

Explaining electoral volatility: predispositions' strength, heuristics, and political sophistication*

Romain Lachat
University of Zurich
lachat@pwi.unizh.ch

Introduction

The recent literature on electoral research points to several trends that affect mass political behaviour in all advanced industrial countries. These trends include changes in the social-structural basis of traditional political cleavages, the emergence of new political issues and of new values, and a weakening of the relationship between parties and citizens (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Franklin, Mackie and Valen 1992; Nieuwbeerta and Manza 2002; Schnell and Kohler 1995; Wattenberg 1991). This phenomenon of “electoral dealignment” leads to a reassessment of the traditional models of voting behaviour. These were based on an image of a stable electorate. Votes were to be explained on the basis of long-term factors, such as one’s position in the social structure, or traditional loyalties acquired through socialisation. This is reflected in the heavy emphasis put both on party identification, in the tradition of the Michigan model (Campbell, Converse et al. 1960), and on stable political cleavages, following the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967). The trends we have mentioned imply that these traditional models become inadequate. As a consequence of the weakening of traditional loyalties, voting choices are characterised by a higher level of uncertainty. As voters’ attachment to political parties abates, issue voting is expected to become more frequent and citizens should be more strongly influenced by short-term factors. These evolutions, in turn, should be reflected by increases in the level of electoral volatility, split-ticket voting, and late decision-making in electoral campaigns. In this paper, we shall consider the relationship between dealignment and the increase in electoral volatility. We do not reassess the phenomenon of dealignment as such, and we do not contest that an increase in electoral volatility characterises most advanced industrial democracies. Yet, we argue that an almost exclusive focus on the decline of party identification – which is current in the literature on electoral dealignment – is not sufficient to account for the observed increase in electoral volatility. We shall suggest here an alternative model, which departs from many accounts of volatility on three respects. First of all, we

* Paper prepared for the Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Lund, Sweden, July 15-18, 2004

suggest that the decline in the strength of party identification is only one aspect of the weakening of voters' social-structural predispositions. Voters' position with respect to the traditional class and religious cleavages must also be accounted for. Second, we make a distinction between different types of volatility. It has been argued that the increase in volatility was mainly due to changes between ideologically close parties. If we want to address this argument, we need separating changes *within* party families from changes *between* groups of parties. Third, and most important, we consider that weak social-structural predispositions are only one factor that can lead to unstable party preferences. To develop a better explanation of such behaviours, it is necessary to account also for voters' degree of political expertise. It is only by considering both elements (and their interactive effect!) that a more encompassing explanation of electoral volatility can be formulated.

In the next section, we present a short summary of the arguments supporting the "dealignment hypothesis," introducing the major causes and consequences of this phenomenon. In the following section, we discuss three important reasons why the strength of party identification may not be sufficient to explain which voters are most likely to be volatile. This will be followed by a summary of our hypotheses and by the presentation of our dependent variables' operationalisation. Then, we analyse the evolution of electoral volatility in Germany, between 1969 and 2002. Germany is an extremely adequate case to study the evolution of volatility. It is one of the very few countries where panel studies have been regularly conducted during electoral campaigns. As we consider the distinction between inter-election and campaign volatility to be important, the availability of such panel studies is a central criterion. In this way, we can trace the evolution of both types of volatility over a long period of time. Finally, we shall present the second part of our analysis, where we focus on the determinants of electoral volatility. The paper is concluded with a summary of our main findings.

Electoral dealignment and its consequences

The concept of *electoral* or *partisan dealignment* refers to changes in the relationships between parties and citizens. As Dalton writes it, "[t]he dealignment thesis holds that party ties were generally eroding as a consequence of social and political modernization, and thus most advanced industrial societies should experience a dealignment trend" (Dalton 2000: 22). Several important evolutions have contributed to the phenomenon of dealignment. Most important among these are a decrease in the salience of traditional cleavages, a process of cognitive mobilisation, and a transformation in the characteristics of electoral campaigns.

First, the process of social modernisation has altered the basis of traditional cleavages (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984; Franklin, Mackie and Valen 1992). The opposition between workers and owners has become less salient, as economic growth, increases in educational levels as well as in social and geographical mobility, have led to a homogenisation of life-styles. The separation between classes has largely been blurred. Furthermore, the growing importance of the service sector has reduced the size of the working class and of the “old” middle class, the two core groups that were opposed along the class cleavage. The religious cleavage has also been affected by a trend toward secularisation, leading to a sharp decrease in the frequency of church attendance. The second major “source” of dealignment is a process of cognitive mobilisation (Dalton 1984; Inglehart 1970; Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1979). Dalton argues that the spread of education and the decrease in the costs of acquiring political information have made voters more independent of parties. More and more citizens now have both the skills and the resources to orient themselves politically without relying on parties. “[T]he functional need for partisan cues to guide voting behavior, evaluate political issues, and mobilize political involvement is declining for a growing sector of society” (Dalton 1984: 265). This process of cognitive mobilisation is distinct from the traditional, partisan form of mobilisation. “Cognitive mobilization means that citizens possess the level of political skills and resources necessary to become self-sufficient in politics” (Dalton 1988: 18). Finally, changes at the level of parties also contribute to dealignment. The privileged position of political parties as intermediaries between citizens and Government is being challenged, and they have more and more difficulties to fulfil their traditional functions (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Flanagan and Dalton 1984).

At the individual level, the most important characteristics of dealignment are an increase in the political skills of citizens – that is in their level of cognitive mobilisation – and a decrease in the strength of traditional loyalties. Two aspects of the latter evolution can furthermore be distinguished: a *decline of party identification*, on the one hand, and a *weakening of the strength of cleavages*, on the other. While changes regarding party identification are the ones most often discussed in the dealignment literature, it is important to emphasise that a weakening of cleavages’ strength may also contribute to this phenomenon. We will come back to this distinction in the next section. In the meantime, we shall refer here more generally to these two aspects as a *decline in the strength of voters’ predispositions*. These evolutions are important to understand the process of formation of voting choices. The combined effect of cognitive mobilisation and of the weakening of voters’ predispositions

results in an increase in the level of “uncertainty” surrounding voters’ choices. These two evolutions mean that we face a growing number of voters who do not rely on traditional loyalties and who have the skills to make political choices independently of parties. Following the dealignment literature, these new independent voters should differ from traditional partisans on two crucial points. First they are more likely to base their voting choices on political issues. Second, they should display a higher level of variability in their partisan preferences. The two characteristics, of course, are related. As their voting choices are not likely to be based on traditional loyalties, they are more likely to alter their partisan preferences from one election to the next. Depending on the characteristics of the candidates, on the salient issues of the moment, on the perceived competence of the competing parties, among others, the new “apartisans” are expected to choose the party or candidate that corresponds most closely to their political preferences.

