The Moral Compass of Politics
Parties' Use of Morality in Political Communication

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

Morality gives politics its soul. Politics gives morality its power. Neither can shape society without the other. Morality represents values, principles, and beliefs that shape how people interact with each other. Yet, interactions between people influence both personal choices and broader collective behavior. When these shared behaviors and norms become widespread, they contribute to the development of collective social patterns. These patterns solidify into formal systems of collective governance through institutions. Institutional systems are the expression of socially shared belief systems and moral norms. Norms are created and institutionalized when their standards of behavior are seen as morally right and appropriate by a sufficiently large fraction of the relevant population. Morality acts as a compass in politics. It guides individuals in creating political systems that reward positive behavior, encourage individuals and societies to act ethically, and punish wrongdoing.

This raises the question of whether institutions, built on shared norms, can influence the moral tone of public debates. Through their inherent structure, institutions may reinforce dominant moral standards or, in times of societal transformation, function as mechanisms for challenging and renegotiating those standards. Electoral dynamics, campaign cycles, and parliamentary debates provide structured political arenas where political parties present their ideas, logical arguments, beliefs, and ideological rationale to the public. I investigate how political parties, operating within these institutional frameworks, use morality in their discourse.

This dissertation relies on the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) as a framework for defining morality. The MFT is a pluralistic, descriptive framework from moral psychology, viewing morality as a multidimensional phenomenon that aims at explaining why people have different moral intuitions across cultures and ideologies (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007). According to the MFT, moral reasoning is not based on a single principle, but on multiple, distinct moral concerns that evolved to address different social challenges. Each moral concern identified by MFT gives rise to a distinct moral foundation, resulting in five evolutionarily grounded foundations that are both innate for individuals and universally relevant across cultures: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*. The first two are individualizing foundations, protecting individuals, while the latter three are binding foundations, maintaining group cohesion.

Rooted in the Social Intuitionist Model (Haidt, 2001), MFT argues that moral judgments are primarily driven by intuitive and emotional responses, with reasoning playing a secondary role. This means that when faced with a moral dilemma, people experience an immediate feeling of what is right or wrong. Subsequent reasoning justifies that pre-existing intuitive moral belief. Morality, in this view, is shaped by automatic emotional responses, not just deliberate thought. This instantaneous right-or-

wrong feeling, produced by the recourse to morality leads people to hold distinct moral worldviews, which, in turn, can exacerbate political polarization and mutual misunderstanding in societal debates, explaining why moral disagreements are often deep-seated and difficult to resolve through argument alone.

Initially developed in cultural psychology (Haidt & Joseph, 2004), MFT has since been applied in political psychology to study how ideological differences shape moral reasoning and how parties across cultures use moral rhetoric differently. Research has consistently shown a strong connection between an individual's political ideology and their moral domain. For instance, liberals tend to prioritize moral foundations related to individualism, such as *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*, while conservatives present a more balanced moral domain with a preference for the binding foundations of *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* (Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt, 2012; Kivikangas et al., 2021).

However, my dissertation shifts focus from individual-level moral attitudes to examine these dynamics exclusively at the party level. Studies in the United States have already begun to explore this connection, indicating that the patterns observed at the individual level are mirrored in party-level communication (Lewis, 2019; Lipsitz, 2018; Sagi and Dehghani, 2014). Building on these insights, my dissertation extends this analysis beyond the US bipartisan system to investigate how morality and ideology interplay within European multi-party systems. I do so by investigating diverse political communication outputs because morality is an omnipresent influence in politics.

This dissertation is investigating the application and implications of the MFT in understanding political parties' behavior and communication in European multi-party systems. Political parties' morality shapes their political ideology. I argue that similar patterns are observable in European multi-party systems as in the US bipartisan context, specifically a left/right divide in how political parties moralize their discourse. Its intuitive nature makes morality a powerful communication tool for political parties. Exposure to moral rhetoric creates immediate emotional feelings, leading to a spontaneous behavioral response. Taking advantage of this instantaneous agreement or disagreement produced by the recourse to morality, political parties deviate from their usual ideology-driven use of morality to engage in non-ideological use of morality when needed, depending on the issue at hand or the broader political context, such as during elections. Therefore, I aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how political parties use and leverage moral rhetoric in the political discourse.

This dissertation begins by operationalizing morality in political texts to investigate its presence within political party rhetoric (Chapter 2). It then proceeds to examine whether identifiable ideological patterns underlie political parties' use of moral rhetoric (Chapter 3). It then turns to the question of

how parties behaviorally respond to moralized rhetoric in the context of policymaking and political discourse (Chapter 4). Finally, it explores the extent to which strategic considerations shape the use of morality by parties, thereby assessing whether moral appeals are instrumentalized as part of broader political strategy (Chapter 5).

The main takeaways of this dissertation are as follows. In Chapter 2, I develop and validate multilingual versions of the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD) in French, German, Italian, and Spanish. I provide a fully reproducible translation procedure, which allows scholars to accurately translate the MFD into further languages. Furthermore, I introduce a new cross-linguistic validation method for dictionary-based text analysis, which relies on correlation analyses across languages using officially translated documents.

In Chapter 3, I first test whether ideology-driven patterns observed in two-party systems extend to multi-party contexts. The findings confirm that left-wing parties emphasize *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*, while right-wing parties prioritize *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*. Contrary to previous research, *Sanctity-Degradation* appears more frequently in left-wing rhetoric. Second, the chapter challenges the notion that ideology alone explains moral appeals, showing that socio-cultural issues are more moralized than economic ones. While *Fairness-Cheating* and *Loyalty-Betrayal* align strictly with ideology, the use of *Care-Harm* and *Authority-Subversion* varies depending on issue type and party positions on economic and societal matters.

Chapter 4 investigates the role of moral rhetoric in shaping political disagreement among elected officials, focusing on spontaneous inter-party reactions in a parliamentary setting. Contrary to expectations, moral statements do not elicit more reactions than non-moral ones. Further analyses show that moral transgressions do not significantly increase negative reactions either, and MPs do not systematically respond more positively or negatively to moral appeals based on ideological alignment. However, specific moral foundations, namely *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Loyalty-Betrayal*, are more likely to trigger both affirmations and interruptions, while *Authority-Subversion* and *Sanctity-Degradation* have limited emotional impact. Overall, this chapter concludes that morality is not a primary driver of political disagreement in parliamentary settings. Instead, patterns of reaction are shaped by party status, strategic behavior, and the emotional salience of specific moral foundations.

In Chapter 5, I focus on parties' political communication during election campaigns. I provide strong evidence that political parties strategically adjust their moral rhetoric in response to evolving electoral conditions, rather than relying solely on fixed ideological positions. My research demonstrates that political actors systematically adapt their use of moral discourse during election campaigns in accordance with broader strategic goals. Specifically, I identify two distinct mobilization strategies: mass mobilization aimed at the general electorate, and targeted mobilization directed toward reinforc-

ing in-group or partisan support. I show that political parties adapt their moral rhetoric in line with broader strategic considerations, responding to fluctuations in candidate popularity and the timing of the campaign. Specifically, the findings indicate that when candidate popularity rises or when the election nears, major parties tend to adopt a more balanced moral rhetoric to broaden their appeal, in a logic of mass mobilization. Conversely, early campaign speeches or a decline in popularity prompts a shift towards a more partisan moral stance to consolidate their core base.

My dissertation makes several contributions to political science. From a methodological perspective, I develop a translation and validation procedure for the MFD, which was originally developed by Graham et al. (2009). By providing essential methodological tools for future quantitative text analysis of moral discourse across diverse linguistic contexts, the translation methodology developed in this dissertation, building on approaches from scholars such as Matsuo et al. (2019), contributes to advancing research on moral communication and significantly broadens the scope of MFT beyond its predominantly Anglophone applications. Furthermore, the methodological advancement for dictionary validation offers a time- and resource-efficient solution for scholars, addressing limitations identified in existing validation methods (Bos & Minihold, 2022; Carvalho et al., 2020; Zúquete, 2022). Its contribution extends beyond the analysis of moral language, providing a broadly applicable validation approach for any dictionary-based text analysis. As such, it constitutes a significant methodological contribution of this dissertation to the field of computational text analysis.

From a substantive perspective, I first enrich the field of political and moral psychology by investigating political parties' use of morality in multi-party contexts. I show that the link between political ideology and moral foundations extends beyond the individual level to political parties in multi-party systems, mirroring patterns observed in existing party-level studies (Bos & Minihold, 2022; Lewis, 2019; Lipsitz, 2018; Parker et al., 2019; Sagi & Dehghani, 2014). This work represents the first cross-national, party-level study of moral rhetoric across ideological positions and issue types. Furthermore, my dissertation highly enriches the existing debates in party politics and ideology by demonstrating that the use of moral appeals by political actors is not exclusively ideology-driven but also significantly topic-dependent. This further contribution of my dissertation refines our understanding of how parties strategically frame issues.

Second, at the intersection of political communication, moral psychology, and political disagreement, I present the first systematic analysis of how moral statements by politicians influence behavioral responses in parliamentary debates. My work builds on scholarly contributions about interruption behavior in parliament (see, among others, Ash et al., 2024; Miller & Sutherland, 2023). By empirically investigating the role of specific moral foundations in shaping political disagreement and elite communication, it provides a more nuanced understanding of the moral dynamics that drive both societal

division and possibilities for consensus.

Third, my dissertation makes a significant contribution to the literature on political communication, electoral strategy, and campaign mobilization (Druckman et al., 2009; Riker, 1986) by showing that while moral rhetoric reflects ideological leanings, it is also guided by strategic calculations that vary over the course of the campaign.

Fourth, by distinguishing between ideology-inherent and context-dependent uses of moral appeals, my work, in alignment with established campaign strategy research (Dai & Kustov, 2022; Geer, 1998), shows how political parties adapt their rhetoric in response to candidate popularity and campaign timing. These findings contribute significantly to the literature on strategic political communication and electoral campaigning.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptualization and Methodology

2 CONCEPTUALIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Conceptualization of Morality

2.1.1 The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT)

The MFT framework. Human morality has largely been studied in social sciences (Darley & Shultz, 1990; Haidt et al., 1993; Kohlberg, 1969; Nichols, 2002; Piaget, 1965; Shweder et al., 1997). In particular, a common framework for deciphering, understanding, and conceiving human morality has been developed: the MFT (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007). The MFT is an influential pluralist theorization of morality developed in the social psychology literature that, in contrast to rather monist conceptualizations of morality (see among others Kohlberg, 1971 or Turiel, 1983), conceives it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007).

The MFT framework determines specific criteria and assumptions that a given moral dimension needs to fulfill in order to become a universally shared moral foundation (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007). To be considered as a moral foundation, a moral concern should (1) be a breeding ground for debate, (2) elicit an instantaneous and affective reaction, (3) be widespread across different cultures, (4) be innate, and (5) contain an evolutionary component, implying that it should change and develop as individuals engage in moral discussions and debates over time.

Five moral dimensions, which account for various aspects of morality have been shown to meet these criteria: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*. These five moral dimensions have been metaphorically called foundations to highlight the fact that they are aspects of morality, anchored in the ground but infinite and subject to change and evolution (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Thus, the underlying idea of the MFT is that these five moral foundations are shared by everyone, but each person attributes different weights to them depending on their socialization, culture, and environment.

Each moral foundation reflects the dichotomous contrast between vices and virtues (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007). The *Care-Harm* foundation aims at capturing the ability to feel compassion and empathy for others. Actions that prioritize caregiving and mitigate harm are considered morally virtuous, whereas those resulting in harm or showing indifference to welfare are judged as morally vicious. The *Fairness-Cheating* foundation is based on the values of justice, cooperation, reciprocity, and fairness. Behaviors that uphold fairness and reciprocity are perceived as virtuous acts, whereas those involving cheating, exploitation, or injustice are deemed morally condemnable. The *Loyalty-Betrayal* foundation captures the virtues of patriotism, self-sacrifice, solidarity, and allegiance to a group or community. Thus, actions that exemplify loyalty and contribute to group

unity are esteemed, while acts of betrayal, unfaithfulness, or disloyalty to the community are considered morally reprehensible. The *Authority-Subversion* foundation is concerned with obedience and respect for hierarchical structures, authority figures and social norms. Behaviors aligning with established norms, rules, and roles are regarded as morally virtuous, while insubordinate acts challenging or undermining authority are considered morally vicious. Finally, the *Sanctity-Degradation* foundation is related to the preservation of purity and sacredness and to the avoidance of contamination. It encompasses moral concerns related to bodily integrity, sacred values, and aversion to moral transgression. Actions that uphold purity, cleanliness, and sacredness are deemed morally commendable, while those that violate taboos or defile sacred values are considered morally offensive.

The foundations of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* are referred to as individualistic foundations. They are moral dimensions that occurs at the individual level in contrast with the three remaining foundations that are considered binding foundations, with the social function of focusing on dynamics between individuals at the group level. Although I focus my research, as most of the existing scholarly contributions, on these five moral foundations, other foundation candidates are being explored, such as liberty versus oppression (Haidt, 2012; Iyer et al., 2012), equity versus undeservingness (Meindl et al., 2019), and honesty versus lying (Hofmann et al., 2014).

Contextualization: Origins and Foundation of the MFT. Most leading theories in moral psychology defined morality as being primarily about how individuals should treat one another, focusing on issues like harm, rights, and justice (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Turiel, 1983) or care and compassion (Gilligan, 1982; Hoffman, 1982). In contrast, the MFT represents a descriptive model of moral psychology, specifically focusing on moral judgment. It conceptualizes morality to encompass a spectrum of human moral judgments, values, and behaviors, grounded in underlying moral intuitions and emotions. Central to MFT is the assertion that human moral judgment predominantly operates through intuitive, non-rational processes. Thus, contrasting with earlier theories of morality, the MFT suggests that morality is rooted in a distinct set of evolved intuitions and emotions, arguing that these intuitions play a crucial role in shaping our moral judgments (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2018; Haidt, 2001).

Previous theories in moral psychology depicted human moral judgment and decision-making as adhering to a model of morality based on one or two core concerns, influenced by values prevalent in Western, industrialized societies, such as *Care* and *Fairness* (Turiel, 1983). In pursuit of greater inclusivity regarding non-Western cultures, Shweder et al. (1997) introduced a pluralistic framework of morality. They delineated three distinct cultural perspectives on moral considerations concerning human beings, termed the ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity. Autonomy conceptualizes

the moral individual as possessing entitlements to justice, rights, personal agency, and protection from harm. Community encompasses values governing and safeguarding groups or collectives, including duties, hierarchical structures, and cohesion. Divinity is purportedly concerned with safeguarding the integrity of the soul and spirit against degradation. Later, the MFT was created based on these distinctions: Shweder et al.'s (1997) ethic of autonomy led to the creation of the individualistic foundations of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*, while the ethic of community inspired the creation of both foundations of *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*, and the ethic of divinity led to the foundation of *Sanctity-Degradation* (Graham et al., 2009).

The previously mentioned association between moral foundations and emotions has theoretical roots in the Contempt-Anger-Disgust (CAD) triad hypothesis (Rozin et al., 1999). The CAD triad hypothesis shows distinct connections between the emotions of anger, contempt, and disgust and Shweder's ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity, respectively (Shweder et al., 1997). Rozin et al. (1999) provide empirical evidence that violations of the ethic of autonomy elicit anger, breaches of communal norms provoke contempt, and transgressions against divinity evoke disgust. Based on this existing rationale, MFT scholars posit that each moral foundation is intrinsically linked to specific emotions in the case of a norm violation (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). For instance, transgressions related to *Care* provoke feelings of compassion, breaches of *Fairness* elicit anger, *Authority* violations trigger resentment, *Loyalty* breaches induce rage, and *Purity* violations evoke disgust (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Hence, Schweder's (1997) Three Ethics Theory and the CAD triad hypothesis (Rozin et al., 1999) strongly influenced the development of the MFT.

Finally, Haidt (2001) introduced the Social Intuitionist Model (SIM) of moral judgment, which represents the first conceptualization of morality focused on moral judgment. The SIM laid the theoretical groundwork for the later development of Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), emphasizing that moral judgments predominantly arise from emotional and intuitive responses to moral stimuli, with reasoning and deliberation occurring afterward. In other words, the SIM suggests that individuals often make moral judgments quickly and instinctively, with their reasoning mainly serving to justify these initial intuitions (Haidt, 2001). Building on the SIM, Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) identifies the distinct, evolutionarily shaped moral intuitions that guide how individuals perceive and respond to morality (Graham et al., 2018). The MFT posits that moral judgment is influenced by a minimum of five discrete domains of intuition, each specialized in processing various kinds of moral information. These domains collectively establish the fundamental underpinnings of our moral judgments, preceding the involvement of reasoning and deliberation. Each domain addresses one of five foundational questions intrinsic to human morality: (1) Was someone harmed? (2) Is it fair? (3) Was someone disloyal? (4) Are we following those in charge? (5) Do we find this disgusting or impure? (Haidt &

Graham, 2007). These foundational questions give rise to the five moral foundations.

2.1.2 MFT in Social Sciences

Broad Applications of the MFT. Originally developed to explore how morality evolves across different populations and cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004), the MFT has since been applied to a variety of academic fields. It has been used for instance, in crime science (Harper & Harris, 2017), business (Egorov et al., 2020), or environmental studies (Vainio & Mäkiniemi, 2016), as well as in analyzing diverse phenomena, including contemporary culture wars (Koleva et al., 2012), bioethical discussions (Tilburt et al., 2013), and even long-term historical changes (Wheeler et al., 2019), among others. Regardless of the topic, research consistently highlights the predictive strength of moral foundations in anticipating various outcomes. Examples from the social sciences include responses to sacrificial dilemmas (Crone & Laham, 2015), empathic concerns (Strupp-Levitsky et al., 2020), voting behavior (Franks & Scherr, 2015; Iyer et al., 2012; Jung, 2020), support for stem cell research (Clifford & Jerit, 2013), and compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chan, 2021).

In the field of moral psychology, researchers have focused on the relationship between MFT and human behavior, demonstrating its value in understanding social interactions (Brady et al., 2017; Dehghani et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2018; Mooijman et al., 2018). Individuals who prioritize individualizing moral foundations (*Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*) over binding ones (*Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*) are often more inclined to demonstrate prosocial intentions in high-need situations (Süssenbach et al., 2019) and report greater levels of donations to international aid, charity organizations, and outgroup members (Nilsson et al., 2020). Conversely, those who favor binding foundations are generally less likely to allocate resources in trust-based games (Clark et al., 2017).

The MFT and Political Science. Building on the observation that individuals with different moral priorities behave differently, research in political science has explored whether these differences also correspond to distinct political ideologies. Hence, at the intersection of political science and moral psychology, studies indicate that variations in individual moral orientations often reflect differences in political ideology (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007).

At the individual level, politically liberal individuals typically only consider the *Individualistic dimensions* as moral, while politically conservative individuals tend to attribute a relatively balanced importance to all five moral dimensions with a preference for the *Binding foundations* (Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt, 2012; Kivikangas et al., 2021; Lakoff, 2016). Furthermore, considering the party level, some research has focused specifically on party positions by examining

how political actors use moral foundations within US political discourse (Enke, 2020; Hackenburg et al., 2023; Kraft & Klemmensen, 2024; Neiman et al., 2016; Sterling & Jost, 2018). The relationship between ideology and morality found at the individual level also manifests at the party level (Lewis, 2019; Lipsitz, 2018; Sagi & Dehghani, 2014) and in contexts outside the USA (see Chapter 3 *Morality and Political Ideology* for an analysis of the use of morality in European multi-party systems, as well as Bos & Minihold, 2022; Parker et al., 2019).

The study of political ideology and morality forms the foundational framework at the intersection of political science and MFT. However, some studies have taken a different approach, focusing either on how a particular moral foundation relates to various issues or on how moral foundations might explain a specific political issue. First, some studies have focused deeply on individual moral foundations. For instance, the *Sanctity-Degradation* foundation has been examined in relation to various topics in political science, including environmental degradation (Frimer et al., 2015) and religious violations (Graham & Haidt, 2012), as well as broader social science topics, such as suicide (Rottman et al., 2014) and self-control failures (Mooijman et al., 2018).

In contrast, other studies have applied the MFT framework to specific issues, showing overall that individuals with strong moral convictions on specific issues tend to adopt more extreme attitudes toward those issues (Clifford, 2019; Garrett, 2019; Skitka, 2010). The most studied issue within the framework of MFT is environmental concerns, revealing a consistent link between support for the *Individualistic* foundations (*Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*) and a willingness to engage in climate action (Dickinson et al., 2016), adherence to pro-environmental norms (Jansson & Dorrepaal, 2015), and participation in climate-friendly consumption (Vainio & Mäkiniemi, 2016; Welsch, 2020).

Morality and Political Ideology: identifying a causal mechanism. Does morality influence political ideology, or does political ideology shape moral beliefs? The MFT suggests that our moral judgments arise from instinctive emotional reactions shaped by ingrained psychological mechanisms. These mechanisms evolved to curb selfish behavior and promote social harmony. While we can engage in deliberate moral reasoning, occurring primarily as a *post hoc* justification, MFT views this as mainly a way to rationalize the intuitive judgments we have already made (Haidt, 2008). These foundations extend beyond morality, influencing social and political values (Haidt, 2012). Hence, this framework suggests that moral intuitions can predict political beliefs, as evidenced in numerous studies (Haidt, 2012; Koleva et al., 2012).

However, the causal relationship between moral foundations and ideology remains contested. Studies like Smith et al. (2017) have questioned MFT's causal claims, suggesting methodological and measurement issues undermine findings. Competing theories, like cognitive developmental approaches

(Kohlberg, 1969), propose that preexisting political beliefs drive moral judgments (Hatemi et al., 2019). Traditional models argue that ideological values shape moral evaluations, rationalizing actions and beliefs through constructs like authoritarianism and system justification (Jost et al., 2003; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Political traits, such as Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), are central to this perspective, influencing moral domains like loyalty, purity, and fairness (Kugler et al., 2014; Pratto et al., 1994). Research on motivated reasoning supports the view that political orientations influence moral reasoning, with evaluations often reflecting ideological biases (Lodge & Taber, 2005).

Aligned with MFT scholars, I argue that an individual's morality shapes their ideological beliefs. While the debate over causality remains unresolved, my focus is not to untangle this complex interplay but to build on the premise that moral foundations play a significant role in guiding ideological orientations. This perspective provides a meaningful framework for exploring the relationship between morality and political beliefs, despite ongoing scholarly discussions.

2.1.3 Limitations and Critics of the MFT

The MFT has faced criticism from various perspectives within moral psychology. While some critiques target MFT's foundational nativism (e.g., Suhler & Churchland, 2011) and others question its reliance on intuitionism (e.g., Narvaez, 2008), much of the recent criticism has focused on its core principle of moral pluralism.

Scholars propose alternative pluralistic frameworks or challenge specific foundations. For example, the Model of Moral Motives (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013) advocates for the inclusion of group-oriented social justice concerns, which, according to the authors, are not adequately captured by the existing foundations of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* as they stand. Similarly, Relationship Regulation Theory (Rai & Fiske, 2011) argues that core moral motivations (such as unity, hierarchy, equality, or proportionality) can only be fully understood by examining the structure of social relationships within specific contexts.

Further critiques suggest that the individual moral foundations identified by MFT may be multidimensional. For example, the concept of fairness can be interpreted through different lenses, such as equality or equity (Meindl et al., 2019). These discussions have enriched the debate around moral pluralism and contributed to refining various approaches to understanding morality[1].

Not all approaches to studying morality in political science rely on the MFT. Some instead treat morality as a monist concept, examining whether a statement appeals to fundamental beliefs or values, or distinguishes between what is fundamentally right or wrong (see, among others, Kohlberg, 1971;

[1] See, among others, Graham et al. (2013) for a response by MFT scholars to existing critiques of the theory.

Widmann & Simonsen, 2024). This approach offers significant advantages when investigating whether a topic is moralized. However, I am interested not just in assessing the general level of moralization within discourse but also in analyzing *how* the discourse is moralized, the MFT framework is better suited to my research goals.

2.1.4 Alternative Theories

Alternative theories to MFT aim to understand the underlying mechanism behind morality and moral intuition. I will review three further alternative theories to the MFT, namely the Social Domain Theory (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Turiel, 1983), the Dyadic Theory (Schein and Gray, 2015; 2018), and the Theory of Morality as Cooperation (Curry, 2016).

First, the Social Domain Theory clearly separates *conventional norms*, comparable to MFT's *binding* foundations, from *moral principles*, which align with MFT's *individualistic* foundations. Within this framework, violations of *conventional norms* may be labeled "wrong" primarily because they breach established rules rather than moral absolutes. For instance, wearing pyjamas to work could be deemed "wrong," but this judgment stems from violating a social norm rather than a moral violation. In contrast, moral rules are seen as universally applicable, governing behavior across various contexts and historical periods. Violations of moral rules typically involve harm, rights infringement, or injustice, making them more serious than breaches of *conventional norms* (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Turiel, 1983).

Second, the Dyadic Theory posits that all moral issues relate to the avoidance of harm (Schein & Gray, 2015; 2018). Their monist view of morality suggests that moral disagreements stem from one key question: What do liberals and conservatives see as harmful? (Schein & Gray, 2015). Hence, immorality arises when one perceives an intentional harmful behavior of a moral agent. This theory also explains the diversity of values across cultures by suggesting that perceptions of harm differ. For example, conservatives in the US may prioritize patriotism more than liberals because they believe a lack of national love could lead to harm, whereas liberals do not share this belief. Dyadic Theory asserts that the perception of harm is central to moral relevance, making it the strongest predictor of moral conviction, regardless of political orientation.

Third, the Theory of Morality as Cooperation (MAC) (Curry, 2016) challenges MFT by presenting a different understanding of the moral domain. MAC suggests that morality has evolved to promote cooperation and identifies seven foundational dimensions: family values, loyalty to the group, reciprocity, heroism, deference, fairness, and property (Curry et al., 2019). Family values address resource distribution among relatives and encompass caring for offspring. Loyalty to the group fosters cooperation for mutual benefit, while reciprocity regulates social exchanges and reinforces virtues such as

trust and patience. Heroism and obedience emerge in conflict situations, representing aggressive and avoidant behaviors, respectively. Fairness governs resource sharing, emphasizing equality, while the property dimension addresses ownership issues. Thus, MAC posits that moral frameworks, such as loyalty to leaders, group defense cooperation, trustworthiness in identifying norm violations, and respect for property, are universal mechanisms evolved to resolve cooperation-related challenges (Curry et al., 2019). Unlike the MFT, MAC excludes dimensions like *Care* or *Sanctity* arguing they are not directly linked to cooperation and are already inherent in concepts like family values and group loyalty.

Similar to MFT, MAC scholars have introduced their own tool for measuring individual-level morality. Curry et al. (2019) validated the Morality as Cooperation Questionnaire (MAC-Q) through surveys with Western online samples, demonstrating its superior fit compared to the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ). An independent study by Yilmaz et al. (2021) further confirmed that the MAC-Q had strong fit values in Türkiye and outperformed the MFQ in predicting outcomes such as prosocial intentions and political ideology. Hence, MAC distinguishes itself from MFT in both theoretical foundations and the measurement tools used to assess morality.

2.2 Measurement of Morality

2.2.1 MFT and measurements

To quantify morality, two measurements rooted in the MFT framework are available: one, the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ), aims to gauge individual moral inclinations, while the other, the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD), targets the examination of moral themes within textual content.

The Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ). The MFQ constitutes a self-administered evaluative instrument crafted to assess individual preferences and priorities within the domain of moral decision-making. The MFQ is not the methodological tool used in this study, as the analysis is concerned with the broader discourse rather than individual-level preferences. The MFQ comprises 32 items, of which 30 are scored due to the presence of two *catch* questions designed to detect inattentive or random responses. The MFQ is divided into two 15-item sections assessing the five moral foundations (Graham et al., 2011).

The first section called the *Relevance Section*, requires respondents to evaluate the relevance of various issues in their moral decision-making. For instance, respondents assess statements such as "Whether or not someone suffered emotionally" (mapping onto the care foundation) and "Whether or not someone did something disgusting" (mapping onto the sanctity foundation). The second section, called the *Judgment Section*, involves rating agreement with a series of moral statements, including "Justice is the most important requirement for a society" (mapping onto the fairness foundation)

and "It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself" (mapping onto the loyalty foundation). Scores are then derived by averaging the responses to the six items corresponding to each moral foundation.

The Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD). Originally derived from the MFQ, the MFD was developed by Graham et al. (2009) and was used in psychology to classify individuals' use of five sets of moral intuitions embedded within text data (such as open-ended answers to a survey). The MFD includes the five specific moral foundations: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*, as well as an overarching category of morality called *General* (Graham et al., 2009). Jung (2020) revisited the traditional version of the MFD in order to render it more suitable for political contexts. They noticed that some words might not contain a moral dimension on their own when referred to political settings. As an example, the word "opposition" is considered in psychology to refer to the moral foundation of subverting authority, whereas the word "opposition" is often used in political science to qualify opposition parties in contrast to governing parties.

The existence of the MFD greatly facilitates the study of morality especially through quantitative text analysis aimed at detecting the presence of the moral foundations in a given corpus. However, the fact that the original MFD is exclusively available in English remains an obstacle to the generalization of existing findings in various fields of study outside the English-speaking area. The only works to my knowledge that have attempted to translate the MFD into foreign languages are the ones by Matsuo et al. (2019) into Japanese, by Bos and Minihold (2022) into German and Dutch, Zúquete (2022) into European Portuguese, and by Carvalho et al. (2020) into Brazilian Portuguese. However, I find some methodological limitations in these translation attempts, mostly when it comes to the dictionary validation procedures.

First, Carvalho et al. (2020) used a back-translation as translation and validation strategy. By not considering synonyms, this type of word-for-word translation does not necessarily imply that, when applying two dictionaries to texts written in their respective languages, the translated dictionary accurately detects the semantic meaning of the words detected by the English version. The comparative use of both dictionaries remains limited. Then, Matsuo et al. (2019) and Zúquete (2022) validated their translation of the dictionary by comparing the performance scores of native respondents who answer the version of the MFQ in the target language with the responses of English respondents who compile the English version of the MFQ. This validation method is very reliable, mostly in order to control for potential culture-inherent biases, but also very time- and resource-consuming. Finally, Bos and Minihold (2022) validated their translated versions of the MFD by comparing their

performance to classify the moral content of 100 randomly selected party manifesto lines with a hand-coded classification performed by humans. The extremely small sample size and the potential biases that human coders might have while classifying the statements render their validation procedure weak.[2]

To address these gaps, I present four validated translations of the English version of the MFD into French, German, Italian, and Spanish. For the translation process, I develop a semi-automated methodology inspired by the work of Matsuo et al. (2019), and I assess the accuracy with which each dictionary detects words compared to the word-detecting power of the original English version. Regarding validation, the culture-inherent biases are minimized within the European context, allowing me to move away from the standard, time-consuming survey-based validation method. Instead, I introduce an innovative, reproducible, time- and resource-efficient validation strategy by performing cross-language correlations on officially translated documents.

2.2.2 The Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD): Translation procedure

Inspired by the translation methodology employed by Matsuo et al. (2019) to create the Japanese MFD, this chapter applies a mixed translation methodology in order to translate the original English version of the MFD into four further languages. The first step aims at the automated gathering of every word contained in the English version of the MFD that Jung (2020) implemented to examine the use of morality in political contexts. The second step aims to manually sort the new corpus of words by relevance for the study of moral rhetoric. In the third step, automated translation tools are applied to the English MFD in order to obtain the first draft of the translated version of the MFD. Finally, in the fourth step, a hand-coded procedure aims at adjusting the newly translated MFD by addressing some possible defects that could lead to biases when applying it. The translation procedure is schematized in Figure 1.

Step 1 - Gathering of each word contained in the English version of the MFD (automated procedure). For each moral foundation, the English version of the MFD contains words and word stems. Words are kept and directly incorporated as candidate words to be included in the first draft of the English dictionary (see Figure 1). Word stems are identified and isolated. Using web-scraping tools on the web-site *OneLook*[3], I capture all the words associated with each word stem. When using

[2]To assess the comparative word-detecting power of their dictionary, I applied the validation strategy I developed, which involved comparing correlations across languages using their dictionary. I focus solely on testing the performance of the German version of the MFD, as it aligns with my languages of study. The Pearson's correlation test using their German version of the MFD and the original English version of the MFD on the main corpus I used for the validation test, namely *EU- Reports Corpus 2* (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3 *The Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD): Validation procedure*). The result shows that, when considering the overall level of Morality detected by their German version of the MFD compared to the original English MFD, the coefficients are showing a non-significant negative correlation: -.03 [-.30, .25]. This lack of correlation might be due to pitfalls in their translation procedure such as not adjusting for language specificity.

[3]Website access: https://www.onelook.com (last accessed 08.05.2025).

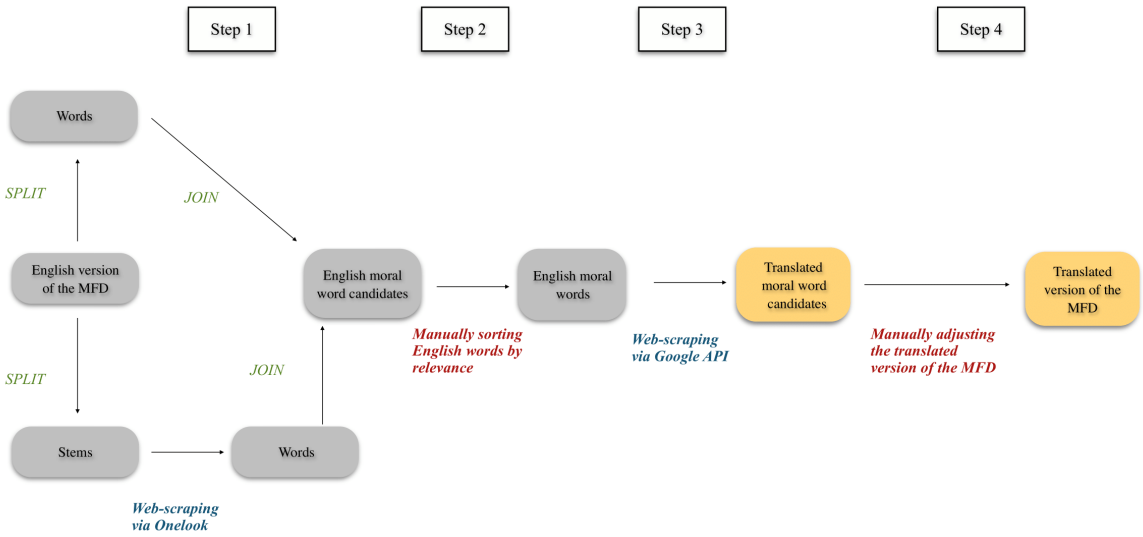


Figure 1: Conceptual Maps summarizing the mixed translation methodology used for creating translated versions of the MFD.

OneLook, three filters are used in order to incorporate as many recurrent words as possible related to the word stems: "Sort by: Commonness", "Filter by commonness: Common words", and "Filter by part of Speech: All". Each word returned via web-scraping is included as candidate words in the first draft of the English dictionary (see Figure 1).

At this stage of the translation procedure, not every word is related to morality; therefore, in the second step of the procedure I manually sort the words by relevance to ensure coherence with the scope of analysis.

Step 2 - Sorting of words contained in the English MFD by relevance (manual procedure). When relying on web-scraping tools, it is fairly common to encounter some issues that have to be manually rectified. Table 13 in the Appendix shows a list of words that were manually eliminated from the MFD per moral foundation. There might be two different reasons for the exclusion of a word from the dictionary: either this specific word was totally unrelated to morality (i.e., "safelight" in *Care* coming from the word stem "safe*"), or this specific word did not correspond to the moral foundation it was contained in (i.e., "harmonize" in *Harm* coming from the word stem "harm*"). The final English version of the MFD contains 1599 words, 176 in *Care*, 175 in *Harm*, 115 in *Fairness*, 115

in *Cheat*, 101 in *Loyalty*, 68 in *Betrayal*, 212 in *Authority*, 153 in *Subversion*, 151 in *Sanctity*, 235 in *Degradation*, and 98 in *General*.

Step 3 - Translation of the English MFD (automated procedure). In the third stage of the translation procedure, using *Google's Translation API*, I automatically translate the English MFD into French, Italian, German, and Spanish. The first draft of the four translated MFD contains 1599 words each, corresponding to the number of words per moral foundation of the English MFD.

Step 4 - Adjustment of the translated MFD (manual procedure). This translation procedure aims at achieving cross-language reliability among five languages. Some manual and language-specific adjustments have to be made to the first version of the translated MFD. When considering many different languages, one word in the English dictionary can have more than one translation in the language to be translated into. In the same way, two or more words in the English dictionary might have the same unique translation in the language to be translated into.

Semantic adjustments. Semantic adjustments aim at creating dictionaries containing meaningful words. Words were deleted for two reasons. First, I deleted some words because the automated translation had no meaning in the translated language (e.g., in Italian: "rompicapo" as a translation of "peacebreaker"; e.g., in German: "subvertierbar" as a translation of "subvertible"), or it was a correct translation but irrelevant for the purpose of studying morality (e.g., in Spanish "conservas" and in French "conserves" as a translation of "preserves"). Second, I deleted some words because the automated translation contained spelling mistakes (e.g., a missing accent in French: the word "stain" was translated as "tache" instead of "tâche").

Avoiding double counting. The main purpose of these manual adjustments is to minimize the biases that an automated translation might introduce. Double counting a word within a moral foundation could bias the representational weight of this moral foundation relative to other moral foundations in a political communication document. I sought to avoid double counting words by deleting all articles preceding a noun in the machine translation, and by deleting all expressions containing a word already present in the dictionary.

First, by deleting all articles preceding a noun in the automated translation, I ensured that, when performing a text analysis using translated versions of the MFD, neither the same noun would be counted twice (in the case where the noun would be translated twice in the dictionary: once preceded by an article and once alone) nor that only the occurrences of the noun when preceded by an article would be counted (in the case where the noun appears only once in the dictionary and preceded with

an article). As an example, imagine that the English word “duty” has been translated as “die Pflicht” in German, then I would delete the article preceding the noun, in this case “die”.

Second and for the same purpose, I deleted all expressions that contained a word already present in the dictionary. As an example, if the English word “protectively” is translated as “in modo protettivo” in Italian, and if the word “protettivo” alone is already part of the dictionary as a translation of “protective”, I deleted “in modo protettivo” from the Italian dictionary.

Grammatical adjustments. Some language-specific grammatical limitations can lead to the misrepresentation of certain words across the five dictionaries. English is a simplistic language when it comes to grammatical structures.

For example, the English conjugation of a verb in the present tense takes only two forms for regular verbs: “root” and “root + s/es” in the third person singular. In addition, the “root” can represent the base form of an infinitive verb without the word “to” in front of it. Furthermore, the English conjugation of a verb in the simple past or in the past participle tense is usually formed by simply adding the ending ”-ed” to the verb. Similarly, an adjective is written in the same way regardless of whether it qualifies a masculine or feminine and/or a singular or plural noun, and whether it qualifies a noun taking the function of subject or object in the sentence (specific to the German language).

