on emissions in favor of a cap and trade system. Party leader Jesse Klaver later said the new policy was part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bring about real, positive change for the country.

Green: Tandem Rebrand

After a lively debate at the GreenLeft party conference last week, the party announced that it was changing its name to the "New GreenLeft." In addition, while the party reiterated its desire to curb carbon emissions, the party decided to abandon its calls for a tax on emissions in favor of a cap and trade system. Party leader Jesse Klaver later said the new name and policy change were part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bring about real, positive change for the country.

Labour: Feature Rebrand

After a lively debate at the Labour Party (PvdA) conference over the weekend, party members voted to change its name to the "New PvdA." Party leader Lillianne Ploumen later said the new name was part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bring about real, positive change for the country.

Labour: Policy Rebrand

After a lively debate at the Labour Party (PvdA) conference last week, the party announced an updated policy profile. While the party reiterated its commitment to maintaining the welfare state, the party said that the welfare state could not come at the cost of economic growth and called for lower taxes and business deregulation. Party leader Liliane Ploumen later said the change was part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bring about real, positive change for the country.

Labour Tandem Rebrand

After a lively debate at the Labour Party (PvdA) conference last week, the party announced that it was changing its name to "the New PvdA." In addition, the party changed some of its policy positions. While the party reiterated its commitment to maintaining the welfare state, the party said that the welfare state could not come at the cost of economic growth and called for lower taxes and business deregulation. Party leader Lilianne Ploumen went on to say that the changes were part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bring about real, positive change for the country.

PVV: Feature Rebrand

After a lively debate at the Party for Freedom's congress over the weekend, party members voted to change its name to the New Party for Freedom. Party leader Geert Wilders later said the new name was part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bringing about real, positive change to the country.

PVV: Policy Rebrand

After a lively debate at the Party for Freedom's party congress last week, the party announced some policy changes. While the party reiterated its commitment to the protection of Dutch identity, the party softened its opposition to immigration as the party said it was now in favor of accepting refugees from war torn countries. Party leader Geert Wilders later said the changes were part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bringing about real, positive change to the country.

PVV: Tandem Rebrand

After a lively debate at the Party for Freedom congress last week, the party announced that it was changing its name to the "New Party for Freedom." In addition, the party changed some of its policy positions. While the party reiterated its commitment to protecting Dutch nationality, the party softened its immigration stance by committing to allowing refugees from war torn countries. Party leader Geert Wilders later said the changes were part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bringing about real, positive change to the country.

VVD: Feature Rebrand

After a lively debate at the VVD's congress over the weekend, party members voted to change its name to the "New Party for Freedom and Democracy" (New VVD). Party leader Mark Rutte later said the new name was part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bringing about real, positive change to the country.

VVD Policy Rebrand

After a lively debate at the VVD party congress last week, the party announced some policy changes. While the party reiterated its commitment to small government and a market driven economy, the party announced that it was now in favor of more government regulation of businesses and the economy. Party leader Mark Rutte later said the changes were part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bringing about real, positive change to the country.

VVD Tandem Rebrand

After a lively debate at the VVD congress last week, the party announced that it was changing its name to the "New People's Party for Freedom and Democracy" (New VVD). In addition, the party changed some of its policy positions. While the party reiterated its commitment to small government and a market driven economy, the party announced that it was now in favor of more government regulation of businesses and the economy. Party leader Mark Rutte later said the changes were part of a renewed effort by the party to demonstrate its commitment to bringing about real, positive change to the country.