There are three important consequences of this phenomenon of dealignment which are often discussed in the literature: electoral volatility, late decision-making, and split-ticket voting (see for example Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). All of them can be seen as “symptoms” of a growing uncertainty on the side of voters. If the level of volatility increases, if a larger number of voters makes their electoral decision late in the campaign, and if a larger proportion of the electorate supports different parties for different offices, it indicates that voters’ party preferences have become more uncertain. Most important for our argument is the fact that these evolutions are usually presented as direct *consequences of the weakening of party identification*. This argument is stated most clearly in a contribution of Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000), where increases in electoral volatility, split-ticket voting, and late decision-making – among others – are presented as *consequences of partisan dealignment*.

An alternative explanation to electoral volatility

Altogether, the dominant argument of the dealignment literature is thus that party identifications become less frequent and that new “apartisans” with a high level of interest for politics and a high level of education are more likely to change their partisan preference on a short-term basis or to display other signs of uncertainty in their electoral decisions.¹ As we

¹ Of course, this short summary of the relationship between partisan dealignment, cognitive mobilisation, and uncertainty, is only a part of the dealignment hypothesis. Partisan dealignment and cognitive mobilisation have other consequences, that reach beyond the question of the formation of voting choices. The new “apartisans,” for example, should also be more likely to politically active beyond the electoral context. These aspects, however, are not relevant for the argument we shall present here. We only concentrate on those aspects of the dealignment

mentioned in our introduction, we do not think that this argument is sufficient to explain an increase in electoral volatility. Three aspects need to be further specified: the weakening of social-structural predispositions, a distinction between different forms of electoral volatility, and the role of cognitive factors in the explanation of voters' uncertainty. We discuss these three points in turn.

As regards voters' social-structural predispositions, we argue that it is necessary not to focus only on party identification. We do not dispute the fact that party identification has become less frequent. There is a large amount of evidence showing that fewer voters have a stable party identification and/or that its impact on voters' choices is declining. Furthermore, this is undoubtedly a very important political predisposition. It may even be *the* most important antecedent factor in the explanation of voters' choices, at least in some national contexts. In party systems like those of the United States or of Britain, where a very large proportion of citizens traditionally identified with a party and where a limited number of parties compete, it may be appropriate to focus only on party identification in the explanation of dealignment. Yet, in the European context, party systems are usually more fragmented and the proportion of party identifiers was in many cases lower than in the US. Most important, other types of social-structural predispositions have played a major role in structuring voters' choices. The traditional social cleavages – the most important of which being certainly the class and religious divides – have been central to the explanation of voters' party preferences. As they have also been affected by the aforementioned evolutions, they need to be accounted for if one wishes to determine which voters have become “dealigned.” If weak social-structural predispositions lead to a higher level of electoral volatility, accounting for both of these two central types of predispositions will allow us to develop a better explanation of the increase in this form of uncertainty. Accordingly, we use here an Index of Predispositions' Strength, which combines into a single measure the strength of voters' party identification with the impact of social-structural variables (among others, social class and religion).

The second part of our argument deals with electoral volatility itself. This concept is most often used to refer to changes in party preferences between two successive elections. Here, however, we shall distinguish between different types of volatility. A first distinction relates to the period during which eventual changes are observed. We shall contrast *inter-election* volatility with *campaign* volatility. The former refers to changes in voting choice between two

process that are of direct relevance for the question of the process of formation of voting choices. For a more detailed discussion of the cognitive mobilisation and dealignment hypotheses, see Dalton (2002) and Dalton and Wattenberg (2000).

successive elections, while the latter regards changes in one's voting intention during an electoral campaign. The second distinction is the one between *intra-block* and *inter-block* volatility. The latter corresponds to changes between parties which belong to different groups, defined in ideological terms. The former refers to changes *within* these groups of parties.² Thus, a voter changing her preference from the Greens to the Socialist party, for example, would be considered as intra-block volatile, while a change between the Socialist and the Christian-Democratic party would correspond to a case of inter-block volatility. By crossing these two dimensions, we obtain four types of volatility. The second distinction is important, at least for three reasons. First, it has been argued that the increase in volatility was first of all due to changes within party families (Zelle 1994, 1995). Then, the impact of predispositions' strength on volatility is likely to be higher for inter-block volatility than for intra-block volatility, as the latter type of change involves a less radical departure from one's traditional loyalties. Finally, "blocks" of parties in Germany have a particular characteristic: they always include a large party and a much smaller one. This may be an important factor with respect to the likelihood of a change in voters' party preferences.

Our third argument deals with the explanation of volatility. As we mentioned it before, we argue that uncertainty is not only linked with weak social-structural predispositions, but that it may also be due to specific cognitive factors. Two elements should play an important role here: an individual's level of political sophistication and the use of heuristics in the formation of voting decisions. There is a large amount of literature from political psychology showing the central role played by *political sophistication* in the process of formation of voting choices.³ Political sophistication can be defined, at the most basic level, as "accumulated knowledge in a domain" (Fiske, Lau and Smith 1990: 32). Variations in citizens' degree of political sophistication are linked with important variations in the stability of attitudes and in the way in which information is processed. Political experts will be more interested in politics than political novices, and they should be more strongly exposed to political information. Furthermore, they "should have particularly well developed and efficient strategies for representing and using information" (McGraw and Pinney 1990: 12). Similarly, Zaller (1992: 21) notes that "political awareness denotes intellectual or cognitive engagement with public affairs as against emotional or affective engagement or no engagement at all." At a general level, we would expect an increase in a voter's level of political sophistication to result in more stable and more coherent political attitudes. The impact of political sophistication on

² We refer to the *sum* of intra-block and inter-block volatility as *overall volatility*.

³ We use here the terms "political sophistication" and "political expertise" in an interchangeable way.

electoral volatility, however, also depends on the strength of predispositions. To show this, we must first introduce the second central concept, namely heuristics.

Much research in political cognition shows that individuals do not process all available information in a systematic manner. Both their capacity and their motivation to consider a large amount of information and to process it in a systematic way are limited. Instead, people will rather tend to use simple decision rules or “heuristics,” that allow them making a choice on the basis of a few, salient pieces of information. In the case of voting choices, the kind of decisions that interest us here most directly, a salient piece of information on which heuristic decisions can be based is party affiliation. *If* political parties are central to the organisation of a voter’s political cognitions and *if* he is not particularly motivated – through contextual factors, for example – to invest more time comparing the alternative candidates and their political programmes, then the party affiliation of candidates may be sufficient to base his voting decision. This expectation is consistent with several dual-process models of opinion formation, that are central to understanding the process of attitude formation and change (Chaiken 1980; Fiske and Neuberg 1990; Maheswaran and Chaiken 1991; Petty and Cacioppo 1986a, 1986b). As far as the potential instability of party preferences is concerned, it implies that even voters with a low or moderate level of political expertise can display stable preferences if they base their decision on meaningful heuristics. Our argument here is that predispositions’ strength is an adequate indicator of the availability of heuristics to a given voter. Citizens with strong predispositions (i.e. those with a party identification and/or those belonging to a social group which is clearly “aligned” in the cleavage structure) are likely to base their voting choice on party affiliation and they should display stable preferences, independently of their level of political expertise.