However, French, German, Italian, and Spanish have more complex grammatical structures in terms of verbs conjugation and nouns or adjectives declension. For this reason, in the four languages considered, I added for each verb all the conjugated forms of the present tense and the infinitive verb forms and for each adjective, past participle and present participle I added all the feminine and masculine as well as the singular and plural declension forms (see Table 1 for an example of grammatical adjustment of the English word ”care” into French, German, Italian, and Spanish.) [4]

Apostrophes (only Italian and French). In Italian and French, I add apostrophes (“l’” and “d’” in French, and “l’” and “un’” in Italian) before nouns beginning with a vocal. When a noun that begins with a vocal is preceded by a definite article, then a contraction occurs and the article becomes “l’” directly followed by the noun. As an example in French, the word “église” (meaning church) can appear in a text either preceded by the indefinite article “une église” or by the definite article “l’église”. When performing the analysis, “église” and “l’église” would then be considered as being two distinct words. Therefore, in this case, when the word “église” appears preceded by the indefinite article, such as “une église”, the word “église” would be attributed the value 1. However, when the word “église” appears preceded by the definite article “l’église”, the word “église” would be

[4] All languages considered have at least one past tense that include the past participle. Therefore, I add the past participle to each dictionary.

Table 1: Overview of the grammatical adjustments made to the example of the English root "care".

English word	**Grammatical Adjustments**
care	*Noun singular* "cura" in Italian "cuidado" in Spanish "Pflege" in German "soin" in French + *Infinitive form* "preoccupare preoccuparsi" in Italian "preocupar" in Spanish "pflegen" in German "soucier" in French + *Present first and second person singular* "preoccupo preoccupi" in Italian "preocupo preocupas" in Spanish "pflege pflegst" in German "soucie soucies" in French + *Present first, second, and third person plural* "preoccupiamo preoccupate preoccupano" in Italian "preocupamos preocupaìs preocupan" in Spanish "pflegen pflegt pflegen" in German "soucions souciez soucient" in French
cares	*Noun plural* "cure" in Italian "cuidados" in Spanish "Pflege" in German "soins" in French + *Present third person singular* "preoccupa" in Italian "preocupa" in Spanish "pflegt" in German "soucie" in French
caring	*Present participle and/or gerundive* "preoccupando" in Italian "preocupando" in Spanish "pflegend pflegende pflegenden pflegender pflegendes pflegendem" in German "souciant" in French
cared	*Past participle* "preoccupato preoccupata preoccupati preoccupate" in Italian "preocupado preocupada preocupados preocupadas" in Spanish "gepflegt gepflegte gepflegter gepflegtes gepflegten gepflegtem" in German "soigné soignée soignées soignés" in French

attributed the value 0. Since the purpose of the MFD application is to detect words related to morality in a text, to the word "church", which is one of them, it should be assigned the value 1. Moreover, in terms of cross-linguistic comparison, in English (as well as in German and Spanish), the word "church" preceded by the indefinite article "a church" or the definite article "the church" would be assigned the value 1.

Genitive, Umlaut and Eszett (only German). I make three language specific adjustments for the German dictionary. First, I add in German, the genitive-specific ending to each masculine and neutral singular noun (noun + (e)s). As an example, the masculine word "der Krieg" takes the ending "des Krieg**es**" when using the genitive form, therefore, in order to reduce possible biases, I add the word "Krieges" into the dictionary. Second, Umlauts are used on some vowels (ö, ü, ä) and can be replaced by adding the letter -e after the vowel that would need the Umlaut (oe, ue, ae). Even though the use of Umlauts is more frequent in German, I included both spellings in the dictionary. As an example, as translation for the English word "solidarity" I add in the dictionary the word "Solidarität" as well as "Solidaritaet". Third, Eszett is a very specific letter in the German language that replaces *-ss*. In some cases, both spellings of a word are allowed and sometimes the spellings evolve over time with words that used to contain an Eszett and are now written as *-ss*. To avoid any bias, especially when comparing texts written generations apart, I have included both spellings in the dictionary. For example, to translate the English word "wrongfulness", both spellings "Unrechtmäßigkeit" and "Unrechtmässigkeit" are included in the dictionary.

Elimination of duplicates. For each language, I eliminate duplicates both within and between moral foundations to avoid double counting the same word. When some duplicates appear within the same moral foundation, each duplicate is kept once. Some words, however, are replicated across at least two moral foundations. For example, the word "right" could be intuitively considered as being a marker of fairness (in terms of equity) and at the same time a vast word capturing one general notion of morality (in opposition to "wrong"). However, from a methodological perspective and in terms of comparability with the English MFD, each moral foundation category must be mutually exclusive. One word can only be contained in one single moral foundation category.

Tables 14-17 present the final classification per languages of the duplicates originally contained in more than one moral foundation category. The decision to classify a word into one particular category follows two distinct reasons. First, if a duplicate appears simultaneously in categories A and B, and also has an alternative translation in the translated language which is present in category A, then I decide to include the duplicate in category B. This allows the translated MFD to be as close as possible to the English MFD. Second, some words may be more difficult to classify because of their multifaceted

meanings and possible translations. In such cases, the surrounding words in the respective categories in which this word is duplicating are scrutinized, and the word is finally assigned to the category containing the closest related words in terms of meaning. As an example, in the French MFD, the word "patrie" is duplicating in *Authority* and *Loyalty*. Back-translating "Patrie" in English gives the following output: "country", "homeland", "fatherland", "motherland", and "native land". Therefore, both categories *Authority* and *Loyalty* are taken into account. The category *Loyalty* contains some closely related words in terms of meaning and word stems such as "patriote". Therefore, I assign "patrie" to the moral foundation *Loyalty*.

Final versions of the French, Italian, Spanish, and German MFD. After proceeding to the automated gathering of every word contained in the English version of the MFD (Step 1), the manual sorting by relevance of the new corpus of words for the study of moral rhetoric (Step 2), the automated translation of the English MFD (Step 3), and to manual adjustments of the translated MFD (Step 4), I obtain the final versions of the French, Italian, Spanish, and German MFD. The English-MFD contains 1599 words; the French-MFD contains 2390 words; the Italian-MFD contains 2656 words; the German-MFD contains 4344 words; and the Spanish-MFD contains 2518 words (see Table 2 below for further details[5]

Table 2: Overview of the number of moral words per Moral Foundation per language.

	English MFD	**French MFD**	**Italian MFD**	**German MFD**	**Spanish MFD**
Care	176	197	233	449	244
Harm	175	358	393	634	410
Fairness	115	138	201	240	128
Cheat	115	167	172	250	167
Loyalty	101	150	130	210	135
Betrayal	68	121	103	179	100
Authority	212	308	335	585	335
Subversion	153	275	314	428	312
Sanctity	151	197	212	398	210
Degradation	235	317	421	695	365
General	98	162	142	276	112
Total =	1599	2390	2656	4344	2518

2.2.3 The Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD): Validation procedure

Data used for validation. Two different sets of corpora are used to validate the translated MFD: the *EU-Reports Corpora* and the *Political Communication Corpora*. In order to accurately compare the English version of the MFD with the French, German, Italian, and Spanish versions of the MFD

[5]The translation procedure was applied to the Italian and Spanish dictionaries by my co-author Dr. Nicola Palma (see co-authored statement and article).
Husson, C., & Palma, N. (2025). Broadening the study of morality in multi-party settings through a novel dictionary translation and validation methodology. *Political Psychology*, *46*(3), 487-510.

and ensure that they all capture the same words related to the different moral foundations, I rely on officially translated documents in all five languages.

The first set of corpora is the *EU-Reports Corpora*. The choice to use EU reports is motivated by the fact that it allows us to rely on a unique source of textual documents that provides the simultaneous official translation in different languages. The *EU-Reports Corpora* contains three distinct corpora.

The first corpus is the *EU-Reports Corpus 1* that contains 649 reports corresponding to all reports produced by the European Parliament during the 8th legislative period (2014-2019). EU reports from the European Parliament are very specific official documents often containing legal terms. After reading a sample of the EU-Reports, I noticed that some of them were very short and exclusively focusing on legal matters. Therefore, I decided to select a sub-sample of the *EU-Reports Corpus 1* in which I only selected reports that address a substantive topic. I set a threshold of 30 pages and above. Thus, the second corpus is the *EU-Reports Corpus 2*, which is a sub-set of the *EU-Reports Corpus 1*, that contains 509 reports corresponding to all substantive reports produced by the European Parliament during the 2014-2019 legislative period. Finally, in order to ensure that no specificity related to the chosen legislation period drives our results, I include a third corpus of EU reports containing substantive reports of both legislative periods that respectively precede and follow our main legislative term of interest. Thus, the third corpus is the *EU-Reports Corpus 3*, which contains 92 reports corresponding to the 10 first substantive reports (30 pages and above) produced by the European Parliament each year between 2009-2014 and 2019-2022.[6]

EU-Reports Corpus 2 is the main corpus I use to validate the translation of the English-MFD into French, Italian, Spanish, and German. *EU-Reports Corpus 1* and *EU-Reports Corpus 3* allow us to check for robustness of the results produced by the validation test when modifying the corpus of analysis.

The purpose of creating a second set of corpora, the *Political Communication Corpora*, is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at showing that the translated MFD are applicable to the study of political communication outputs and, on the other hand, it ensures that the translated MFD can be used on spoken communication outputs, namely speeches. The *Political Communication Corpora* contains five distinct corpora. The first corpus is the *Canada Manifestos Corpus* that contains 24 officially translated party manifestos of the major Canadian political parties that ran for the 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2019 election campaigns (see Table 18 in the Appendix). The following four corpora contain officially translated speeches by EU officials. The *EU-Speeches French Corpus* and the *EU-Speeches German Corpus* contain 48 speeches, the *EU-Speeches Italian Corpus* contains 25 speeches held, and the *EU-Speeches Spanish Corpus* contains 25 speeches (see Tables 19 - 21 in the Appendix

[6]Only six substantive reports were available in years in which the legislative period changed (2009, 2014, 2019, and 2022).

for further details on the speakers and dates of the speeches).

Validation methodology. As first validation test, I perform Pearson's correlations on the *EU-Reports Corpora*. I create sub-samples of EU-Reports classified by languages. Then, using Quanteda (Benoit et al., 2018), I create eleven variables for each language: each representing one moral foundation *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, *Sanctity-Degradation*, and *General*, as well as *Morality*, *Vices*, and *Virtues*. These variables respectively contain the number of moral words detected in the given corpus. Finally, I correlate each moral foundation as well as *Morality*, *Vices*, and *Virtues* across the five different languages.

If I obtain correlation coefficients between 0 and -1 for a given moral foundation across all analyzed languages, this would indicate a negative correlation relationship across all analyzed languages. If I obtain correlation coefficients equal to 0 for a given moral foundation between all analyzed languages, this would indicate no correlation across all analyzed languages. If I obtain correlation coefficients between 0 and 1 for a given moral foundation across all considered languages, this would indicate a positive correlation relationship across all analyzed languages. Thus, in order to obtain conclusive results for the validation of the MFD translation, I need to obtain positive correlation coefficients, which would indicate reliability for the translated dictionaries. For example, if I obtain a statistically significant correlation coefficient between 0 and 1 for e.g., *Care-Harm* between English and Spanish, this would indicate that when the number of moral words related to e.g., *Care-Harm* detected in the Spanish corpus increases, then, the number of moral words related to e.g., *Care-Harm* detected in the English corpus also increases.

As a further validation, I compute the difference of the means using the *Political Communication Corpora*. For each moral foundation, I compute the difference of the means between the proportion of words from a specific moral foundation relative to the total moral words detected by the English MFD applied to the English version of the document, and the proportion of words from a specific moral foundation relative to the total moral words detected by a translated MFD applied to the officially translated version of the document[7]. The straightforward assumption to make is that because the same document has been officially translated, if the translated version of the MFD is accurately translated, the same number of morality-related words appear when applying the two dictionaries to their corresponding corpus. Therefore, the difference of the means should be close to zero, which would indicate that there are no differences when applying the translated MFD to the officially translated version of the document and when applying the English MFD to the English version of the document.

[7]The validation procedure for the *Political Communication Corpora* using differences of the means was conducted in collaboration with Dr. Nicola Palma (see co-authored statement and article).
Husson, C., & Palma, N. (2025). Broadening the study of morality in multi-party settings through a novel dictionary translation and validation methodology. *Political Psychology*, *46*(3), 487-510.

Results of the validation tests. The already validated English version of the MFD is detecting *Morality* words for each moral foundation. I perform validation tests in order to ensure that the translated versions of the MFD are detecting, in their respective language, *Morality* words for each moral foundation as accurately as the original English version.

Tables 3 and 22-29 (in the Appendix) present the Pearson correlation coefficients for *Morality*, *Virtues*, *Vices*, *General*, and all moral foundations across languages, performed on the *EU-Reports Corpus 2*, along with their significance level and their confidence intervals. Results of the correlation test on the *EU-Reports Corpus 2*, the main corpus of validation, are positive and statistically significant for *Morality*, *Virtues*, *Vices*, *General*, as well as for all moral foundations, and for each language combination.

Table 3 shows that, when considering the overall level of *Morality* detected by each translated MFD compared to the original English MFD, the coefficients show a very high positive correlation: 0.96** [0.95; 0.97] for Italian-English, 0.98** [0.98; 0.98] for French-English, 0.95** [0.94; 0.96] for German-English, and 0.96** [0.95; 0.97] for Spanish-English. These results show that, overall, the moral words translated in French, Italian, Spanish, and German are very accurately representing the moral words included in the original English version of the dictionary. This allows me to validate the translation of the English MFD into French, German, Spanish, and Italian. Moreover, when considering the overall level of *Morality* detected by each translated MFD compared to each other, the coefficients also show a very high positive correlation: 0.98** [0.97; 0.98] for French-Italian, 0.95** [0.94; 0.96] for German-Italian, 0.96** [0.95; 0.97] for Spanish-Italian, 0.96** [0.95; 0.96] for German-French, 0.97** [0.97; 0.98] for Spanish-French, and 0.96** [0.95; 0.96] for Spanish-German. This allows me to attest to the reliability of the dictionaries, also across the translated languages. Thus, I validate the translated versions of the MFD in French, Italian, Spanish, and German.

Note that language-inherent specificities are still an obstacle to the translation procedure and do not allow me to obtain a word-for-word translated dictionary. Some incorrigible biases remain. I took a closer look at the correlation coefficients which were the lowest across the different moral foundations in order to identify some grammatical problems or some specific word misrepresentations that could cause a drop in the correlation coefficient. The lowest correlation coefficient is 0.24** [0.15; 0.32] for the French-English comparison for the moral foundation *Sanctity/Degradation*, which is due to the words "droit; droits" missing in the moral foundation *Sanctity* in the French version of the dictionary. These words were duplicating in *Fairness*, *Sanctity*, and *General*, and I decided to assign them to the category *General* in order to ensure consistency with the other languages.

Moreover, the overall coefficients for German are slightly lower than for the other languages. This is due to the fact that in German some verbs have a separable particle, meaning that the particle is

Table 3: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Morality* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.96** [.95, .97]			
3. French	.98** [.98, .98]	.98** [.97, .98]		
4. German	.95** [.94, .96]	.95** [.94, .96]	.96** [.95, .96]	
5. Spanish	.96** [.95, .97]	.96** [.95, .97]	.97** [.97, .98]	.96** [.95, .96]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

separated from the verb and usually placed at the end of the sentence in question. It was impossible for me during the translation phase to include these verbs in the German version of the dictionary because the roots of verbs with separable particles usually have a completely different meaning when they are present alone. For example, the conjugated forms of the separable verb "ein/fühlen" (meaning "to empathize") could not be included in the German version of the dictionary since the verb "fühlen" (meaning "to feel") alone has a different meaning. Thus, an asymmetry of meaning is created between the English and the German version of the MFD, which in turn causes the correlation coefficient to drop. The lowest correlation coefficient for German is 0.29** [0.21; 0.37] for the moral foundation *General*, which is the category in which I had to eliminate the most German words due to the presence of verbs that have a separable particle.

Tables 4 and 5 present respectively the Pearson correlation coefficients for *Morality* across languages, performed on the *EU-Reports Corpus 1*[8] and *EU-Reports Corpus 3*[9], along with their significance level and their confidence intervals. Results of the correlation test on both corpora are positive and statistically significant for *Morality* for each language combination. Thus, results of the cross-language validation procedure are robust when modifying the selection methodology of the corpus of analysis in terms of content or chosen time frame.

Then, I compute the differences of the means using the *Political Communication Corpora*. For all *EU-Speeches corpora* and for the *Canada Manifestos corpus*, the differences of the means are below 8%

[8]Tables 30 - 37 in the Appendix present the Pearson correlation coefficients for *Virtues*, *Vices*, *General* and all moral foundations across languages, performed on the *EU-Reports Corpus 1*, along with their significance level and their confidence intervals.

[9]Tables 38 - 45 in the Appendix present the Pearson correlation coefficients for *Virtues*, *Vices*, *General* and all moral foundations across languages, performed on the *EU-Reports Corpus 3*, along with their significance level and their confidence intervals.

Table 4: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Morality* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1.*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.81** [.78, .83]			
3. French	.82** [.79, .84]	.99** [.99, .99]		
4. German	.82** [.80, .85]	.96** [.96, .97]	.97** [.96, .97]	
5. Spanish	.83** [.80, .85]	.98** [.98, .98]	.99** [.98, .99]	.97** [.97, .98]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 5: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Morality* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3.*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.93** [.90, .95]			
3. French	.96** [.94, .97]	.99** [.98, .99]		
4. German	.94** [.91, .96]	.96** [.95, .98]	.97** [.96, .98]	
5. Spanish	.94** [.91, .96]	.98** [.97, .99]	.99** [.98, .99]	.97** [.95, .98]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

for each moral foundation (see Figures 3 and 2). Overall, the extremely low differences of the means are negligible and allow me to confirm the accuracy of the newly translated French, Italian, Spanish, and German versions of the MFD. Most importantly, these results confirm that the translated versions of the MFD are a suitable tool for the study of spoken political communication outputs.

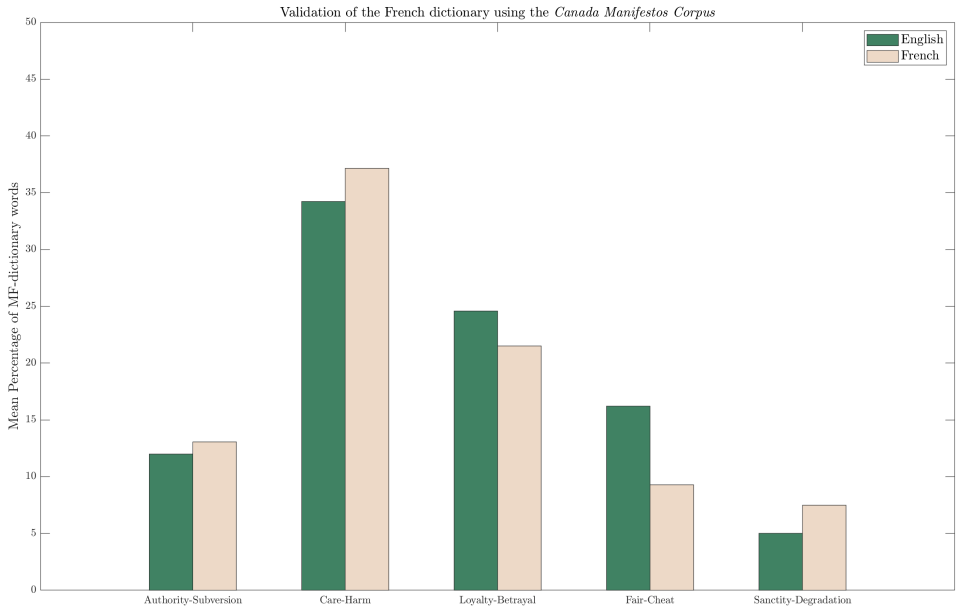


Figure 2: Difference of the mean when applying the English and the French MFD on the *Canada Manifestos corpus*.

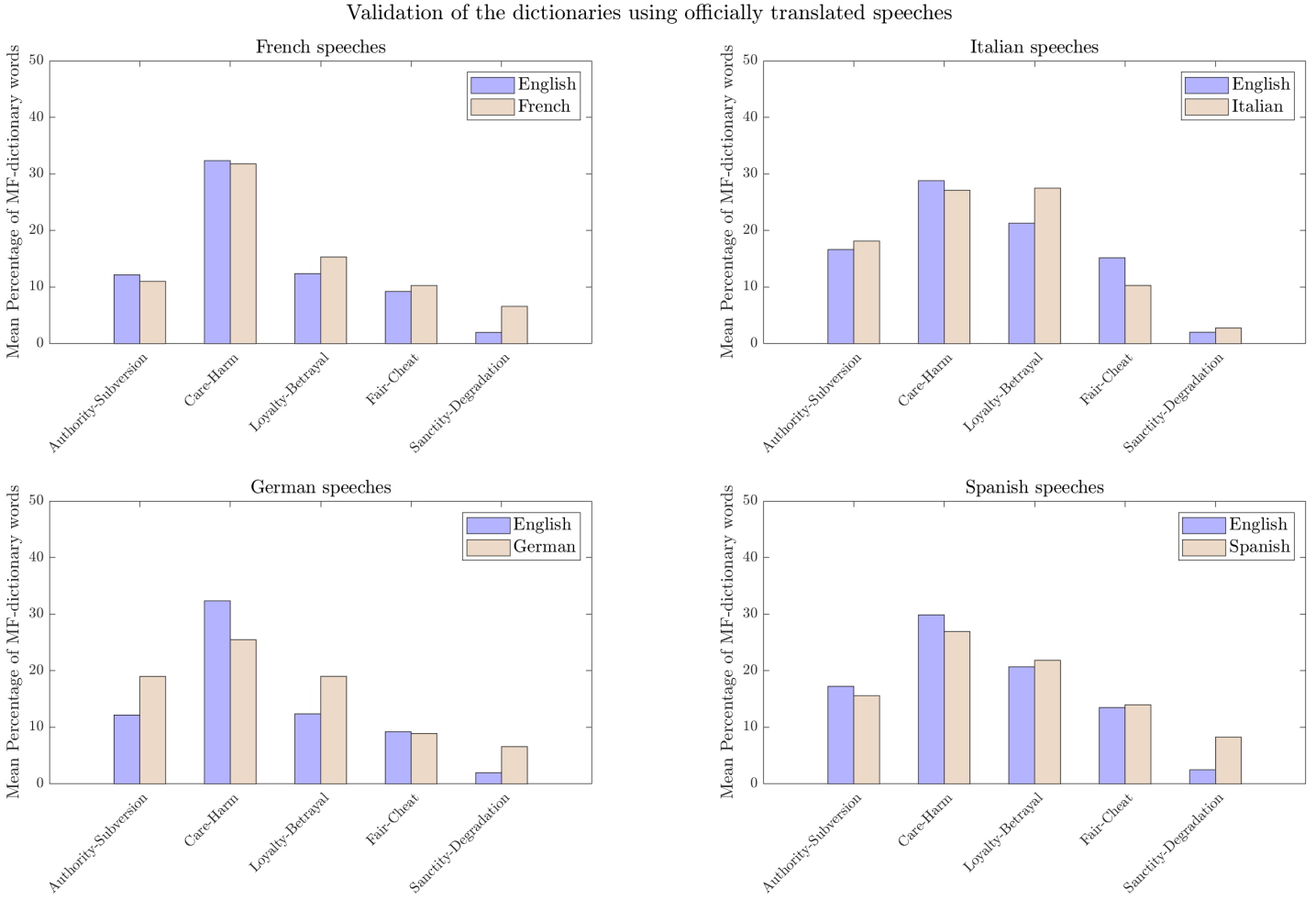


Figure 3: Difference of the mean when applying the English and the translated versions of the MFD on their respective *EU-Speeches corpus*.

2.3 Summary

From a conceptual perspective on morality, I fully rely on the MFT framework, including its core assumption of moral pluralism, which posits that morality is grounded in several distinct, innate moral foundations.

From a methodological perspective, I develop a semi-automatic dictionary translation method that is entirely and easily replicable for languages beyond those included in my work. Furthermore, this chapter constitutes a novel attempt to introduce a procedure for dictionary validation based on officially translated documents that, unlike traditional validation methodologies based on multi-lingual surveys or human coders (Bos & Minihold, 2022; Matsuo et al., 2019), offers an efficient, resource-saving alternative for scholars. Hence, this novel easily reproducible dictionary translation and validation methodology provides scholars with a valuable tool for translating the MFD into further languages and thus, facilitates the study of morality in political science and other academic disciplines.

However, some limitations may arise from the application of the MFD. Since its creation, new tools have emerged to analyze morality in texts. Garten et al. (2018) developed a Distributed Dictionary Representation (DDR) of the MFD. DDR performs better than traditional dictionary approaches as it is able to detect not only moral words but also to assess the semantics of a given text. Nevertheless, despite not being the most innovative methodology, I believe that the benefit of relying on translated versions of the MFD lies in the fact that my work builds on numerous existing findings, allowing for comparability and replicability in the analysis of morality in politics. Future research should consider applying these innovative methodologies beyond the English-speaking context.

CHAPTER 3[§§]

Morality and Political Ideology

[§§]The content of this chapter has been published as a co-authored article with Dr. Nicola Palma:
Husson, C., & Palma, N. (2025). Broadening the study of morality in multi-party settings through a novel dictionary translation and validation methodology. *Political Psychology*, *46*(3), 487-510.

3 MORALITY AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Morality is a central concept in all fields of study related to the human thinking process. It can elicit instantaneous intuitions and influence personal behavior without rational thought or reasoning (Haidt, 2001) allowing individuals to effortlessly make judgments and to automatically discern whether something is right or wrong. In the realm of politics, since individuals are receptive to moral appeals, political actors resort to morality to trigger an emotional reaction in the target audience (Clifford, 2019; Haidt & Joseph, 2004).

Previous research in the US bi-partisan system indicates the linkage between political ideology and distinct moral perspectives, at both the individual (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007) and the party level (Lewis, 2019; Lipsitz, 2018; Sagi & Dehghani, 2014). However, despite scholars' increasing knowledge about the ideology-driven use of morality in bi-partisan systems, research lacks a good understanding of political actors' use of moral appeals in multi-party settings. More specifically, can distinct patterns be detected in the way political actors employ moral appeals within multi-party contexts?

In this work, I tackle this question theoretically relying on the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) (Graham et al., 2009). Originally developed to trace the evolution of morality in different populations and cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004), the MFT was subsequently used to analyze the impact of morality in many diverging scholarly fields of research, such as crime science (Harper & Harris, 2017), business (Egorov et al., 2020), and environmental studies (Vianio & Mäkiniemi, 2016). On the one hand, I analyze whether consolidated findings on the link between political actors' ideology and their use of moral appeals hold in multi-party systems. On the other hand, I expand the analysis beyond the widespread theoretical mechanism that considers ideology as the only determinant of the political actors' recourse to moral appeals examining to what extent the type of issues being addressed (socio-cultural vs. economic issues) might influence a party's recourse to morality. To quantify morality in political texts, I rely on the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD) which identifies five specific moral foundations: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority- Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* (Graham et al., 2009). The MFD has been translated and validated into four further languages: French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

This study enriches the existing literature in political psychology by investigating political parties' use of morality in multi-party contexts. The findings present compelling evidence that within multi-party frameworks, political actors' resort to moral appeals is influenced not only by their ideology but also by the specific issues they tackle. The methodological innovations presented in this paper hold promise for a broader application in the study of values and beliefs in politics, extending beyond the scope of the MFT. It is important to acknowledge that similar approaches can be applied to other

values-based theories in the realm of political science such as Schwartz's universal values (Schwartz, 1994), and Douglas's grid-group cultural theory (Douglas, 1999). These theories have been examined about the MFT and offer a different perspective on values and beliefs in politics (see e.g. Johnson et al., 2022).

3.1 Studying morality in a political context: theory building and hypotheses

3.1.1 The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT)

The MFT represents a prominent pluralistic framework for understanding morality, developed within the field of psychology. Unlike monistic approaches to morality, such as Kohlberg's (1971) stage theory, MFT views morality as a multi-dimensional construct (Graham et al., 2009). It posits that moral judgments, values, and behaviors are shaped by intuitive and emotionally driven processes, rather than solely by rational deliberation.

Central to MFT is the identification of universal criteria that a moral dimension must satisfy to be recognized as a foundational aspect of morality. These criteria include being a subject of moral contention, evoking immediate and affective responses, exhibiting cross-cultural prevalence, having an innate basis, and reflecting evolutionary adaptations. Additionally, these foundations are understood to evolve as individuals engage in moral discourse over time (Graham et al., 2012). The theory identifies five core moral dimensions that fulfill these criteria: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*. The dimensions of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* are categorized as *individualizing foundations*, as they focus on moral concerns at the individual level. In contrast, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* are classified as *binding foundations*, which emphasize the social dynamics and cohesion within groups (A comprehensive understanding of the MFT framework can be found in Chapter 2, Section 2.1 *Conceptualization of Morality*).

Initially, the MFT was a theory of cultural psychology developed to trace how morality changes in different populations and cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). The MFT gained relevance in the field of political psychology by investigating whether individuals who share the same ideology have a similar understanding of morality, and in comparative party politics, to attest whether this linkage between morality and political ideology also holds at the party level.

3.1.2 Morality and ideology at the individual level

Studies on the moral attitudes of American citizens have established a link between their political ideology and their moral orientation: Liberals are more receptive to individualistic moral foundations, whereas conservatives are more responsive toward the binding foundations (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012; Kivikangas et al., 2021). The political psychology literature highlights, on the one hand, the effect of moral appeals on the preferences and voting choices of the electorate through the activation of emotional patterns in individuals (Jung, 2020; Ryan, 2014, 2017). On the other hand, other scholarly contributions point out the mobilizing effect of emotions and, therefore, politicians' attempts to strategically trigger voters' emotional appeals (Brader, 2005; Marcus et al., 2000). In this frame, the use of moral appeals might be a payoff strategy for vote-seeking political actors. The recourse to moral appeals in their outside communication translates into incentives for a party's members to express their preferences through voting (Jung, 2020; Lipsitz, 2018).

3.1.3 Morality and ideology at the party level

Some studies investigated the linkage between morality and ideology at the party level in the US context on diverse political communication materials: in presidential speeches (Shogan, 2007), in diplomatic negotiations (Boyd-Judson, 2005), in state legislative hearings (Ferraiolo, 2013; Mucciaroni, 2011) and sermons of liberal and conservative pastors (Graham et al., 2009). Sagi and Deghani's (2014) work, focusing on the abortion debate in the US Senate, suggests that findings at the individual level reflect at the party-level unit of analysis. Recent works based on political ads from the 2008 US Presidential election (Lipsitz, 2018) and on the 2016 US Presidential primary debates (Lewis, 2019) consolidate their findings showing that the Liberal Party uses more *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*, whereas the Conservative Party relies more on *Authority-Subversion*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*.

Extending the analysis beyond the US context, some scholars studied how morality and ideology interplay when considering multi-party systems. First, Parker et al. (2019) analyzed Australian Prime Minister (PM) speeches and found that liberal PMs use more individualistic foundations while conservative PMs rely to a greater extent on binding foundations. However, their findings also demonstrate that the recourse to morality is more strongly influenced by PM's individual characteristics, rather than being primarily dictated by political ideology. Second, Zúquete (2022) focused on the Portuguese multi-party system by analyzing transcripts of parliamentary debates. The results suggest that in the Portuguese context, political parties possess a moral identity of their own as they use morality based on both their stance on the left-right dimension and their status as incumbent vis-à-vis opposition parties. Third, Bos and Minihold (2022) found partial evidence for an ideology-driven use of moral appeals in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. Their study concludes that left-wing parties are more

likely to use *Fairness-Cheating* appeals but no conclusion could be drawn on the use of *Care-Harm*, *Authority-Subversion*, or *Loyalty-Betrayal* appeals.

These somewhat conflicting results, in contrast to those observed in the US bi-partisan system, highlight the need for further research delving into the recourse to moral appeals in multi-party settings. Building on this literature, I formulate the following hypotheses, aimed at consolidating previous findings on the linkage between morality and ideology:

Hypothesis 1: The more left-wing a party is on the left-right scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*.

Hypothesis 2: The more right-wing a party is on the left-right scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Authority-Subversion*, *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Sanctity-Degradation*.

Nevertheless, some scholars argue that the use of moral appeals by political actors must take into account the fact that some policies lend themselves to a greater moralization as compared to other "non-moral policies" (Wendell & Tatalovich, 2020). Whilst the current literature still debates on whether economic issues should be considered moral or non-moral (Abramowitz, 1995; Laver & Garry, 2000; Ryan, 2014), it is increasingly acknowledged that socio-cultural issues, such as abortion, stem cell research, and social justice programs, are subject to a heightened degree of moralization (Clifford & Jerit, 2013; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Hersh, 2001; Sagi & Dehghani, 2014). Although relevant studies examine how morality shaped policy attitudes towards non-cultural topics such as foreign policy (Kertzer et al., 2014), I seek to investigate whether socio-cultural issues are inherently more susceptible to being imbued with moral content. This leads me to formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Socio-cultural issues are overall discussed more morally than economic issues.

Finally, I investigate whether the differences between left-wing and right-wing political parties hold, depending on whether I consider, on the one hand, the type of issues being addressed, and, on the other hand, the parties' stances on the socio-cultural versus economic axes of competition. Bos and Minihold (2022) examine political parties' recourse to moral appeals considering not only parties' locations on the left-right ideological dimension but also their stances on economic and socio-cultural issues. Furthermore, this analysis is consistent with previous studies that highlight how parties' mutual interactions take place in multi-dimensional political spaces where socio-cultural issues flanked economic issues in shaping party competition (see inter alia Rovny & Whitefield, 2019). Differentiat-

ing manifesto statements on whether they deal with cultural or economic issues allows us to examine whether differences among party families in their recourse to morality exclusively depend upon their ideology or whether the issue being addressed might influence their recourse to morality as well. Hence, I formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: The more left-wing a party is on the socio-cultural scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* when addressing socio-cultural issues.

Hypothesis 4b: The more right-wing a party is on the socio-cultural scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Authority-Subversion*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* when addressing socio-cultural issues.

Hypothesis 5a: The more left-wing a party is on the economic scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* when addressing economic issues.

Hypothesis 5b: The more right-wing a party is on the economic scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Authority-Subversion*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* when addressing economic issues.

3.2 Empirical Analysis

3.2.1 Data

To investigate political parties' recourse to moral appeals in their electoral manifestos, I rely on the Comparative Manifestos Project's corpus (CMP) that unitizes parties' formal electoral programs into quasi-sentences, each one corresponding to a specific statement (Volkens et al., 2020). The analysis is based on 329,004 statements, covering 9 countries and 31 elections between 2000 and 2019. Table 6 provides a comprehensive description of the dataset by summarizing for each country all parties considered in each election under study. I focus on Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

Table 6: Summary of the parties considered in each election under study.

Countries	**Election Year**	**Parties**
Austria	2002	FPO - OVP - SPO
	2006	BZO - FPO - GRUNE - OVP - SPO
	2008	BZO - FPO - GRUNE - OVP - SPO
	2013	FPO - GRUNE - LIF/NEOS - OVP - SPO - Team Stronach
	2017	FPO - GRUNE - LIF/NEOS - OVP - SPO
	2019	FPO - GRUNE - LIF/NEOS - OVP - SPO
Belgium	2007	ECOLO - PRL/MR - PS - PSC/CDH
	2010	ECOLO - PRL/MR - PS - PSC/CDH
	2014	FDF - PP - PRL/MR - PS - PSC/CHD
Spain	2000	CC - PNV - PP - PSOE
	2008	CC - CHA - EA/Amaiur/EHB - IU - PNV - PP - PSOE
	2011	CC - IU - PP - PSOE - UPyD
	2015	CC - EA/Amaiur/EHB - IU - PNV - PP - PSOE - Podemos
	2016	CC - Cs - EA/Amaiur/EHB - IU - PNV - PP - PSOE - Podemos
	2019	CC - Cs - EA/Amaiur/EHB - IU - PNV - PP - PSOE - Podemos - Vox
France	2012	AC - FN - NC - PG - PRG - PRV - PS - RPR/UMP/LR - UDF/MODEM - VERTS/EELV
	2017	FI - FN - LREM - PCF - PS - RPR/UMP/LR - UDF/MODEM - VERTS/EELV
Germany	2002	CDU - FDP - Grunen - LINKE - SPD
	2005	CDU - FDP - Grunen - LINKE - SPD
	2009	CDU - FDP - Grunen - LINKE - SPD
	2013	AfD - CDU - FDP - Grunen - LINKE - Piraten - SPD
	2017	AfD - CDU - FDP - Grunen - LINKE - SPD
Ireland	2007	FF - FG - GP - LAB - SF
	2011	FF - FG - GP - LAB - PBPA - SF - SP
	2016	DS - FF - FG - GP - I4C - LAB - PBPA - SF
Italy	2013	CCD/UDC - CD - FI/PDL - FdI - LN - M5S -PD - RC - SC - SEL - SVP - VdA
	2018	FI/PDL - FdI - LN - M5S - PD - SI - SVP
Luxembourg	2013	GRENG - ADR - LSAP - DP - CSV - DL
United Kingdom	2015	CONS - LAB - LIBDEM - PLAID - SNP - UKIP
	2017	CONS - DUP - GREEN - LAB - LIBDEM - PLAID - SF - SNP - UKIP
	2019	CONS - GREEN - LAB - LIBDEM - PLAID - SNP

3.2.2 Measuring Morality

To measure morality in political texts, I rely on translated and validated versions of the MFD in German, French, Italian, and Spanish, each capturing five core moral foundations: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*. These translations are specifically adapted for political contexts. Following a semi-automated methodology, I first compiled all words from the English MFD (Step 1), manually filtered them for their relevance to morality in political texts (Step 2), translated the filtered list into the target languages (Step 3), and manually refined the translations (Step 4).

To validate the accuracy and comparability of the translated dictionaries, I used a corpus consisting of 509 officially translated European Parliament reports from the 2014–2019 legislative period. I computed Pearson's correlations between the moral word counts in each language and the original English version. Results show very high positive and statistically significant correlations: 0.96 for Italian-English, 0.98 for French-English, 0.95 for German-English, and 0.96 for Spanish-English, indicating that the translations accurately reflect the English dictionary. Moreover, cross-comparisons between the translated versions also produced very high correlations: 0.98 for French-Italian, 0.95 for German-Italian, 0.96 for Spanish-Italian, 0.96 for German-French, 0.97 for Spanish-French, and 0.96 for Spanish-German. These results confirm the reliability and consistency of the dictionaries across the four languages. I thus validate the translated MFDs in French, German, Italian, and Spanish for the study of morality in political texts (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2 *Measurement of Morality* for a more detailed explanation of the translation and validation procedures).