D. 2 Survey Questions

Question 1 The purpose of this research study is to analyze voter attitudes towards political parties. If you agree to participate, in the following survey, you will watch a video about a Dutch political party, and then you will answer a series of questions about your attitude to said party. Questions will include items such as rating the party's policies, how much you trust the party and its leader, and your intention to vote for the party in future elections. The survey should last no more than 10 minutes. There are no risks in participating in this survey, and there are no benefits. You will receive 3 EUR for completing this survey. All responses are entirely anonymous and will remain completely confidential. No identifying information will be collected, including IP addresses, and no persons will have access to the responses except for the study coordinators. Note that that further processing of your data is possible, provided that this is compatible with this purpose. Research data published in scientific journals will be anonymous and cannot be traced back to you as an individual. Your responses will be analyzed solely to answer the research questions described above. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. This study is being conducted by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh, USA. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Matthias Avina at maa330@pitt.edu.
If you would like to participate, click "Yes" below. With this, you declare:
- I am 18 years of age
- I have read and understood the information
- I agree to participate in the study and to use the data obtained with it.
- I reserve the right to withdraw this consent without giving any reason.
- I reserve the right to stop the study at any time I wish.

Yes, I wish to participate
No, I do not wish to participate
Question 2
What is your age?
18-24

25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65+
Question 3
What is your gender?
Male
Female
Non-binary / third gender
Question 4
What is your highest level of educational attainment?
Some High School
High School graduate or equivalent
Some college, no degree
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Doctorate
Question 5
Which region of the Netherlands are you from?
Question 6
Who is the current Prime Minister of the Netherlands?
Wim Kok
Jan Peter Balkenende
Mark Rutte
Geert Wilders
Wopke Hoekstra
Question 7
How many seats are in the Dutch House of Representatives?
100
125
150
175
200
Question 8
Which of the following parties is in the political opposition?
Christian Democratic Appeal
Christian Union
PvDA
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
Question 9
In politics, people often speak of the "left" and the "right." Where would you place yourself on this scale? [0-10 Feeling Thermometer]
Question 10
Using the slider below, please indicate how interested you are in politics. [0-10 Feeling Thermometer]

Question 11
Choosing from the list below, please rank the issues based on how important they are to you personally.
Healthcare
The environment
The economy
Affordable housing
Unemployment
Immigration
Inflation
Question 12
From the list below, please select the party that you would be most likely to support if an election were held today:
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)
Green Left (GL)
Party for Freedom (PVV)
Labour Party (PvdA)
Q13
Treatment Script Here
Q14
Do you approve or disapprove of [party leader name's] performance as party leader?
Q15
Please rate the [party name] using the left/right scale [0-10 scale]
Q16
How close do you feel to the [party name]?
Q17
How much do you trust the [party name]?
Q18
How competent do you think the [party name] would be in handling the issues that are most important to you?
Q19
How likely are you to vote for the [party name] in the next national election?

D.3 Alternate Models

Table 23: D.1 Closeness ATE

Party Name	Feature Rebrand	Policy Rebrand	Tandem Rebrand
GroenLinks (Green)	0.64**	0.32	0.04
	(0.31)	(0.28)	(0.27)
PvdA (Social Democratic)	-0.28	-0.16	-0.15
	(0.34)	(0.32)	(0.31)
VVD (Liberal)	-0.02	0.70**	0.38
	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.24)
PVV (Far-Right)	-0.19	-0.31	−0.72***
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.25)

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 24: D.2 Trust ATE by Party

Party Name	Feature Rebrand	Policy Rebrand	Tandem Rebrand
GroenLinks (Green)	0.41	-0.11	-0.06
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)
PvdA (Social Democratic)	-0.15	-0.35	-0.3
	(0.34)	(0.36)	(0.33)
VVD (Liberal)	−0.52*	0.29	0.003
	(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.23)
PVV (Far-Right)	-0.17	-0.06	−0.73***
	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.23)

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 25: D.3 Capability ATE

Party Name	Feature Rebrand	Policy Rebrand	Tandem Rebrand
GroenLinks (Green)	0.26	0.06	0.02
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)
PvdA (Social Democratic)	0.41	0.39	0.43*
	(0.20)	(0.28)	(0.18)
VVD (Liberal)	-0.22	0.46*	0.19
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)
PVV (Far-Right)	-0.14	-0.15	−0.73***
	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.22)

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 26: D.4 Feature Vote Choice