What about voters with weaker predispositions? In such a case, we would expect the stability of their party preferences to depend on their level of sophistication. But this relationship should not be linear. Electoral volatility is a typical case of an *attitude change*. Following McGuire’s “information processing paradigm” (1968, 1969), we would expect the probability of an attitude change to stand in a non-linear relationship with individuals’ expertise. This expectation is centred on McGuire’s distinction between *receiving* a persuasive argument and *yielding* to it. Experts in a domain will be more likely than novices to receive new messages, but they will at the same time be less likely than the latter to accept these new messages if they are conflicting with their former preferences. As the probability of an attitude change is the product of the probability to receive an argument and of the probability to yield to it, the relationship between attitude change and expertise will be nonlinear. In our case, we should

thus expect the relationship between political sophistication and electoral volatility to display such a nonlinear pattern. The most volatile voters should not be the ones with the lowest level of political sophistication, but the ones in the middle range of the political expertise scale. Such a paradigm has for example been widely applied by Zaller (1992), in his model of attitude formation and change.

Hypotheses and data

On the basis of the arguments we have presented above, we can distinguish three competing models of volatility, expressed in the following three hypotheses. It must be emphasised that these three hypotheses are rather complementary than mutually exclusive. Hypothesis 1 is the “simplest,” as it postulates that volatility depends on a single factor. Hypotheses 2 and 3 bring additional factors into play, and present more complex sets of expected relationships.

1) *Partisan dealignment*. According to this argument, an increase in the strength of a voter’s party identification should be linked with a lower level of electoral volatility. Voters with a strong party identification should be more likely than voters without a party identification or with a weak one to vote for the same party (or group of parties) in two successive elections, and they should be more likely to have a stable voting intention during an electoral campaign. Furthermore, the impact of party identification should be stronger for inter-block changes than for intra-block changes.

2) *Strength of predispositions*. The hypothesis of a partisan dealignment can be extended to a more encompassing definition of social-structural predispositions, as we suggested above. The impact of strong predispositions should be the same as the impact of a strong party identification, but it should be more pronounced.

3) *Predispositions, sophistication, and heuristics*. Following the arguments we have presented in the previous section, we would expect a more complex set of relationships between voters’ characteristics and volatility. Volatility should be weak among voters with strong predispositions. Furthermore, in that case, it should not be affected by a variation in voters’ degree of political expertise. As predispositions weaken, however, volatility should become higher *and* it should be more strongly affected by voter’s level of political sophistication. This

impact of political sophistication should be non-linear, with voters in the middle range of the sophistication scale showing the largest increase in the level of volatility.

We shall test these hypotheses by comparing three different models of electoral volatility. These models will be estimated separately for inter-election volatility and for campaign volatility. In both series of analyses, our dependent variable will be categorical, with three possible values: stable voting intention/choice, intra-block change, and inter-block change. These models will be estimated with a pooled dataset, including all German National Election Studies between 1969 and 2002.⁴ Before turning to our analyses, we first need to explain how the dependent variable will be operationalised.

Inter-election volatility is based on a comparison of the actual voting choice with the voting choice in the previous election (as indicated by a recall question). As far as campaign volatility is concerned, we compare voting intentions in the different panel waves. We consider as volatile those respondents who expressed a preference for at least two different parties.⁵ To distinguish between inter-block and intra-block volatility, the criterion we rely on is whether two parties are potential coalition partners or not. Hence, the composition of groups will vary over time. During the period we study, there were four coalitions: a big coalition formed of the CDU (Christian-Democratic Union) and of the SPD (Social-Democratic Party) that ended with the election of 1969, a social-liberal coalition which came to power after the latter election and which was replaced in 1982 by a coalition of CDU and FDP (Liberal Party), and, finally, the coalition of the SPD and the Greens, which followed the 1998 elections. For the 1972 to 1980 elections, we shall accordingly contrast the CDU to the SPD and FDP. For the following elections, from 1983 to 1998, the CDU and FDP are opposed to the SPD and to the Greens. As far as inter-block volatility is concerned, smaller parties, the electoral results of which are marginal, will not be considered. In a few cases, it is difficult to form blocks of parties. This is a consequence of changes in the composition of the coalitions. In 1969, 1972, and 1983, we have no measure of inter-election, inter-block volatility. In 1969 and 1983, the reason is that the coalition in power changed during the legislature. In 1972, the problem is similar: the coalition changed with the formation of a new

⁴ The list of the datasets we have used is indicated in appendix 2. Of the ten election studies we consider, six were panel studies (1969, 1972, 1976, 1983, 1987, and 1990), with usually two pre-electoral waves and a post-electoral one. The 1969 panel study has only two waves. The 1990 one has four waves. However, in the latter case, we do not use at all the first wave, as it was conducted much more in advance of the election (about one year before) than in the other campaigns.

⁵ Respondents who were undecided until the last panel wave have been excluded from our analyses. These voters have not changed their party preference, but it is better not to classify them together with stable voters. It is obvious that stability of voting intention and late decision-making are two different phenomena that need to be explained separately.

government after the 1969 election. In 1969, it is not meaningful either to analyse voters' campaign, inter-block volatility. The government was composed of a SPD-CDU coalition. As 94% of the respondents in our sample voted for one of these two parties, analysing the frequency of changes between that coalition and the opposition (i.e. the FDP) would not bring much information.

The evolution of volatility

Before comparing the validity of the three hypotheses, we first take a look at the evolution of the different forms of volatility in Germany. As far as overall inter-election volatility is concerned, we see in table 1 that no distinctive pattern emerges.⁶ The proportion of volatile voters varies between 14 and 25%. The fluctuations are thus quite substantial – but it is clear that there is no increase in electoral volatility – at least as indicated by this type of change. Three elections have a relatively high level of volatility: 1969, 1990, and 1998. All three are, in a way, 'special' elections. 1969 and 1998 are the only two cases in our sample where election results lead to a change in the governing coalition. And the 1990 election was conducted in an extraordinary context, shortly after the reunification of the two German states. These particular electoral contexts certainly explain to some extent the observed fluctuations. The absence of a general trend, as well as the relationships between particular electoral contexts and the level of volatility, show that dealignment does not stand in such a strong relationship with electoral volatility – at least in the cases considered here.

The results in table 1 also allow us to compare the levels of overall and of inter-block volatility. The latter is of course smaller, by a proportion that varies between 40 and 60%. But the difference between the two is neither increasing nor decreasing. There is not either any relationship between the level of overall volatility and the size of the difference. As a matter of fact, this difference is very close to the average of 52% in the 1990 and 1998 elections, which are marked by a high overall proportion of volatile voters. It is also noteworthy that the level of inter-block volatility did not become higher with the emergence of the Greens. We could have expected such a change, as before 1983, one of the two blocks was composed of a single party.⁷ Altogether, our conclusion is thus a negative one: neither the level of inter-block

⁶ We indicate here overall volatility, as the distinction between intra-block and inter-block volatility cannot always be made. Intra-block volatility is then simply equal to the difference between overall volatility and inter-block volatility.

⁷ The Greens were already present in the 1980 election. But we have excluded them from our analysis of inter-block volatility in that election, as they did not clearly fit into any of the two groups.

volatility, nor the difference between overall and inter-block volatility are marked by any trend.