To detect the extent to which political parties moralize the content of their electoral manifestos and to measure their recourse to moral appeals, I compute a dichotomous variable that, for each statement, signals the presence of any of the five moral foundations. 11% of the electoral manifesto statements contains a recourse to the moral domain of *Care-Harm*; around 8% of the statements included in the analysis refers to *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion* appeals; 3% of the statements incorporates an appeal to the moral foundation of *Sanctity-Degradation*. Overall, 38% of the statements present in parties' manifestos across all countries under study are moralized.

3.2.3 Descriptive analysis

Figures 4 - 6 provide a descriptive overview of the use of morality in the countries under study according to the different party families. I rely on the categorization provided by the Chapel Hill expert surveys (Jolly et al., 2022) with the only exception that I merged Christian democrat and conservative political parties under the common denomination of conservatives.

Figure 4 traces the evolution over time in the use of morality across the nine countries included in the dataset. Figure 4(1) represents the overall level of morality use across countries and over time as the proportion of moral statements relative to the total number of moral statements. While the discourse is the most moralized in Spain with, on average, 40% of the manifesto statements moralized, it remains moderate in Austria over the entire time frame (18% in the 2002 Austrian election campaign before going up to around 27% in 2013). The graphical illustration clearly provides evidence of the existence of cross-countries differences in the level of moralization of the political discourse.

Figure 4(2) to (6) represent the level of use of each moral foundation across countries and over time as the proportion of statements corresponding to the given foundation relative to the total number of moral statements. Some interesting patterns can be observed. For instance, figure 4(5) shows the use of the moral foundation of *Authority-Subversion* over time. Italian political parties are strong outliers in the use of this moral foundation: they use 5% to 10% more *Authority-Subversion* appeals among their moral appeals compared to other countries. This may be attributed to the Italian political culture, in which the subversion of established authority is a common phenomenon, with governments alternating more often than in other European multi-party systems.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of moral appeals contained in the electoral manifesto statements for six party families: radical left-wing parties, socialists, liberals, conservatives, radical right-wing parties, and greens. The results of a one-way ANOVA test ($F5 = 128.36$, $p < .001$) confirm that there is a statistically significant difference in the extent to which political parties moralize the content of their electoral manifestos based on their ideology with at least one ideology group that significantly differs from the others in terms of the proportions of moral appeals included in its electoral program. Political parties on the left side of the political spectrum moralize more than right-wing political parties. Post-hoc comparisons conducted with the Bonferroni method reveal that socialists recur to a greater extent to moral appeals than conservatives; similarly, radical left parties moralize their electoral manifestos more than their radical right counterparts.

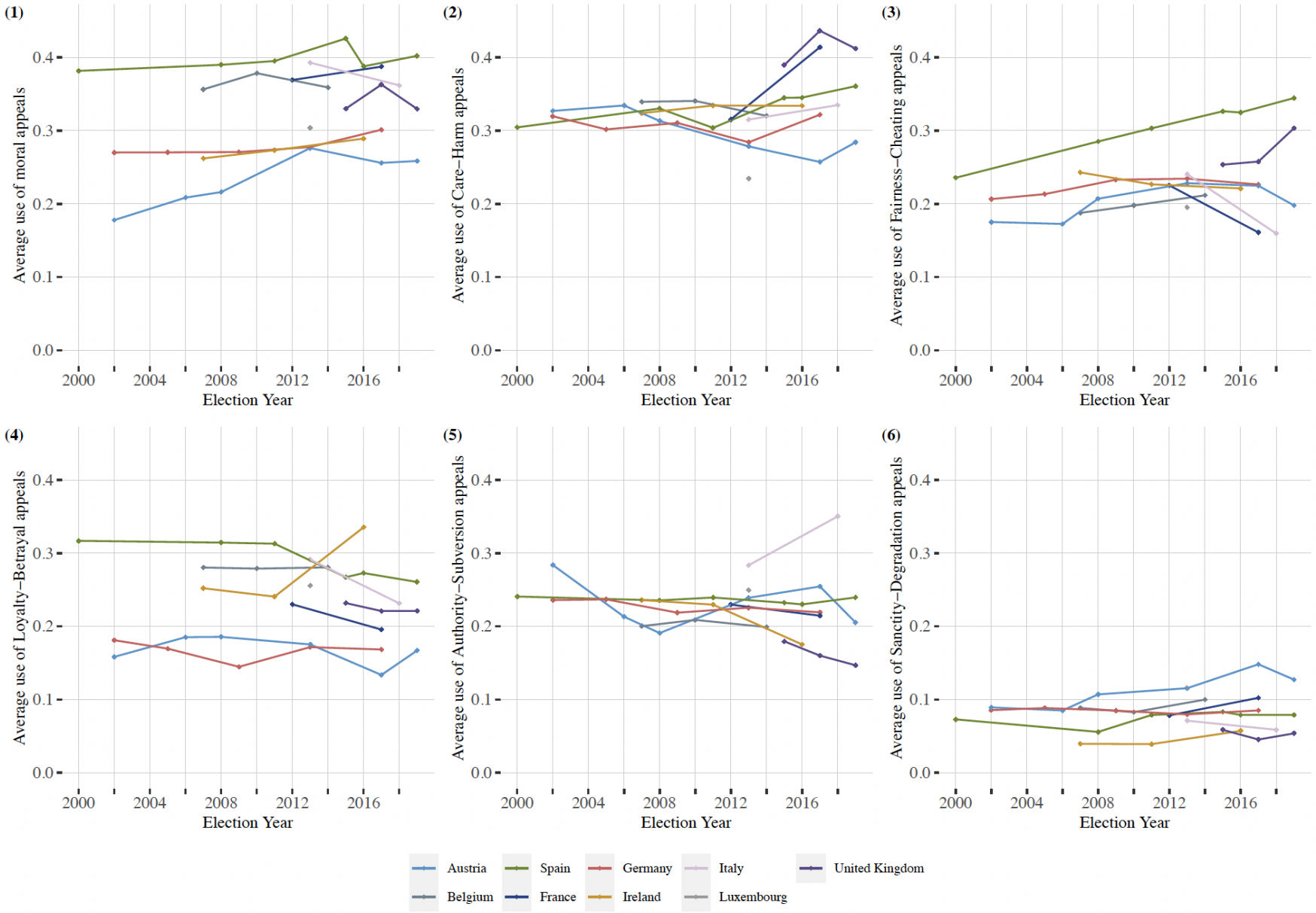


Figure 4: Recourse to morality across countries and over time in 9 European multi-party systems.

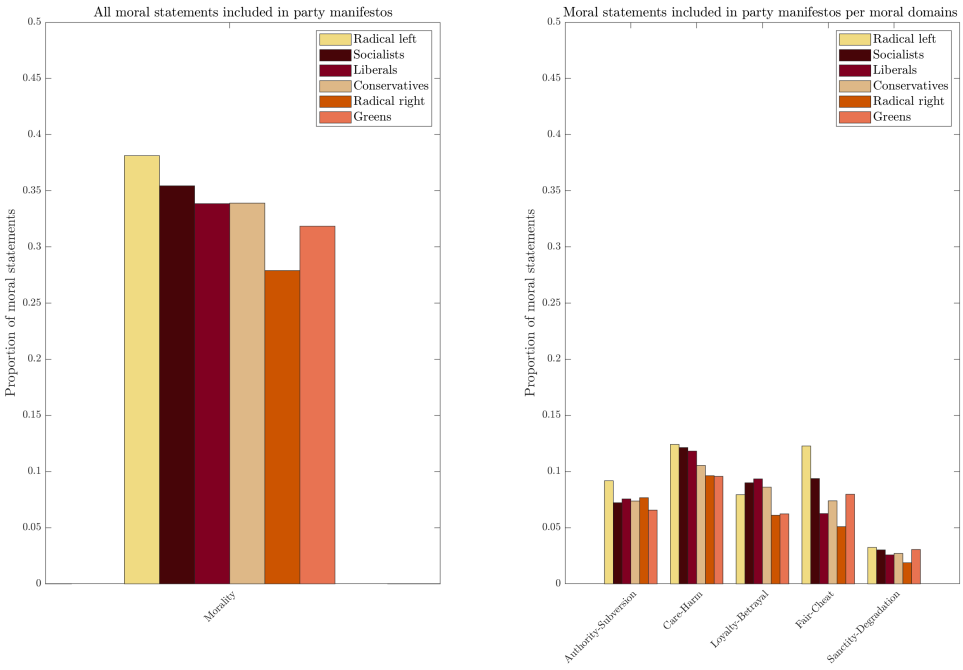


Figure 5: Moral appeals in manifesto statements per party families.

Note. N = 291,185. Proportion of moral appeals in electoral manifesto statements, grouped by party family.

Figure 6 plots how party families' use of moral appeals differs per country. Socialists' moral domains seem to be similar in Spain, Austria and in the UK (high *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* values) whilst presenting almost opposite patterns in Ireland (high *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*) or a balanced moral domain among all moral foundations in France. All conservative parties besides in Luxembourg score very high for *Loyalty-Betrayal* appeals. When a radical right party is present in the countries under study, they score the highest for *Authority-Subversion* (besides in the case of France, in which the radical right party is the second highest score for this foundation). Similarly, when a radical left party is present in the countries under study, they score the highest for *Fairness-Cheating* (besides in the case of France and Belgium). Green parties achieve high scores of *Sanctity-Degradation* appeals (except in the UK). This could be attributed to how they frame issues related to protecting or avoiding environmental degradation. Finally, liberal parties show highly heterogeneous patterns in all countries under study.

Political parties do not systematically present comparable patterns in their recourse to morality in each country included in the analysis. This descriptive overview does not allow us to draw any broader conclusion on the potential ideology-based use of moral appeals in multi-party systems. Therefore, I examine whether political parties differ in their emphasis on the five moral foundations in which moral intuition can be categorized by means of implementing regression models based on conditional probabilities.

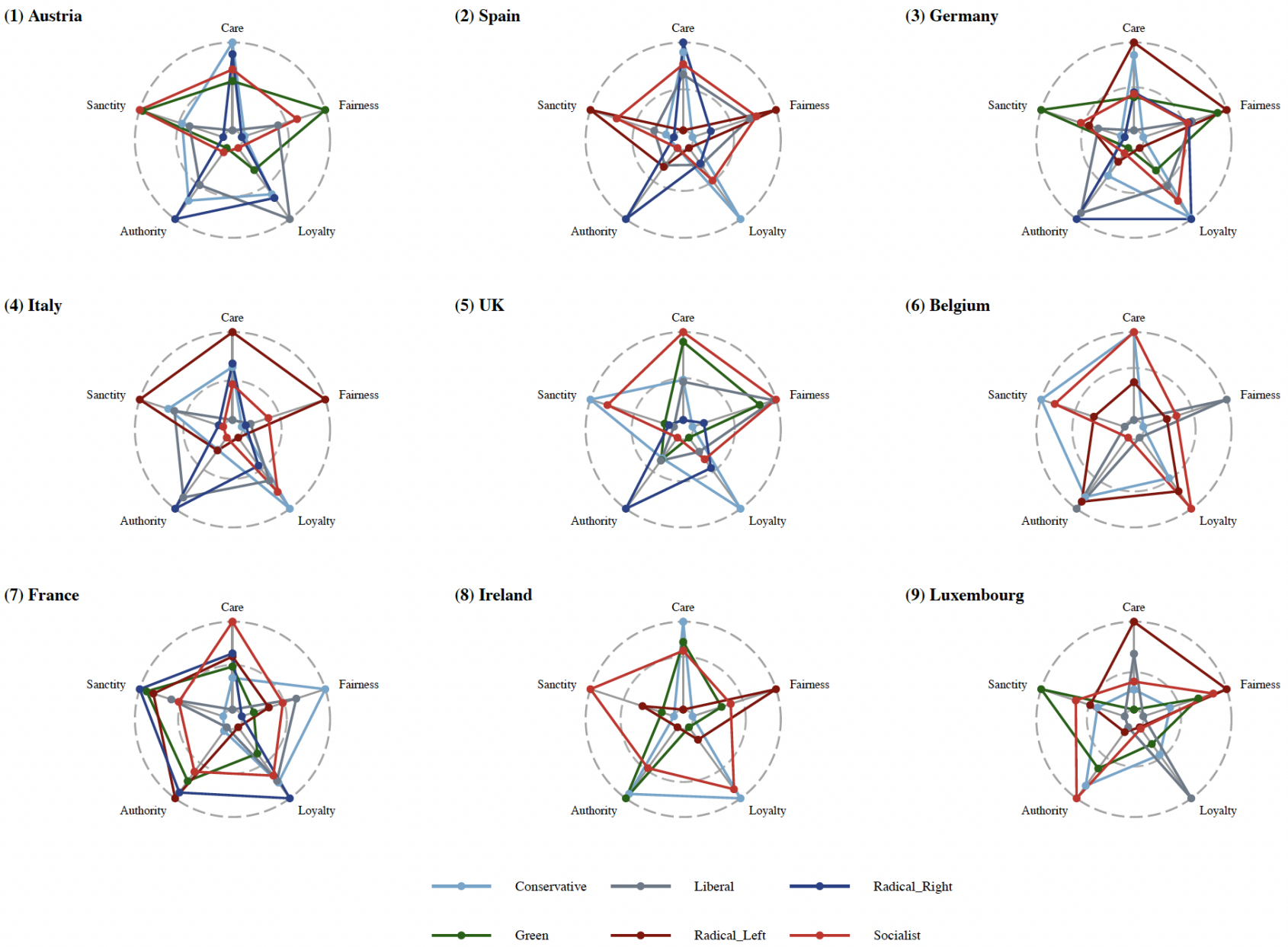


Figure 6: Profile of moral domain per country across the 9 European multi-party systems under study.

3.2.4 Consolidating existing findings in multi-party systems

For each of the five moral foundations, I perform country fixed effects conditional logit models with a dependent variable indicating whether each statement signals the recourse to the said moral foundation (see Table 46 in the Appendix). This methodology allows me to control for any country-specific attributes.

The independent variable is constructed based on Chapel Hill expert surveys' estimates (Jolly et al., 2022). Relying on a 11-point scale, experts' evaluations provide parties' placement on the left-right dimension with the value of 0 denoting a party on the left, whilst 10 indicates a party on the right of the political spectrum. I construct a time series dataset with observations for each year in which an election takes place. However, expert surveys are generally conducted at specific time points, not necessarily coinciding with the years I am interested in. To deal with this data limitation, I assume a linear trend among different known observations, and I interpolate the estimates with a linear interpolation method. This technique allows me to estimate new points within a discrete range delimited by known observations. Considering parties' placements on a given dimension estimated in two distinct time periods, I am able to estimate parties' locations on the considered dimension for all years between these two time points.

As control variables, I include in the analysis the year in which an election takes place; the length of each statement defined in terms of the number of words contained within, and a dummy variable indicating the incumbent status of political parties. This variable assumes the value of 1 in case the party was in power at the time of election, and 0 otherwise. These external factors, such as the status of being in government or being an opposition party, as well as the influence of specific historical context that can lead to a greater moralization could potentially bias the results of the analysis.

Figure 7 shows the results of the five logistic regression models. The analysis provides mixed support to the hypotheses. Indeed, the more a party is located on the left side of the ideological continuum (to the left of the dotted line), the better chances it will have to emphasize the moral domains of *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*. Conversely, the more right-wing a party is on the left-right scale (to the right of the dotted line), the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Authority-Subversion* and *Loyalty-Betrayal*. However, I find that left-wing political parties rely to a greater extent on *Sanctity-Degradation* moral appeals than their right-wing counterparts. The explanatory variable assessing parties' positions on the left-right scale has statistically significant coefficients in all the five models I performed (see Table 46 in the Appendix).

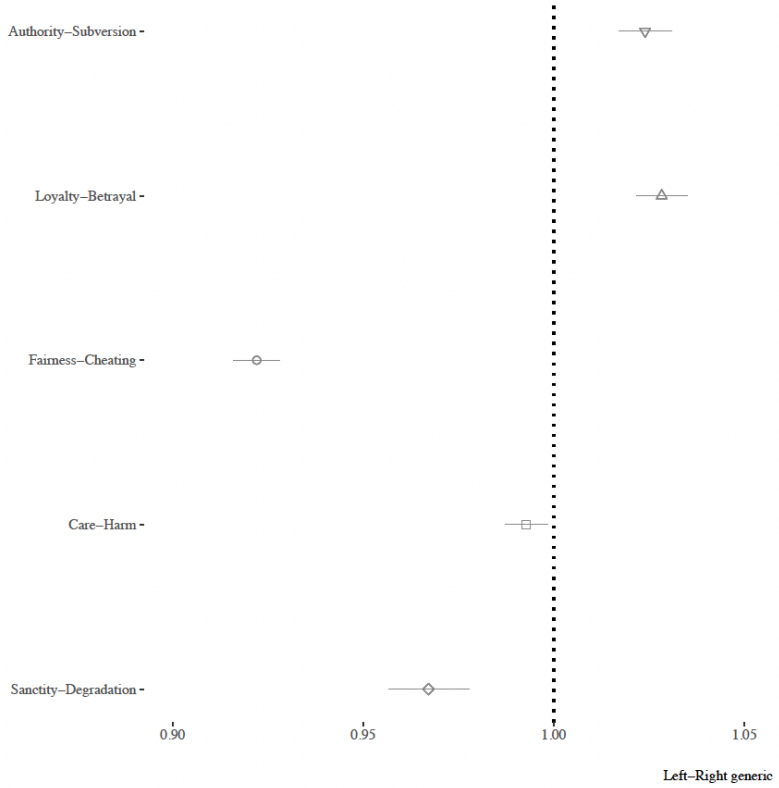


Figure 7: Moral appeals per moral foundations in manifestos statements.

Note. N = 329,004. Conditional logit analysis of the effects of parties' placement on the left-right scale on the recourse to the five different moral foundations. Controlled for length of the manifesto statements, election year, and parties' incumbency status at the time of election. Odds ratios from regression coefficients.

3.2.5 Parties' moralization of economic versus socio-cultural issues

To test the third hypothesis, I categorize moral statements based on whether they address socio-cultural or economic issues, using the hand-coded CMP statement classification (Volkens et al., 2020). Statements referring to themes such as equality, traditional morality, law and order, multiculturalism, and support for unprivileged minority groups are classified as socio-cultural. By contrast, statements related to market regulation, economic growth, public spending, and nationalization are classified as economic. I selected these specific issue categories following the definitions used by the Chapel Hill expert surveys when constructing the GALTAN and LRECON measures, my main independent variables. This selection yields 36,249 socio-cultural statements and 36,082 economic statements.

I estimate the bootstrapped mean levels of moral appeals in socio-cultural and economic manifesto statements, respectively. The results show that moral appeals are more frequent in manifesto statements dealing with socio-cultural matters (Mean = 0.48; 95% confidence interval [0.47, 0.48]) than in those addressing economic themes (Mean = 0.30; 95% confidence interval [0.29, 0.31]). To

Table 7: Logit models with country fixed effects performed to estimate the effect of a socio-cultural vs. economic content to be a moral statement (H3).

	Morality
Socio-cultural issues	0.91***
	(0.02)
Incumbency	−0.03
	(0.02)
Number of words	0.04***
	(0.00)
Election year	0.01***
	(0.00)
Log Likelihood	−44011.29
Deviance	88022.58
Num. obs.	72331

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

further examine whether political parties moralize socio-cultural issues to a greater extent, I estimate the likelihood that a manifesto statement addressing socio-cultural issues contains a moral appeal (see Table 7). The coefficient for the variable *Socio-cultural issues* is positive and highly significant (0.91, p <.001). These findings provide empirical evidence that statements related to socio-cultural issues are significantly more likely to include moral appeals.

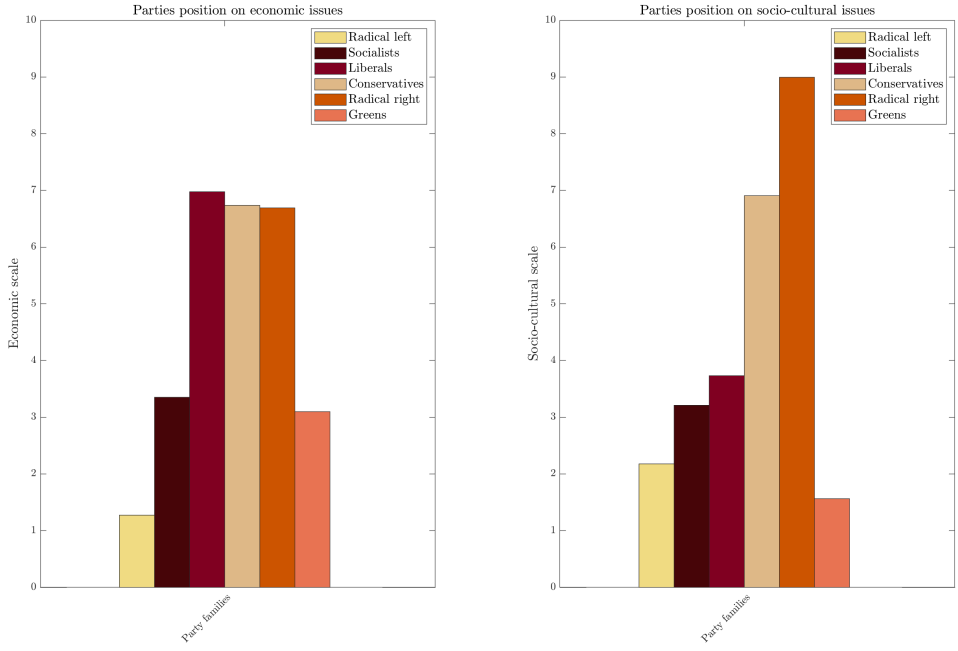


Figure 8: Parties' position on economic and socio-cultural issues.

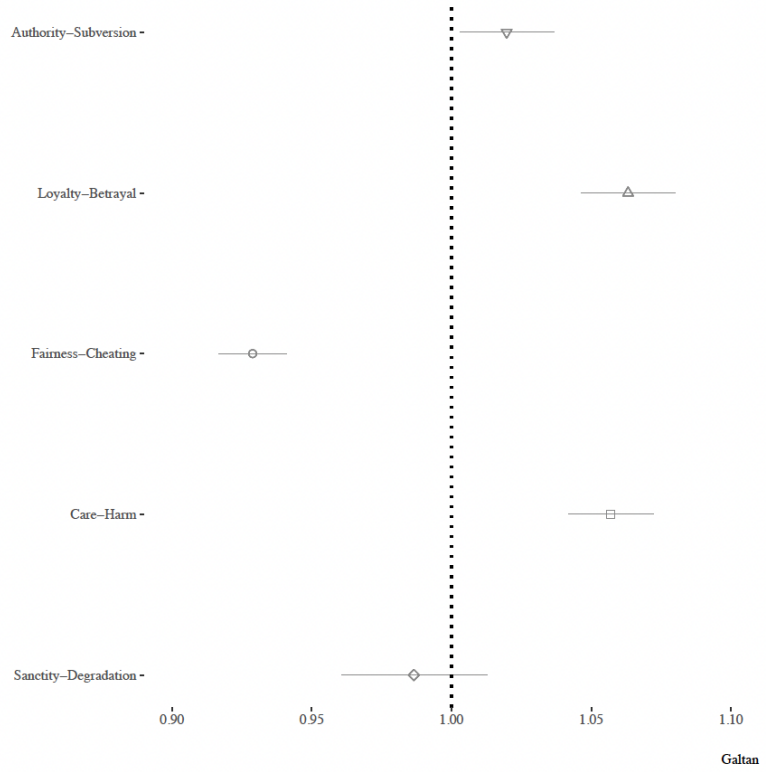


Figure 9: Moral appeals per moral foundations in manifestos statements related to socio-cultural issues.

Note. N = 36,249. Conditional logit analysis of the effects of parties' placement on the left-right socio-cultural scale on the recourse to the five different moral foundations in socio-cultural manifesto statements. Controlled for length of the manifesto statements, election year, and parties' incumbency status at the time of election. Odds ratios from regression coefficients.

I examine whether differences in political parties' use of moral appeals persist when I consider their stances on the economic and socio-cultural dimensions of competition, and when I control for the type of issues being addressed. To construct the independent variables, I rely on the CHES estimates of parties' positions on both the economic and socio-cultural (GALTAN) dimensions.[11] Figure 8 shows parties' stances on the left-right economic and socio-cultural scales. On economic issues, liberal, conservative, and radical right parties share similar positions, whilst on the socio-cultural scale, liberal, socialist, radical left, and Green parties hold opposing positions compared to conservatives and radical right parties.

The empirical strategy employed consists of two steps. First, I separate manifesto statements related to economic policy from those dealing with socio-cultural issues. Second, for each group of manifesto statements, I regress the five moral domains on parties' positions on the socio-cultural and the economic scales, respectively (see Tables 47-50 in the Appendix). Parties on the left side of the

[11] I applied a linear interpolation method to construct a yearly estimate of parties' placements on both the economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

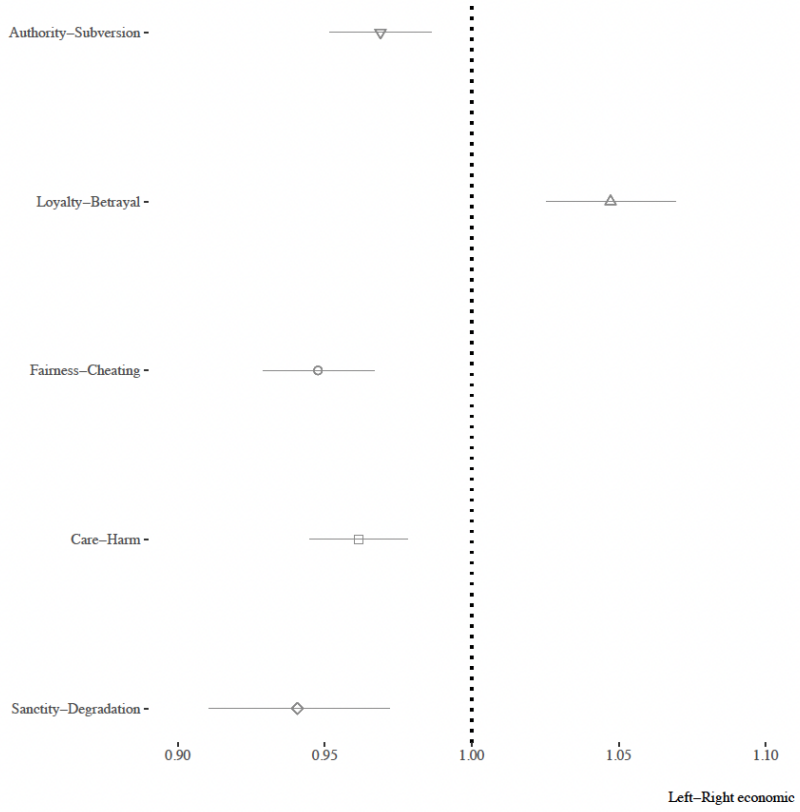


Figure 10: Moral appeals per moral foundations in manifesto statements related to economic issues.

Note. N = 36,082. Conditional logit analysis of the effects of parties' placement on the left-right economic scale on the recourse to the five different moral foundations in economic manifesto statements. Controlled for length of the manifesto statements, election year, and parties' incumbency status at the time of election. Odds ratios from regression coefficients.

economic axis call for an increased role of government in the economy, whilst parties on the right side advocate for a higher degree of deregulation and less state intervention. Conversely, parties on the left side of the socio-cultural axis favor an expansion of civil rights and individual freedoms, whilst parties on the right oppose socio-cultural issues such as abortion rights and same-sex marriage (Jolly et al., 2022).

This empirical strategy allows me, on the one hand, to estimate the likelihood of an economic-related manifesto statement including a specific moral foundation's appeal conditional on parties' stances on economic issues. On the other hand, I estimate the chances that a socio-cultural-related manifesto statement contains a specific moral foundation's appeal depending on parties' stances on socio-cultural issues. Figures 9 and 10 show the results of the ten logistic regression models. The results partially corroborate the hypotheses.

The analysis highlights that the more left-wing a party is on socio-cultural issues, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domain of *Fairness-Cheating*, but not the moral foundation of *Care-Harm*,

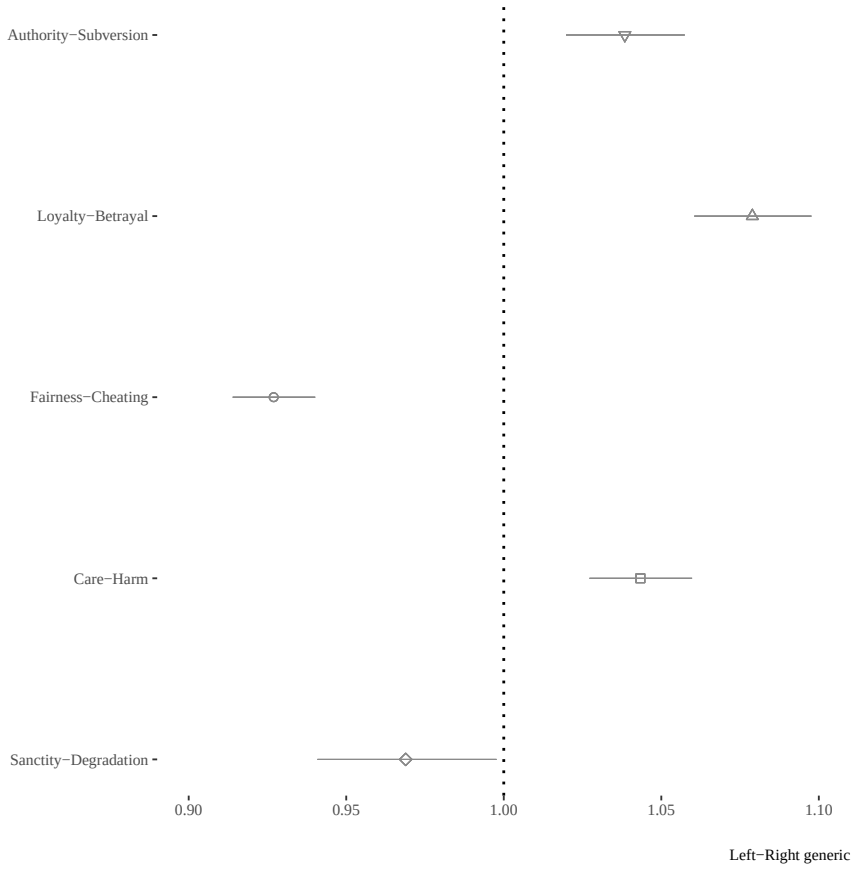


Figure 11: Moral appeals per moral foundations in manifesto statements related to socio-cultural issues.

Note. N = 36,249.Conditional logit analysis of the effects of parties' placement on the left-right scale on the recourse to the five different moral foundations in socio-cultural manifesto statements. Controlled for length of the manifesto statements, election year, and parties' incumbency status at the time of election. Odds ratios from regression coefficients.

which is more likely to be emphasized by right-wing parties. By contrast, parties on the socio-cultural right are more likely to resort to *Authority-Subversion* and *Loyalty-Betrayal* appeals, as expected by the hypothesis.

As far as economic issues are concerned, I find strong support for the hypothesis that parties on the left of the economic axis are more likely to use *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* moral appeals. Nevertheless, the results show that right-wing parties on the economic axis are more likely to emphasize the moral domain of *Loyalty-Betrayal*, but not *Authority-Subversion* and *Sanctity-Degradation*, which, instead, are used to a greater extent by left-wing political actors.

Furthermore, the results confirm the unexpected findings regarding the use of *Sanctity-Degradation* by left-wing political parties. More specifically, the more left-wing a party is on economic issues, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domain of *Sanctity-Degradation* when addressing economic issues.

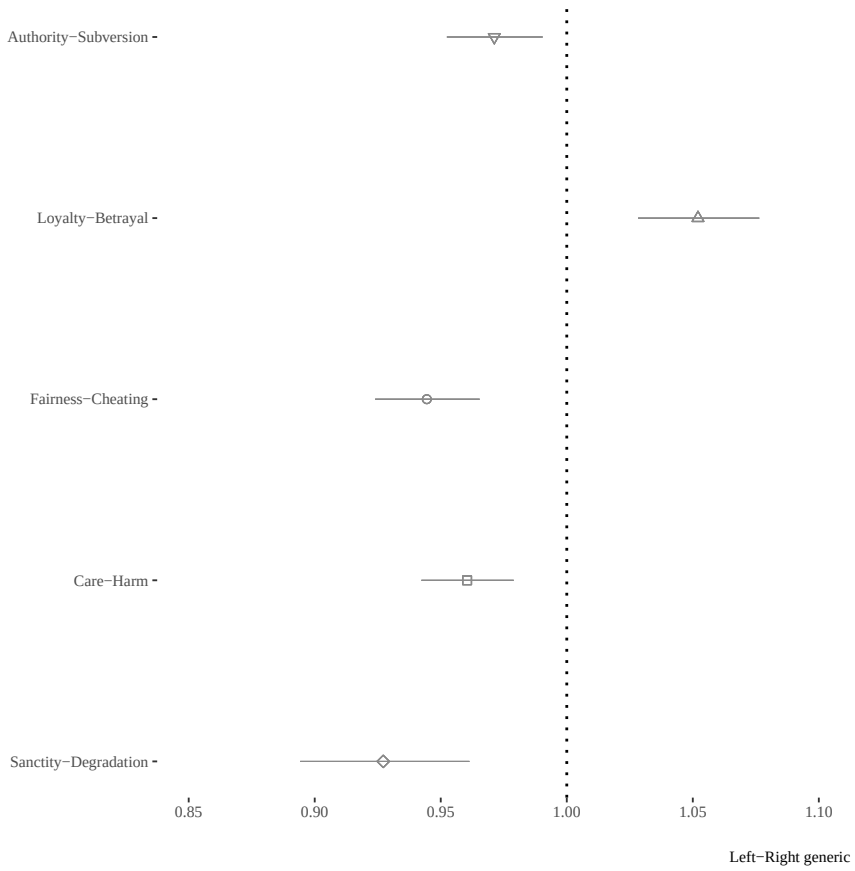


Figure 12: Moral appeals per moral foundations in manifesto statements related to economic issues.

Note. N = 36,082. Conditional logit analysis of the effects of parties' placement on the left-right scale on the recourse to the five different moral foundations in economic manifesto statements. Controlled for length of the manifesto statements, election year, and parties' incumbency status at the time of election. Odds ratios from regression coefficients.

To check whether these findings hold when using a broader measurement of parties' ideology, I regress the presence of the five moral domains on parties' positions on the general left-right ideological scale. The results in Figures 11 and 12 corroborate the initial explanation, according to which differentiating between economic and socio-cultural issues might alter the recourse to the moral domains of *Care-Harm* and *Authority-Subversion* by left-wing and right-wing political parties, respectively. The rationale behind these results could be that the recourse to moral appeals belonging to the categories of *Fairness-Cheating* and *Loyalty-Betrayal* is dependent on parties' ideology, regardless of whether I am considering economic or socio-cultural issues. By contrast, parties' recourse to *Care-Harm* and *Authority-Subversion* appeals is influenced by the issues at play.

3.3 Chapter Conclusion

In this work, I examine parties' use of moral appeals by applying translated versions of the MFD to electoral manifestos of political parties competing in 31 elections across 9 European multi-party systems. This work is the first, to my knowledge, to explore, at the party level, the recourse to moral appeals in a multi-party setting across countries, political ideology, and the type of issue being addressed (socio-cultural vs. economic issues).

First, I analyze whether consolidated findings on the link between political actors' ideology and their use of moral appeals hold beyond bi-partisan systems. In this respect, I find that political parties show a similar ideology-driven use of moral appeals in multi-party settings as in the US context. In fact, the more left-wing a party is on the left-right spectrum, the more likely it is to emphasize *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* appeals. Conversely, the more right-wing a party is on the left-right spectrum, the more likely it is to emphasize *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*. I also observe that *Sanctity-Degradation* is a moral domain mostly attributable to left-wing political parties, and not, as existing literature suggests, to right-wing parties.

Second, I challenge the theoretical mechanism exclusively focusing on the ideology-driven use of moral appeals by political actors. The findings demonstrate that, overall, socio-cultural issues tend to be framed in moral terms more frequently than those related to economic issues. Furthermore, whilst the recourse to the moral foundations of *Fairness-Cheating* and *Loyalty-Betrayal* exclusively depends on the party's ideology, the use of *Care-Harm* and *Authority-Subversion* moral domains differs based on the type of issue being addressed and the political parties' perspectives on the economy and society.

Findings showing evidence that *Sanctity-Degradation* is a moral domain mostly attributable to left-wing political parties in European multi-party systems resonate well with existing research. First, Johnson et al. (2022) propose, based on a cultural theory perspective, that issues relating to the moral aspect of *Sanctity-Degradation* are not solely associated with social and political conservatism, as previously indicated by the MFT framework. Instead, they argue that these concerns hold universal significance and are indicative of a distinct cultural nature. The findings demonstrate the accuracy of their claims in European multi-party systems. Second, Koleva et al. (2012) show how moral intuition on the *Sanctity-Degradation* dimension better predicts individual stances towards so-called "culture war" issues, such as immigration, abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or global warming, than political ideology. This unexpected outcome might be driven by the political agenda of left-wing parties: by discussing culture war issues to a greater extent, they have a higher recourse to the moral foundation of *Sanctity-Degradation* than their right-wing counterparts.

The shift in the recourse to *Care-Harm* by the right when addressing socio-cultural issues, as well as the emphasis on *Authority-Subversion* by the left when discussing economic issues, opens

two avenues for discussion. First, past studies highlight a correlation between higher perception of social danger and greater emphasis on the binding foundations (see Van Leeuwen & Park, 2009). The increased recourse to the binding foundation of *Authority-Subversion* by left-wing political parties when discussing economic issues might be attributed to their collective-oriented, rather than individualistic, economic approach, which makes them more likely to perceive the economy as a potential societal threat for individuals. Furthermore, recent studies on the use of moral appeals in political elite communication show that political parties on the economic left are more likely to use *Sanctity-Degradation* moral appeals in their electoral manifestos (see Bos & Minihold, 2022).

Second, it demonstrates the need to consider the multidimensional nature of ideology. The left-right divide of political ideology has the advantage of being an established and convenient framework into which new issues can easily be integrated. However, it also has the drawback of overlooking significant political distinctions (Grendstad, 2003a; Knutsen, 1995). Following this perspective, scholars question the conventional left-right axis as the sole overarching factor in elucidating variations in value dimensions. Drawing on Douglas's (1999) grid-group cultural theory (CT), they argue that in multi-party systems, the left-right spectrum inadequately reflects the substantial diversity in values (Grendstad, 2003a; Grendstad, 2003b; Hornung & Bandelow, 2022; Olli & Swedlow, 2023). Hence, accounting for ideological multi-dimensionality might elucidate why certain moral foundations traverse the left-right ideological continuum in European multi-party systems, contingent upon the issue at hand.

This work expands the existing scholarly contributions in the literature focusing on morality and politics. I provide evidence that political actors' use of moral appeals is not exclusively ideology-driven but also topic-dependent. Future research should seek to investigate whether there might exist a potential strategic recourse to moral appeals by political actors on specific topics. If this is the case, the question of to what extent other determinants might lead political actors to resort to moral appeals becomes relevant. Furthermore, upcoming studies should consider the benefit of the combined use of textual analysis techniques and traditional survey analysis to study the use of morality on both the supply and the demand side. Text analysis tools using the MFD allow scholars to grasp the use of morality in political communication outputs, while survey research could focus on how the recourse to moral appeals might influence public opinion.