	Closeness	Interest	Approval
(Intercept)	2.55***	4.57***	2.56***
	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.26)
Feature Rebrand	0.12	0.27	−0.53
	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.40)
Self Placement - Closeness	0.63***		
	(0.04)		
Feature*Closeness	−0.04		
	(0.05)		
Political Interest		0.26***	
		(0.04)	
Feature*Interest		−0.07	
		(0.06)	
Leader Approval			0.59***
			(0.04)
Feature*Approval			0.04
			(0.06)
Adj. R^2	0.29	0.05	0.26
Num. obs.	1258	1300	1093

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 27: D.5 Policy Rebrand Vote Choice

	Closeness	Interest	Approval
(Intercept)	2.55***	4.57***	2.56***
	(0.24)	(0.26)	(0.27)
Policy Rebrand	−0.24	0.44	−1.07*
	(0.33)	(0.37)	(0.43)
Self Placement - Closeness	0.63***		
	(0.04)		
Policy*Closeness	0.1		
	(0.05)		
Political Interest		0.26***	
		(0.04)	
Policy*Interest		−0.10	
		(0.06)	
Leader Approval			0.59***
			(0.04)
Policy*Approval			0.09
			(0.06)
Adj. R^2	0.35	0.04	0.26
Num. obs.	1254	1296	1099

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 28: D.6 Tandem Rebrand Vote Choice

	Closeness	Interest	Approval
(Intercept)	2.38***	4.21***	2.59***
	(0.29)	(0.31)	(0.30)
Tandem	0.40	0.07	−0.92**
	(0.37)	(0.40)	(0.45)
Self Placement - Closeness	0.63***		
	(0.05)		
Tandem*Closeness	−0.11		
	(0.06)		
Political Interest		0.28***	
		(0.05)	
Tandem*Interest		−0.03	
		(0.06)	
Leader Approval			0.57***
			(0.05)
Tandem*Approval			0.09
			(0.07)
Adj. R^2	0.25	0.06	0.25
Num. obs.	1087	1117	915

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 29: D.7 Feature Rebrand Closeness

	Closeness	Interest	Approval
(Intercept)	0.90***	3.46***	2.10***
	(0.18)	(0.23)	(0.24)
Feature Rebrand	0.28	0.46	−0.03
	(0.25)	(0.31)	(0.36)
Self Placement - Closeness	0.81***		
	(0.03)		
Feature*Closeness	-0.08		
	(0.04)		
Political Interest		0.35***	
		(0.04)	
Feature*Interest		−0.06	
		(0.05)	
Leader Approval			0.57***
			(0.04)
Feature*Approval			−0.01
			(0.06)
Adj. R^2	0.52	0.11	0.27
Num. obs.	1267	1304	1099

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 30: D.8 Policy Rebrand Closeness

	Closeness	Interest	Approval
(Intercept)	0.90***	3.46***	2.10***
	(0.17)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Policy Rebrand	0.31	0.55	−0.78*
	(0.24)	(0.32)	(0.38)
Self Placement - Closeness	0.81***		
	(0.03)		
Policy*Closeness	−0.01		
	(0.04)		
Political Interest		0.35***	
		(0.04)	
Policy*Interest		−0.07	
		(0.05)	
Leader Approval			0.57***
			(0.04)
Policy*Approval			0.07
			(0.04)
Adj. R^2	0.57	0.11	0.30
Num. obs.	1268	1305	1104

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$

Table 31: D.9 Tandem Rebrand Closeness

	Closeness	Interest	Approval
(Intercept)	0.90***	3.46***	2.10***
	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.24)
Tandem Rebrand	0.26	−0.13	−0.44
	(0.26)	(0.31)	(0.38)
Self Placement - Closeness	0.81***		
	(0.03)		
Tandem*Closeness	−0.12		
	(0.04)		
Political Interest		0.35***	
		(0.04)	
Tandem*Interest		0.01	
		(0.05)	
Leader Approval			0.57***
			(0.04)
Tandm*Approval			0.04
			(0.06)
Adj. R^2	0.48	0.14	0.28
Num. obs.	1265	1294	1092

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

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