Table 1: The evolution of inter-election volatility

	Overall volatility	N	Inter-block volatility	N
1969	21.7	526	-	
1972	20.5	955	-	
1976	18.3	925	11.2	918
1980	14.2	811	6.0	797
1983	21.7	891	-	
1987	17.8	1098	10.1	1086
1990	24.7	765	13.1	746
1994	16.5	643	6.8	618
1998	21.4	817	11.8	779
2002	18.9	741	9.4	723

Note: percentage of voters who changed their party (block) preference. Voting choice at the previous election has been asked in the last pre-electoral wave or in the post-electoral wave (1980, 1994, 1998, 2002).

The evolution of *campaign volatility* (table 2) presents quite a different picture.⁸ Here, a trend toward a larger proportion of changing voters is unmistakable. Regarding overall volatility, this proportion increased from 20% or less before 1976 to more than 30% in 1983 or 1990. Inter-block volatility, too, increased, and even more starkly. Its 1983 level was twice as high as in 1972. For both types of changes, two elections stand out: 1983 and 1990. The events surrounding the latter election certainly contributed to a more pronounced instability in voters' preferences. In 1983, too, the specific political climate may explain, at least partly, why volatility was particularly high during the campaign. The governing coalition changed in autumn 1982. After repeated divergences between the Socialists and the FDP, FDP Ministers left the government. On October 1st 1982, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (SPD) was defeated in a constructive vote of confidence and Helmut Kohl (CDU) was elected as the new Chancellor. The first wave of the 1983 panel was conducted shortly after these events, in November 1982. However, the special circumstances surrounding those two votes are not the only explanation to the increase in the level of campaign volatility. In 1987 for example, which was by these standards a 'normal' campaign, the level of volatility was also clearly higher than in the 1970s.

⁸ We have computed percentages without including voters who did not have a voting intention in any of the pre-electoral waves. This group is usually very small (3% or less). It is only somewhat larger in 1969, where it includes 9.6% of respondents.

Table 2: The evolution of campaign volatility

	Overall volatility	N	Inter-block volatility	N
1969	17.1	584		
1972	20.0	1087	11.2	1077
1976	19.1	1062	11.5	1046
1983	30.7	945	22.9	939
1987	24.7	1176	15.5	1158
1990 ¹	32.5	837	18.9	800

Note: proportion of respondents who changed their voting intention during the panel.

¹ Voting intentions at the first panel wave have not been taken into account.

These first analyses of the evolution of electoral volatility offer us a contrasted situation. Campaign volatility *has* increased, and it was also influenced by the climate of political instability of the 1983 and 1990 elections. On the other hand, inter-election volatility reveals no systematic trend. But its level also responds to peculiar political circumstances. These two results are not contradictory. They rather shed light on two different aspects of the process of electoral change. A high level of *inter-election* volatility may be the consequence of a process of realignment: it indicates that a large number of voters have changed their party preference since the previous elections, what can eventually result in substantial variations in parties' results. But this does not necessarily imply that we face significant evolutions in the process of opinion formation. The latter aspect is better captured by changes in the level of *campaign volatility*. The latter may thus be a better indicator for changes in the level of voters' uncertainty.

This impression is confirmed if we look at the relationship between the two types of volatility. As a matter of fact, there is no *logical* connection between inter-election and campaign volatility. A voter can change her party preference between two successive elections, but still display a stable voting intention during the electoral campaign – or vice-versa. Empirically, however, we would expect a majority of 'long-term' stable voters – that is respondents who supported the same party in two successive elections – to have had the same voting intention during the whole campaign. In the case of 'long-term volatile' voters, on the other hand, we do not expect *a priori* a given behaviour to be dominant during the electoral campaign. The party preference of these voters may have changed long before the campaign, in which case they would not show volatile intentions during the campaign. But this change may as well occur during the campaign.

In table 3, we indicate for each panel study the proportion of voters who changed their voting intention during the campaign, among 'long-term stable' voters and among 'long-term volatile' voters. We first see that there is a very strong difference between these two groups as regards the *level* of campaign volatility. As expected, individuals who supported the same

party or coalition in two successive elections are much less likely to be uncertain of their preference during the campaign. Only a minority of them expressed a preference for different parties or coalitions, respectively. Apart from the 1983 campaign, where about a quarter of these voters hesitated about which party to support, the proportion of volatile voters is always smaller than 15%, and often under 10%. By contrast, more than a half of long-term volatile voters are also uncertain of their voting choice during the campaign. It is very clear from this that a change in one's preferences between elections is strongly related to a high level of instability during the electoral campaign.

Table 3: Campaign volatility among 'long-term stable' and 'long-term volatile' voters

	Long-term stable		Long-term volatile	
	% volatile	N	% volatile	N
Overall volatility				
1969	5.7	406	56.6	106
1972	11.1	802	55.6	169
1976	8.8	754	65.7	166
1983	23.6	772	65.2	132
1987	13.4	900	71.5	193
1990	13.6	575	87.8	188
Inter-block volatility				
1976	5.5	805	55.9	102
1987	10.1	966	61.7	107
1990	7.7	636	91.7	96

Furthermore, these figures show that the increase in the level of campaign volatility, which we noticed in table 2, is almost entirely due to long-term volatile voters. Among these, the level of instability during the campaign period has increased very markedly, from about 55% in 1969 to about 90% in the 1990 election. There is also some change in the other group of voters, but it is much more modest. The proportion of volatile voters in the late 1980s and early 1990s (about 13%) is comparable to the level of 1972. Thus, the higher level of volatility in voters' preferences during campaigns is not due to a *general increase* in uncertainty. The groups of voters we have distinguished react in very different ways. A large majority of voters have stable preferences in the long-term, and most of them do not hesitate about their voting choice during an electoral campaign. By contrast, the remaining voters, who represent about a fifth of the electorate as we saw it in table 2, become more unstable. Not only do they change their preferences between elections, but they are also increasingly hesitant during campaigns.

Explaining volatility

Having considered how volatility evolved during the last decades, we now turn back to our central question, analysing the determinants of this instability. For each of the two independent variables, we shall estimate the three following models, which correspond each to one of the hypotheses presented above:

$$\text{Model 1: } y_{ij} = \beta_{0ij} + \beta_{1ij} \cdot \text{party id.} + \beta_{2ij} \cdot \text{time} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

$$\text{Model 2: } y_{ij} = \beta_{0ij} + \beta_{1ij} \cdot \text{IPS} + \beta_{2ij} \cdot \text{time} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Model 3: } y_{ij} = & \beta_{0ij} + \beta_{1ij} \cdot \text{IPS} + \beta_{2ij} \cdot \text{soph.} + \beta_{3ij} \cdot \text{soph.}^2 + \beta_{4ij} \cdot \text{IPS} \cdot \text{soph.} + \\ & + \beta_{5ij} \cdot \text{IPS} \cdot \text{soph.}^2 + \beta_{6ij} \cdot \text{time} + \varepsilon_{ij} \end{aligned}$$

In the first model, the dependent variable is regressed simply on party identification and time. Party identification is a four-point scale, recoded to the 0-1 range, where 0 means “no party identification” and 1 a “very strong party identification.” The variable “time” indicates the number of year separating one given election from the first election considered here.⁹ Model 2 has exactly the same structure – only party identification is replaced by the Index of Predispositions’ Strength (IPS). This index is a scale ranging from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating stronger social-structural predispositions (the construction of this scale is documented in appendix 1). In model 3, IPS and time are also included, along with additional variables. We consider first voters’ degree of political expertise.¹⁰ To allow us to capture non-linear effects, sophistication is also included in its squared form. Last of all, two interaction terms are specified, between IPS and sophistication, on the one hand, and between IPS and the squared form of sophistication, on the other. In this way, we make it possible for the effect of a voter’s degree of sophistication to be conditional on the strength of his predispositions.