At this point, it is important to mention potential limitations of the study. First, regarding the case selection, I only focus on all possible countries considering the languages into which I was able to accurately translate the MFD while maintaining a coherent regional scope. Second, I exclusively focused on the existing MFT framework. Acknowledging that probably more than five moral foundations exist, MFT scholars consider, for example, the values of *Liberty-Oppression* as being a good candidate to become the sixth moral foundation (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2012; Iyer et al., 2012). The inno-

vative dictionary translation and validation procedure developed in this dissertation (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2 *Measurement of Morality*) can provide future research with the opportunity to investigate the presence of further moral foundations outside the English-speaking area. Moreover, incorporating this sixth moral foundation might enable scholars to predict social libertarianism and egalitarianism, and therefore broaden the implication of their work to further value-based theories such as Inglehart's postmaterialism (Inglehart, 1990).

CHAPTER 4

Reactions to Morality

4 REACTIONS TO MORALITY

Morality shapes political decision-making. How people approach political issues is influenced by what citizens and policymakers see as morally right or wrong. In democratic societies, this might lead to disagreement. For democracy to function, however, these disagreements need to be addressed through informed public discussions about the challenges policy-makers are confronted with. In the best-case scenario, public discourse should eventually bring about enough consensus to turn these discussions into policy outcomes. But what happens when disagreements are so entrenched and conflicts so intense that consensus becomes impossible? What if neither side believes they can persuade the other with logical arguments? Such unresolved political disagreements can harm individuals and society as a whole. They risk creating political deadlock, making it harder to respond effectively to the problems democracies face. The challenge, then, is to manage these deep-seated disagreements, to understand their origins, and to find ways to bridge the divides they create.

I argue that while political ideology and morality are closely linked, differences in moral values do not inherently present an obstacle to political consensus. The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) suggests people with different political ideologies weigh various moral foundations differently, with each ideology emphasizing certain aspects as more important than others (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2012; Haidt, 2012). Among citizens, moral foundations predict disapproval between liberals and conservatives by shaping how each group perceives and forms their judgment on different issues, in particular, culture war issues (Graham et al., 2012; Koleva et al., 2012), but moral transgressions elicit negative reactions regardless of one's ideology (Blumenau & Lauderdale, 2024). Everyone punishes any type of moral transgression, such as betrayal, harm, or cheating. By examining spontaneous reactions to moral rhetoric in a parliamentary setting, I investigate whether shared moral reactions to wrongdoing have the potential to bridge ideological divides beyond citizens, namely to Members of Parliament (MPs) during policymaking.

I focus on the spontaneous reactions between MPs from different political parties in the German Bundestag to moral rhetoric in inter-party settings. My focus excludes intra-party dynamics, as I am not concerned with divisions or unity within the same party. Instead, my aim is to explore how different moral frameworks between parties may drive political disagreements and hinder the formation of consensus. I use data covering reactions to 359,350 parliamentary speeches by MPs from Germany's six major political parties (AfD, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Linke, and Grüne) in the Bundestag from 1949 to 2021. This dataset, collected by the Open Discourse Project and based on Bundestag plenary protocols (Richter et al., 2023), includes 3,204,404 sentence-level observations. MPs frequently respond spontaneously to speeches, with three types of reactions recorded: affirmation, laughter, and interruption. I focus on inter-party interruptions and affirmations. Interruptions represent negative re-

sponses, characterized as spontaneous, intuitive expressions of disagreement, while affirmations reflect positive, supportive reactions aligned with the speaker's position. I evaluate moral content in political texts with the validated German version of the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD), which identifies five moral foundations: *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* (See Chapter 2, Section 2.2 *Measurement of Morality* for details on the full translation and validation methodology). For the analysis, I apply logistic regression models that include fixed effects for electoral terms.

The *Reaction hypothesis* argues that moral statements should be more likely than non-moral statements to be reacted to. The underlying mechanism assumes that moral statements provoke either negative or positive emotions in the listening audience, leading to a behavioral response. Unexpectedly, moral statements do not elicit more reactions than non-moral ones. In fact, the opposite occurs in some cases; for example, MPs are more likely to react to the AfD's non-moral statements than to their moral ones. The *Political Disagreement hypothesis* argues that moral transgressions are more likely interrupted than other statements. The results show unexpected patterns. There is no significant difference in the likelihood of interrupting a moral transgression compared to interrupting another statement or a moral virtue. Results of *ad hoc* analyses strengthen the non-finding regarding political disagreement. Political disagreement dynamics in the German Bundestag are not driven solely by morality or the behavior of a single-party outlier like the AfD. Instead, as a side finding, the increased frequency of interruptions aligns with a broader pattern in which newcomer parties interrupt disproportionately more MPs from established parties during their first legislative term. The *Ideology Hypothesis* proposes that MPs' reactions align with their political orientation. Results show that MPs do not react more favorably to moral foundation appeals that align with their beliefs, nor do they react more negatively to those that contradict them. However, certain moral foundations are more effective in eliciting emotional responses, resulting in a higher overall level of reactions. Specifically, moral rhetoric based on the *Care*, *Fairness*, and *Loyalty* foundations tends to create stronger reactions, leading to both positive affirmations and negative interruptions. In contrast, appeals based on *Authority* elicit fewer reactions, while those based on *Sanctity* show no significant changes in reaction types.

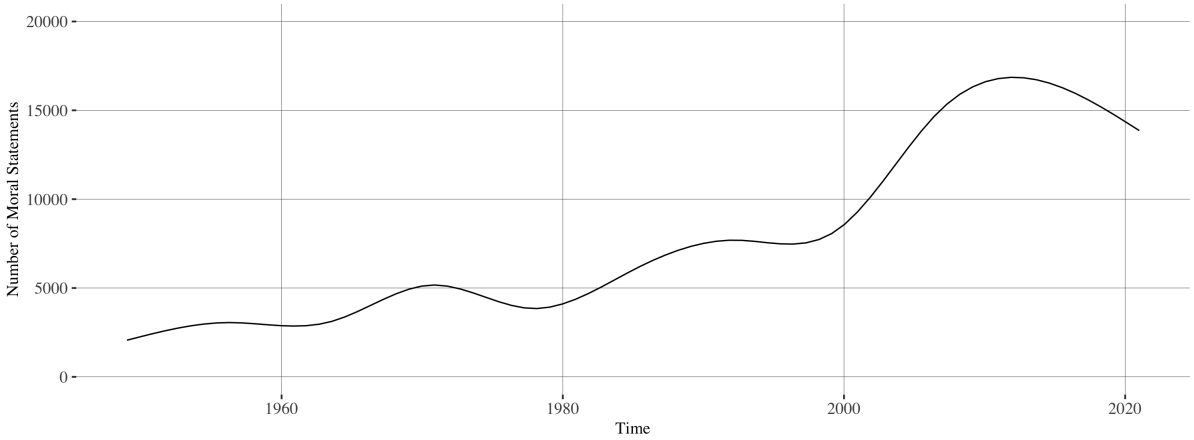
This work enriches the existing literature on two main different research fields. Contributing to the moral psychology literature, I show that although morality serves as an explanatory factor of political disagreement among citizens, it seems to have less impact at higher levels of politics. This suggests that political actors, such as MPs, are less likely to be driven by personal moral values or gut feelings, as their actions are often guided by political strategy. Consequently, the professional demands of politics may lead them to prioritize strategic goals over moral considerations, highlighting a divide

between individual moral beliefs and the strategic calculations inherent in political decision-making. Furthermore, my work expands the literature on political communication in a legislative context, I show a *Newcomer effect* leading political parties to employ disruptive behavior as a strategic tool to assert their outsider status and navigate the challenges of establishing their political presence.

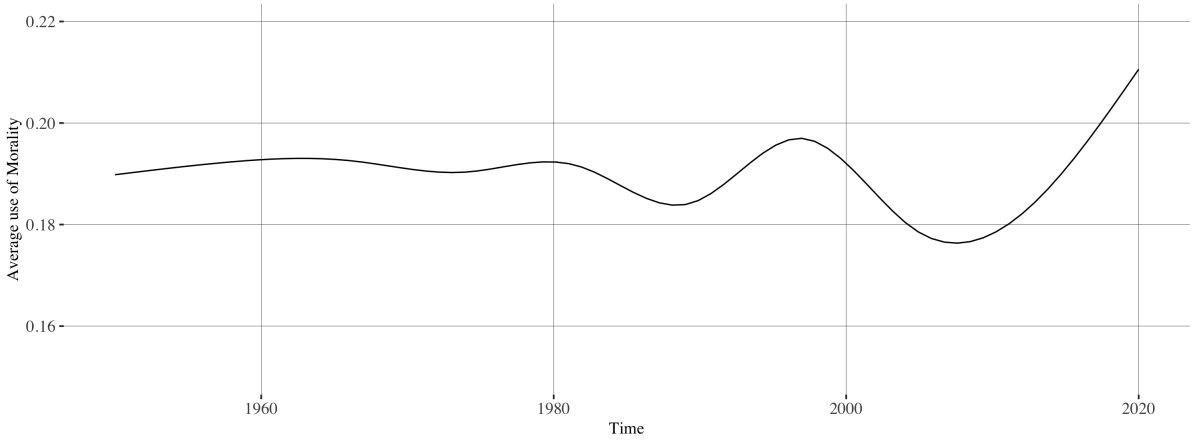
4.1 Navigating the Moral Landscape: Spontaneous Reactions to Morality

4.1.1 Insights into the German Bundestag

In recent decades, parliamentary discourse in the German Bundestag has experienced significant shifts. Since the early 2000s, while the use of moral rhetoric has steadily increased, inter-party reactions, such as interruptions and affirmations, have also risen significantly.



(a) Mean number of moral statements overtime.

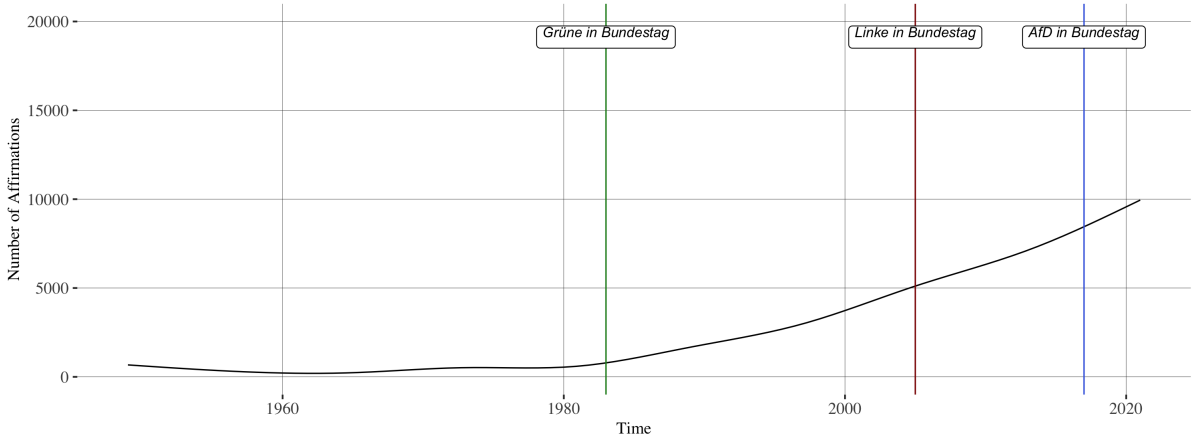


(b) Mean level of morality use overtime in share of moral statement over all statements.

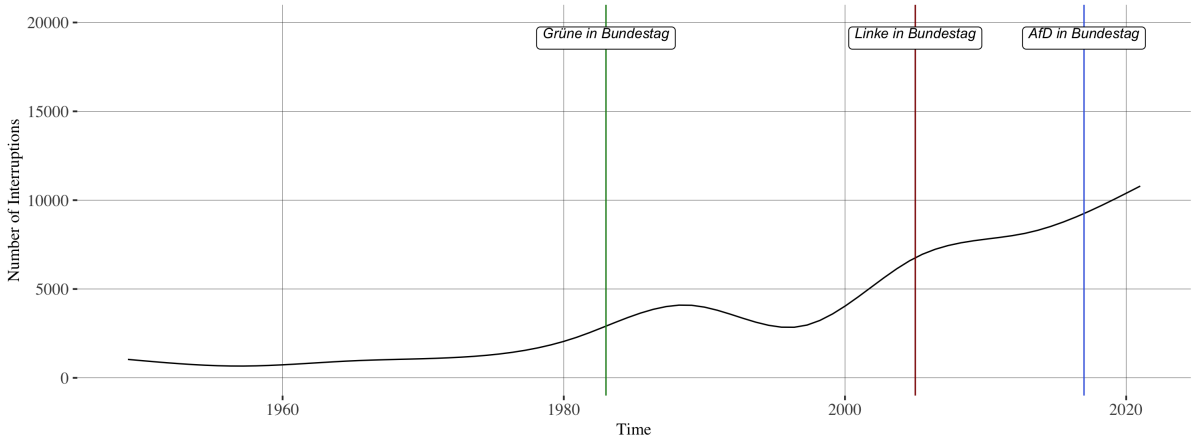
Figure 13: General trend of the use of morality overtime in the German Bundestag by the six parties under study: AfD, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Linke, and Grüne.

Figure 13 shows the average use of morality, as the mean number of moral statements over time (a)

and as the proportion of moral statements over all statements (b), during the parliamentary sessions of the German Bundestag between 1949 and 2021. Reflecting historical and social changes throughout German history, the rise in the raw count and average use of morality indicates that not only are there more statements with moral language, but moral rhetoric also forms a more significant part of parliamentary discourse in recent years. From the 1950s to the 1990s, the focus on stability, unity, and pragmatic governance kept moral rhetoric moderate, with only gradual increases. The dip around the early 2000s may indicate a period of technocratic focus on economic issues, especially following reunification and European integration. However, from 2010 onward, morality rises, coinciding with the rise of populism and debates on immigration, identity, and climate change. These issues, often moralized, drive parties to adopt moral rhetoric, influencing other parties to follow suit to address emotionally charged, divisive topics.



(a) Mean number of affirmations overtime.



(b) Mean number of interruptions overtime.

Figure 14: General trend of inter-party reactions overtime in the German Bundestag by the six parties under study: AfD, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Linke, and Grüne.

Figure 14 shows the average reaction behavior in inter-party dynamics, as the mean number of reactions over time for affirmations (a) and interruptions (b), during the parliamentary sessions of the German Bundestag between 1949 and 2021. Following reunification in 1990, the integration of East and West German political traditions may have brought new voices and perspectives into the Bundestag, creating room for both agreement and tension. In the 1980s, the rise of the Green Party, and later on in the early 2000s, the rise of the Left Party challenged the political *status quo*, introducing environmental and social issues that could have polarized opinions and provoked strong reactions across party lines. As Germany's role in the European Union grew in the 1990s and 2000s, contentious debates around sovereignty, immigration, and economic policies may have increasingly divided the Bundestag, with some members championing EU integration and others expressing skepticism. The emergence of the right-wing AfD in 2013 (and 2017 into parliament), with its sharp criticism of immigration and the EU, might have intensified these divides, prompting more interruptions from other parties. At the same time, the need to counterbalance the AfD's influence could have fostered more affirmations among mainstream parties, as they found common ground in opposing the AfD's agenda. Major events like the Eurozone debt crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic probably added complexity to inter-party dynamics.

These parallel trends raise an intriguing question: could the intensified use of moral rhetoric in the political discourse be linked to the changing dynamics of inter-party interactions? The present study posits that the recourse to morality influences inter-party dynamics in parliament.

4.1.2 Theoretical Mechanism

The mechanism preceding a behavioral response is expected to be as follows: a statement activates emotions in the person reacting, which translates into a behavior, here being a reaction (see Figure 15). Jung (2020) is the only study, to my knowledge, explaining the interplay between moral rhetoric, emotions, and behavior. She investigates how parties' moral rhetoric affects the voting behavior of co-partisan voters through the activation of positive emotions about their party preferences. This study shows that moral rhetoric activates emotions and that people act on this emotional activation, which translates into a behavior: voting. The behavior observed is, however, not directly following people's exposure to moral rhetoric but rather occurs weeks later. Hence, knowing that individuals' exposure to moral rhetoric elicits instantaneous intuitions and influences personal behavior without rational thought and reasoning (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Joseph, 2004), how to be sure that the behavior observed, namely voting, is due to the use of moral rhetoric? I will test this underlying mechanism linking moral rhetoric, emotions, and behavior using inter-party reactions in parliament. This is an instantaneous and directly observable behavior following exposure to moral rhetoric. I argue that

spontaneous reactions are a more likely case to test the behavioral impact of moral rhetoric in the political discourse than voting behavior.

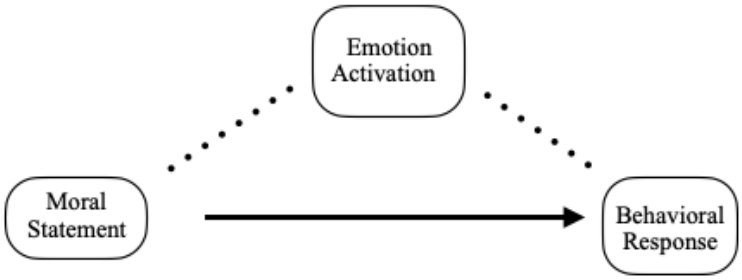


Figure 15: General Theoretical Mechanism.

Moral Statement. The MFT, developed within social psychology, offers a pluralistic framework for understanding morality as a multi-dimensional construct. Unlike earlier monistic approaches that emphasize a single moral logic, such as Kohlberg's (1971) stages of moral development or Turiel's (1983) domain theory, MFT posits that individuals rely on multiple, evolutionarily grounded moral domains when forming judgments (Graham et al., 2009). It distinguishes between two *Individualistic* foundations occurring at the individual level (*Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*) and three *Binding* foundations with the social function of focusing on dynamics between individuals at the group level (*Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*). Each moral foundation accounts for various aspects of morality:

- ***Care-Harm:*** Disapproval of causing suffering, approval of actions that prevent harm.
- ***Fairness-Cheating:*** Sensitivity to justice and equality, disapproval of violations of fairness.
- ***Loyalty-Betrayal:*** Value of group solidarity (family, country), approval of those who enhance group well-being.
- ***Authority-Subversion:*** Respect for hierarchy and social roles, approval of those fulfilling their roles responsibly.
- ***Sanctity-Degradation:*** Disgust response to physical and social contaminants, like spiritual corruption or uncontrolled impulses.

Although these foundations are universally present, cultures and subcultures place different emphasis on each foundation, shaping their unique moral landscapes (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1 *Conceptualization of Morality* for a detailed discussion of the MFT framework).

Emotion Activation. A central issue within moral psychology is understanding how individuals form moral judgments (e.g., Greene, 2015; Haidt, 2007; Prinz, 2006). The MFT suggests that people form moral judgments intuitively, often guided by emotions, without engaging in conscious deliberation or reasoning (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2001). Each moral foundation is intrinsically linked to specific emotions: *Care* to compassion, *Fairness* to anger, *Authority* to resentment, *Loyalty* to rage, and *Purity* to disgust (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Hence, moral statements have, by nature, an emotion activation power.

Reaction. MPs are crucial political actors focused on advancing policies that align closely with their party's stance. A significant component of their legislative activities involves delivering parliamentary speeches. In case of disagreement, the parliamentary context, through its procedures, ensures that issues can be raised and opposing viewpoints expressed by MPs within the boundaries of social and institutional norms. Most democratic parliaments provide their members with structured opportunities, governed by formal rules of conduct, to ask questions, respond, or comment in reaction to a speech. Despite the presence of these institutional conduct rules and procedures governing these formal plenary sessions, MPs frequently exhibit spontaneous reactions to speeches. Official records document three types of such reactions: affirmation, laughter, and interruptions. I focus on interruptions and affirmations[12]. While interruptions are negative reactions, defined as spontaneous and intuitive verbal expressions of political disagreement with the speaker, affirmations are positive reactions, showing as spontaneous and intuitive verbal expressions of encouragement and alignment with the speaker.

To sum up, morality is intuitive and innate (Haidt, 2001). The recourse to morality triggers an emotional reaction by the listener (Clifford, 2019; Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Therefore, I expect moral statements to be more likely than non-moral statements to provoke a behavioral reaction in the target audience.

The Reaction Hypothesis: Moral statements are more likely than non-moral statements to be reacted to.

[12]The reaction type "laughter" is excluded from this study due to its complex and context-dependent nature. Laughter can signal a positive reaction, such as amusement, or a negative response, such as ridicule or derision, making its interpretation challenging to standardize.

4.2 Morality and Political Disagreement

Individual thinking is the process of allowing individuals to form their own ideology, that is, the set of ideas, opinions, values, and beliefs that aim to give birth to, guide, and/or justify individual or collective human actions. Human thought is organized according to two distinct systems. System 1 operates in a non-deliberate manner through emotions and intuitions, whilst System 2 is the deliberate type of thinking involving rationality and logic (Kahneman, 2011). Whereas ideas and opinions are derived from System 2, since they require relevant cognitive effort involving analysis and reasoning, beliefs and values are formed intuitively and are intrinsically linked to individual emotions in accordance with their automatic and non-deliberate nature. In this perspective, morality serves as the basis for the decision-making process and shapes an individual's unique set of values and beliefs.

Morality and ideology are linked and inherent to an individual. Individuals who have a similar moral domain happen to also share the same ideology. In the same way, individuals who share the same ideology attribute more weight to the same specific moral foundations than to others (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007). However, while language allows us to comprehend the reasoning behind someone else's ideas or opinions, understanding how their moral values are formed is impossible because morality is rooted in personal intuition. One might attempt to understand another's morality by translating it into their own moral framework, but this will always fall short of a complete understanding. For instance, two people debate the morality of vegetarianism. Person A believes it's morally imperative to minimize harm to animals, prioritizing compassion and nonviolence. Person B, valuing natural cycles and cultural traditions, considers humane meat consumption acceptable. Moral disagreement arises as Person A assumes Person B prioritizes harm reduction, while Person B perceives Person A's stance as rigid. This highlights the challenge of fully interpreting others' moral values, which are rooted in personal experiences and beliefs. The inability of two actors to reach an agreement when two types of moralizations collide can lead to hostile behavior, such as violence (Graham et al., 2012).

One major implication of the use of morality in politics is that distinct moralities contribute to political disagreement. Koleva et al. (2012) show that, especially regarding so-called "culture war" issues, Liberals tend to frame culture war issues around *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* (e.g., supporting same-sex marriage based on equality), whereas conservatives frame them around *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* (e.g., opposing same-sex marriage based on traditional religious beliefs). Thus, at the individual level, moral foundations act as predictors of disapproval between liberals and conservatives because they shape how each group perceives and evaluates culture war issues, leading to political disagreement (Graham et al., 2012; Koleva et al., 2012).

However, recent findings by Blumenau and Lauderdale (2024) challenge this established idea. They show that when violating any moral virtue (*Care* through *Harm*, *Fairness* through *Cheating*, *Loyalty* through *Betrayal*, *Authority* through *Subversion*, or *Sanctity* through *Degradation*), whether individuals value this moral foundation or not, it will result in the same condemning reaction from everyone. In other words, Blumenau and Lauderdale's (2024) findings imply that, for instance, a left-leaning person will value in particular the *Individualistic* foundations of *Care* and *Fairness*, but when the *Binding* moral foundation of *Loyalty* is violated (through *Betrayal*), it will create a similar condemning reaction to the one of a more right-leaning person. This holds for a more right-leaning person and the violation of the moral principles of an *Individualistic* foundation. Thus, people should condemn moral transgressions consistently.

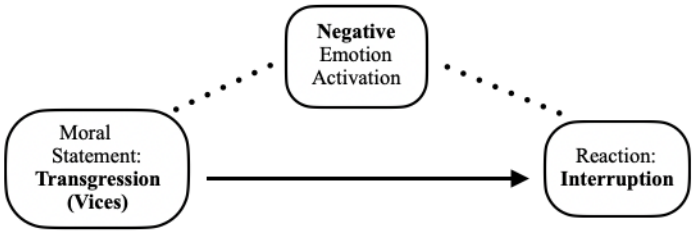


Figure 16: Theoretical Mechanism applied to the *Political Disagreement Hypothesis*.

This study will, therefore, in the context of parliamentary debate between MPs, test whether this inherent linkage between morality and ideology might explain contemporary political disagreement (Graham et al., 2012; Koleva et al., 2012) and whether people seem to be equally receptive when it comes to moral transgressions (Blumenau and Lauderdale, 2024). Focusing on moral transgression, I expect that individuals, regardless of their ideology, will react similarly and negatively toward moral transgressions (see Figure 16).

The Political Disagreement Hypothesis: Moral transgressions are more likely interrupted than other statements.

4.3 Ideology-driven Reaction to Morality

The linkage between morality and political ideology is well-established in the literature. Studies on the moral attitudes of American citizens have identified a connection between moral orientation and political ideology: liberals tend to value the *Individualistic* moral foundations more, while conservatives are more inclined to resonate with *Binding* moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Hersh, 2001; Kivikangas et al., 2021). This linkage at the individual level has been confirmed to exist in European multi-party systems (see e.g. Di Battista et al., 2018 in Italy; or Graham et al., 2009 in the UK). Furthermore, the study of the interplay between morality and ideology has been shown to hold at the party level in the US (Boyd-Judson, 2005; Ferraiolo, 2013; Lewis, 2019; Lipsitz, 2018; Mucciaroni, 2011; Sagi & Deghani, 2014; Shogan, 2007), as well as in European multi-party systems (see findings in Chapter 3 but also Bos & Minihold, 2022; Parker et al., 2019).

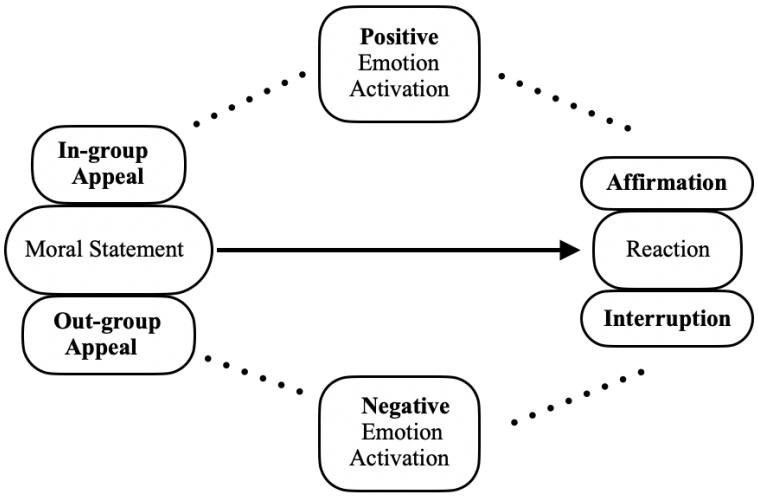


Figure 17: Theoretical mechanism applied for the *Ideology Hypothesis*.

I expect these trends to reflect in the intuitive behavior that actors adopt when exposed to moral rhetoric (see Figure 17). When a moral statement is appealing to their in-group morality, MPs should react positively with an affirmation. Following the same rationale, when a moral statement is appealing to the morality of their out-group, MPs should react negatively with an interruption. I thus deduce the following hypotheses:

The Ideology Hypothesis (a): MPs from political parties more on the right of the political spectrum (AfD, CDU/CSU, and FDP) are more likely to interrupt statements containing *Care* and *Fairness* dimensions than statements containing *Loyalty*, *Authority*, and *Sanctity* dimensions.

The Ideology Hypothesis (b): MPs from political parties more on the left of the political spectrum (Grüne, Linke, and SPD) are more likely to interrupt statements containing *Loyalty*, *Authority*, and *Sanctity* dimensions than statements containing *Care* and *Fairness* dimensions.

The Ideology Hypothesis (c): MPs from political parties more on the right of the political spectrum (AfD, CDU/CSU, and FDP) are more likely to affirm statements containing *Loyalty*, *Authority*, and *Sanctity* dimensions than statements containing *Care* and *Fairness* dimensions.

The Ideology Hypothesis (d): MPs from political parties more on the left of the political spectrum (Grüne, Linke, and SPD) are more likely to affirm statements containing *Care* and *Fairness* dimensions than statements containing *Loyalty*, *Authority*, and *Sanctity* dimensions.

4.4 Empirical Analysis

4.4.1 Data

In this study on reactions to moral rhetoric, I analyze extensive data on reactions to 359,350 parliamentary speeches between MPs from the six major political parties (AfD, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Linke, and Grüne) in the German Bundestag between 1949 and 2021. This dataset has been collected by the Open Discourse Project from the plenary session protocols available on the Bundestag's official website (Richter et al., 2023). The 3,204,404 observations in the dataset are at the sentence level of analysis.

4.4.2 The German Bundestag

The German Bundestag offers an advantageous context for studying reactions to moral statements in parliamentary speeches. Its dynamic multi-party system consistently includes over 500 MPs from four to six parties, providing a broad ideological spectrum and periodic shifts in party composition. This variability enhances the robustness of observations by ensuring diverse moral domains are represented and minimizing the influence of long-term dynamics. Additionally, the Bundestag's detailed records, including all type of reactions and their sources, create a rich dataset for analysis, making it an ideal setting for examining morality in parliamentary discourse.

4.4.3 Variables Description

Reactions. The three dependent variables capture inter-party reactions, but also more specifically interruptions, or affirmations of speeches during parliamentary debates. Each variable is coded as a

dummy indicating, respectively, whether the last pronounced statement has been followed by a reaction, an interruption, or an affirmation.

Morality. As main independent variables, I use dummy variables indicating whether the last statement preceding the reaction contains a moral dimension. To quantify morality in political texts, I rely on a translated and validated version of the MFD, derived from the MFT, into German (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2 *Measurement of Morality* for more information). The variable called *Moral Statement* is coded as 1 if the last statement preceding the reaction contains any moral appeal, i.e. any word found in the German version of the MFD, and 0 otherwise. I create five dummy variables called respectively *Care*, *Fairness*, *Loyalty*, *Authority*, and *Sanctity*. Each variable is coded for each statement within parliamentary speeches to indicate the presence or absence of content aligning with the virtuous side of the respective five moral foundations. I introduce two further dummy variables *Virtues* and *Vices* indicating respectively whether a statement contains a virtuous or a vicious dimension.

Party affiliation. To capture the party affiliation of both the reacting MP and the speaking MP, I use dummy variables coded as 1 if the MP belongs to a given party and 0 otherwise. Hence, for each of the six parties under study (AfD, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Linke, and Grüne), I create two dummy variables: one to show if the speaking MP is affiliated with the party, and another to show if the reacting MP is affiliated with it. This results in twelve dummy variables in total. Table 8 offers a comprehensive overview of the representation of each political party in the German Bundestag throughout the terms examined in this study.

Controls. In addition to the primary explanatory variables, the analysis incorporates control variables for the following factors. Whether the speech is given at the beginning or the end of the same legislative term before a new election might influence the recourse of morality by the speaking MPs. Therefore, the variable *Day* controls for the timing of the speech within the legislative period. I also include a dummy that indicates whether the speaker is a woman or not. The recent literature on reactions during parliamentary debates focused so far more extensively on interruptions and more precisely on the gendered aspect of interruption behavior. Findings are contradicting each other. While in the US context, women are more likely being interrupted than men during their parliamentary discourse (Boyd et al., 2024; Miller & Sutherland, 2023), the opposite is observed in Germany. Women receive more positive reactions such as applause and fewer interruptions during their speeches in the German state parliaments than men do (Ash et al., 2023). Even though findings point in two different directions, the gender of the speaker seem to be an important factor influencing interruption

behavior between MPs. Further I include the age of the speaker as a control variable, because young inexperienced MPs are more likely to be interrupted during their parliamentary speeches (see Miller & Sutherland, 2023).

Table 8: Overview of the Political Parties and their presence in the German Bundestag.

Party-Faction (Abreviation)	Full Name (English Translation according to CMP)	Party Family (CMP)	Terms in Parliament (2002-2021)
AfD	Alternative for Germany	Nationalist and radical right	2017-2021
CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union	Christian Democratic	All terms
FDP	Free Democratic Party	Liberal	1949-2013 and 2017-2021
Greens	Alliance'90/Greens	Ecological	1983-2021
Left	LINKE	Socialist or other left	2005-2021
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany	Social Democratic	All terms

4.4.4 Methods

I estimate logistic regression models using the dummy variables attesting for reactions as dependent variables. All models also include electoral term fixed effects. This allows me to account for unobserved term-specific factors and general parliamentary culture. Hence, with these models, I estimate the probability of a reaction, an interruption, or an affirmation happening after a (moral) statement is made during a parliamentary speech during a specific term. I conduct a series of simulations to derive predicted probabilities of a reaction, an interruption, or an affirmation for each interaction effect of interest. While the average-case simulation approach may raise concerns about generalizability, particularly for interaction effects, I adopt the methodological approach advocated by Hanmer and Kalkan (2013). This involves simulations based on observed data scenarios, where variables of interest are manipulated to obtain insights into their effects.

4.5 Results

Table 9 shows the results for the *Reaction Hypothesis* and the *Political Disagreement Hypothesis*. Coefficients for the control variables *Female Speaker* and *Age Speaker* are statistically significant across all models. Overall, statements by women are less likely than those by men to be reacted to by MPs from other political parties. Consistent with previous findings in the German context (Ash et al., 2023), women are less likely than men to be interrupted during their speeches by MPs from other political parties. Regarding positive reactions in an inter-party setting, women are more likely than men to be encouraged during their speeches.

Consolidating previous findings (see Miller & Sutherland, 2023), the older a speaker is the less likely they will be interrupted but the more likely their statements will be reacted to and affirmed by MPs from other political parties. The negative and significant coefficient for the variable *Day* in all

models suggests a lower likelihood of reactions, interruptions, or affirmations at the end of a legislative period compared to the beginning. This may be because parliamentary speeches are broadcast to a public audience, often via journalists and social media (Yildirim et al., 2023). Reacting to a speaker's statement may carry higher social and institutional costs, potentially deterring MPs from engaging in such behaviors closer to re-election, while they may feel freer to react earlier in their term.

4.5.1 The Reaction Hypothesis

Models 1-3 in Table 9 include the main explanatory variable *Moral Statement* with the three dependent variables of interest: *Reaction*, *Interruption*, and *Affirmation*, as well as party dummies (using the CDU/CSU as a baseline), control variables, and all interaction terms between *Moral Statement* and the party dummies. Across all models, the coefficient for *Moral Statement* is not statistically significant, indicating that moral statements are neither more nor less likely to be reacted to, interrupted, or affirmed than non-moral statements.

Figure 18 shows the predicted probability of moral and non-moral statements being reacted to in the form of reactions (a), interruptions (b), and affirmations (c) per speaker's party. Figure 18(a) shows that, overall, moral statements are not more likely to be reacted to than non-moral ones. However, for AfD speakers, there is a statistically significant trend in the opposite direction: other parties are more likely to react to their non-moral statements. This trend holds when breaking down inter-party reactions into interruptions (see Figure 18(b)) and affirmations (see Figure 18(c)), where moral statements are neither more likely to be interrupted nor affirmed than non-moral statements. Notably, for AfD and Linke speakers, the predicted probability of interruptions shows a significant difference, with other parties interrupting their non-moral statements more frequently than their moral statements.

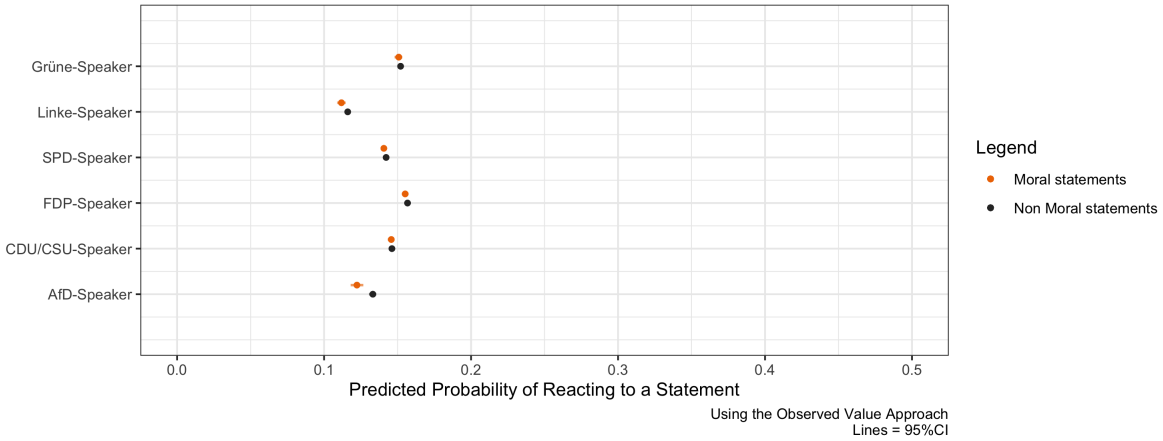
In terms of inter-party reactions, MPs react most frequently to statements from the FDP and Grüne, and least frequently to those from Linke MPs (see Figure 18(a)). However, interruptions occur significantly more often when the AfD is speaking compared to other parties (see Figure 18(b)). Conversely, affirmations are significantly less likely when the AfD speaks, with a predicted probability of zero compared to other parties (see Figure 18(c)). For statements by CDU/CSU MPs, the pattern reverses: MPs from other parties are significantly less likely to interrupt and significantly more likely to affirm statements made by CDU/CSU MPs compared to those from other parties.

Table 9: Logistic Regression showing the results for the *Reaction Hypothesis*.

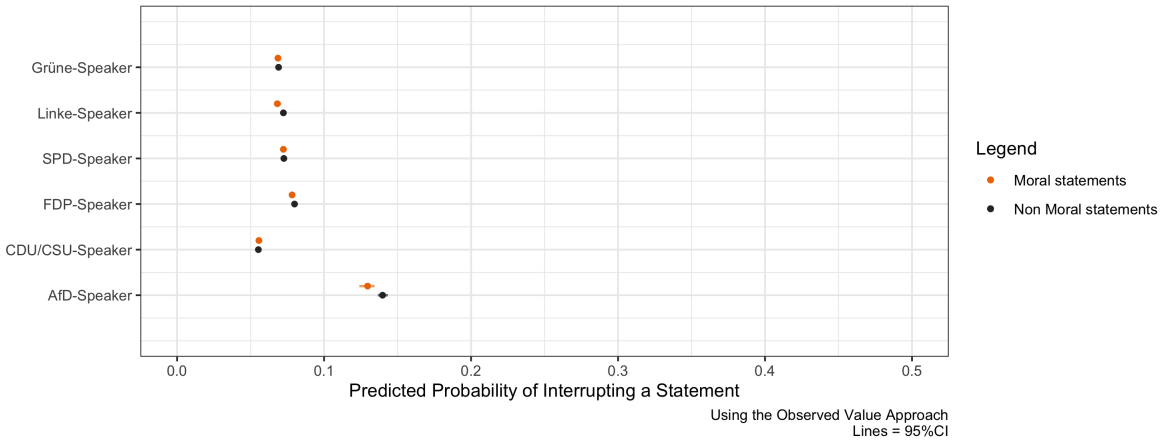
	Dependent variable:				
	Reaction	Interruption	Affirmation	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Moral Statement	−0.004	0.005	−0.014		
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.012)		
Vices Statement				0.056***	
				(0.016)	
Virtues Statement					−0.042***
					(0.013)
AfD Speaker	−0.059***	0.671***	−3.629***	0.657***	−3.643***
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.084)	(0.013)	(0.083)
FDP Speaker	0.161***	0.018***	0.339***	0.015**	0.338***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
SPD Speaker	0.028***	−0.122***	0.250***	−0.123***	0.248***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Linke Speaker	−0.232***	−0.100***	−0.339***	−0.108***	−0.343***
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Grüne Speaker	0.116***	−0.165***	0.449***	−0.167***	0.452***
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
date	−0.045***	−0.012***	−0.081***	−0.012***	−0.080***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Women speaking	−0.058***	−0.098***	0.012**	−0.098***	0.012**
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Speaker Age	0.0005***	−0.004***	0.006***	−0.004***	0.006***
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)
AfD Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.096***	−0.094***	−0.086		
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.191)		
FDP Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.011	−0.028*	0.024		
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.019)		
SPD Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.010	−0.010	−0.005		
	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.016)		
Linke Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.040**	−0.071***	0.009		
	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.028)		
Grüne Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.006	−0.011	0.006		
	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.018)		

AfD Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.099*	
				(0.054)	
FDP Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.048	
				(0.030)	
SPD Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.031	
				(0.025)	
Linke Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.117***	
				(0.043)	
Grüne Speaker x Vices Statement				0.005	
				(0.032)	
AfD Speaker x Virtues Statement					−0.018
					(0.204)
FDP Speaker x Virtues Statement					0.032
					(0.021)
SPD Speaker x Virtues Statement					0.010
					(0.018)
Linke Speaker x Virtues Statement					0.036
					(0.030)
Grüne Speaker x Virtues Statement					−0.014
					(0.020)
Constant	86.496***	21.618***	153.494***	21.680***	153.484***
	(2.970)	(3.823)	(4.434)	(3.823)	(4.434)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404	3,204,404	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−1,274,392.000	−871,982.600	−674,671.300	−871,984.600	−674,658.700
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,548,851.000	1,744,031.000	1,349,409.000	1,744,035.000	1,349,383.000
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

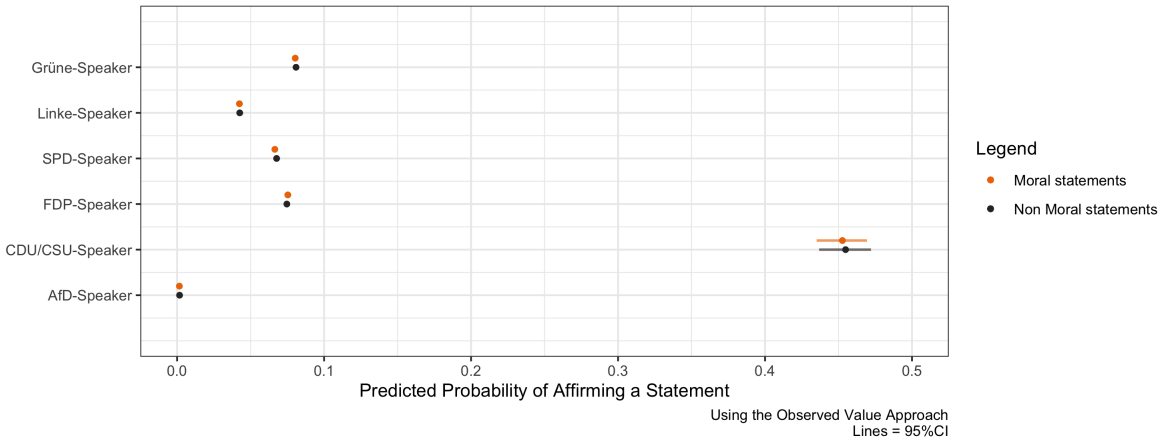
Figure 18: Predicted probability of Moral vs. Non-Moral Statements being reacted to per speaker's party.



(a) Reactions.



(b) Interruptions.



(c) Affirmations.

As a robustness check, and to ensure that these non-results are not driven by additional factors,

I perform a logistic regression for the main model of the *Reaction Hypothesis*, adding a variable that controls for the size of the faction of the speaking MP. The reasoning is that MPs from smaller parties are more likely to face reactions because they have more MPs from other parties in their audience. The results in Table 56 in the Appendix show that the coefficient for the variable *Faction size* is not significant. This indicates that the extent to which a party is represented in parliament does not influence the likelihood of other parties reacting to statements made by its MPs.

To sum up, this trend indicates that, unexpectedly, the likelihood of reacting to a moral statement is not significantly different from the likelihood of reacting to a non-moral statement. In certain cases, the pattern reverses: for instance, MPs are more likely to react to non-moral statements from the AfD than to moral ones. Additionally, MPs frequently interrupt the AfD and never affirm their statements, underscoring the party's outsider status in political disagreement. In contrast, MPs affirm CDU/CSU statements more often than those from other parties, highlighting CDU/CSU's potential as a unifying presence in the German Bundestag.

To further investigate these unexpected findings, I review the content of both moral and non-moral interrupted statements from AfD speakers. Regarding interrupted moral statements, in some cases, the moral content of the message directly conflicts with the values of other political actors (see the first example in Table 10). In other cases, while the moral content aligns with the values of most political parties, interruptions stem from skepticism about the credibility of an AfD MP delivering such a message (see the second example in Table 10). Finally, interruptions may occur when a statement is perceived as defamatory toward an individual, implying accusations of wrongdoing (see the third example in Table 10). Conversely, the analysis of interrupted non-moral statements from AfD MPs reveals that the reasons for interruption are more straightforward and consistent. These interruptions typically occur in response to provocative statements (see the second example in Table 10). While parliamentary discussions aim to foster constructive debate, interruptions arise when statements use language that could deepen divisions, reinforce stereotypes, or associate specific groups with crime or social decline, in order to ensure responsible discourse (see Table 10, the first example drawing a comparison between organized crime and political or social groups, and the third example linking immigrants and criminality).

Table 10: Examples of moral and non-moral statements interrupted during the speech of a MP from the AfD.

Interrupted Moral Statement of the AfD	**Interrupted Non-moral Statement of the AfD**
"Freiheit ist unser erster Grundwert, aber Freiheit braucht auch ein Maß an Sicherheit." translated into "Freedom is our first fundamental value, but freedom also requires a degree of security." (Detlev Spangenberg 03.07.2018)	"Wie die Mafiaclans in Süditalien versuchen sie, Polizei und Justiz zu unterwandern." translated into "Like the mafia clans in southern Italy, they are trying to infiltrate the police and judiciary." (Jürgen Pohl 13.02.2020).
"Unsere Werte müssen geachtet, aber auch gelebt werden: die Achtung der Würde aller Menschen, die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau, Meinungs- und Religionsfreiheit sowie Demokratie und Rechtsstaatlichkeit." translated into: "Our values must be respected, but they must also be lived: respect for the dignity of all people, equal rights for men and women, freedom of opinion and religion, democracy and the rule of law." (Albrecht Glaser 13.12.2019)	"Schon vor der Coronakrise hat die grüne Klimahysterie zu massivem Stellenabbau, Wohlstandsverlust und der Abwanderung von Unternehmen geführt." translated into: "Even before the coronavirus crisis, green climate hysteria had already led to massive job cuts, loss of prosperity, and companies moving away." (Karsten Hilse 05.03.2020)
"Ihre Absicht ist dabei klar: Sie sprechen den Bürgern das eigene Urteilsvermögen ab und diffamieren all jene als Angsthasen oder Panikmacher, die aufgrund persönlicher Erfahrungswerte wissen, dass Sie, Herr Minister, unrecht haben." translated into: "Your intention is clear: you are denying citizens their own judgment and defaming all those as fear-mongers or alarmists who know from personal experience that you, Mr. Minister, are wrong." (Dirk Spaniel 11.09.2020)	"In Baden-Württemberg stellen Zuwanderer 2018 über 30 Prozent der Tatverdächtigen im Bereich der Gewaltkriminalität mit dem Tatmittel Messer." translated into: "In Baden-Württemberg, immigrants accounted for over 30 percent of suspects in violent crime involving knives in 2018." (Dirk Spaniel 11.09.2020)

Interruptions in parliamentary discourse regarding AfD MPs are often driven by a combination of moral and non-moral factors. Both types of statements can provoke strong reactions based on their content, whether moral or non-moral. This may explain why no statistically significant difference is found in the interruption of moral versus non-moral statements from AfD MPs by MPs of other parties. The reasons for interruption seem to be more related to the nature of the statement, whether it is perceived as inflammatory, divisive, or misaligned with the speaker's credibility, rather than the moral versus non-moral distinction itself.

Unlike factual statements, which describe reality, moral statements prescribe how people should behave, reflecting underlying values and beliefs. One might argue that people need to pay more attention to the overall framing or the argumentation of the speaking person to comprehend a moral statement than a factual statement. Quantifying the level of attention by MPs is inherently challenging. However, the timing of a speech within the daily session may serve as an indicator of the conditions for attentiveness. Given the cognitive demands of discussing complex societal, economic, and political issues throughout the day, it is plausible to assume that attentiveness may decline as the day progresses. Unfortunately, Bundestag protocols do not provide the exact time for each speech. To evaluate the plausibility of this alternative explanation, I conducted robustness checks on the three main models used to test the *Reaction Hypothesis* by introducing a new control variable, *Speech Count*. This variable tracks the sequence of speeches based on their ID within a given day, serving as a proxy for the time of the day. A higher *Speech Count* value indicates that the speech was delivered later in the session. Results can be observed in Table 56 in the Appendix. While the magnitude of the effect is relatively small, across all models, the coefficient for *Speech Count* is negative and highly significant. This indicates that the later in the day a speech is given, the less likely it will be reacted to in the form of interruption or affirmation[13].

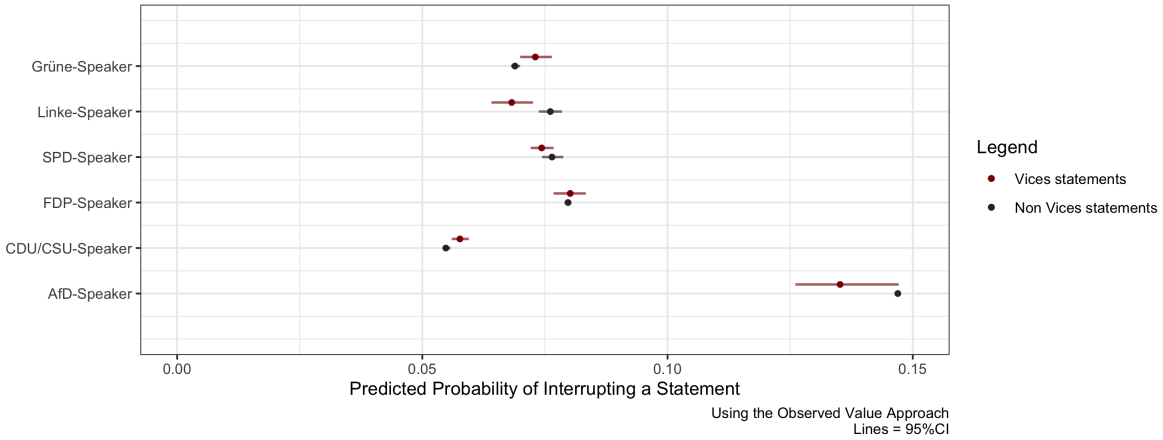
4.5.2 The Political Disagreement Hypothesis

To test the *Political Disagreement Hypothesis*, Model 4 in Table 9 includes as main explanatory variable *Vices Statement* on interruption behavior. The coefficient is statistically significant but in the opposite direction of expectations: moral transgressions are more likely to be interrupted than non-moral ones.

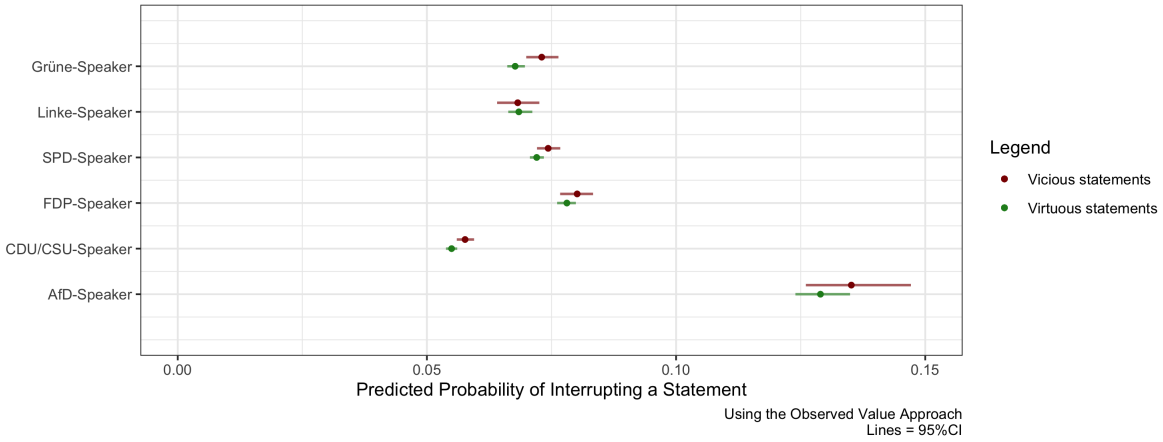
Figure 19 shows the predicted probability of Vices statements being interrupted, comparing them

[13]It is important to acknowledge a key consideration regarding these results. Not all speeches recorded in the German Bundestag protocols are delivered orally during the sessions. The Bundestag permits the submission of written statements, referred to as *"zu Protokoll gegebene Reden"* (statements for the record), which are included in the official records without being spoken in the plenary. This approach helps streamline debates, especially when numerous members wish to contribute on a particular issue. These written statements are integrated into the official protocols alongside the spoken speeches, typically positioned at the end of the relevant debate section where the speech would have been made. As a result, speeches with a higher value for *Speech Count* are more likely to be among those not delivered aloud during the session. Since MPs cannot directly react to speeches that are not spoken, this nuance adds an important layer to interpreting the findings related to the effect of *Speech Count* on reactions like interruptions or affirmations.

Figure 19: Predicted probability of Vices Statements being interrupted per speaker's party.



(a) Vices vs. Non-Vices.



(b) Vices vs. Virtues.

to non-Vices statements (a) and Virtues statements (b) by the speaker's party. In Figure 19(a), only the coefficients for Linke and CDU/CSU speakers are statistically significant. When a Linke MP is speaking, non-Vices statements are more likely to be interrupted by MPs from other parties than Vices statements. For CDU/CSU speakers, the expected effect is observed: their Vices statements are more likely to be interrupted than their non-Vices statements.

When comparing the predicted probability of interruption between Vices and Virtues statements, only one coefficient is statistically significant: for Grüne speakers. When a Grüne MP is speaking, their moral transgression statements are more likely to be interrupted than their moral virtues statements. The graph again highlights the unequal patterns of interruptions across political parties: CDU/CSU speakers are generally less likely to face interruptions during their speeches, whereas AfD speakers experience a higher likelihood of being interrupted compared to MPs from other parties.

To sum up, these trends indicate that, unexpectedly, the overall likelihood of interrupting a moral

transgression is not significantly different from that of interrupting another statement or a moral virtue[14].

4.5.3 The Ideology Hypothesis

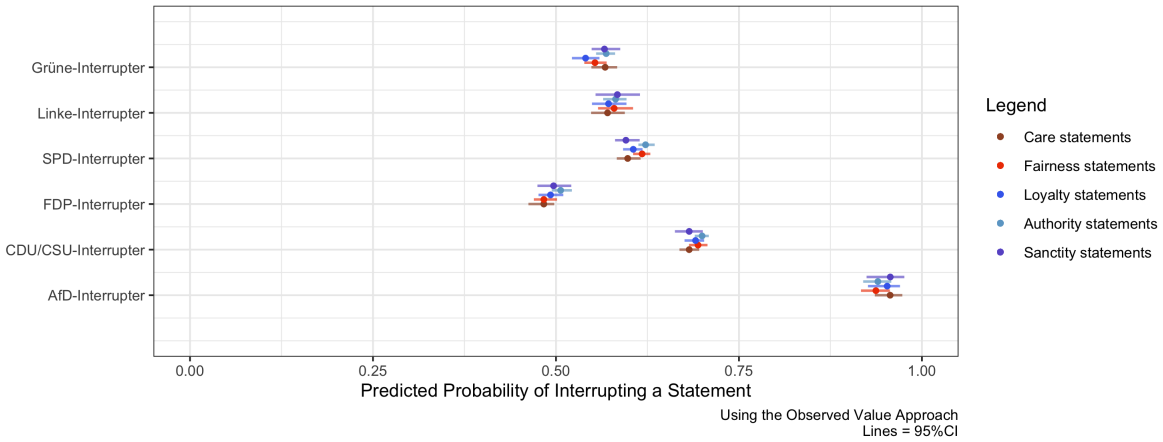
Tables 51-55 in the Appendix present the results of the logistic regressions analyzing the relationship between each moral foundation and the behaviors of interruption and affirmation. The findings reveal that *Care* statements are generally more likely to be both interrupted and affirmed compared to other statements. Similarly, *Fairness* statements are more likely to be interrupted and affirmed than other statements. The trend continues with *Loyalty* statements, which are also more likely to be interrupted and affirmed. In contrast, *Authority* statements are less likely to provoke interruptions and affirmations than non-*Authority* statements. Notably, the coefficients for *Sanctity* statements are non-significant in both the interruption and affirmation contexts, indicating that these statements do not provoke reactions any more or less than other statements.

However, when comparing the predicted probabilities of interruption (a) and affirmation (b) (see Figure 20), no clear pattern emerges regarding ideology-driven reactions to morality. There is no noticeable difference in interruption or affirmation behavior among the political parties across all moral foundations. Political parties do not show a consistent tendency to react more or less, either positively or negatively, to specific moral foundations.

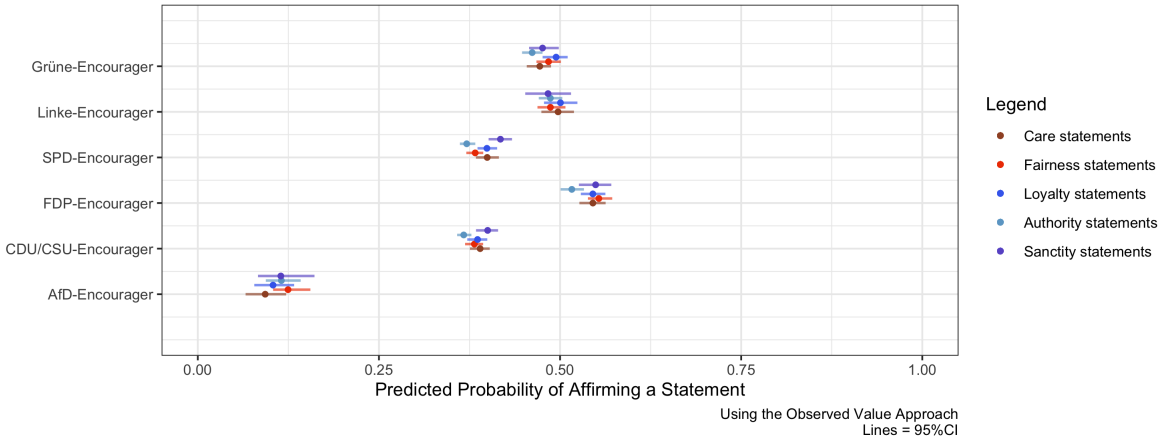
To sum up, there are no ideology-driven patterns in how MPs react to moral rhetoric. They do not react more positively to moral foundation appeals that align with their own moral beliefs, nor do they react more negatively to moral foundations that conflict with their moral domain. However, I demonstrate that certain moral foundations are more likely to activate emotions and, consequently, elicit more reactions overall than others. Specifically, moral rhetoric that appeals to the foundations of *Care*, *Fairness*, and *Loyalty* tends to generate more reactions, both positive affirmations and negative interruptions. In contrast, appeals to *Authority* result in fewer reactions, while *Sanctity* appeals elicit no significant increase or decrease in either type of reaction.

[14]I repeated the analysis, examining whether moral virtues exhibit a distinct pattern of affirmation. Model 5 in Table 9 includes the main explanatory variable *Virtues Statement* on affirmation. Here again, the coefficient is statistically significant, but in the opposite direction of expectations: moral virtues are less likely to be affirmed compared to non-moral virtues. Figure 34 (in the Appendix) shows the predicted probability of Virtues statements being affirmed per speaker's party compared to non-Virtues statements (a) and compared to Vices statements (b). The likelihood of affirming a moral virtue is not significantly different from that of affirming a non-moral virtue or a moral transgression. This suggests that the affirmation of moral virtues does not stand out in comparison to non-moral virtues or moral transgressions.

Figure 20: Predicted probability of Moral Foundations Statements being reacted to per reacting party.



(a) Interruptions.



(b) Affirmations.

4.6 *Ad hoc* analysis.

4.6.1 Identifying Political Disagreement

To further explore political disagreement and determine whether these unexpected patterns are valid or influenced by outliers, I created a heatmap illustrating the predicted probability of interruptions between parties[15] (see Figure 21). This visual representation helps to identify instances of political disagreement more clearly. Figure 21 reveals that the AfD is a notable outlier in interruption behavior within the German Bundestag. AfD speakers are more likely to be interrupted than their counterparts from other political parties. Additionally, AfD MPs disproportionately interrupt the parliamentary speeches of their colleagues compared to MPs from other parties. AfD speakers are most frequently interrupted by members of the Grüne party, while AfD MPs tend to interrupt the majority of speeches made by representatives of the SPD, Grüne, and CDU/CSU.

4.6.2 Analysis Replication Excluding the Outlier

Building on this identification, I repeat the main analysis while excluding the only legislative term in which the AfD was represented (2017-2021) to examine whether the expected relationship between morality and political disagreement was evident in the inter-party discourse dynamics of the German Bundestag prior to the AfD's entry into parliament. The results, presented in Table 57 in the Appendix, are consistent with previous findings. The coefficients for *Moral Statement* in models 1-3 are not statistically significant, indicating that moral rhetoric is neither more nor less likely to be reacted to, interrupted, or affirmed than non-moral rhetoric. Moreover, consolidating the previous findings and contradicting my expectation, vices statements are more likely to be interrupted than non-vices statements (see model 4), and virtues statements are less likely to be affirmed than non-virtues statements (see model 5).

[15] Given the focus of my study, the heatmap displays only inter-party interruptions. Including intra-party interactions yields similar results, as interruptions within the same party show very low predicted probabilities. This is consistent with expectations, as MPs from the same party rarely interrupt each other.

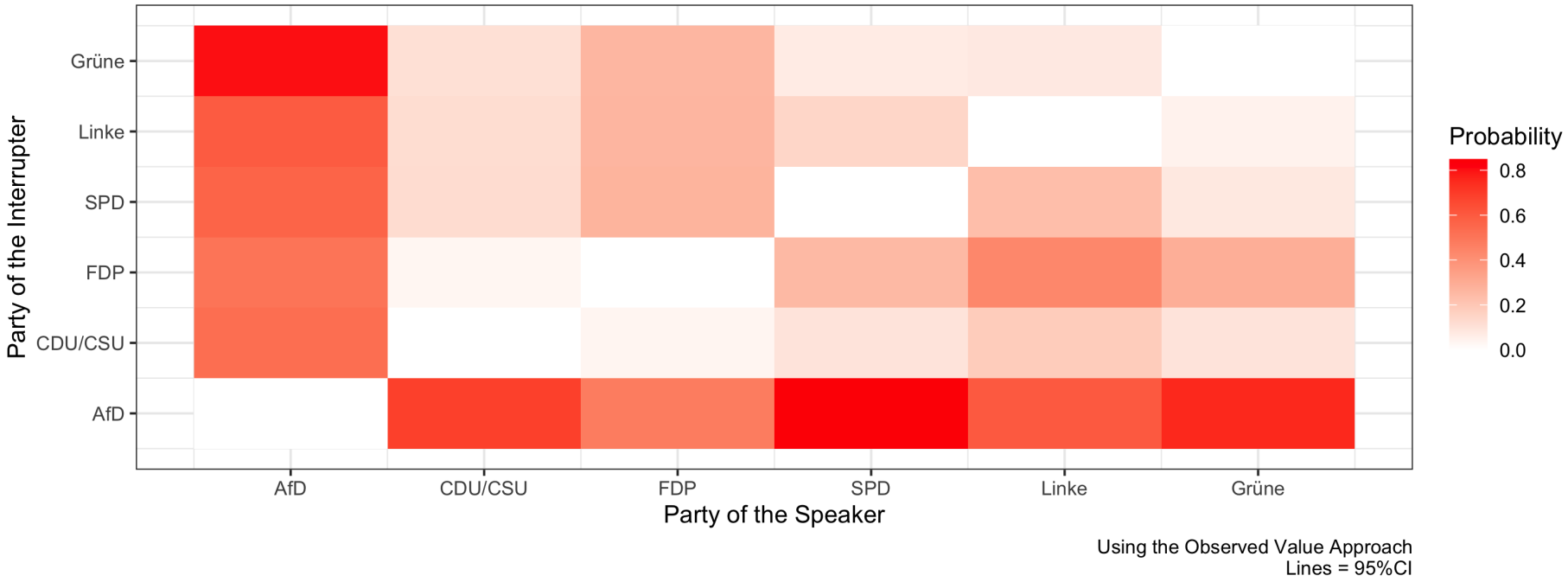


Figure 21: Heatmap showing the predicted probability of interruption between the six political parties under study.

4.6.3 Outlier Analysis: Examining the Case of the AfD

I conduct an outlier analysis specifically focusing on the AfD by distinguishing between (i) AfD interrupters and non-AfD interrupters, and (ii) AfD speakers and non-AfD speakers. I focus exclusively on the 2017-2021 legislative term, the only term in which the AfD is represented (see Table 8), and thus the only period in which AfD members can act as speakers or interrupters.

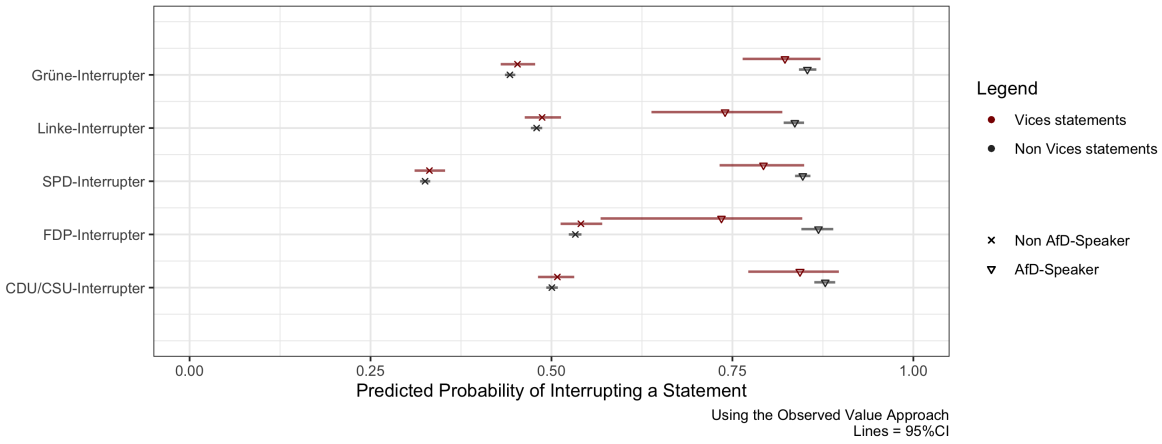


Figure 22: Predicted probability of a Vices Statement vs. non-Vices Statement being interrupted when a MP from the AfD is speaking and when a MP from any other party is speaking per interrupter's party between 2017 and 2021.

Figure 22 shows the predicted probability of interrupting Vices Statements versus non-Vices Statements for AfD speakers versus non-AfD speakers. AfD speakers have a significantly higher predicted probability of being interrupted on the parliamentary floor compared to MPs from other parties. This effect is statistically significant when the interrupter is from the Grüne, Linke, SPD, or CDU/CSU, who interrupt AfD speakers more frequently than speakers from other parties. A similar pattern is observed for interrupters from the FDP, although the results are not statistically significant. No clear pattern regarding political disagreement emerges: AfD speakers are not interrupted more or less when mentioning moral transgressions compared to other types of statements.

Figure 23 shows the predicted probability of interrupting Vices Statements versus non-Vices Statements for AfD interrupters versus non-AfD interrupters. AfD interrupters have a significantly higher predicted probability of interrupting parliamentary speeches compared to MPs from other parties. The difference in predicted probabilities between AfD interrupters and interrupters from other parties is substantial and highly statistically significant. While the predicted probability of interruption ranges between 0.3 and 0.9 when the interrupter is from the AfD, it drops to between 0 and 0.1 when any other party is interrupting. However, no clear pattern regarding political disagreement emerges: AfD interrupters do not interrupt moral transgressions more or less than other types of statements.

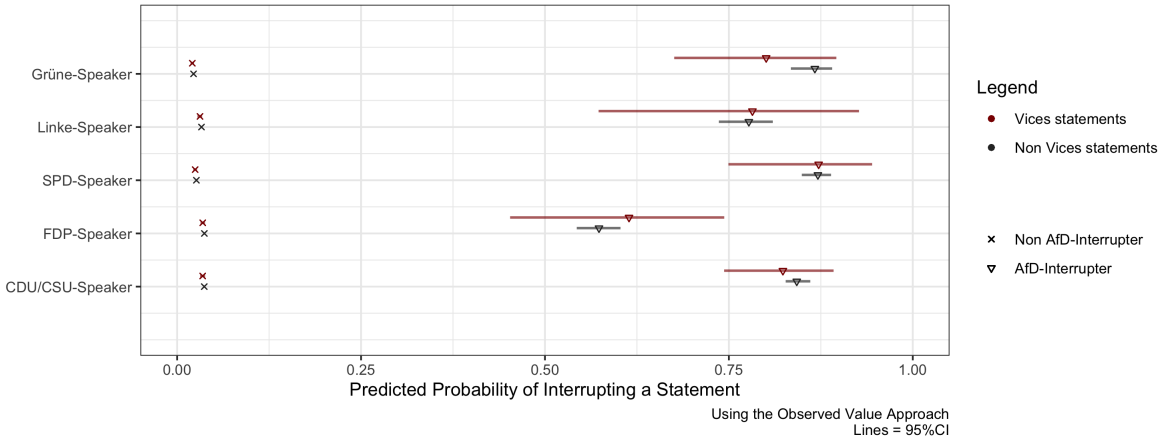


Figure 23: Predicted probability of a Vices Statement vs. non-Vices Statement being interrupted by an AFD interrupter and non-AFD interrupter per speaker's party between 2017 and 2021.

To sum up, this *ad hoc* analysis suggests that the non-results of the main analysis are not driven by a strong outlier. Morality does not affect the spontaneous reaction behaviors of MPs during parliamentary debates.

4.6.4 Alternative Explanation: Newcomer Status

The *ad hoc* analysis focusing on the AfD also highlights the disproportionate interruption behavior of AfD MPs and raises the question of whether this behavior is specific to the AfD or if a part of this phenomenon is attributable to their newcomer status. I consider an outsider or newcomer to be a political party who never appeared as a potential political representative before (Barr, 2009). Whilst research on political competition shows that outsider political actors tend to strategically emphasise certain policy issues to secure electoral consensus, exploiting the low emphasis placed by mainstream parties on these policy domains (see Hobolt & De Vries, 2015), I investigate whether they might strategically differ in their inter-party interactions with other parties. Therefore, I replicate the analysis for two other parties that entered parliament after 1949, namely Grüne that entered for the 10th legislative term in 1983 and Linke that entered for the 16th legislative term in 2005 (see table 8)[16].

I expect MPs from newcomer parties to have a greater incentive to interrupt the speeches of other political parties than their more experienced counterparts, particularly regarding moral statements. During their first mandate, lacking the advantage of a long-standing reputation compared to well-known MPs, they may focus on making an impression and openly signaling their disagreement with

[16]Note that the political party Linke entered the German parliament in 2005, officially. However, its ideological roots trace back to the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), which entered the Bundestag in 1990 during the 12th term. The PDS failed to secure representation in subsequent terms (13th, 14th, and 15th). Thus, while the Linke emerged as a newcomer in 2005, its ideology was not new but evolved from the PDS tradition.

certain ideological positions. MPs from newcomer parties might also be more likely to face interruptions, especially when using moral rhetoric, as their previously unrepresented ideology could provoke stronger reactions from the audience. MPs from other parties are exposed to a new moral framework unfamiliar to them, potentially amplifying emotional reactions and contributing to a higher overall interruption rate.

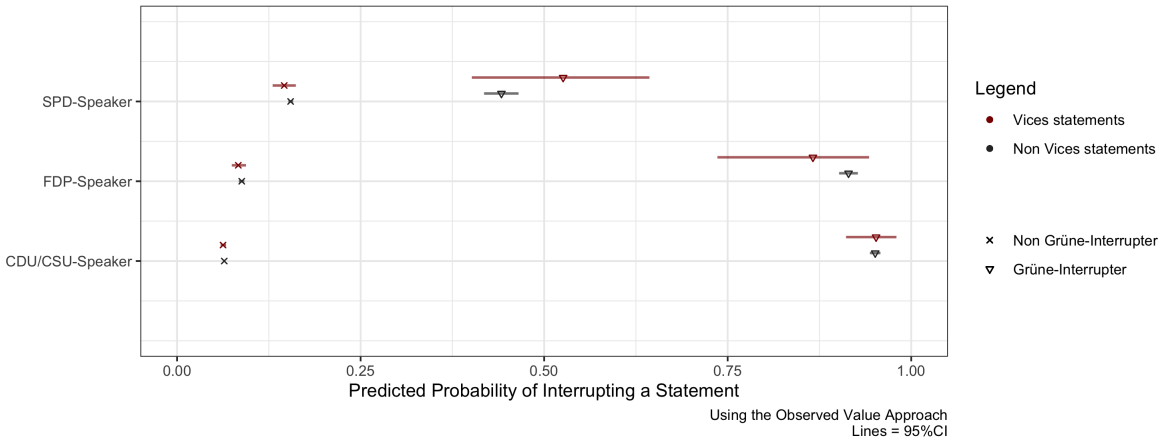


Figure 24: Predicted probability of Vices Statement vs. non-Vices Statement being interrupted by a Grüne interrupter and non-Grüne interrupter per speaker's party between 1983 and 1987.

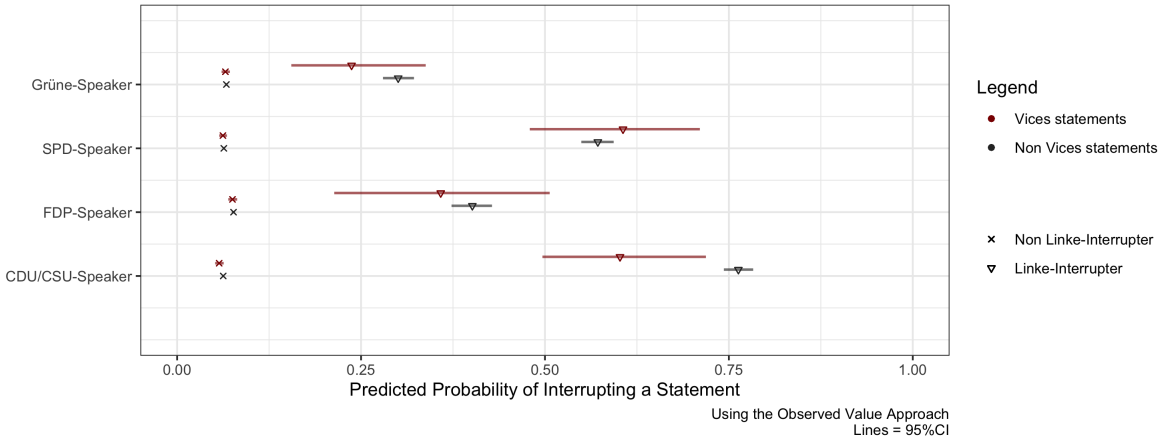


Figure 25: Predicted probability of Vices Statement vs. non-Vices Statement being interrupted by a Linke interrupter and non-Linke interrupter per speaker's party between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 24 shows the predicted probability of Vices statements versus non-Vices statements being interrupted by Grüne interrupters (1) or interrupters from other parties (2) per speaker's party during the first legislative term in which Grüne was represented, between 1983 and 1987. During this period, interruptions by MPs from other parties have a predicted probability between 0.1 and 0.2, whereas interruptions by Grüne MPs range from 0.4 to 0.95. Similarly, Figure 25 shows the predicted

probability of Vices statements versus non-Vices statements being interrupted by Linke interrupters (1) or interrupters from other parties (2) per speaker's party during the first legislative term in which Linke was represented, between 2005 and 2009. During the first legislative term of the Linke party, interruptions by MPs from other parties range between 0.05 and 0.1, while interruptions by Linke MPs are between 0.2 and 0.8. These findings indicate a *Newcomer effect*, where MPs from newcomer parties exhibit disproportionately high interruption behavior compared to established parties.

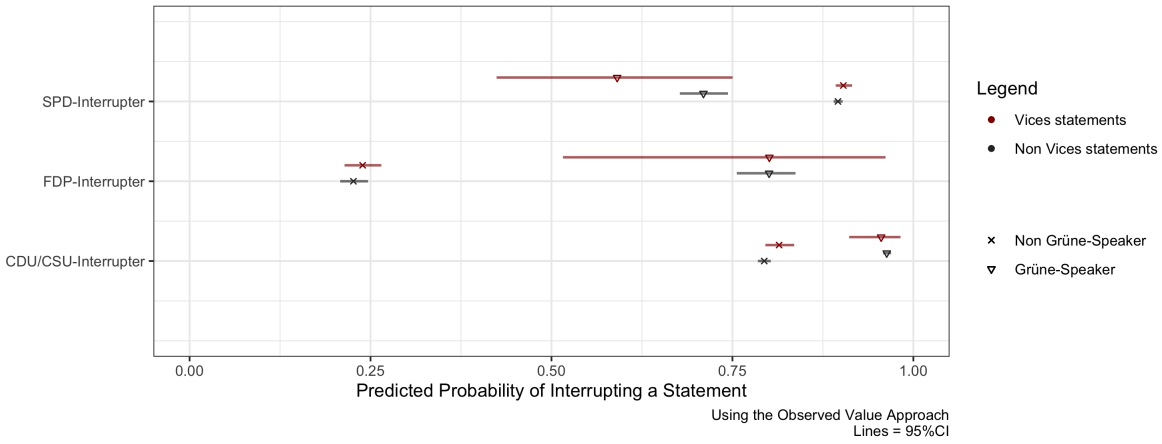


Figure 26: Predicted probability of Vices Statement vs. non-Vices Statement being interrupted when a MP from the Grüne is speaking and when a MP from any other party is speaking per interrupter's party between 1983 and 1987.