⁹ That is 1972 as regards campaign volatility, and 1976 in the case of inter-election volatility.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, the German National Election Studies did not systematically include questions of factual knowledge, which would allow us to operationalise political expertise as an index of political knowledge, as it is usual. Instead, we turned to a proxy, combining political interest and education. Both variables are five-point scales. We have added them and recoded the resulting nine-point scale to the 0-1 range, with higher values indicating a higher level of political expertise (i.e. a higher level of education and of political interest). For reasons of space, we do not detail here the construction of the education variable (see Lachat, forthcoming).

As our dependent variables are categorical, all models have been estimated with multinomial logistic regressions.¹¹ The estimated coefficients are presented in tables 4 and 5.

We first consider only model 1. It is very clear on the basis of these results that party identification affects the stability of voters' party preferences. Voters with a strong party identification are less volatile, both during campaigns and between elections. This effect is clearly significant, but it is more pronounced for inter-block changes than for intra-block changes. These results are in line with the hypothesis of a partisan dealignment. The estimated coefficients of model 2, where party identification is replaced by predispositions' strength, are very similar. The only difference is that the effect of IPS is always stronger than the effect of party identification. The differences are most of the time quite substantial. This supports hypothesis 2 and our argument that it is important not to focus only on party identification, but to consider also other relevant social-structural predispositions.

More interesting for us are however the results of model 3. They are also more difficult to interpret on the basis of the coefficients only, as they include both non-linear effects and interaction terms. We shall thus rely largely on predicted probabilities, so as to make these results easier to grasp. Let us begin however with the coefficients of model 3 in table 4. As regards intra-block volatility, we see that the strength of voters' predispositions has a significant negative effect. This is consistent with the results found in model 2: stronger predispositions decrease the likelihood of a change in one's voting choice. The election year (the variable 'time') has a significant impact, too. The other coefficients are relatively small – except the one of political expertise. Despite its large value, however, it is not significantly different from 0. The results are very different in the case of inter-block volatility: here, all variables have a significant impact. Stronger predispositions, again, are linked with a lower probability to be volatile. Sophistication has a positive impact, but the squared form of the variable has a strong negative impact. This means that its effect on the likelihood to be volatile is positive up to a certain point, and that it becomes then negative. This is exactly the type of non-linear effects that we had expected. Moreover, by looking at the coefficients of the interaction terms, we notice that the relationship between sophistication and volatility depends on the strength of one's predispositions. Here, again, both coefficients are significant. However, it is difficult to imagine how large these effects are. To this end, we have computed a series of predicted probabilities on the basis of the model's estimated coefficients. They

¹¹ The assumption of the Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives has been tested in all cases with a Hausman specification test (Long 1997: 183f.). This assumption cannot be rejected, even at a level of significance of 0.1%. We can thus be very confident that a multinomial logit model is appropriate in this case.

Table 4: Estimated coefficients (s.e. in parentheses) for the models of inter-election volatility

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Intra-block vol.	Inter-block vol.	Intra-block vol.	Inter-block vol.	Intra-block vol.	Inter-block vol.
Party identification	-1.10*** (0.17)	-2.17*** (0.16)				
IPS			-2.20*** (0.19)	-2.29*** (0.17)	-2.28* (0.92)	-1.08 [†] (0.64)
Sophistication					2.47 (2.71)	4.29* (2.18)
Sophistication ²					-0.78 (2.41)	-4.19 [†] (2.16)
IPS*Soph.					-0.06 (3.63)	-6.07* (2.84)
IPS*Soph ²					0.04 (3.24)	5.34 [†] (2.84)
Time	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)
Constant	-1.94*** (0.12)	-1.22*** (0.10)	-0.71*** (0.17)	-0.34* (0.15)	-1.38* (0.68)	-0.85 [†] (0.50)
N		5658		5584		4805
Log likelihood		-3158.4		-3113.6		-2709.9
McFadden R ²		0.03		0.04		0.05

[†] $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Estimated coefficients (s.e. in parentheses) for the models of campaign volatility

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Intra-block vol.	Inter-block vol.	Intra-block vol.	Inter-block vol.	Intra-block vol.	Inter-block vol.
Party identification	-1.17*** (0.17)	-1.75*** (0.13)				
IPS			-2.12*** (0.19)	-1.91*** (0.15)	-1.80* (0.74)	0.24 (0.52)
Sophistication					2.31 (2.30)	7.42*** (1.98)
Sophistication ²					-0.80 (2.16)	-7.51*** (2.09)
IPS*Soph.					-1.63 (3.05)	-9.92*** (2.47)
IPS*Soph ²					1.55 (2.86)	8.97*** (2.64)
Time	0.02* (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Constant	-1.83*** (0.12)	-1.12*** (0.09)	-0.76*** (0.17)	-0.43** (0.14)	-1.60** (0.55)	-1.86*** (0.43)
N	5008		4977		4965	
Log likelihood	-3388.7		-3369.4		-3318.2	
McFadden R ²	0.04		0.04		0.05	

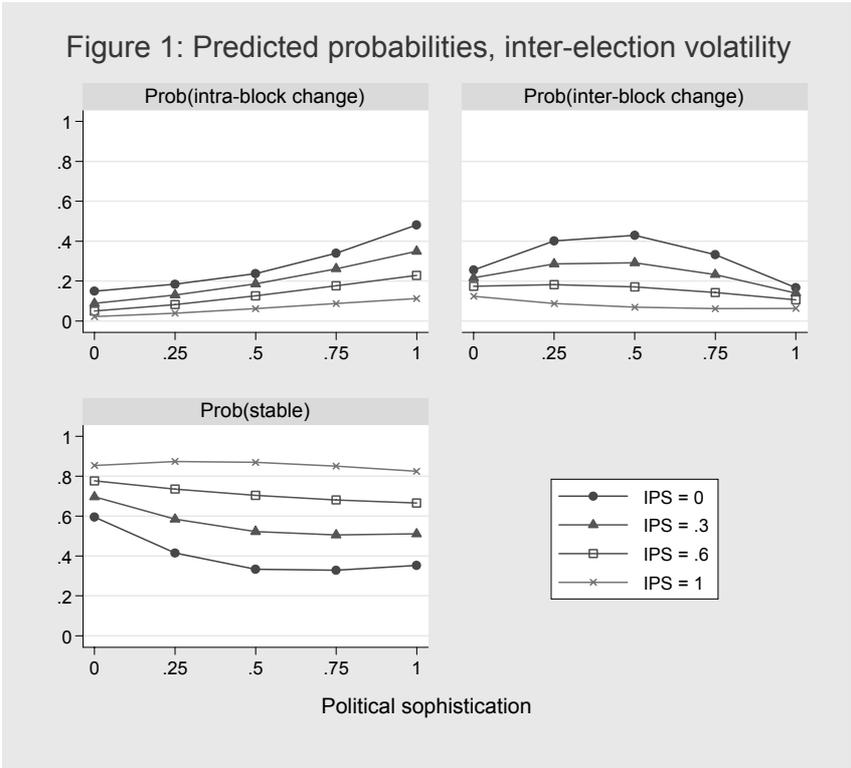
† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

allow to illustrate in a more telling way how strongly sophistication and predispositions' strength affect volatility.