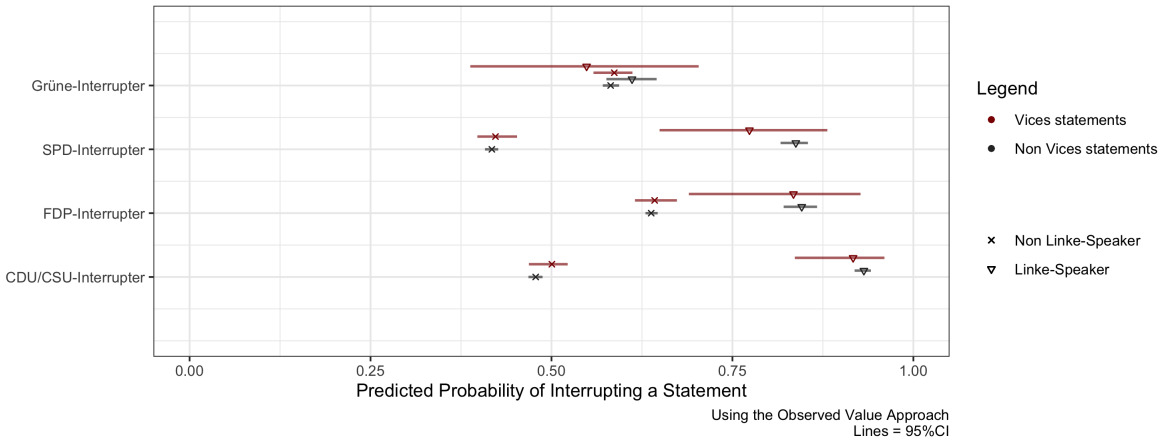


Figure 27: Predicted probability of Vices Statement vs. non-Vices Statement being interrupted when a MP from the Linke is speaking and when a MP from any other party is speaking per interrupter's party between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 26 shows the predicted probability of Vices statements versus non-Vices statements being interrupted for Grüne speakers (1) or speakers from other parties (2) per interrupter's party during the first legislative term in which Grüne was represented, between 1983 and 1987. The results reveal

no consistent pattern in interruptions toward Grüne versus other speakers: MPs from CDU/CSU and FDP interrupt Grüne MPs significantly more, while SPD MPs interrupt them significantly less. Similarly, Figure 27 shows the predicted probability of Vices statements versus non-Vices statements being interrupted for Linke speakers (1) or speakers from other parties (2) per interrupter's party during the first legislative term in which Linke was represented, between 2005 and 2009. During this period, Linke speakers are interrupted significantly more than speakers from other parties by SPD, FDP, and CDU/CSU MPs, and not significantly more or less than speakers from other parties by Grüne MPs. These trends of interruptions toward Grüne or Linke speakers during their first appearance in parliament seem to be more driven by political ideology rather than newcomer versus established party status.

To sum up, these findings show that there is a strong *Newcomer effect* regarding the interruption behavior perpetrated by MPs from this newcomer party toward MPs from other parties. MPs from newcomer parties interrupt disproportionately more MPs from already established parties. AfD speakers are interrupted significantly more than speakers from other parties (see Figure 22), but this finding might not be generalizable to further newcomer parties. Considering Grüne and Linke speakers, interruptions seem primarily influenced by ideological differences rather than their status as newcomers. Finally, the moral dimension of a statement does not significantly influence its likelihood of being interrupted and therefore does not explain patterns of political disagreement.

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

In democratic societies, morality shapes how policymakers and citizens view political issues, often sparking disagreements that can either fuel productive debate or, if left unresolved, lead to political deadlock. This study is, to my knowledge, the first to explore the influence of morality on political disagreement in the political communication between politicians. I argue that the use of moral statements will be more likely to induce a reaction in the target audience than non-moral statements due to the emotional activation associated with moral rhetoric. This article extends the study of moral rhetoric beyond its emotional activation power, exploring its influence on behavior. By examining spontaneous inter-party reactions to moral rhetoric in a parliamentary setting, I investigate whether shared moral reactions to wrongdoing have the potential to bridge ideological divides.

Results of the *Reaction Hypothesis* reveal, unexpectedly, that reactions to moral statements are no more likely than reactions to non-moral ones. In some instances, this pattern is reversed: for example, MPs are more inclined to react to the AfD's non-moral statements than to their moral ones. As an alternative explanation, interruptions of AfD MPs in parliamentary discourse seem to be driven by both moral and non-moral factors, with reactions primarily influenced by the content's perceived

divisiveness or the speaker's credibility rather than a strict moral versus non-moral distinction.

Testing the *Political Disagreement Hypothesis*, the results present some surprising insights. Moral transgressions tend not to elicit stronger negative reactions compared to other types of statements. In *ad hoc* analyses, I further investigate patterns of political disagreement in the German Bundestag. The AfD is a significant outlier, both in being interrupted and interrupting others. AfD MPs are most frequently interrupted by members of the Grüne party and, in turn, interrupt MPs from SPD, Grüne, and CDU/CSU at disproportionately high rates. However, excluding the AfD from the analysis confirms that moral rhetoric is not statistically significant in predicting interruptions or affirmations, consolidating the main finding that morality does not drive spontaneous reactions in debates. An outlier analysis further emphasizes the unique behavior of AfD MPs, revealing significantly higher interruption rates when they act as either speakers or interrupters. These behaviors, however, show no clear association with moral transgressions, indicating that the AfD's interruption patterns are driven by factors unrelated to moral rhetoric. As a side finding, a broader comparison with other newcomer parties, including Grüne (1983) and Linke (2005), reveals a *Newcomer effect*. MPs from newcomer parties consistently interrupt established parties at disproportionately high rates during their first legislative term.

Results of the *Ideology Hypothesis* show that the reactions of MPs to moral rhetoric do not follow a pattern driven by ideology. They do not show a stronger positive reaction to moral appeals that resonate with their ideological beliefs, nor do they react more negatively to appeals that challenge their moral framework. However, the study reveals that certain moral foundations have a heightened ability to create emotional responses and, as a result, generate more significant reactions overall. Specifically, moral rhetoric that invokes the foundations of *Care*, *Fairness*, and *Loyalty* tends to elicit a broader range of reactions, including both positive affirmations and negative interruptions. In contrast, appeals based on *Authority* tend to produce fewer audience reactions, while those centered on *Sanctity* do not significantly increase or decrease reactions in either direction. This indicates that the effectiveness of moral rhetoric relies more on the emotional impact of specific moral foundations than on whether it aligns with ideological beliefs, ultimately influencing audience behavior.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that neither morality nor a single-party outlier, such as the AfD, explains political disagreement dynamics in the German Bundestag. Instead, the heightened interruption behavior appears to align with the broader trend of newcomer parties using interruptions as a strategic tool, reflecting their outsider status and the challenges they face in establishing political presence.

This study applies a theoretical mechanism linking morality, emotions, and behavioral responses. While Jung (2020) highlights a connection between these concepts in the context of voting, my study

does not find a similar effect in inter-party reactions within parliament. This difference could stem from the nature of the behaviors being studied: voting, a deliberate and delayed action, versus spontaneous and observable reactions, which are more immediate. If the mechanism fails to apply in a more likely scenario (spontaneous reactions) compared to a less likely one (voting), it raises doubts about its general applicability in linking morality, emotions, and behavior. Future research should aim to replicate studies involving this mechanism. Additionally, the audience differs: Jung focuses on political communication aimed at citizens, while my study examines interactions among politicians. Context may also play a role, as the German parliamentary setting appears unique in terms of interruption behaviors (see Ash et al., 2024 versus Miller & Sutherland, 2023). Future studies should extend this analysis to other legislative contexts to test its broader validity.

While previous studies in the field of moral psychology have attested that morality serves as an explanatory factor of political disagreement among citizens, my study shows that it has less impact at higher levels of politics. MPs' political communication in a legislative context is not driven by their own morality or gut feelings but rather by political strategy, revealing a gap between personal moral values and the strategic thinking required in political decisions. An important implication of my study for the moral psychology literature on political disagreement is the critical role of the audience in political communication. Drawing on the dual system theory of human thought (Kahneman, 2011), citizens, as a non-professional audience, tend to react to political disagreement with System 1 thinking, driven by emotions and intuition. In contrast, MPs, as a professional audience, rely more on System 2 thinking, characterized by rationality and logic.

Finally, this study adds to the understanding of political communication in legislative contexts by revealing a *Newcomer Effect*, where emerging political parties adopt interruption behavior as a deliberate strategy to highlight their outsider status and solidify their position in the political arena. This effect likely stems from strategic efforts to signal ideological disagreement and gain visibility. Furthermore, the disproportionate interruptions faced by MPs from newcomer parties, particularly in the case of the AfD, emphasize the confrontation that arises when new ideologies and moral frameworks challenge established political norms. Future research should delve deeper into the *Newcomer Effect*, examining, for instance, the content of interrupted statements to uncover the underlying mechanisms behind it.

CHAPTER 5

Morality and Political Strategy

5 MORALITY AND POLITICAL STRATEGY

While existing research suggests that morality in politics is ideology-driven, this study investigates whether political actors also adjust their moral appeals strategically in response to electoral conditions. Depending on their ideological positioning, actors may be more or less receptive to specific moral appeals. Based on the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), in European multi-party systems, the more a party is located on the left side of the ideological continuum, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*. Conversely, the more right-wing a party is on the left-right scale, the more likely it is to emphasize the moral domains of *Authority-Subversion* and *Loyalty-Betrayal* (see the findings of Chapter 3). This chapter explores how political parties modify their use of moral rhetoric in their discourse during election campaigns based on fluctuations in their popularity, the timing of the campaign, and the region in which a speech is delivered.

I argue that political actors strategically deviate from their ideological use of morality when they aim to mobilize voters. The recourse to moral appeals in parties' discourse produces emotions in the target audience, which, in turn, result in a behavioral response (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2 *Theoretical Mechanism*). Political actors adapt the type of moral appeal they make according to the type of mobilization they seek at the time of the speech. Specifically, I argue that when political parties want to mobilize their own voters, they will emphasize the moral dimensions to which their partisans are most receptive, while when they pursue a logic of mass mobilization, they will broaden their moral domain to make their discourse receptive to a larger share of the constituency.

To test this argument, I analyze campaign speeches from the 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022 French presidential elections. Using a novel dataset of 422 speeches, I measure the moral content of parties' rhetoric through a validated French version of the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD). I argue that parties broaden their moral domain when aiming for mass mobilization and that they employ a more partisan moral domain when targeting their core electorate. Three key conditions, (i) the popularity of the party's candidate at the time of the speech, (ii) the timing of the speech, and (iii) the region in which the speech takes place, serve as the basis for evaluating shifts in moral rhetoric.

The findings suggest that while ideological patterns persist, strategic considerations also influence parties' use of moral rhetoric. First, when the popularity of a party's candidate rises, political parties' rhetoric becomes more balanced to appeal to a broader audience. When their popularity declines, they adopt a more partisan stance to consolidate their base. This pattern aligns with strategic campaigning behavior. A robustness check using an alternative popularity measure confirms the findings. Candidates adjust their rhetoric with some delay, reinforcing the idea that campaign strategies react to broader polling trends rather than immediate shifts. Second, regarding the timing of the campaign,

I find evidence that early on, the moral rhetoric of certain political parties focuses on partisan mobilization to secure their own base, then transitions to a more balanced approach for mass mobilization toward the end. This strategy aims to first strengthen core support before appealing to undecided voters. Third, I find no significant difference in moral rhetoric when speeches are delivered in a home region versus elsewhere. Political parties consistently maintain a partisan moral domain, regardless of location. A robustness check using an alternative regional classification confirms this non-finding, reinforcing that campaign rhetoric is not region-specific.

My work introduces the distinction between ideology-inherent and strategic, context-dependent uses of moral rhetoric. In doing so, this study makes several contributions to political science. First, the findings reveal how moral appeals are adapted across time, popularity conditions, and audience targeting, highlighting the strategic modulation of rhetoric throughout electoral campaigns. It demonstrates that moral rhetoric in political campaigns is not merely a reflection of ideological positioning but also a strategic tool for voter mobilization. This contributes to a broader understanding of political communication by showing that candidates actively modify their discourse to maximize electoral gains. Second, it contributes to the moral psychology literature, particularly applications of MFT, by consolidating my findings in Chapter 3 on the ideology-driven use of morality in multi-party systems on a different political communication output, namely campaign speeches. On the methodological side, the introduction of a novel dataset of 422 campaign speeches from four presidential elections in France provides an original empirical foundation for the study of rhetoric overall in a comparative context. Hence, the findings contribute to debates in party politics and ideology by showing that while moral rhetoric reflects ideological leanings, it is also contingent on strategic calculations that vary over the course of the campaign.

5.1 Moral Rhetoric as a Strategy-Driven Tool in Election Campaigns

The existing scholarly contributions in political psychology highlight, on the one hand, the mobilizing effect of emotions on voting behavior and, therefore, politicians' attempts to strategically trigger voters' emotional responses (Brader, 2005; Marcus et al., 2000; Valentino et al., 2011), and, on the other hand, the effect of moral rhetoric on the electorate's preferences and voting choices (Jung, 2020; Ryan, 2014; 2017). Hence, morality triggers a reaction in the target audience, and when political actors leverage moral rhetoric in their public discourse, individuals experience unconscious approval or disapproval, which, in turn, is reflected in a behavioral response (for a detailed explanation of the general rationale behind the recourse to morality, see Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2 *Theoretical Mechanism*).

Morality is ideology-driven. An ideological use of morality occurs when political actors use moral appeals in their rhetoric that align with their own beliefs and ideology. The MFT suggests that

human morality is shaped by five core psychological foundations (*Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*), which evolved to support social cooperation and differ across individuals and cultures (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Liberal or more left-leaning actors, however, rely on different foundations of morality than their conservative or more right-leaning counterparts (see findings in Chapter 3, as well as Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2012; Kivikangas et al., 2021). Left-wing individuals are more receptive to the moral foundations of *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*, while their right-wing counterparts are more responsive to *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*. I challenge the idea of an exclusively ideology-driven use of morality by arguing that political strategy also drives the recourse to moral rhetoric.

Political actors have practical reasons to use moral rhetoric strategically as part of their communication. Morality triggers instant intuitions, influencing behavior without rational thought (Haidt, 2001). People often feel a sense of approval or disapproval without knowing why (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). This effect means that when politicians use moral language, voters quickly make value-based judgments. Since candidates and parties aim to appeal to the median voter (Downs, 1957), moral rhetoric can be a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. The use of morality is a communication strategy that can bring rewards, instantaneous approval, but also involves risks, instantaneous disapproval.

Existing scholarly contributions already suggest that the resort to moral appeals is affected by additional factors not directly attributable to a political party's ideology. Variations in the type of moral endorsement (virtues vs. vices) being adopted (Kraft, 2018), as well as the type of issue being addressed (see results in Chapter 3), might both trigger a non-ideological use of morality. I investigate to what extent further determinants lead political actors to strategically adjust their recourse to moral rhetoric. I define a strategy-driven use of morality as occurring when a political actor adapts their moral rhetoric to support a broader political strategy.

I argue that political actors deviate from their ideological use of moral appeals when they need it most. In times of ordinary politics, they have little incentive to strategically calibrate the moral content of their discourse. When acting in a vote-seeking logic, however, they have strong incentives to choose the most effective mobilization strategy to achieve their main objective: gathering votes. I argue that adjusting the type of moral rhetoric they use in their discourse is part of a broader mobilization strategy. Hence, an election campaign, due to the inherent vote-seeking context it entails, seems to be a favorable setting for triggering a modification of political actors' (usually ideology-driven) recourse to morality.

Scholars agree that discourse is a useful tool for political actors to strategically persuade and mobilize voters (Dickson & Scheve, 2006; Druckman et al., 2009; Riker, 1986). While the extent to which campaigns effectively change voters' minds remains contested (Campbell, 2008; Finkel, 1993;

Wlezien & Erikson, 2001), party competition often reflects an ideological tension between voters and political parties (see *inter alia* Adams, 2012; Hinich & Munger, 1992). Voters tend to elect political actors who minimize the distance between their individual preferences and a party's ideological ideal points. Political parties tend to strategically emphasize specific issues or update their policy positions in order to perform successfully during elections (Belanger & Meguid, 2008; Budge, 1982). Frames are crucial during an election campaign, as they help voters interpret the policy positions of different political actors (Busby et al., 2019; Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Features of parties' rhetorical tactics, such as their valence, emotional load, or populist nature, have been shown to be important components of their electoral strategy (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Dai & Kustov, 2022; Jerit, 2004). Negatively framed arguments have greater persuasive power than positive ones (Cobb & Kuklinski, 1997; Riker & Mueller, 1996). Hence, the valence of a political message might have a stronger impact on the audience than its source or actual content (Jerit, 2004). Furthermore, political elites who speak the language of emotion have a better chance of connecting with their audience (Jerit, 2004). In the populist literature, scholarly contributions show that rhetorical adjustments are often an important part of political parties' broader vote-seeking strategies. On the one hand, political parties modify their rhetoric based on their status in a given election. Bonikowski and Gidron (2016) show that, in the US, outsider candidates are more likely to resort to populist rhetoric than insider candidates. On the other hand, rhetoric also varies based on context-dependent characteristics. Dai and Kustov (2022) show that candidates use more populist rhetoric when experiencing lower polling numbers.

Moral rhetoric plays a crucial role in electoral competition by shaping voter engagement and strategic communication. Jung (2020) shows that morality mobilizes co-partisan voters through the activation of positive emotions, reinforcing their political identity and increasing their likelihood of participation. I argue that, due to its mobilization potential, moral rhetoric serves as an additional strategic rhetorical tactic that political actors employ as a payoff strategy. When competing in an election, candidates and parties strategically adjust their discourse to emphasize moral appeals, aiming to strengthen voter commitment and maximize electoral gains.

Political actors can shape and reshape their communication style more easily than their party ideology. By adjusting their moral rhetoric, they strategically emphasize specific moral foundations to target particular groups within their audience. During an election campaign, political parties might aim for different forms of mobilization. Sometimes, they need to mobilize their partisan voters and therefore adopt a strategy targeting their in-group, whereas at other times, they aim to mobilize as many voters as possible and therefore employ a mass mobilization strategy. Thus, I assume that political actors adjust their moral rhetoric and either construct a more partisan-oriented moral domain,

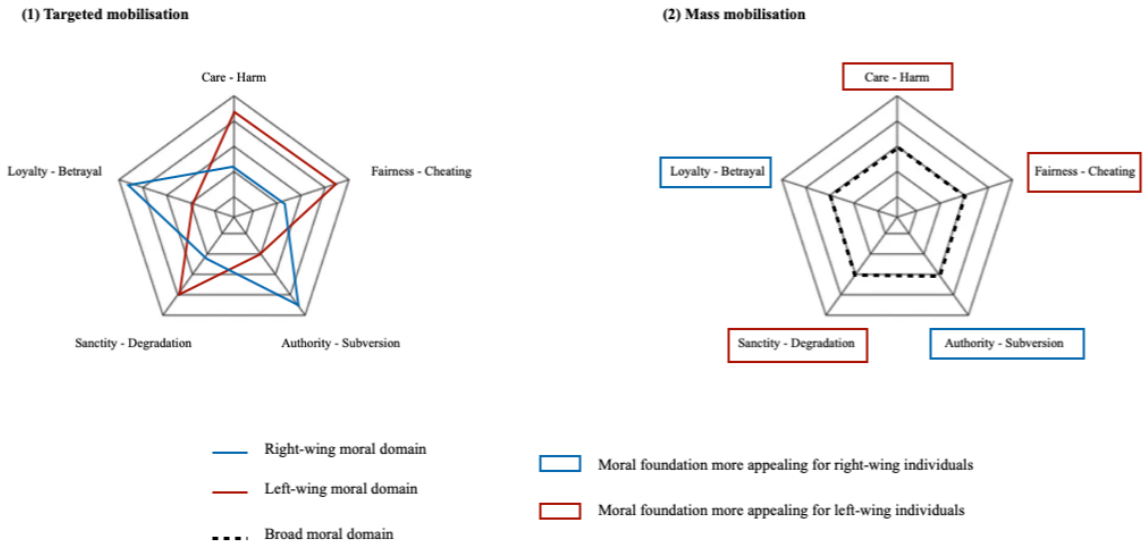


Figure 28: Visualisation of potential moral domains in the context of (1) targeted mobilzation, and (2) mass mobilzation.

in a logic of in-group targeted mobilization, or use a more balanced moral domain, in a logic of mass mobilization.

Figure 28 shows different moral domains. On the left side of the graph, typical right- and left-wing moral domains are represented. When political actors need to mobilize their own voters, they will adapt their recourse to morality accordingly and opt for an ideological use of morality. More right-wing actors will narrow their moral domain around the foundations of *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*, while more left-wing actors will place greater emphasis on the foundations of *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Sanctity-Degradation* (see findings in Chapter 3).

Political actors will strategically weigh the costs and benefits of using ideology-driven moral rhetoric. The benefit is that it generates instant approval from partisan voters who share their moral views. However, the cost is the potential disapproval from non-partisan voters with different beliefs. Since their broader strategy focuses on the targeted mobilization of their own voters, the benefits of using ideology-driven moral rhetoric outweigh the costs.

Hypothesis (targeted-mobilization): Political actors use a partisan-oriented moral domain, when they seek targeted mobilization of their in-group.

When political actors need to mobilize a broader portion of the population in a logic of mass mobilization, the costs of using ideology-driven moral rhetoric are too high, as it excludes a large part of the population. Therefore, political actors will adapt their recourse to morality accordingly and opt

for a more balanced use of morality. This is observable on the right side of figure 28. This balanced moral domain is equally appealing to both left-wing and right-wing individuals in the audience.

Hypothesis (mass-mobilization): Political actors broaden their moral domain, when they seek mass-mobilization.

5.2 Conditions selection

By focusing on (i) the popularity of the party's candidate at the time of the speech, (ii) the timing of the speech, and (iii) the region in which the speech takes place, I establish conditions under which political actors might be more prone to adapt their rhetoric according to the broader mobilization strategy they adopt. While I argue that political actors broaden their moral domain when they seek mass mobilization (*Hypothesis (mass-mobilization)*), I expect them to use a partisan-oriented moral domain when they seek the targeted mobilization of their in-group (*Hypothesis (targeted-mobilization)*).

5.2.1 Popularity

Political parties are strategic actors who, in times of elections, react to fluctuating features of the political environment (Jerit, 2004). The literature on campaigning strategies shows that candidates experiencing low numbers in election polls, on the one hand, change their campaigning appeals more frequently than their political opponents (Geer, 1998), and on the other hand, tend to use a more populist rhetorical strategy (Dai & Kustov, 2022).

Considering the popularity of a party's candidate at the time of a speech, shifts in public support can influence their rhetorical strategies during an electoral campaign. When a party experiences a decline in popularity, they face a stronger incentive to secure their existing voter base. In this scenario, they rely more on partisan-oriented moral rhetoric, reinforcing ideological alignment rather than broadening their appeal. Conversely, when a party's candidate's popularity is rising, their focus shifts toward a mass-mobilization logic in order to expand their electorate, strategically incorporating a more balanced moral domain in their campaign speeches to appeal to a broader audience and stay ahead of competing parties.

5.2.2 Timing

The timing of election campaigns plays a significant role in voter mobilization, with both early and late efforts offering potential benefits. For example, Baumann et al. (2021) suggest that political parties should increase the salience attributed to certain issues towards the end of their electoral campaign. Recent findings show that American political parties calibrate their use of moral rhetoric differently,

depending on whether they participate in primary or general elections, in a way that recalls how they emphasize or de-emphasize certain political issues to match voters' preferences (Lipsitz, 2018). A field experiment found that early nonpartisan phone calls during a campaign cycle were effective in mobilizing voters (Panagopoulos, 2011). Hence, while some studies suggest that messages delivered closer to election day are more effective in mobilizing voters, others show that early campaign efforts can also be impactful.

Different political actors may adopt varying mobilization strategies depending on the timing of the election. One perspective argues that early in the campaign, parties prioritize partisan mobilization to secure their base, ensuring committed supporters donate, volunteer, and actively promote the campaign. This approach builds a strong organizational foundation before shifting to mass mobilization in the later stages, when persuading undecided and swing voters becomes critical to expanding electoral support. In contrast, the opposing view suggests that parties start with mass mobilization to generate broad interest, attract potential supporters, and build early engagement. As the election nears, the strategy shifts to targeted mobilization, focusing on key voter segments, such as undecided voters or specific demographics, to maximize efficiency and secure crucial votes.

These competing expectations reflect differing views on whether campaigns should first consolidate their base before expanding or start broad and refine their outreach as election day approaches. I will investigate both possibilities, examining how different electoral contexts shape the timing and focus of mobilization efforts.[17]

5.2.3 Home Regions

The literature on campaigning shows that political actors use different campaign strategies in their home regions, where they are confident of achieving an electoral consensus in their favor, than in other regions, where the electoral results remain uncertain throughout the campaign (Shaw, 1999; 2008). On the one hand, they might decide to increase their campaign contributions in uncontested regions (Urban & Niebler, 2014) in order to maximize their chances of securing votes in these regions. On the other hand, they might engage in convincing voters in regions that will be most consequential for the upcoming election, which might be decisive in changing the outcome of an election (Gimpel et al., 2007). Thus, the same region might represent different opportunities for different parties.

I focus on the extent to which the region in which the speech was delivered might trigger a strategic deviation in parties' use of morality. I distinguish between two types of regions: home regions and

[17]Note that external factors, such as expected voter turnout, may influence the choice of mobilization strategy. For example, in low-turnout elections, parties might prioritize partisan mobilization to ensure their most committed supporters turn out. In contrast, high-turnout elections incentivize mass mobilization to expand the electorate and maximize overall support. While I am aware of this potential dynamic, I am unable to test it due to the lack of available data.

other regions. Home regions are defined as areas where a political party has historically performed well in previous elections. I argue that, when it comes to communication tactics, parties calibrate their rhetoric according to their audience, which is expected to be more partisan in home regions and more diverse in other regions. Hence, acting in a logic of targeted mobilization, I expect political parties' use of morality to be more partisan-oriented when holding a speech in a home region than elsewhere. Parties broaden their moral domain when holding a speech in another region, where a mass-mobilization strategy is more likely to be successful in gathering votes.

5.3 Research Design

5.3.1 Election Speeches in France

To investigate candidates' use of moral appeals in their campaign discourse, I rely on a comprehensive corpus of campaign speeches delivered during the 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022 French presidential election campaigns. The speeches were collected using web-scraping tools from the website and archive of the project *Mesure du discours*[18]. This corpus contains a total of 422 observations at the speech level: 129 from the 2007 campaign, 60 from 2012, 127 from 2017, and 106 from 2022.[19]

Studying France provides insights into a semi-presidential system where individual candidates exert a particularly strong influence on elections. This candidate effect heightens the importance of communication strategies, as speeches and campaign discourse play a critical role in shaping voter perceptions. In this context, candidates' election speeches are a central communication tool for political parties within the French political landscape. Moreover, by focusing on a European multi-party system, this study avoids the ideological constraints of two-party systems, such as that of the United States, thereby enriching the analysis with a broader array of political ideologies. Unlike fully parliamentary systems, where party dynamics dominate, or two-party presidential systems like the US, France's institutional setup allows for both strong candidate effects and a wide ideological spectrum.

5.3.2 Variables Description

Moral Domain. To quantify morality in political texts, I rely on a translated and validated French version of the MFD, derived from the MFT (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2 *Measurement of Morality* for a detailed overview of the translation and validation procedures). Consistent with previous findings on the ideological use of morality in European multi-party systems, different types of moral domains can be distinguished. A *partisan moral domain* disproportionately emphasizes certain foundations: left-wing parties tend to use more references to *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*,

[18] Website access: http://mesure-du-discours.unice.fr/hyperbase/ (last accessed 08.05.2025).

[19] The same corpus can be split at the statement level if necessary. It contains 98,581 statements: 27,957 from the 2007 campaign, 15,171 from 2012, 29,427 from 2017, and 26,026 from 2022.

whereas right-wing parties more frequently appeal to *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion* (see findings in Chapter 3). In contrast, a *broad moral domain* balances all five moral foundations more evenly, appealing to both left-wing and right-wing audiences.

To capture the type of moral domain used in a speech, I construct a variable called *Moral Domain* (see the equation below). First, I compute five separate variables *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, *Loyalty-Betrayal*, *Authority-Subversion*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*. These are continuous variables ranging from 0 to 1, each representing the share of statements referring to the corresponding moral foundation out of the total number of moral statements in the speech. For example, a *Care-Harm* score of 1 means all moral statements in the speech appeal to *Care-Harm*, whereas a score of 0 indicates that none of the moral statements fall into this category.

Next, I aggregate the moral foundations commonly associated with left-wing rhetoric (*Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Sanctity-Degradation*) and those associated with right-wing rhetoric (*Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*), creating two separate indices. These indices are then rescaled to range from 0 to 1, capturing the proportion of left-leaning and right-leaning moral appeals in each speech.

Finally, I subtract the left-wing appeal index from the right-wing appeal index to create the *Moral Domain* variable. This resulting measure ranges from -1 to 1. Values closer to -1 indicate a speech dominated by left-wing moral appeals; values closer to 1 reflect a predominance of right-wing appeals. A value near 0 suggests a balanced distribution of both types, capturing the use of a broad moral domain. This variable allows me to identify when political actors rely on partisan-oriented moral rhetoric, expected in the context of targeted mobilization, and when they adopt a more balanced moral domain, expected in the context of mass mobilization.

$$MoralDomain = Right_{AS/LB} - Left_{CH/FC/SD}$$

where

$$Right_{AS/LB} = \frac{1}{2} \times AuthoritySubversion + \frac{1}{2} \times LoyaltyBetrayal$$

and

$$Left_{CH/FC/SD} = \frac{1}{3} \times CareHarm + \frac{1}{3} \times FairnessCheating + \frac{1}{3} \times SanctityDegradation$$

Popularity. Candidates' level of popularity at the time of the speech is measured using data from the *Institut français d'opinion publique*, which released polling predictions every other day during each French presidential campaign. The continuous variable Δ *Popularity* represents the relative change in a candidate's popularity between two periods: (1) the candidate's average popularity in the week preceding the speech, and (2) their average popularity on the day before and the day of the speech. The analysis focuses on this two-day window before the speech, as it represents a reasonable time frame in which parties can assess shifts in their performance in opinion polls and potentially adjust their communication strategies accordingly. Popularity change is measured in relative terms because losing one percentage point in the polls has different implications for a candidate polling at around 6% compared to one polling at 30%. A Δ *Popularity* value of 0 indicates that the candidate's popularity remained stable between the two periods. A negative value signifies a decline in popularity in period 2 compared to period 1, while a positive value indicates an increase in popularity over the same time frame.

Home Region. Using official election results published by the *Ministère de l'Intérieur*, I determine whether a region qualifies as a home region for a political party, based on the performance of its candidates in that region during previous regional and national elections. I create a dichotomous variable, *Home Region*, coded as 1 if a party obtained the highest vote share either in the previous regional or previous presidential election in the region where the speech was delivered, and 0 otherwise.

Timing. The continuous variable *Timing* represents the proximity of a speech to election day. It ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 corresponds to the first day of the campaign, and 1 corresponds to the final day of the campaign, the day before the election.

Political Party. I create binary variables for each political party represented in at least one of the four elections under study: *Rassemblement National* (RN/FN), *Reconquête!* (R!), *Les Républicains* (UMP/LR), *La République en Marche* (LREM), *Union pour la démocratie Française* (UDF), *Parti Socialiste* (PS), *Europe Écologie les Verts* (EELV), *La France Insoumise* (LFI), and *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF) (see Table 11 for a full description of the political parties' names, the candidates representing them in each election, and the number of speeches available per party and election year). Each variable is coded as 1 if the speech was delivered by a candidate from the given political party, and 0 otherwise. When the same political party changed its name over time, I grouped them into one variable (FG and PCF into *PCF*; UMP and LR into *UMP/LR*; FN and RN into *FN/RN*).

Table 11: Total Number of Campaign Speeches by Candidate and Election Year.

Candidate's name	**Party/Parties**	**Total speeches (years)**
Nicolas Sarkozy	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)	63 (2007: 41, 2012: 22)
Marine Le Pen	Front National (2012, 2017) / Rassemblement National (2022)	52 (2012: 13, 2017: 27, 2022: 12)
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	Front de gauche (2012) / La France insoumise (2017, 2022)	51 (2012: 13, 2017: 23, 2022: 15)
Emmanuel Macron	La République En Marche (LREM)	42 (2017: 32, 2022: 10)
Ségolène Royal	Parti Socialiste (PS)	30 (2007)
François Fillon	Les Républicains (LR)	29 (2017)
François Bayrou	Union pour la démocratie Française (UDF)	24 (2007)
Jean-Marie Le Pen	Front National (FN)	20 (2007)
Valérie Pécresse	Les Républicains (LR)	19 (2022)
Éric Zemmour	Reconquête (R!)	17 (2022)
Benoît Hamon	Parti Socialiste (PS)	16 (2017)
Anne Hidalgo	Parti Socialiste (PS)	16 (2022)
Marie-George Buffet	Parti communiste français (PCF)	14 (2007)
François Hollande	Parti Socialiste (PS)	12 (2012)
Yannick Jadot	Europe Écologie Les Verts (EELV)	9 (2022)
Fabien Roussel	Parti communiste français (PCF)	8 (2022)

Speech Length. The variable *Speech Length* captures the number of words (*tokens*) in the speech text. Controlling for speech length ensures that the level or type of morality detected in each speech is not merely attributable to its length.

Election. Four dichotomous variables are created, each coded as 1 if the given speech was delivered during the corresponding election campaign, and 0 otherwise.

5.4 Empirical Analysis

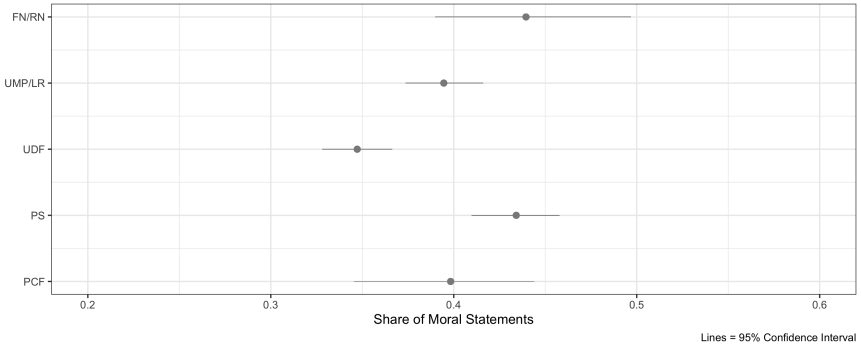
5.4.1 Descriptive Overview

To what extent does the level of moralization differ across election campaigns and political parties? Political actors may adjust the level of morality in their discourse, regardless of the type of morality they use, they might choose to moralize their messages more than usual. While there is no clear theoretical logic or specific conditions that explain fluctuations in the overall level of moralization in campaign discourse, it is important to assess how morally charged the discourse is, as this provides a foundation for analyzing the types of moralization political parties employ in their campaigns.

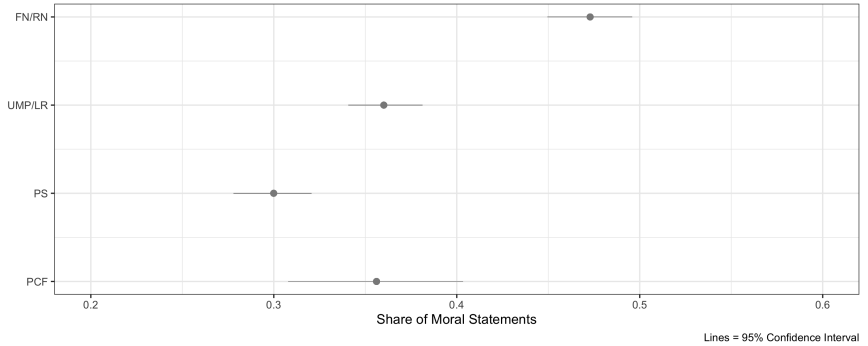
Figure 29 presents a descriptive overview of the level of moralization in parties' communication across the election campaigns under study. Although no consistent or systematic pattern explaining the level of moralization over time is observable, the electoral speeches of the 2007 election campaign were significantly more moralized than those of the 2017 campaign (see Figure 29 (e)). Across all election campaigns, candidates moralize, on average, between 36% and 41% of their overall campaign discourse. Figures 29 (a) to (d) show the mean level of morality used across parties in their campaign discourse for each election. Across the campaigns in which Marine Le Pen was a candidate (2012 to 2022; see Table 11), the only discernible pattern is that her far-right party, FN/RN, consistently employs a more moralizing discourse than most competing political parties.

Although the level of moralization is not the primary focus of this analysis, I conduct a preliminary test to examine the effects of the three independent variables on the level of moralization in campaign discourse (see Table 59 in the Appendix). The effects of popularity and timing are not statistically significant. However, the effect of the home region is positive and significant, suggesting that regardless of the type of morality used, political parties tend to moralize their discourse more when delivering speeches in their home region compared to other locations.

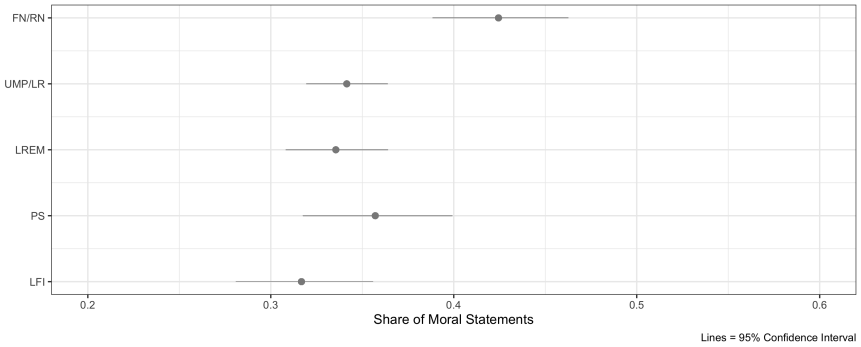
Figure 29: Share of moral statements used per political party across all and for each election campaigns.