The three panels in figure 1 present the probabilities to be “intra-block volatile,” “inter-block volatile,” and “stable,” respectively. In each of them, the probability is displayed as a function of one's degree of political sophistication, and as a function of predispositions' strength. We see that voters with strong predispositions (i.e. the lines “IPS=1”) have a very high probability to be stable. Furthermore, this probability is not affected by their level of political sophistication. However, when predispositions weaken, the probability that individuals change their party preference, both between and within blocks of parties, becomes larger, on the one hand, and it varies with one's degree of political expertise, on the other. The interaction effects we had expected are thus a reality. Let us consider first inter-block changes (right-hand panel). We find that the voters most susceptible to display this type of instability are those with very weak predispositions and with a medium level of political sophistication. Among political novices, the level of inter-block volatility is only marginally affected by predispositions' strength. When political sophistication increases, the likelihood to be volatile becomes larger – but only amongst voters with weak or very weak predispositions. By contrast, voters with a high level of political expertise have again a low level of inter-block volatility – and this is almost not affected by the strength of their predispositions. Thus, in the case of inter-block volatility, our results clearly confirm hypothesis 3. They do not fit with the expectations of a pure partisan model of volatility. The probability that voters change their party preference between blocks of parties is conditioned by political expertise, by predispositions' strength, and, most crucially, by the interactive effect of these two variables.

As regards intra-block volatility, the pattern of results is clearly different. As before, the level of volatility becomes higher as voters' predispositions weaken. However, volatility is highest among respondents with a high level of political sophistication – not among those with a medium level. Intra-block volatility thus appears to respond to a different ‘logic’ than inter-block volatility. The most sophisticated voters are those who are likely to switch between ideologically close parties. This result is rather surprising. How can we explain it? We have no clear-cut answer to this question. Two explanations seem to us to be plausible. The first possibility is that intra-block volatility, at least a part of it, is the result of strategic decisions. This would explain why it takes place mainly among political experts. Such changes may be strategic, if voters give their preference to one or to the other coalition partner as a function of the expected results of the election. A voter who has a preference for the Greens, for example,

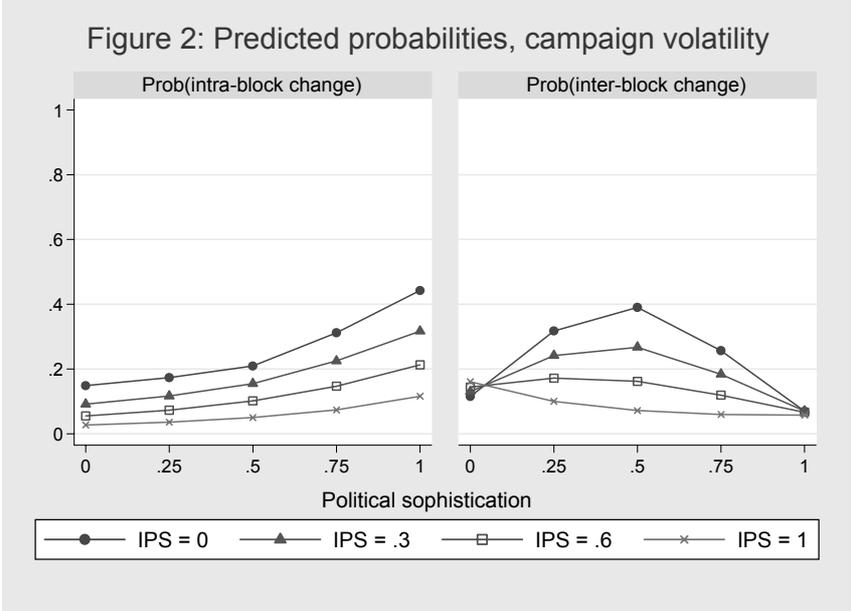
may switch to the SPD (its larger coalition partner) if the CDU leads the race. This would be a good strategic decision, as the winning party is responsible for the formation of the government. Another plausible explanation, which does not imply strategic decisions, is that intra-block changes correspond to a “hard-learning” situation. As potential coalitions in Germany are composed of a large party (CDU or SPD) and a smaller one (FDP or Greens), it is possible that the “message” of the smaller parties may only be received by voters with a high level of political expertise. Both hypotheses, however, would require more detailed analyses in order to be confirmed. It would be necessary in both cases to consider each election separately and to account for parties’ expected results and for the intensity of their electoral campaigns. This would go beyond the purpose of the present paper. The lower panel in figure 1 presents the probability that voters support the same party in two successive elections. It does not bring any new information, as the probabilities of the three possible behaviours always sum to 1. We see there again that the most stable voters are those with strong predispositions, and that when predispositions weaken, the likelihood to be stable depends on one’s degree of political sophistication.



As regards campaign volatility, the pattern of results is quite similar. We see in table 5 that in the case of intra-block volatility, the estimated coefficients for education and for the two interaction terms are again *not* significant – though their values are now larger than in the previous case. As far as inter-block volatility is concerned, however, we notice that the

estimated coefficients are all significant and that they have large values. They point however to similar results: the coefficient of the variable ‘sophistication’ is positive but its squared form has a negative coefficient; the interaction terms show that the impact of sophistication decreases when predispositions strengthen. By computing predicted probabilities, we can show more clearly how these different effects combine. We do this in figure 2, where the likelihood of an intra-block and of an inter-block change, respectively, is plotted against political sophistication, for voters with different levels of predispositions’ strength.

These probabilities confirm our first impression: the resulting patterns are very similar to the ones obtained in the case of inter-election volatility. Both intra-block and inter-block changes are least likely among respondents who have strong predispositions. In both cases, also, the probability of a change varies as a function of the *interaction* between sophistication and predispositions’ strength. In the left panel, we observe that respondents with weak predispositions and with a high level of political expertise are the ones who are most likely to change their voting intention between political parties that are ideologically close. As a matter of fact, the predicted probabilities that we obtain here are almost identical with those of figure 1. Here again, we think that such a pattern may be due either to strategic decisions, or to a “hard-learning” situation, or to a combination of both. Intra-block changes are characteristic of voters that are both detached from parties *and* politically sophisticated.



In the right-hand panel of figure 2, by contrast, we observe strong non-linear effects. The relationships between sophistication, predispositions’ strength, and volatility, are even more contrasted than in the case of inter-election changes. Most noticeable is the fact that among respondents with either a very low or a very high level of political sophistication, the strength

of predispositions does not make any difference. This factor only influences the chances that one modifies his party preference amongst moderately sophisticated voters. Like in the case of inter-election volatility, this result strongly supports hypothesis 3. A pure partisan model of volatility is not sufficient to understand which factors lead to instability. It is only by combining predispositions' strength and political sophistication that we can gain new insights into the determinants of electoral volatility.

Conclusion

We started this paper with the traditional argument of the dealignment literature, according to which the weakening of the relationship between parties and citizens leads, among others, to an increase in the level of electoral volatility. We have reassessed this hypothesis, arguing that the strength of party identification was not the only factor contributing to voters' uncertainty. First, we have argued that other social-structural predispositions should also be considered. Voters' position with respect to the traditional cleavages is also important to understand which voters are more likely to be "dealigned." Then, relying on research in political psychology, we have suggested that cognitive factors may also play a central role in the explanation of electoral volatility. On this basis, we have developed an alternative model of electoral volatility, which considers the interactive effects of predispositions' strength and of voters' level of political sophistication. This model rests on the hypothesis that volatility and political sophistication stand in a non-linear relationship and that, at the same time, political sophistication's impact is conditioned by the strength of voters' predispositions.

We have first analysed the evolution of the frequency of four types of volatility in the German electorate, between 1969 and 2002. The trends we could observe correspond only partially to the expectations of the dealignment literature. While inter-election volatility remains more or less stable during this period (though it responds to special electoral circumstances), campaign volatility has become more frequent. An increasing number of citizens have unstable voting intentions during electoral campaigns. Furthermore, we could also show that there is a relationship between these two forms of volatility. Voters with stable preferences in the long-term also display stable preferences during electoral campaigns. On the other hand, the level of campaign volatility has starkly increased among 'long-term volatile' voters. The second and most important analysis dealt with the determinants of electoral volatility. We found strong support for our argument that party identification's strength was not sufficient to account for variations in electoral volatility. The strength of political predispositions, which is

linked with the availability to voters of meaningful heuristics, is an important factor. But its role can be much better understood by accounting simultaneously for citizens' level of political expertise. We could show that the impact of predispositions' strength is conditional on a voters' degree of political sophistication.

Contrary to our hypothesis, however, the patterns of volatility were not the same for inter-block and for intra-block volatility. In the latter case, we observed that the most volatile voters were those with weak predispositions and a *high* level of political expertise – and not a middle level of expertise, as expected. While we could not provide a definitive explanation for this difference, we suggested two hypotheses. The first one is that intra-block volatility (contrary to inter-block volatility) corresponds to a “hard-learning” situation. The second hypothesis is that such changes are due, at least in part, to voters' strategic decisions. Both arguments seem plausible, especially given the nature of party coalitions in Germany, which are composed of a large party and of a much smaller one. More detailed analyses would however be necessary to confirm or to invalidate these hypotheses.

Appendix 1: Construction of the Index of Predispositions' Strength

As we explained it above, we need a measure of the strength of voters' predispositions. We must develop a single measure, which accounts, on the one hand, for the presence/absence and for the strength of voters' political predispositions and, on the other, for voters' position in the class and religious structure. The problem is to find a way to determine the respective impact of these various variables on voters' choices. To do this, we shall rely on multivariate analyses, regressing voting choices on party identification and on the variables linked to cleavages. Then, we shall use the estimated coefficients to compute predicted probabilities of voting choice. These probabilities use all information in the model to express the likelihood that a voter chooses one alternative over the other(s). All variables included in the model will contribute to these probabilities. And the size of these "contributions" will precisely correspond to the variable's influence once other factors are controlled for. Predicted probabilities can vary between 0 and 1. However, as we are interested in the *strength* of voters' predispositions, what is important is the value taken by the highest probability. As we consider here either three or four parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP until 1976, plus the Greens from 1980 onwards), the highest probability can vary between a third and 1, or between 0.25 and 1. To build our index, we must recode these highest possible probabilities into the 0-1 range. In this way, the range of our Index of Predispositions' Strength will not depend on the number of parties we distinguish.

The values of this index will be computed using a model of voting choice, which includes all relevant structural variables. Voters' electoral choices are thus regressed on social class, trade-union membership, religion, church attendance, party identification, and a few other central social-structural characteristics (age, gender, education, and employment status). This model can be specified as follows:

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \beta_{kj}^P P_{ik} + \sum_{l=1}^{L-1} \beta_{lj}^C C_{il} + \sum_{m=1}^{M-1} \beta_{mj}^U U_{im} + \sum_{n=1}^{N-1} \beta_{nj}^R R_{in} + \sum_{q=1}^Q \beta_{qj}^Z Z_{iq} + \varepsilon_{ij} .$$

As the dependent variable is polytomous, the model will be estimated using a multinomial logistic regression, separately for each election. In the equation above, y_{ij} is the logistic transformation of the probability that voter i supports party j . The P_{ik} are the k variables specifying voters' party identification. There are four such variables, measuring identification with the SPD, the CDU, the FDP, and the Greens, respectively. They are four-point scales, which indicate the *strength* of a voter's identification. 0 means no party identification and 1 a

very strong identification with the corresponding party. The C_{il} variables are a set of l dummies which indicate voters' social class membership. We include six dummies, corresponding to the following social categories: unskilled workers, skilled workers, routine non-manual workers, service class, self-employed, and farmers. The reference category is "no class." That is, it groups respondents who are not professionally active (neither when the survey was conducted, nor before). The U_{im} variables are interactions between trade-union membership and some of the class dummies. We have included such interactions for skilled and unskilled workers, for routine non-manual employees, and for members of the service class. The R_{in} are a set of dummies for voters' religion and religiosity. We include two dummies for Protestants and two for Catholics, dividing members of each religion into those who regularly attend Church and those who have a low level of Church attendance. Last of all, the Z_{iq} in the equation above represent our control variables. They are age, gender, education, and employment status. Age is simply coded in years and is centred on its mean. Gender is a dummy taking the value 1 for women. Education is a five-point scale, which ranges from 0 to 1. Employment status, finally, is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 for retired respondents and the value 0 for other individuals. For reasons of space, we do not present here the corresponding estimated coefficients and standard errors. These can be found in Lachat (forthcoming), along with much more detailed explanations on the construction of this index and on its characteristics.

Appendix 2: Data sources

We analyse here German elections from 1969 to 2002. All data files are available through the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research at the University of Cologne¹² or, up to the 1998 election study, on a CD-ROM delivered with a book edited by Markus Klein et al. (2000). Panel studies were conducted during the 1969, 1972, 1976, 1983, 1987, and 1990 campaigns. Below, we indicate the exact references of the data files we use.

Bundestagswahl 1969 (Voruntersuchung, September 1969 und Nachuntersuchung, Oktober-November 1969). ZA study number: 0426. Primary researchers: H.-D. Klingemann, F. U. Pappi, Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung, Universität zu Köln.