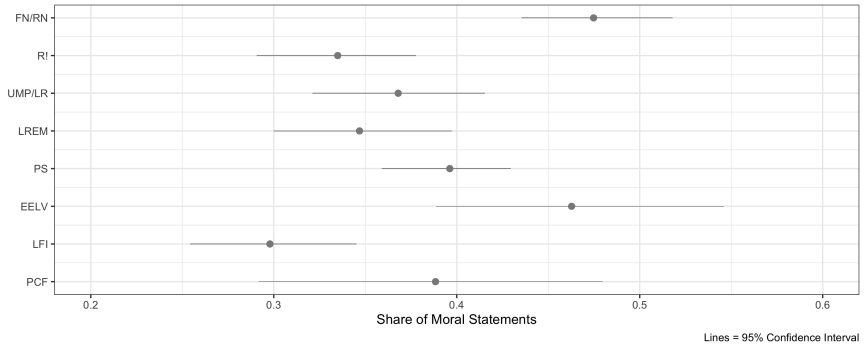
(a) 2007 Election Campaign



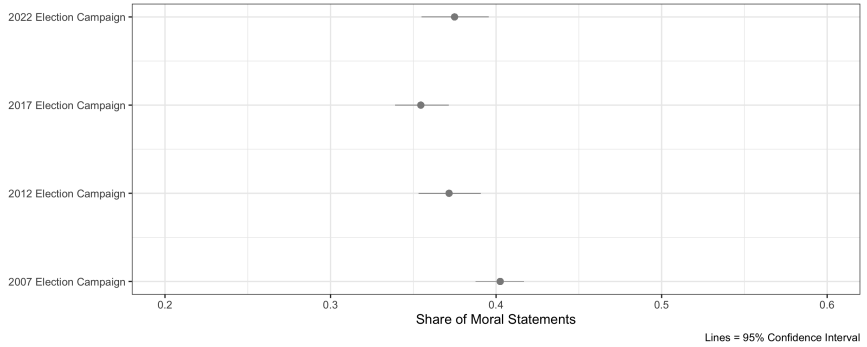
(b) 2012 Election Campaign



(c) 2017 Election Campaign



(d) 2022 Election Campaign

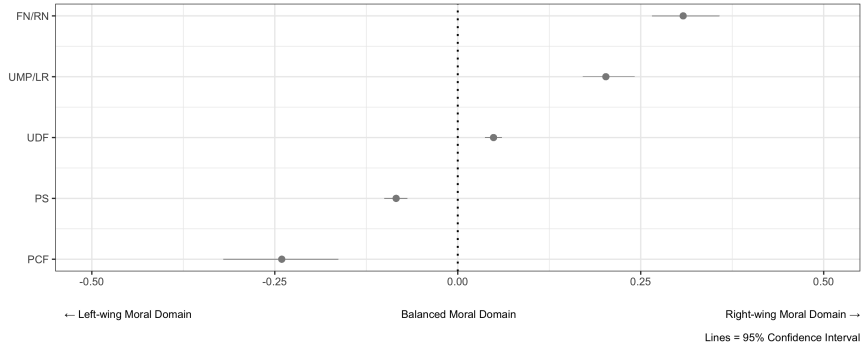


(e) Across all Election Campaigns

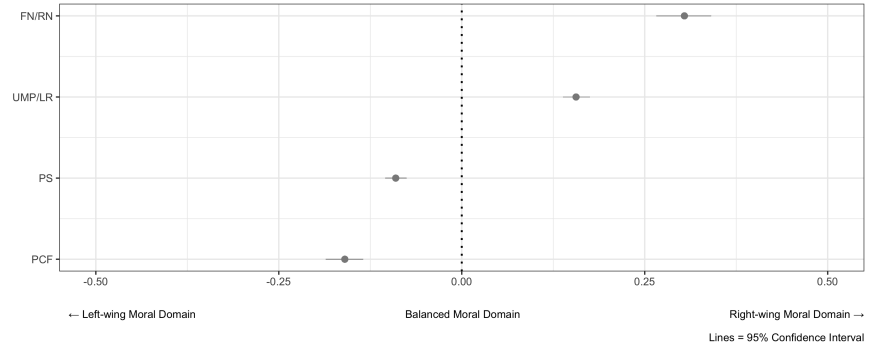
To what extent do political parties modify the type of moralization they use across election campaigns? Figure 30 presents a descriptive overview of parties' use of moral rhetoric during each election campaign under study. Over time, a consistent and systematic ideological pattern emerges in the moralization of campaign discourse. Across all election campaigns, right-wing parties predominantly employ moral language associated with right-leaning moral domains, while left-wing parties exhibit the opposite tendency. Overall, and up until the 2022 election campaign, the intensity of moral language use follows expected patterns, with parties at both ends of the ideological spectrum employing more partisan moral domains. For instance, the far-right political party FN/RN exhibits a more right-leaning moral domain than UMP/LR, the conservative party; similarly, PCF, a far-left political party, displays a more left-leaning moral domain than PS, the socialist party. However, in the 2022 election campaign, while the broader left-right divide remains evident, these specific patterns dissipate (see Figure 30(d)).

While Chapter 3 demonstrated that political parties in European multi-party systems use moral rhetoric based on their ideology, as shown through political manifestos, this descriptive analysis reveals that a strong ideology-driven use of morality is also evident in parties' campaign speeches in the French political landscape. I now investigate whether, as expected, candidates adjust their use of moral rhetoric based on their broader political strategy under specific conditions: the candidate's popularity at the time of the speech, the timing within the election campaign, and whether the speech was delivered in their home region.

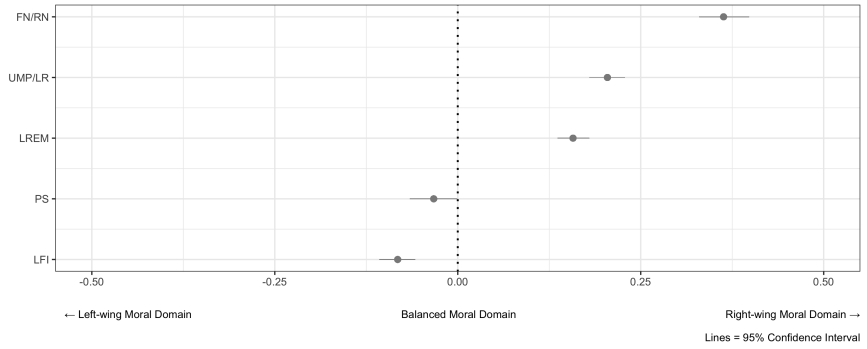
Figure 30: Moral Domain per political party for each election campaigns.



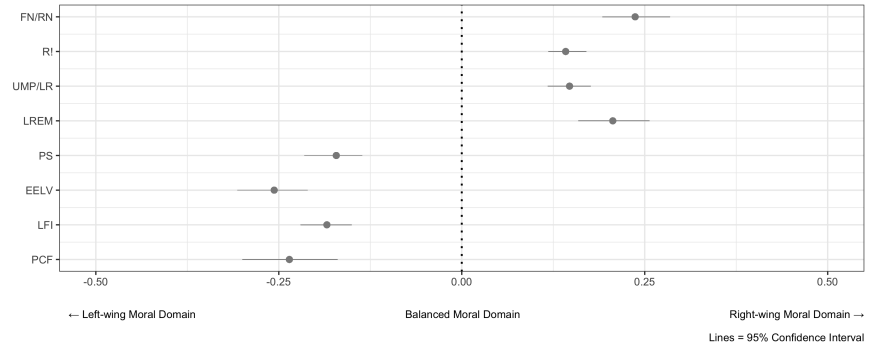
(a) 2007 Election Campaign



(b) 2012 Election Campaign



(c) 2017 Election Campaign



(d) 2022 Election Campaign

5.4.2 Results

For each of the three conditions, I perform election fixed effects linear models with *Moral Domain* as the dependent variable (see Table 12). I use election fixed effects in my regressions to control for unobserved heterogeneity across the different French presidential election campaigns I consider (2007 to 2022). Each campaign involves unique contextual factors, such as the national political climate, key electoral issues, institutional changes, or the specific pool of candidates, that could independently influence the communication strategies of political parties. By including election fixed effects, I isolate the impact of my key variables (popularity, timing, and home region) on moral rhetoric from these broader, election-specific influences. This approach ensures that the observed adjustments in parties' use of moral appeals reflect strategic behavior within each campaign rather than differences between election cycles. Moreover, to ensure that the regression coefficients are interpretable on their own, I rescale the *Moral Domain* variable to range from –1 to 0 by taking its negative absolute value, where values closer to 0 indicate a more balanced moral domain.[20]

The three main regression models, one for each condition, are presented in Table 12. Regarding the independent variables, the coefficient for Timing is positive and significant, indicating that, overall, as election day approaches, candidates' moral rhetoric becomes more balanced (see Table 12, model (1)). This suggests that candidates primarily appeal to their partisan or core voters at the beginning of the campaign and shift toward mass mobilization in the final stages to rally undecided voters. In contrast, the coefficients for *Home Region* and Δ *Popularity* are not significant (see Table 12, models (2) and (3)).

I interact party binary variables with the respective key variable of interest, either popularity, timing, or home region, to assess whether candidates from different parties adjust their moral rhetoric differently under similar conditions.[21] Previous research shows that political parties use different types of morality based on their ideology, with left- and right-wing parties favoring distinct moral foundations (see Chapter 3 for a complete overview of the ideological use of morality in European multi-party systems). By including these interactions, I can determine whether parties strategically deviate from their typical ideological use of morality when electoral incentives change. This approach allows me to identify party-specific strategies and assess whether certain parties are more likely to shift from partisan to broader moral appeals and vice versa depending on changes in popularity, the stage of the campaign, or the region where the speech is delivered.

[20] Note that for the simulations conducted later, I performed the same regression models using the non-rescaled version of the *Moral Domain* variable.

[21] Table 58 in the Appendix presents models 1–3, which show the basic versions of the main models used in the analysis, excluding interaction terms. The results indicate that none of the independent variables exhibit a statistically significant or distinguishable effect. Furthermore, model 4 in the same table presents a joint specification that includes all three independent variables within a single model. Consistent with the previous findings, no significant effects are observed.

Table 12: Linear Regression on the negative absolute value of Moral Domain.

	Dependent variable:		
	- |Moral Domain|		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Timing	0.201*		
	(0.104)		
Home Region		−0.040	
		(0.099)	
Δ Popularity			0.047
			(0.041)
UMP/LR	0.143	−0.027	−0.021
	(0.095)	(0.020)	(0.019)
UDF	0.286**	0.117***	0.125***
	(0.114)	(0.028)	(0.029)
FN/RN	0.009	−0.167***	−0.153***
	(0.094)	(0.019)	(0.020)
LFI	0.232**	0.051**	0.047**
	(0.108)	(0.020)	(0.022)
PCF	0.097	−0.064***	−0.057**
	(0.103)	(0.023)	(0.026)
PS	0.260***	0.066***	0.067***
	(0.096)	(0.022)	(0.021)
EELV	0.464		−0.079**
	(0.288)		(0.038)
R!	0.098		0.034
	(0.162)		(0.029)
Speech Length	−0.00000	−0.00000	−0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Timing x UMP/LR	−0.199*		
	(0.113)		
Timing x UDF	−0.192		
	(0.158)		
Timing x FN/RN	−0.196*		
	(0.112)		
Timing x LFI	−0.229*		
	(0.136)		
Timing x PCF	−0.189		
	(0.128)		
Timing x PS	−0.240**		
	(0.114)		

Timing x EELV	−0.679*		
	(0.359)		
Timing x R!	−0.061		
	(0.211)		
Home Region x UMP/LR		0.046	
		(0.100)	
Home Region x UDF		0.070	
		(0.115)	
Home Region x FN/RN		0.091	
		(0.102)	
Home Region x LFI		−0.049	
		(0.121)	
Home Region x PCF		0.046	
		(0.121)	
Home Region x PS		0.035	
		(0.101)	
Δ Popularity x UMP/LR			0.019
			(0.056)
Δ Popularity x UDF			−0.042
			(0.058)
Δ Popularity x FN/RN			−0.011
			(0.058)
Δ Popularity x LFI			0.006
			(0.075)
Δ Popularity x PCF			−0.110*
			(0.064)
Δ Popularity x PS			−0.057
			(0.053)
Δ Popularity x EELV			−0.053
			(0.287)
Δ Popularity x R!			0.039
			(0.150)
Constant	−0.338***	−0.172***	−0.172***
	(0.089)	(0.015)	(0.021)
Campaign Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES
Observations	422	422	422
R^2	0.408	0.394	0.409
Adjusted R^2	0.377	0.368	0.378
Residual Std. Error	0.097 (df = 400)	0.097 (df = 404)	0.097 (df = 400)
F Statistic	13.143*** (df = 21; 400)	15.432*** (df = 17; 404)	13.204*** (df = 21; 400)
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Popularity. Figure 31 presents the simulated moral domain of three political parties: the conservative party UMP/LR, the liberal party LREM, and the far-left party LFI for different values of change in popularity (expressed as a share). For these parties, the overall pattern aligns with expectations and reaches statistical significance, indicating a strategy-driven use of moral rhetoric in response to shifts in popularity throughout the election campaign.

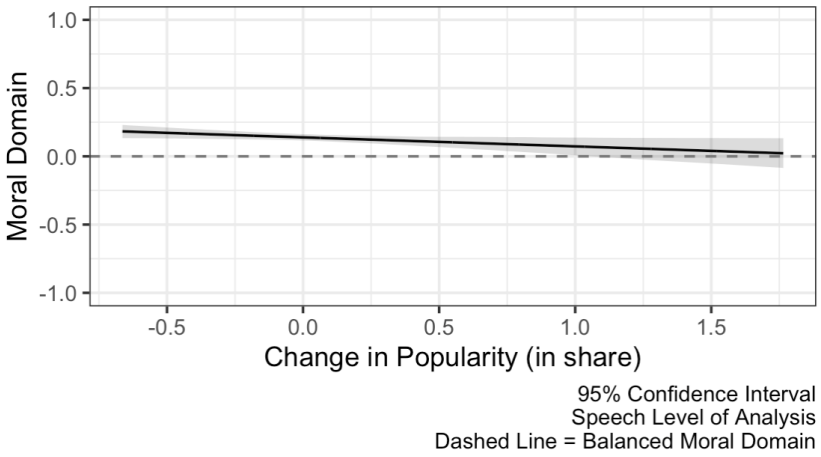
On the y-axis, *Moral Domain* is balanced when closer to the dashed line, right-leaning as it approaches 1, and left-leaning as it moves toward -1. The x-axis represents changes in candidate popularity. A value of 0 indicates no change in popularity based on opinion polls in the week preceding the speech, with the candidate's average popularity measured the day before and on the day of the speech. A negative value, such as -0.5, signifies a decline in popularity, meaning the candidate lost half of their support. Conversely, a positive value indicates a gain in popularity; for example, a value of 1 signifies that the candidate's popularity doubled.

Consistent with the literature on campaigning strategies (Dai & Kustov, 2022; Geer, 1998), my results indicate that candidates with low polling numbers adjust their rhetorical strategy accordingly. When a candidate's popularity declines, their focus shifts toward securing their existing voter base. In this case, they tend to employ more partisan-oriented moral rhetoric, reinforcing ideological alignment rather than broadening their appeal. Figure 31 demonstrates that as their popularity decreases, UMP/LR and LREM adopt a more right-leaning moral domain, while LFI employs a more left-leaning moral domain. Each party strategically uses targeted moral rhetoric to consolidate support among its core electorate.

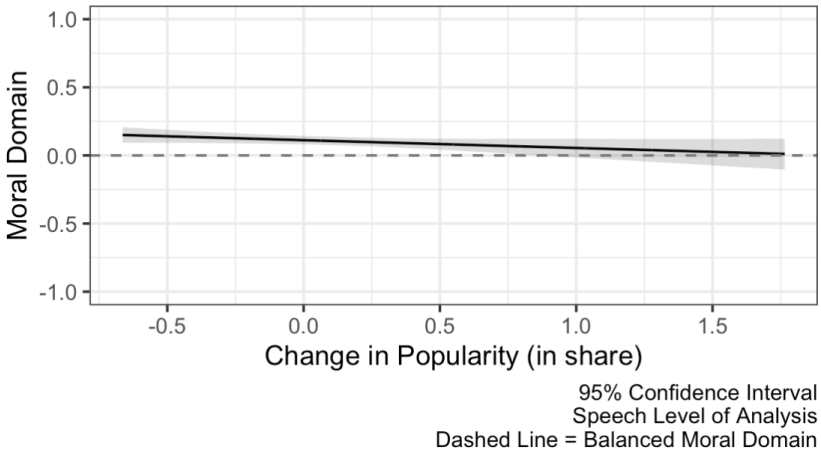
Conversely, when a political actor experiences an increase in popularity, they broaden their moral domain. As shown in Figure 31, the greater the increase in opinion polls, the more balanced their moral domain becomes in campaign speeches, aiming to appeal to a broader audience. This aligns with a mass-mobilization strategy designed to attract as many voters as possible.

Figure 36 in the Appendix presents the simulated *Moral Domain* in response to changes in popularity for all other political parties. For FN/RN, UDF, PS, and PCF, the use of moral rhetoric appears to be primarily ideology-driven, showing no clear adaptation based on their performance in opinion polls throughout the campaign. However, for R! and EELV, similar strategy-driven patterns emerge as observed for the three parties discussed above, though the results are not statistically significant.

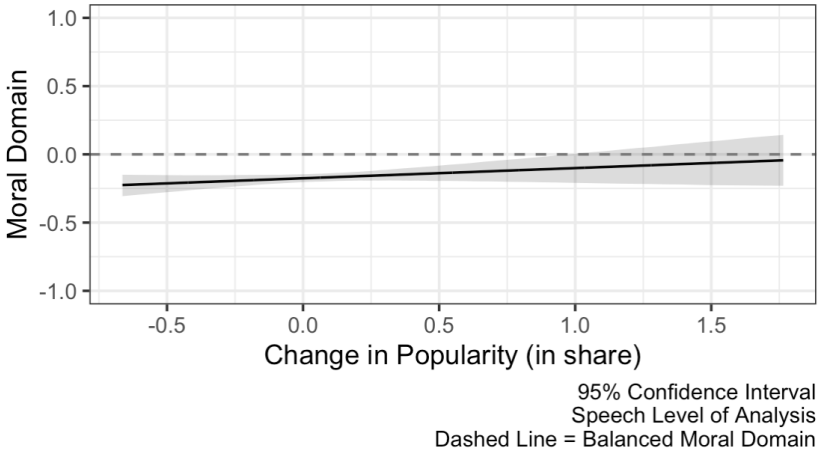
Figure 31: Simulated Moral Domain when experiencing a change in popularity (in share).



(1) Les Républicains (or UMP)



(2) La République En Marche



(3) La France Insoumise

To test the robustness of this finding, I reproduce the analysis using an alternative measure of the candidate's popularity at the time of the speech. The main measure, Δ *Popularity*, represents the relative change in a candidate's popularity between two periods: (1) the candidate's average popularity in the week preceding the speech and (2) their average popularity on the day before and the day of the speech. For the robustness check, I use an alternative measure, Δ *Popularity (2)*, which does not account for a time window but simply compares the candidate's popularity on the day before the speech to their popularity on the day of the speech.

Like the main measure, Δ *Popularity (2)* is expressed in relative terms, since a one-point drop in the polls has different implications for a candidate polling at 6% than for one polling at 30%. A value of 0 indicates that the candidate's popularity remained stable between the two days, while a negative value signals a decline and a positive value an increase. While Δ *Popularity (2)* provides a more immediate snapshot of popularity shifts, I consider the main measure theoretically more relevant and plausible, as political parties typically require some time to react to polling trends and adjust their strategies accordingly.

Table 61 in the Appendix displays the linear regression results using Δ *Popularity (2)* as the independent variable, including interaction terms between political parties and popularity at the time of the speech. Figure 38 in the Appendix presents the simulated Moral Domain values for candidates from the three political parties that showed significant effects in the main analysis: LREM, UMP/LR, and LFI.

The results based on Δ *Popularity (2)* are consistent with those obtained using the main measure, reinforcing the robustness of the findings. As polling numbers decline, campaign speeches become more ideologically balanced, reflecting a mass-mobilization strategy aimed at attracting a broader audience. Conversely, when popularity increases, candidates shift toward more partisan moral framing to reinforce alignment with their core electorate. Specifically, UMP/LR and LREM adopt a more right-leaning stance, while LFI moves further left.

Timing. Figure 32 presents the simulated values of the *Moral Domain* over the course of the election campaign for Emmanuel Macron's party, LREM. This is the only party for which a clear pattern emerges regarding campaign timing: targeted mobilization of partisan voters at the beginning, followed by mass mobilization toward the end.

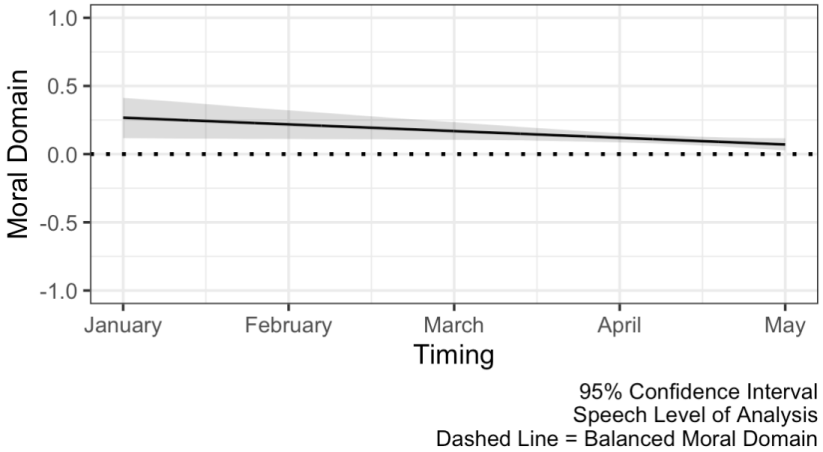


Figure 32: Simulated Moral Domain for *La Répblique En Marche* over the course of an election campaign.

The x-axis represents the time frame of the election campaign, starting in January, while the y-axis shows the values for *Moral Domain*. The dashed line indicates a perfectly balanced moral domain, with values closer to 1 representing a more right-leaning moral domain. As expected, LREM's moral rhetoric in campaign speeches starts as partisan at the beginning of the election and becomes more balanced toward the end. This pattern suggests that early in the campaign, LREM prioritizes partisan mobilization to secure its base, ensuring committed supporters donate, volunteer, and actively promote the campaign. This strategy builds a strong organizational foundation before transitioning to mass mobilization in the later stages, when persuading undecided and swing voters becomes crucial to expanding electoral support.

The simulation results for other political parties are presented in Figures 35 (for left-wing political parties) and 37 (for right-wing political parties) in the Appendix. The remaining political parties exhibit a consistent partisan moral domain throughout the election campaign, showing no distinct political strategy for mobilization. For EELV (see Figure 35 (1) in the Appendix), the trend reflects an opposite pattern compared to LREM, with a balanced moral domain at the beginning of the campaign and a more partisan use of morality toward the end. However, the results lack statistical significance.

Home Region. Figure 33 presents the simulated values for *Moral Domain* when a speech is delivered in a home region versus outside a home region during an election campaign. Two political parties are missing from this analysis due to data availability issues: the far-right party R! and the green party EELV. R! competed for the first time in the 2022 election, meaning no data exist on their past performances across different regions. For EELV, data were likely unavailable due to their historically low performance and inconsistent presence across regions in France.

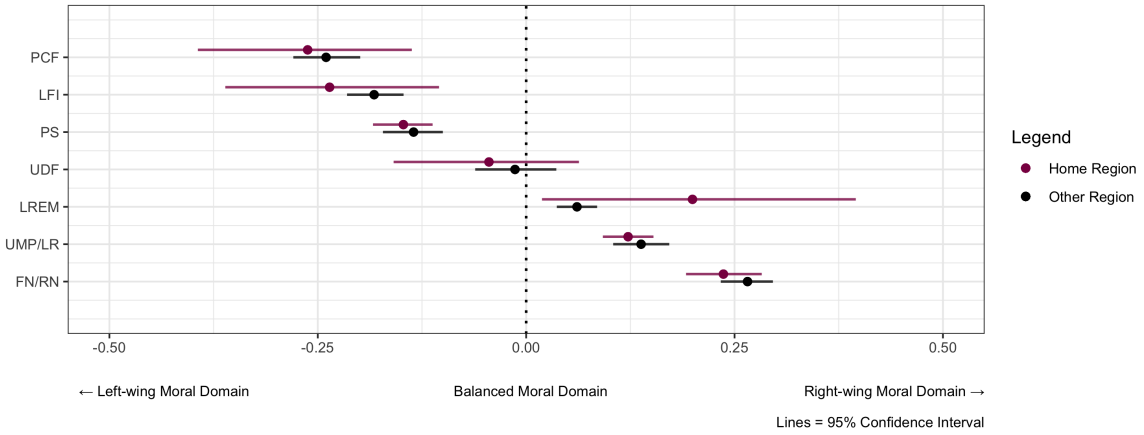


Figure 33: Simulated Moral Domain when a speech is given in a Home vs. Other region during the election campaign.

The coefficients are not significant, and no clear pattern emerges. This suggests that political parties do not adjust their use of moral rhetoric based on the region in which they deliver a speech. Instead, since ideological patterns remain evident, their use of morality appears to be consistently partisan across the ideological spectrum, regardless of whether the audience is from a home region or not.

To test the robustness of this non-finding, I run a similar model using an alternative measurement for the region in which the speech is delivered. The categorical variable *Home Region (2)* is coded as 2 if a party obtained the highest vote share in both the previous regional and the previous presidential election in the region where the speech is given. *Home Region (2)* is coded as 1 if a party obtained the highest vote share in either the previous regional or the previous presidential election, and 0 otherwise. Results of the regression analysis can be found in the Appendix in table 60. The coefficients still show no significance when adopting a more conservative approach.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

This study provides evidence that political parties do not use moral rhetoric solely based on political ideology but also based on a broader political strategy, adjusting their moral rhetoric in response to electoral conditions. Analyzing 422 campaign speeches from the 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022 elections, I show that political parties systematically adjust their moral discourse based on fluctuations in the popularity of their candidates and the timing of the election. The findings suggest that while ideological patterns persist, strategic considerations also influence parties' use of moral rhetoric.

First, when the popularity of a political party's candidate rises, political parties such as UMP/LR, LREM, and LFI adopt a more balanced moral rhetoric to appeal to a broader audience. Conversely, when popularity declines, they shift toward a more partisan stance to consolidate their base. UMP/LR and LREM move further right, while LFI becomes more left-leaning. Other parties, such as FN/RN, UDF, PS, and PCF, appear to use moral rhetoric primarily based on ideology rather than polling shifts. Meanwhile, R! and EELV exhibit similar strategy-driven patterns as the main parties but without statistical significance. A robustness check using an alternative popularity measure confirms these findings, reinforcing that campaign strategies react to broader polling trends rather than immediate shifts.

Second, regarding the timing of the campaign, LREM is the only party showing a clear strategic shift. Early in the campaign, Macron's speeches focus on partisan mobilization to secure his base before transitioning to a more balanced approach for mass mobilization toward the end. This strategy aims to strengthen core support first, then attract undecided voters. Other parties maintain a consistent partisan moral domain throughout the campaign, except for EELV, which follows the opposite pattern, starting with a balanced moral domain and becoming more partisan, though the results are not statistically significant.

Third, no significant difference in moral rhetoric emerges when speeches are delivered in a home region versus elsewhere. Political parties maintain a consistently partisan moral domain regardless of location, suggesting that campaign rhetoric is ideologically driven rather than region-specific. A robustness check using an alternative regional classification confirms this non-finding.

To sum up, in line with established campaign strategy research (Dai & Kustov, 2022; Geer, 1998), this study reveals a clear pattern: candidates adapt their moral rhetoric based on their polling performance. When the popularity of a party's candidate increases, they tend to broaden their moral appeals to attract a wider audience. Conversely, when popularity declines, they focus on reinforcing their base through more partisan moral appeals. Furthermore, the timing of the election is relevant when studying these rhetorical shifts. Early in a campaign, political parties use partisan rhetoric to mobilize their core supporters. As the election approaches, they shift towards more inclusive appeals.

This temporal strategy suggests that campaigns recognize the importance of aligning message delivery with the evolving dynamics of the election. Hence, political parties adjust their moral framing based on both the current popularity of their candidate and the stage of the campaign.

My work makes a significant contribution to the literature on political communication, electoral strategy, and moral psychology. First, by demonstrating the strategic, context-dependent use of morality, I challenge the prevailing notion that morality in political discourse is static and exclusively ideologically determined (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Instead, I show that parties adapt their messaging dynamically in response to electoral incentives, contributing to scholarship on strategic framing and campaign mobilization (Druckman et al., 2009; Riker, 1986). Second, this study adds to the literature on vote-seeking behavior by showing that shifts in rhetorical strategies are not only issue-specific (see Chapter 3) or based on moral endorsement (Kraft, 2018) but also involve the moral framing of campaign messages. Finally, the results align with and expand on findings from the populist literature, demonstrating that rhetorical adjustments are not exclusive to outsider candidates or populist parties (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Dai & Kustov, 2022) but are a broader strategic tool used by a wide range of political actors.

Overall, this study highlights that moral rhetoric is a powerful and flexible tool in electoral competition. Future research could explore how these strategic adjustments vary across different political systems or whether they interact with other persuasive techniques, such as emotional appeals or populist framing. By establishing that moral communication is not just an ideological signal but also a strategic choice, this work opens new avenues for understanding how political parties influence voter behavior and navigate the complexities of electoral competition.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6 CONCLUSION

Morality plays a dual role in European multi-party systems: it shapes political ideology and acts as a strategic communication tool for parties. Morality, as conceptualized by the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), influences party ideologies, leading to a predictable left/right divide in the moral framing of their discourse, similar to patterns observed in the US context (see Chapter 3). Beyond inherent ideology, morality's intuitive nature makes it a highly effective communication tool for political parties. Exposure to moral rhetoric elicits an immediate emotional activation, leading to a spontaneous behavioral response (see Chapter 4). Political strategy, rather than just fixed ideology, triggers and guides the use of specific moral rhetoric. Parties strategically adapt their moral discourse based on contextual factors like popularity, electoral timing, or the specific issues at stake, moving beyond a purely ideological stance to a more calculated, contextual application of moral rhetoric for mobilization and persuasion (see Chapter 5). Hence, this dissertation provides a more comprehensive understanding of how political parties leverage moral rhetoric and its profound impact on political communication, ideology, and societal debates.

In Chapter 2, I focus on quantifying morality in parties' political communication. I present the development and validation of multilingual versions of the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD) in French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Chapter 2 offers a fully reproducible translation protocol, designed to ensure the accurate adaptation of the MFD into further linguistic contexts. Moreover, I introduce a novel cross-linguistic validation methodology for dictionary-based text analysis, founded upon correlation analyses conducted across officially translated documents.

In Chapter 3, I investigate how political parties use moral appeals in 31 elections across nine European multi-party systems, applying translated versions of the MFD to their electoral manifestos. This approach is, to my knowledge, the first to analyze parties' moral appeals in a multi-party context, considering different countries, political ideologies, and issue types (socio-cultural vs. economic).

First, I examine whether established links between ideology and moral appeals extend beyond two-party systems. Consolidating existing patterns in the US context, my findings indicate that parties in multi-party systems demonstrate an ideology-driven use of moral rhetoric. Specifically, left-wing parties emphasize *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating* appeals, while right-wing parties prioritize *Loyalty-Betrayal* and *Authority-Subversion*. Interestingly, *Sanctity-Degradation* is primarily associated with left-wing parties, contrary to existing literature.

Second, I challenge the exclusive focus on ideology in explaining the use of morality. My results show that socio-cultural issues are more frequently framed morally than economic issues. While the use of *Fairness-Cheating* and *Loyalty-Betrayal* is tied to parties' ideology, the application of *Care-Harm* and *Authority-Subversion* varies based on the issue type and parties' views on the economy and society.

Hence, I show the role of moral foundations in shaping parties' political ideology across diverse European multi-party systems. Morality is, however, more than just a reflection of parties' political ideology; it's a dynamic and strategically employed tool in their rhetoric.

In Chapter 4, I investigate the spontaneous inter-party reactions to moral rhetoric among MPs in the German Bundestag. I explore how morality influences how policymakers and citizens perceive political issues, which might lead to disagreements that can either foster constructive debate or, if unresolved, result in political friction. My work is the first to explore morality's impact on political disagreement within inter-party communication among politicians. To address this, I analyze reactions to all parliamentary speeches delivered by MPs representing Germany's six principal parties (AfD, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Linke, and Grüne) spanning the period from 1949 to 2021.

First, its intuitive nature makes morality a powerful communication tool for political parties. Exposure to moral rhetoric creates immediate emotional feelings, leading to a spontaneous behavioral response. Therefore, I expect that moral statements elicit more reactions than non-moral ones due to their emotional activation. Unexpectedly, my results show that reactions to moral statements are not more likely than those to non-moral statements. In some cases, this pattern reverses; for example, MPs react more to the AfD's non-moral statements. Instead, interruptions of AfD MPs appear driven by perceived divisiveness or speaker credibility, not a strict moral versus non-moral distinction.

Second, my initial expectation was that people generally agree on what constitutes immoral behavior, even if they differ on what they consider moral. I anticipated that individuals condemn transgressions of moral principles similarly, regardless of their personal prioritization of a specific moral dimension. For instance, I expected someone who does not personally value loyalty to still condemn an act of betrayal. However, my results did not support this expectation. Moral transgressions do not elicit stronger negative reactions. The *ad hoc* analyses that I performed show that the AfD is a significant outlier in both interrupting and being interrupted, particularly by the Grüne party. However, excluding the AfD reveals that moral rhetoric does not significantly predict interruptions or affirmations, reinforcing the finding that morality does not drive spontaneous reactions in debates. Further outlier analysis confirms the AfD's unique, high interruption rates, which are unrelated to moral transgressions. As a side finding of this dissertation, a *Newcomer effect* is identified. MPs from newcomer parties (Linke, Grüne, AfD) consistently interrupt established parties at disproportionately high rates during their first term.

Third, my findings indicate that MPs' reactions to moral rhetoric are not driven by ideology; they do not react more positively to ideologically aligned moral rhetoric or more negatively to challenging ones. However, certain moral foundations significantly trigger emotional responses and thus more reactions. *Care-Harm*, *Fairness-Cheating*, and *Loyalty-Betrayal* rhetoric elicits a broader range of reactions (both

positive and negative), while *Authority-Subversion* appeals produce fewer, and *Sanctity-Degradation* appeals show no significant effect. The emotional impact of specific moral foundations, rather than ideological alignment, dictates the effectiveness of moral rhetoric in influencing audience behavior.

Hence, Chapter 4 shows that neither morality nor a single-party outlier seem to explain political disagreement dynamics in the German Bundestag. Instead, the observed reaction patterns are influenced by parties' newcomer status, strategic considerations, and the affective salience of distinct moral foundations.

Finally, Chapter 5 challenges the notion that political parties rely only on an ideological use of moral rhetoric. Instead, it provides compelling evidence that parties in France strategically adjust their moral appeals based on electoral conditions. I analyze a unique dataset of campaign speeches from the 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022 presidential elections. In alignment with established campaign strategy research (e.g., Dai & Kustov, 2022; Geer, 1998), I uncover a systematic pattern of adaptation in response to candidate popularity and campaign timing. This strategic adaptation aims to maximize electoral advantage, either by broadening appeal to undecided voters or by consolidating support among the party's base.

First, focusing on popularity, Chapter 5 reveals a distinct pattern among major French political parties: when a candidate's popularity rises, parties tend to adopt a more balanced and inclusive moral rhetoric. This broadening strategy aims to resonate with a wider audience and attract voters beyond their core ideological base. Conversely, when a candidate's popularity declines, these same parties shift towards a more partisan and ideologically rigid moral stance. This consolidation strategy aims to reinforce the loyalty of their existing base, ensuring that their most committed supporters are mobilized.

Second, Chapter 5 highlights the significance of the campaign timeline in shaping moral rhetoric. Results show that early on, the campaign discourse focuses on partisan mobilization, employing targeted moral rhetoric designed to secure and energize core supporters. This initial phase prioritizes consolidating the party's base. As the election approaches, moral rhetoric undergoes a clear transition, shifting towards a more balanced and inclusive approach aimed at mass mobilization. This strategic evolution reflects that different phases of a campaign require different rhetorical objectives: securing the base first, then appealing to undecided or swing voters as the election draws near.

Third, a non-finding of the Chapter concerns the influence of the location of the speeches. I find no significant difference in moral rhetoric whether speeches were delivered in a candidate's home region versus elsewhere. Political parties generally maintain a consistently partisan moral domain regardless of the geographic context.

To sum up, this dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary approach between political science and

social psychology and enriches both fields in applying psychological theories to politics and by providing robust data-driven evidence to psychological frameworks. The core takeaway is that the role of morality in political parties' rhetoric within European multi-party political systems is twofold. Morality shapes parties' political ideology. Morality is also a strategically used political communication tool, depending on contextual and issue-related factors.

From a methodological perspective, my research develops a novel translation and validation procedure for the MFD, initially developed exclusively for the English speaking area (Graham et al., 2009). The novel semi-automatic dictionary translation method that is entirely and easily replicable for languages beyond those included in this work. This innovative translation methodology, inspired by approaches from scholars such as Matsuo et al. (2019), furnishes essential tools for the future quantitative text analysis of moral discourse across diverse linguistic contexts. By doing so, it significantly broadens the application scope of the MFT beyond its predominantly Anglophone applications, thereby advancing research on moral communication globally. Future research should consider applying more innovative methodologies such as Distributed Dictionary Representation (DDR) to the MFD beyond the English-speaking context to not only detect morality but also assessing the semantics of a given text (Garten et al., 2018).

Furthermore, I create a procedure for dictionary validation based on officially translated documents. Unlike traditional validation methodologies reliant on multilingual surveys or human coders (Bos & Minihold, 2022; Matsuo et al., 2019), this approach offers an efficient, resource-saving alternative for scholars. Hence, this novel, easily reproducible dictionary translation and validation methodology provides scholars with a valuable tool for translating the MFD into additional languages, thereby facilitating the study of morality in political science and other academic disciplines. As such, this constitutes a significant methodological contribution of this dissertation to the broader field of computational text analysis.

From a substantive perspective, this dissertation enriches several key areas of political science. First, analyzing moral foundations in European multi-party systems adds to scholarly contributions in the MFT literature (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt & Graham, 2007). This work represents the first cross-national, party-level examination of moral rhetoric across varied ideological positions and issue types. Thus, I apply the MFT framework across multiple countries, across languages, across multiple types of political communication and levels of politics (individuals, parties, institutions), showing its robustness beyond the so far very US-centered scope of analysis (Lewis, 2019; Lipsitz, 2018; Sagi & Dehghani, 2014).

The case selection of my work constitutes, however, a limitation. I focus exclusively on countries whose languages allow for accurate MFD translation (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish) while

maintaining a coherent regional scope (Western Europe). Future research should enrich this robust cross-national evidence with the application of the newly translated MFDs to a wider array of political contexts, communication channels, and historical periods to further test the generalizability of my findings. Moreover, acknowledging that probably more than five moral foundations exist, MFT scholars consider, for example, the value of *Liberty-Oppression* as being a strong candidate to become the sixth moral foundation (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2012; Iyer et al., 2012). The innovative dictionary translation and validation procedure developed in this dissertation can provide future research with the opportunity to investigate the presence of further moral foundations.

Second, my dissertation enriches debates in party politics and ideology by demonstrating that the use of moral appeals by political actors is not exclusively ideology-driven, but significantly shaped by the specific topic at hand. This finding deepens our understanding of how political parties strategically frame issues. While I provide a general distinction between socio-cultural and economic issues, I encourage future research to delve deeper into the specific characteristics of individual topics, creating a more accurate understanding of how, when, and why political actors choose to use moral appeals.