Wahlstudie 1972 (Panel: Voruntersuchung, September-Oktober 1972, Oktober-November 1972; Nachuntersuchung, Dezember 1972). ZA study number: 0635. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, M. Kaase, D. Roth, U. Schleth, R. Wildenmann, Lehrstuhl für politische Wissenschaft, Universität Mannheim.

Wahlstudie 1976 (Panel: Voruntersuchungen, Mai-Juni 1976, August-September 1976; Nachuntersuchung, Oktober-November 1976). ZA study number: 0823. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, E. Gruber, D. Roth, W. Schulte, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; in collaboration with M. Kaase, H.-D. Klingemann, ZUMA, Mannheim; U. Schleth, Universität Heidelberg.

October survey of the *Wahlstudie 1980*. ZA study number: 1053. Primary researchers: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., Mannheim.

Wahlstudie 1983 (Panelstudie). ZA study number: 1276. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, D. Roth, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim.

Wahlstudie 1987 (Panelstudie). ZA study number: 1537. Primary researchers: M. Berger, W. G. Gibowski, D. Roth, W. Schulte, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; M. Kaase, Universität Mannheim; H.-D. Klingemann, FU Berlin; F. U. Pappi, Universität Kiel; M. Küchler, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

¹² <http://www.gesis.org/en/za/index.htm>

Wahlstudie 1990 (Panelstudie). ZA study number: 1919. Primary researchers: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; in collaboration with M. Kaase, Universität Mannheim; H.-D. Klingemann, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; M. Küchler, Hunter College, New York; F. U. Pappi, Universitäten Kiel und Mannheim; H.A. Semetko, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Nachwahlstudie zur Bundestagswahl 1994. ZA study number: 2601. Primary researchers: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; ZUMA, Mannheim; M. Berger, M. Jung, D. Roth, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim; in collaboration with: W.G. Gibowski, Bundespresseamt Bonn; M. Kaase, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; H.D. Klingemann, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; M. Küchler, Hunter College, New York; F.U. Pappi, Universität Mannheim; H.A. Semetko, Syracuse University.

Politische Einstellungen, politische Partizipation und Wählerverhalten im vereinigten Deutschland. ZA study number: 3066. Primary researchers: Jürgen Falter (Universität Mainz), Oscar W. Gabriel (Universität Stuttgart), Hans Rattinger (Universität Bamberg)

Politische Einstellungen, politische Partizipation und Wählerverhalten im vereinigten Deutschland 2002 (Bundestagswahl-Studie). ZA study number: 3861.

References

- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes (1960). *The American voter*. New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Chaiken, Shelly (1980). "Heuristic Versus Systematic Information Processing and the Use of Source Versus Message Cues in Persuasion", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39(5): 752-766.
- Dalton, Russell J. (1984). "Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan Dealignment in Advanced Industrial Democracies", *Journal of Politics* 46(1): 264-284.
- Dalton, Russell J. (1988). *Citizen politics in Western democracies : public opinion and political parties in the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and France*. Chatham: Chatham House Publishers.
- Dalton, Russell J. (2000). "The Decline of Party Identifications", in Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg (eds). *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 19-36.
- Dalton, Russell J. (2002). *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Third Edition. New York: Chatham House.
- Dalton, Russell J., Scott C. Flanagan and Paul A. Beck (eds) (1984). *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dalton, Russell J., Ian McAllister and Martin P. Wattenberg (2000). "The Consequences of Partisan Dealignment", in Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg (eds). *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 37-63.
- Dalton, Russell J. and Martin P. Wattenberg (eds) (2000). *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fiske, Susan T., Richard R. Lau and Richard A. Smith (1990). "On the Varieties and Utilities of Political Expertise", *Social Cognition* 8(1): 31-48.
- Fiske, Susan T. and Steven L. Neuberg (1990). "A Continuum of impression formation from category-based to individuating processes: Influences of information and motivation on attention and interpretation", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 23: 1-74.
- Flanagan, Scott C. and Russell J. Dalton (1984). "Parties Under Stress: Realignment and Dealignment in Advanced Industrial Societies", *West European Politics* 7(1): 7-23.
- Franklin, Mark, Tom Mackie and Henry Valen (eds) (1992). *Electoral Change: Responses to evolving social and attitudinal structures in western countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald (1970). "Cognitive Mobilization and European Identity", *Comparative Politics* 3(1): 45-70.
- Klein, Markus, Wolfgang Jagodzinski, Ekkehard Mochmann and Dieter Ohr (eds) (2000). *50 Jahre Empirische Wahlforschung in Deutschland*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Lachat, Romain (forthcoming). *A Heterogeneous Electorate: Individual and Contextual Differences in the Process of Formation of Voting Choices in Germany and Switzerland*. PhD Thesis. University of Zurich.
- Lipset, Seymour M. and Stein Rokkan (eds) (1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: The Free Press.
- Long, J. Scott (1997). *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Maheswaran, Durairaj and Shelly Chaiken (1991). "Promoting Systematic Processing in Low-Motivation Settings: Effect of Incongruent Information on Processing and Judgment", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61(1): 13-25.
- McGraw, Kathleen M. and Neil Pinney (1990). "The Effects of General and Domain-Specific Expertise on Political Memory and Judgment", *Social Cognition* 8(1): 9-30.

- McGuire, William J. (1968). "Personality and susceptibility to social influence", in Edgar F. Borgatta and William W. Lambert (eds). *Handbook of personality theory and research*. Chicago: Rand McNally, pp. 1130-1187.
- McGuire, William J. (1969). "The Nature of Attitudes and Attitude Change", in Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson (eds). *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, pp. 136-314.
- Nie, Norman H., Sidney Verba and John R. Petrocik (1979 [1976]). *The Changing American Voter*. Enlarged Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nieuwebeerta, Paul and Jeff Manza (2002). "Klassen-, Religions- und Geschlechterspaltungen: Parteien und Gesellschaften in vergleichender Perspektive", in Frank Brettschneider, Jan Van Deth and Edeltraud Roller (eds). *Das Ende der politisierten Sozialstruktur?* Opladen: Leske + Budrich, pp. 247-278.
- Petty, Richard E. and John T. Cacioppo (1986a). *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Petty, Richard E. and John T. Cacioppo (1986b). "The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 19: 123-205.
- Schnell, Rainer and Ulrich Kohler (1995). "Empirische Untersuchung einer Individualisierungshypothese am Beispiel der Parteipräferenz von 1953-1992", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 47(4): 634-657.
- Wattenberg, Martin P. (1991). *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics: Presidential Elections of the 1980s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Zaller, John (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zelle, Carsten (1994). "Steigt die Zahl der Wechselwähler? Trends des Wahlverhaltens und der Parteiidentifikation", in Hans Rattinger, Oscar W. Gabriel and Wolfgang Jagodzinski (eds). *Wahlen und politische Einstellungen im vereinigten Deutschland*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, pp. 47-92.
- Zelle, Carsten (1995). "Social dealignment versus political frustration: Contrasting explanations of the floating vote in Germany", *European Journal of Political Research* 27: 319-345.