Future research should investigate how reframing political issues using different moral foundations can help bridge ideological divides, particularly on so called "culture-war" issues such as queer rights, abortion, or migration. Could a conservative agree with a progressive if the very same issue were presented through the lens of their dominant moral frameworks? While progressive rhetoric often emphasizes *Care-Harm* and *Fairness-Cheating*, future studies could explore whether these same concerns, when reframed using values more resonant with conservative audiences lead to greater cross-ideological acceptance. For instance, queer rights might be framed around individual freedom and social cohesion, abortion around shared commitments to maternal and child well-being, and migration around economic contributions and secure governance. To empirically test the effectiveness of these alternative framings, a factorial survey experiment could be conducted in which respondents are randomly assigned to different moral framing conditions for each issue. This design would allow researchers to systematically assess how specific moral appeals influence attitudes across ideological groups, offering valuable insights into the potential for moral reframing to foster more constructive political discourse.

Third at the intersection between political communication, moral psychology, and political disagreement, this dissertation presents the first systematic analysis of how the use of morality by political actors influences behavioral responses within parliamentary debates. This work builds upon existing scholarly contributions regarding interruption behavior in parliament (e.g., Ash et al., 2024; Miller & Sutherland, 2023). While previous studies in the field of moral psychology have attested that morality serves as an explanatory factor of political disagreement among citizens, this study shows that it has less impact at higher levels of politics. MPs' political communication in a legislative context is not

driven by their own morality or gut feelings but rather by political strategy, revealing a gap between personal moral values and the strategic thinking required in political decisions. An important implication of this study for the moral psychology literature on political disagreement is the critical role of the audience in political communication. Drawing on the Dual System Theory of human thought (Kahneman, 2011), citizens, as a non-professional audience, tend to react to political disagreement driven by emotions and intuition. In contrast, MPs, as a professional audience, rely more on rationality and logic.

Future research should further explore the broader implications of the strong association between specific moral foundations and political ideology, particularly the potential to infer the ideological orientations of influential non-political actors through their moral rhetoric. Such an approach could be especially relevant when applied to cultural elites, media figures, religious authorities, or corporate representatives. They are individuals who, despite operating outside formal political institutions, exert considerable influence on public opinion and political discourse. For instance, the moral language employed by celebrities on social media, CEOs in public communications, or religious leaders in sermons may offer insight into their ideological leanings and their role in processes of political polarization or mobilization. Leveraging computational text analysis informed by MFT to systematically identify these orientations could deepen our understanding of how moral narratives circulate in society, contribute to the formation of public values, and indirectly shape political behavior.

Fourth, this dissertation makes a significant contribution to the literature on political communication, electoral strategy, and moral psychology. By demonstrating the strategic, context-dependent use of morality, it challenges the prevailing notion that morality in political discourse is static and exclusively ideologically determined (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Instead, it shows that parties adapt their messaging dynamically in response to electoral incentives, contributing to scholarship on strategic framing and campaign mobilization (Druckman et al., 2009; Riker, 1986). This study adds to the literature on vote-seeking behavior by showing that shifts in rhetorical strategies are not only issue-specific or based on moral endorsement (Kraft, 2018) but also involve the moral framing of campaign messages. Finally, the results align with and expand on findings from the populist literature, demonstrating that rhetorical adjustments are not exclusive to outsider candidates or populist parties (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Dai & Kustov, 2022) but are a broader strategic tool used by a wide range of political actors.

Overall, I highlight that moral rhetoric is a powerful and flexible tool in electoral competition, capable of strategic adjustment by political actors. Future research could further explore the nuances of these strategic adaptations, investigating how they manifest and vary across diverse political systems. For instance, do different electoral rules or party structures incentivize distinct uses of moral language?

Additionally, it would be valuable to examine the interplay between moral rhetoric and other prominent persuasive techniques, such as emotional appeals (e.g., generating hope or fear) or populist framing (e.g., pitting the people against the elite).

By establishing that moral communication is not just an ideological signal but also a strategic choice, this work opens new avenues for understanding how political parties make use of it to influence electoral competition. A moral discourse driven by political calculation has significant implications for how political scientists analyze political phenomena such as campaign tactics, coalition-building, or policy debate. Morality emerges as a dynamic, capable of shaping political discourse and influencing the broader functioning of democratic systems. This dissertation thus calls for a more refined understanding of how moral rhetoric is articulated, interpreted, and received across varying political contexts.

The implications are significant. For political actors, recognizing the strategic value of moral rhetoric opens new possibilities for communication and mobilization, while also raising important ethical questions about the use of deeply rooted moral intuitions for political purposes. For citizens, greater awareness of the role of moral language can support more critical engagement with political messages and enhance discernment in a complex and often polarized media environment. As morality continues to give politics its soul and politics gives morality its power, explaining their dynamic interplay is essential for addressing the challenges of modern democratic governance and for better understanding what shapes decision-making and political expression in democracies.

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APPENDIX

A2

Conceptualization and Methdology

8 APPENDIX

8.1 A2-Appendix to Chapter 2

8.1.1 Translation procedure

Table 13: List of words manually deleted during the second step of the translation procedure classified per Moral Foundations.

Moral foundation	Deletion
Care	safecracker; safelight; safebreaker; safecracking; sympathectomy; sympathomimetic; sympatholytic; sympathomimetics; sympatholytics; securiform; securifa; defenestration; defenestrate; guardhouse; guardroom; guardrail; guardage
Harm	harmonic; harmony; harmonica; harmonious; harmonize; harmonium; harmattan; harmonics; harmonization; harmonise; harmonized; harmonizer; harmoniously; harmonist; harmonically; harmonist; harmonically; harmotome; harmonical;harmoniousness; harmonisation; harmonizing; harmonia; harmonies; harmonised; harmaline; harmine; harmonizable; harmost; harmonicon; Harmsworth; Harman; harmel; harmoniser; harmonizes; harmonometer; harmoniphon; Harmon; harmonicas; harmonises; harmonising; harmonizers; warlock; Warlpiri; warlockry; warlocks; Hurter; hurtleberry; abandonware
Fairness	fair-haired; fair-weathered
Cheat	/
Loyalty	Devoto
Betrayal	sequester; enema; enemata; enemas
Authority	honorarium; honoraria; honorariums; honorius; orderlies; motherwort; motherfucker; Motherwell; motherfucking; motherfuckers; motherhouse; motherboards; leaderboard; caster; castellated; Castellan; castellation; castellany; casters; submicroscopic; subminiature; submicron
Subversion	dissentious; dissenterism; subvertebral; agitato
Sanctity	puree; purees; Cleanthes; cleanskin; Saintpaulia; saintologist; decentralization: decentralize; decennary; decennial;decennium; decentralized; decentralise; decentralisation; decentralizing; decenter; decentralised; decennia; decentralising; decene; decennaries; decennoval; decentralizes; decenniums; Churchill; Churchillian
Degradation	sickle; sicklebill; sicklepod; Sickles; Sickler; sickleman; sicklewort; sicklemia; sickbag; taintworm
General	/

Table 14: Classification of Italian duplicates per Moral Foundation.

Duplicate	***in***	***and in***	***and in***	***kept in***
abbandonare; abbandono; abbandoni; abbandona; abbandoniamo; abbandonate; abbandonano; abbandonato; abbandonati	Harm	Betrayal	/	Harm
malato; malata	Harm	Degradation	/	Degradation
giusto; giusta; giusti; giuste	Fairness	General	/	General
onesto; onesta; l'onesto; l'onesta; un'onesta; oneste; onesti	Fairness	Sanctity	General	Fairness
ingiusto; ingiusta; l'ingiusto; l'ingiusta; un'ingiusta; ingiusti; inguiste	Cheat	General	/	General
ingiustizia; l'ingiustizia; un'ingiustizia	Cheat	General	/	Cheat
sleale; sleali	Cheat	Betrayal	/	Cheat
patria; patrie	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
disertore; disertrice	Betrayal	Subversion	/	Betrayal
traditore; traditori; traditrice	Betrayal	Authority	/	Betrayal
casta; caste	Authority	Sanctity	/	Authority
fedele	Authority	Sanctity	/	Authority
dissolutezza	Subversion	Degradation	/	Degradation
incontaminato	Sanctity	Degradation	/	Sanctity

Table 15: Classification of French duplicates per Moral Foundation.

Duplicate	***in***	***and in***	***and in***	***kept in***
abandon; l'abandon; d'abandon	Harm	Betrayal	/	Harm
malades	Harm	Degradation	/	Degradation
préjudice; préjudiciable; préjudiciables; préjudiciablement	Harm	Cheat	/	Harm
droit; droits	Fairness	Sanctity	General	General
droite/droites	Sanctity	General	/	Sanctity
injustifié; injustifiée; injustifiés; injustifiées; injustement	Cheat	General	/	Cheat
patrie; patries	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
vertueux; vertueuse; vertueuse	Sanctity	General	/	Sanctity

Table 16: Classification of German duplicates per Moral Foundation.

Duplicate	***in***	***and in***	***and in***	***kept in***
Duldung	Harm	Fairness	/	Fairness
ertraeglich; ertraegliche; ertraeglichem; ertraeglichen; ertraeglicher; ertraegliches; erträglich; erträgliche; erträgliches; erträglichen; erträglichem; erträglicher	Harm	Fairness	/	Fairness
nachteilig; nachteilige; nachteiliges; nachteiliger; nachteiligen; nachteiligem	Harm	Cheat	/	Cheat
schadet	Harm	General	/	Harm
Verderber; Verderbers; Verderberin	Harm	Degradation	/	Degradation
verlassen	Harm	Betrayal	/	Harm
gerecht; gerechte; gerechtem; gerechten; gerechter; gerechtes	Fair	General	/	General
Gerechtigkeit	Fair	General	/	Fairness
richtig; richtige; richtigem; richtigen; richtiger; richtiges	Fair	General	/	General
betrogen; betrogene; betrogenem; betrogenen; betrogener; betrogenes	Cheat	Betrayal	/	Cheat
Betrueger; Betruegers; Betrüger; Betrügers	Cheat	Betrayal	/	Cheat
Heimat	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
Loyalitaeten; Loyalitäten	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
treu; treue; treuem; treuen; treuer; treues	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
Verehrer; Verehrerin	Loyalty	Authority	/	Authority
aufrecht; aufrechte; aufrechtem; aufrechten; aufrechter; aufrechtes	Sanctity	General	/	Sanctity
makellos; makellose; makellosem; makellosen; makelloser; makelloses	Sanctity	Degradation	/	Sanctity

Table 17: Classification of Spanish duplicates per Moral Foundation.

Duplicate	***in***	***and in***	***and in***	***kept in***
amistad	Care	Loyalty	/	Loyalty
valores	Care	General	/	General
abandonar; abandono; abandonas; abandona; abandonamos; abandonáis; abandonan; abandonado; abandonada; abandonados; abandonadas; abandonando	Harm	Betrayal	/	Harm
enfermo; enferma; enfermos; enfermas	Harm	Degradation	/	Degradation
explotado; explotada; explotados; explotadas	Harm	General	/	Harm
perjudico; perjudicas; perjudica; perjudicamos; perjudicáis; perjudican; perjudicado; perjudicada; perjudicados; perjudicadas; perjudicando; perjudicar	Harm	Cheat	/	Harm
perjudicial; perjudicialmente	Harm	Cheat	/	Harm
perjuicio; perjuicios	Harm	Cheat	/	Harm
tolerancia	Harm	Fairness	/	Fairness
correcto; correctas; correcta; correctos	Fairness	General	/	Fairness
honesto; honesta; honestos; honestas	Fairness	Sanctity	General	Fairness
justo; justa; justas; justos	Fairness	General	/	General
justicia	Fairness	General	/	Fairness
injusto; injusta; injustos; injustas	Cheat	General	/	General
infiel; infieles	Cheat	Subversion	/	Subversion
enganar; engano; enganas; enganamos; enganaís; enganan; enganando; enganado; enganada; enganados; eganadas	Cheat	Betrayal	/	Betrayal
enganador; enganadora	Cheat	Betrayal	/	Betrayal
leal; leales	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
lealtad; lealtades	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
patria; patrias	Loyalty	Authority	/	Loyalty
piadoso; piadosa; piadosos; piadosas	Loyalty	Sanctity	/	Sanctity
dersertor; desertora	Betrayal	Subversion	/	Betrayal
casta; castas	Authority	Sanctity	/	Authority
ilegal; ilegales	Subversion	General	/	Subversion
desenfrenado; desenfrenadas; desenfrenada; desenfrenados	Subversion	Degradation	/	Degradation
desenfrenadamente	Subversion	Degradation	/	Degradation
inmaculada; inmaculado; inmaculadas; inmaculados	Sanctity	Degradation	/	Sanctity
inocente; inocentes	Sanctity	General	/	Sanctity
limpio	Sanctity	Degradation	/	Sanctity
recto; recta; rectos; rectas	Sanctity	General	/	Sanctity

8.1.2 Validation procedure: Corpora description

Table 18: Officially translated Party Manifestos in Canada.

Election Campaign	Political parties
2004	Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada
2006	Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada; New Democratic Party; Green Party of Canada
2008	Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada; New Democratic Party; Green Party of Canada; Bloc Québécois
2011	Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada; New Democratic Party; Green Party of Canada; Bloc Québécois
2015	Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada; New Democratic Party; Green Party of Canada
2019	Liberal Party; Conservative Party of Canada; New Democratic Party; People's Party of Canada

Table 19: Officially translated EU speeches contained in the *EU-Speeches French Corpus* and *EU-Speeches German Corpus*.

Speaker	Speeches
von der Leyen	01-07-2022 (Brussels) / 02-06-2022 (Bratislava) / 04-05-2022 (Strasbourg) 04-07-2022 (Lugano) / 05-05-2022 (Warsaw) / 05-10-2022 (Strasbourg) 06-04-2022 (Strasbourg) / 06-05-2021 (Brussels) / 06-05-2022 (Barcelona) 06-07-2022 (Strasbourg) / 07-06-2022 (Strasbourg) / 07-09-2022 (Brussels) 08-06-2022 (Strasbourg) / 09-05-2022 (Strasbourg) / 10-10-2022 (Tallinn) 11-03-2022 (Versailles) / 12-10-2022 (Brussels) / 13-05-2020 (Brussels) 14-07-2022 (Skopje) / 14-09-2022 (Strasbourg) / 15-09-2022 (Strasbourg) 16-04-2020 (Brussels) / 16-09-2020 (Brussels) / 17-01-2022 (Strasbourg) 19-12-2021 (Milan) / 21-06-2022 (Brussels) / 22-06-2022 (Brussels) 23-08-2022 (Brussels) / 24-04-2022 (NewDelhi) / 24-05-2022 (Davos) 25-04-2022 (NewDelhi) / 26-03-2020 (Brussels) / 27-05-2020 (Brussels) 28-11-2020 (Brussels) / 29-08-2022 (Bled) / 29-09-2022 (Athens) 30-08-2022 (Copenhagen)
Katainen	07-09-2015 (Brussels)
Barroso	11-09-2013 (Strasbourg) / 12-09-2012 (Strasbourg) / 21-10-2014 (unknown) 28-09-2011 (Strasbourg)
Ciolos	12-04-2010 (Brussels)
Juncker	12-09-2018 (Strasbourg) / 13-09-2017 (Brussels) / 14-09-2016 (Strasbourg) 22-10-2019 (Strasbourg)
Barnier	26-02-2020 (Brussels)

Table 20: Officially translated EU speeches contained in the *EU-Speeches Italian Corpus*.

Speaker	**Speeches**
von der Leyen	06-05-2021 (Brussels) / 13-05-2020 (Brussels) / 13-06-2020 (Brussels) 14-09-2022 (Strasbourg) / 15-09-2022 (Strasbourg) / 16-04-2020 (Brussels) 16-09-2020 (Brussels) / 17-01-2022 (Strasbourg) / 19-12-2021 (Milan) 26-03-2020 (Brussels) / 27-05-2020 (Brussels) / 28-11-2020 (Brussels)
Katainen	07-09-2015 (Brussels)
Barroso	11-09-2013 (Strasbourg) / 12-09-2012 (Strasbourg) / 21-10-2014 (unknown) 28-09-2011 (Strasbourg)
Ciolos	12-04-2010 (Brussels)
Juncker	12-09-2018 (Strasbourg) / 13-09-2017 (Brussels) / 14-09-2016 (Strasbourg) 22-10-2019 (Strasbourg)
Gentiloni	13-06-2020 (Brussels)
Tajani	18-04-2012 (Strasbourg)
Barnier	26-02-2020 (Brussels)

Table 21: Officially translated EU speeches contained in the *EU-Speeches Spanish Corpus*.

Speaker	**Speeches**
von der Leyen	06-05-2022 (Barcelona) / 11-03-2022 (Versailles) / 12-10-2022 (Brussels) 13-05-2020 (Brussels) / 14-09-2022 (Strasbourg) / 15-09-2022 (Strasbourg) 16-04-2020 (Brussels) / 16-09-2020 (Brussels) / 26-03-2020 (Brussels) 26-10-2020 (Brussels) / 27-05-2020 (Brussels)
Malmström	04-06-2014 (Zaragoza)
Katainen	07-09-2015 (Brussels)
Vassiliou	10-02-2014 (Havana)
Barroso	11-09-2013 (Strasbourg) / 12-09-2012 (Strasbourg) / 21-10-2014 (unknown) 28-09-2011 (Strasbourg)
Ciolos	12-04-2010 (Brussels)
Juncker	12-09-2018 (Strasbourg) / 13-09-2017 (Brussels) / 14-09-2016 (Strasbourg) 22-10-2019 (Strasbourg)
Tajani	18-04-2012 (Strasbourg) / 23-06-2010 (NewYork)

8.1.3 Validation procedure: Results for *EU-Reports Corpus 2 (main)*

Table 22: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Virtues* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.43** [.35, .49]			
3. French	.41** [.33, .48]	.94** [.93, .95]		
4. German	.33** [.25, .41]	.85** [.82, .87]	.84** [.81, .86]	
5. Spanish	.49** [.42, .55]	.89** [.87, .91]	.93** [.91, .94]	.81** [.78, .84]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 23: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Vices* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.52** [.46, .58]			
3. French	.67** [.62, .71]	.75** [.70, .78]		
4. German	.74** [.70, .78]	.75** [.71, .79]	.86** [.83, .88]	
5. Spanish	.59** [.53, .64]	.64** [.59, .69]	.82** [.79, .85]	.80** [.76, .83]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 24: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Care/Harm* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.57** [.50, .62]			
3. French	.54** [.48, .60]	.94** [.92, .95]		
4. German	.53** [.47, .59]	.80** [.76, .83]	.82** [.79, .85]	
5. Spanish	.52** [.45, .58]	.79** [.75, .82]	.78** [.74, .81]	.65** [.59, .69]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 25: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Fairness/Cheat* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.74** [.69, .77]			
3. French	.63** [.57, .68]	.73** [.69, .77]		
4. German	.59** [.53, .64]	.76** [.73, .80]	.71** [.66, .75]	
5. Spanish	.75** [.71, .79]	.88** [.86, .90]	.85** [.82, .87]	.72** [.68, .76]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 26: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Loyalty/Betrayal* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.48** [.41, .54]			
3. French	.50** [.44, .57]	.92** [.90, .93]		
4. German	.53** [.46, .59]	.87** [.84, .89]	.83** [.80, .85]	
5. Spanish	.47** [.40, .54]	.83** [.80, .85]	.90** [.88, .91]	.82** [.79, .85]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 27: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Authority/Subversion* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main)*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.56** [.49, .61]			
3. French	.60** [.54, .65]	.89** [.87, .91]		
4. German	.55** [.48, .61]	.84** [.81, .86]	.86** [.84, .88]	
5. Spanish	.58** [.52, .63]	.79** [.75, .82]	.87** [.85, .89]	.80** [.77, .83]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 28: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Sanctity/Degradation* computed using the*EU-Reports corpus 2 (main).*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.55** [.49, .61]			
3. French	.24** [.15, .32]	.45** [.38, .51]		
4. German	.50** [.43, .56]	.79** [.76, .82]	.43** [.35, .50]	
5. Spanish	.59** [.53, .64]	.84** [.81, .86]	.46** [.39, .53]	.71** [.66, .75]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 29: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *General* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 2 (main).*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.70** [.66, .74]			
3. French	.60** [.54, .65]	.53** [.47, .59]		
4. German	.29** [.21, .37]	.34** [.26, .42]	.44** [.36, .50]	
5. Spanish	.43** [.36, .50]	.45** [.38, .52]	.54** [.47, .60]	.61** [.55, .66]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

8.1.4 Validation procedure: Results for *EU-Reports Corpus 1*

Table 30: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Virtues* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.35** [.28, .41]			
3. French	.37** [.30, .43]	.98** [.98, .98]		
4. German	.27** [.20, .34]	.76** [.72, .79]	.75** [.72, .78]	
5. Spanish	.43** [.36, .49]	.94** [.93, .95]	.94** [.93, .95]	.72** [.68, .75]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 31: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Vices* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.58** [.53, .63]			
3. French	.68** [.64, .72]	.86** [.84, .88]		
4. German	.78** [.74, .80]	.79** [.76, .81]	.87** [.85, .89]	
5. Spanish	.71** [.67, .74]	.81** [.78, .83]	.88** [.86, .90]	.89** [.87, .90]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 32: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Care/Harm* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1.*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.68** [.64, .72]			
3. French	.73** [.69, .76]	.91** [.90, .92]		
4. German	.64** [.59, .68]	.84** [.81, .86]	.90** [.88, .91]	
5. Spanish	.66** [.62, .71]	.85** [.83, .87]	.93** [.92, .94]	.78** [.75, .81]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 33: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Fairness/Cheat* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1.*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.75** [.71, .78]			
3. French	.59** [.54, .64]	.65** [.60, .69]		
4. German	.61** [.56, .66]	.86** [.84, .88]	.70** [.65, .73]	
5. Spanish	.81** [.79, .84]	.91** [.90, .93]	.78** [.75, .81]	.84** [.82, .86]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 34: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Loyalty/Betrayal* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.68** [.63, .72]			
3. French	.61** [.56, .65]	.81** [.79, .84]		
4. German	.68** [.63, .72]	.75** [.72, .78]	.64** [.59, .68]	
5. Spanish	.69** [.65, .73]	.80** [.77, .82]	.90** [.88, .91]	.67** [.62, .71]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 35: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Authority/Subversion* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.54** [.48, .59]			
3. French	.70** [.66, .74]	.79** [.76, .82]		
4. German	.73** [.69, .76]	.83** [.81, .86]	.87** [.85, .89]	
5. Spanish	.77** [.74, .80]	.73** [.69, .77]	.91** [.89, .92]	.87** [.85, .89]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 36: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Sanctity/Degradation* computed using the*EU-Reports corpus 1.*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.32** [.24, .38]			
3. French	.14** [.07, .22]	.17** [.10, .25]		
4. German	.44** [.37, .50]	.77** [.74, .80]	.18** [.10, .25]	
5. Spanish	.48** [.42, .54]	.64** [.59, .68]	.17** [.10, .25]	.75** [.71, .78]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 37: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *General* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 1.*

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.98** [.97, .98]			
3. French	.71** [.67, .74]	.72** [.69, .76]		
4. German	.47** [.41, .53]	.49** [.43, .54]	.51** [.45, .57]	
5. Spanish	.94** [.93, .95]	.94** [.93, .95]	.79** [.75, .81]	.48** [.42, .54]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

8.1.5 Validation procedure: Results for *EU-Reports Corpus 3*

Table 38: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Virtues* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.91** [.87, .94]			
3. French	.91** [.87, .94]	.98** [.96, .98]		
4. German	.91** [.86, .94]	.96** [.94, .97]	.96** [.94, .97]	
5. Spanish	.91** [.87, .94]	.98** [.97, .99]	.98** [.96, .98]	.96** [.94, .97]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 39: Pearson's correlation coefficients for *Vices* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.84** [.76, .89]			
3. French	.97** [.96, .98]	.81** [.73, .87]		
4. German	.95** [.93, .97]	.81** [.73, .87]	.93** [.90, .96]	
5. Spanish	.91** [.86, .94]	.76** [.66, .84]	.91** [.86, .94]	.90** [.86, .93]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 40: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Care/Harm* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.95** [.93, .97]			
3. French	.93** [.89, .95]	.95** [.92, .97]		
4. German	.81** [.73, .87]	.84** [.77, .89]	.84** [.77, .89]	
5. Spanish	.85** [.78, .90]	.86** [.79, .90]	.90** [.86, .94]	.80** [.71, .86]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 41: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Fairness/Cheat* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.84** [.77, .89]			
3. French	.69** [.56, .78]	.73** [.62, .81]		
4. German	.71** [.59, .80]	.89** [.84, .93]	.73** [.61, .81]	
5. Spanish	.86** [.80, .91]	.96** [.95, .98]	.84** [.76, .89]	.89** [.84, .93]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 42: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Loyalty/Betrayal* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.66** [.52, .76]			
3. French	.68** [.56, .78]	.91** [.87, .94]		
4. German	.65** [.51, .75]	.84** [.77, .89]	.72** [.60, .80]	
5. Spanish	.72** [.60, .81]	.76** [.65, .83]	.83** [.75, .88]	.60** [.45, .72]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 43: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Authority/Subversion* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.76** [.66, .83]			
3. French	.80** [.71, .86]	.98** [.96, .98]		
4. German	.94** [.91, .96]	.86** [.80, .91]	.90** [.86, .94]	
5. Spanish	.84** [.76, .89]	.95** [.93, .97]	.98** [.96, .98]	.94** [.90, .96]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 44: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *Sanctity/Degradation* computed using the*EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.36** [.17, .53]			
3. French	.20 [-.00, .39]	.30** [.10, .48]		
4. German	.09 [-.12, .29]	.09 [-.12, .29]	.66** [.53, .77]	
5. Spanish	.31** [.12, .49]	.77** [.67, .84]	.51** [.35, .65]	.16 [-.05, .35]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

Table 45: Pearson's correlation coefficients for the moral foundation *General* computed using the *EU-Reports corpus 3*.

	1. English	2. Italian	3. French	4. German
1. English				
2. Italian	.43** [.24, .58]			
3. French	.44** [.26, .59]	.75** [.64, .83]		
4. German	.25* [.04, .43]	.71** [.59, .80]	.54** [.38, .67]	
5. Spanish	.36** [.17, .52]	.92** [.89, .95]	.74** [.63, .82]	.64** [.50, .74]

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* indicates p <.05. ** indicates p <.01.

A3

Morality and Political Ideology

8.2 A3-Appendix to Chapter 3

Table 46: Logit models with country fixed-effects performed on the overall sample of manifesto statements (H1/H2).

	Dependent variable:				
	Care-Harm	Fairness-Cheating	Authority-Subversion	Loyalty-Betrayal	Sanctity-Degradation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Left-right generic	-0.01^{*}	-0.08^{***}	0.02^{***}	0.03^{***}	-0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Incumbency	0.05^{***}	-0.10^{***}	-0.04^{**}	0.11^{***}	-0.09^{***}
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Number of words	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Election year	0.01^{***}	0.01^{***}	-0.00	-0.00^{**}	0.01^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Log Likelihood	−112065.09	−89748.44	−84903.65	−89572.02	−40495.73
Deviance	224130.19	179496.87	169807.30	179144.04	80991.46
Num. obs.	329,004	329,004	329,004	329,004	329,004

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 47: Logit models with country fixed-effects performed on manifesto statements relative to socio-cultural issues (H4.1).

	Dependent variable:				
	Care-Harm	Fairness-Cheating	Authority-Subversion	Loyalty-Betrayal	Sanctity-Degradation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Galtan	0.06^{***}	-0.07^{***}	0.02^{*}	0.06^{***}	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Incumbency	0.03	-0.13^{***}	-0.12^{**}	0.10^{**}	-0.06
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Number of words	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Election year	-0.00	0.04^{***}	-0.02^{***}	-0.02^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-13756.66	-16670.51	-10889.10	-11902.26	-5274.53
Deviance	27513.32	33341.01	21778.21	23804.52	10549.06
Num. obs.	36,249	36,249	36,249	36,249	36,249

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 48: Logit models with country fixed-effects performed on manifesto statements relative to socio-cultural issues (H4.2).

	Dependent variable:				
	Care-Harm	Fairness-Cheating	Authority-Subversion	Loyalty-Betrayal	Sanctity-Degradation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Left-right generic	0.04^{***}	-0.08^{***}	0.04^{***}	0.08^{***}	-0.03^{*}
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Incumbency	0.03	-0.12^{***}	-0.14^{***}	0.08^{*}	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Number of words	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Election year	-0.00	0.04^{***}	-0.02^{***}	-0.02^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-13771.22	-16676.96	-10883.58	-11894.12	-5272.79
Deviance	27542.43	33353.91	21767.15	23788.24	10545.57
Num. obs.	36,249	36,249	36,249	36,249	36,249

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 49: Logit models with country fixed-effects performed on manifesto statements relative to economic issues(H5.1).

	Dependent variable:				
	Care-Harm	Fairness-Cheating	Authority-Subversion	Loyalty-Betrayal	Sanctity-Degradation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Left-right economic	-0.04^{***}	-0.05^{***}	-0.03^{***}	0.05^{***}	-0.06^{***}
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Incumbency	0.08	-0.08	-0.04	0.08	-0.02
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.08)
Number of words	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Election year	0.02^{***}	0.02^{***}	0.01^{*}	0.01^{*}	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-10354.72	-8433.26	-9947.57	-7423.96	-3899.79
Deviance	20709.44	16866.51	19895.14	14847.93	7799.57
Num. obs.	36,082	36,082	36,082	36,082	36,082

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 50: Logit models with country fixed-effects performed on manifesto statements relative to economic issues (H5.2).

	Dependent variable:				
	Care-Harm	Fairness-Cheating	Authority-Subversion	Loyalty-Betrayal	Sanctity-Degradation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Left-right generic	-0.04^{***}	-0.06^{***}	-0.03^{**}	0.05^{***}	-0.08^{***}
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Incumbency	0.07	-0.08	-0.05	0.09	-0.01
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.08)
Number of words	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}	0.03^{***}
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Election year	0.02^{***}	0.02^{***}	0.01^{*}	0.01^{*}	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Log Likelihood	-10355.89	-8434.26	-9949.31	-7423.79	-3898.09
Deviance	20711.79	16868.52	19898.62	14847.57	7796.19
Num. obs.	36,082	36,082	36,082	36,082	

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

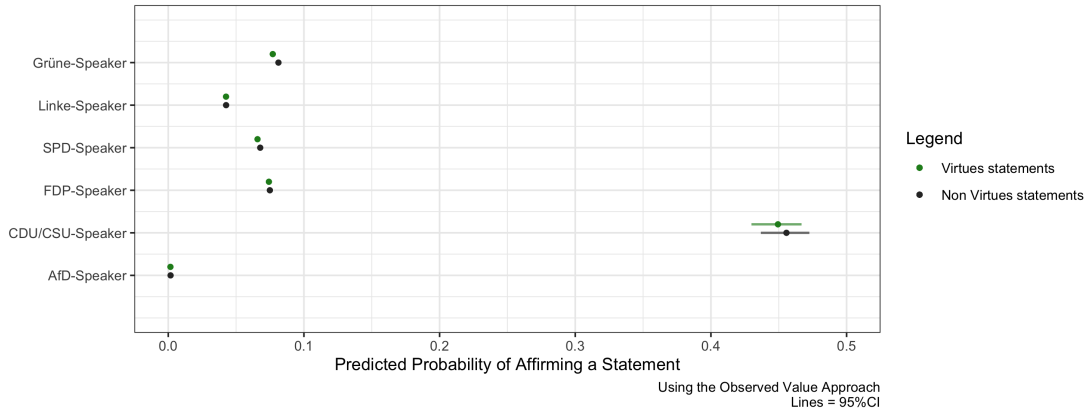
A4

Reactions to Morality

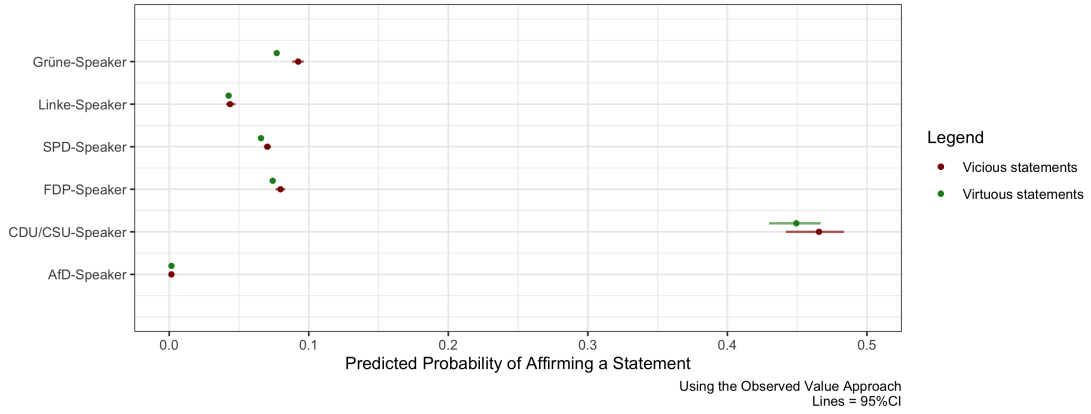
8.3 A4-Appendix to Chapter 4

8.3.1 Figures

Figure 34: Predicted probability of Virtues being affirmed per speaker's party.



(a) Virtues vs. Non-Virtues.



(b) Virtues vs. Vices.

8.3.2 Regression Tables

Table 51: Logistic Regression showing the results for the *Ideology Hypothesis* (Care Statements).

	Dependent variable:	
	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)
Care Statement	0.033**	0.085***
	(0.017)	(0.022)
AfD Reacting	6.511***	0.953***
	(0.044)	(0.052)
FDP Reacting	3.437***	4.157***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
SPD Reacting	3.943***	3.568***
	(0.007)	(0.008)
Linke Reacting	3.755***	3.964***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Grüne Reacting	3.716***	3.908***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
Day	0.014***	−0.073***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Women speaking	−0.059***	0.313***
	(0.006)	(0.007)
Reacting Age	−0.003***	0.004***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
AfD Reacting x Care-Harm Statement	0.005	−0.222
	(0.187)	(0.230)
FDP Reacting x Care-Harm Statement	−0.062	−0.055
	(0.040)	(0.042)
SPD Reacting x Care-Harm Statement	−0.081**	−0.032
	(0.033)	(0.036)
Linke Reacting x Care-Harm Statement	−0.095*	−0.022
	(0.048)	(0.050)
Grüne Reacting x Care-Harm Statement	−0.016	−0.103**
	(0.038)	(0.040)
Constant	−29.936***	137.781***
	(4.665)	(5.280)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−578,014.200	−443,630.500
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,156,094.000	887,327.000
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 52: Logistic Regression showing the results for the *Ideology Hypothesis* (Fairness Statements).

	Dependent variable:	
	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)
Fairness Statement	0.046***	0.074***
	(0.017)	(0.023)
AfD Reacting	6.521***	0.934***
	(0.044)	(0.052)
FDP Reacting	3.440***	4.153***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
SPD Reacting	3.939***	3.572***
	(0.007)	(0.008)
Linke Reacting	3.752***	3.966***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Grüne Reacting	3.719***	3.904***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
Day	0.014***	−0.073***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Women speaking	−0.059***	0.313***
	(0.006)	(0.007)
Reacting Age	−0.003***	0.004***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
AfD Reacting x Fairness-Cheating Statement	−0.234	0.178
	(0.207)	(0.238)
FDP Reacting x Fairness-Cheating Statement	−0.136***	0.029
	(0.041)	(0.043)
SPD Reacting x Fairness-Cheating Statement	0.003	−0.121***
	(0.034)	(0.037)
Linke Reacting x Fairness-Cheating Statement	−0.036	−0.065
	(0.053)	(0.055)
Grüne Reacting x Fairness-Cheating Statement	−0.084**	−0.022
	(0.039)	(0.042)
Constant	−29.922***	137.708***
	(4.665)	(5.280)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−578,010.100	−443,629.300
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,156,086.000	887,324.600
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 53: Logistic Regression showing the results for the *Ideology Hypothesis* (Loyalty Statements).

	Dependent variable:	
	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)
Loyalty Statement	0.045**	0.081***
	(0.020)	(0.026)
AfD Reacting	6.513***	0.940***
	(0.043)	(0.052)
FDP Reacting	3.437***	4.154***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
SPD Reacting	3.941***	3.569***
	(0.007)	(0.008)
Linke Reacting	3.752***	3.964***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Grüne Reacting	3.720***	3.903***
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Day	0.014***	−0.073***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Women speaking	−0.059***	0.313***
	(0.006)	(0.007)
Reacting Age	−0.003***	0.004***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
AfD Reacting x Loyalty-Betrayal Statement	−0.051	0.024
	(0.232)	(0.264)
FDP Reacting x Loyalty-Betrayal Statement	−0.113**	0.017
	(0.048)	(0.050)
SPD Reacting x Loyalty-Betrayal Statement	−0.056	−0.056
	(0.039)	(0.043)
Linke Reacting x Loyalty-Betrayal Statement	−0.058	−0.050
	(0.062)	(0.065)
Grüne Reacting x Loyalty-Betrayal Statement	−0.149***	0.018
	(0.046)	(0.049)
Constant	−29.917***	137.722***
	(4.665)	(5.280)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−578,012.000	−443,630.800
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,156,090.000	887,327.500
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 54: Logistic Regression showing the results for the *Ideology Hypothesis* (Authority Statements).

	Dependent variable:	
	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)
Authority Statement	−0.047***	−0.093***
	(0.014)	(0.019)
AfD Reacting	6.522***	0.917***
	(0.045)	(0.053)
FDP Reacting	3.430***	4.151***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
SPD Reacting	3.932***	3.566***
	(0.007)	(0.008)
Linke Reacting	3.749***	3.956***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Grüne Reacting	3.711***	3.900***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
Day	0.014***	−0.073***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Women speaking	−0.059***	0.313***
	(0.006)	(0.007)
Reacting Age	−0.003***	0.004***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
AfD Reacting x Authority-Subversion Statement	−0.127	0.302*
	(0.152)	(0.179)
FDP Reacting x Authority-Subversion Statement	0.058*	0.044
	(0.034)	(0.036)
SPD Reacting x Authority-Subversion Statement	0.095***	0.012
	(0.028)	(0.031)
Linke Reacting x Authority-Subversion Statement	0.021	0.097**
	(0.042)	(0.044)
Grüne Reacting x Authority-Subversion Statement	0.073**	0.040
	(0.033)	(0.035)
Constant	−29.938***	137.755***
	(4.665)	(5.279)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−578,010.000	−443,619.600
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,156,086.000	887,305.200
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 55: Logistic Regression showing the results for the *Ideology Hypothesis* (Sanctity Statements).

	Dependent variable:	
	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)
Sanctity Statement	0.032	0.029
	(0.025)	(0.032)
AfD Reacting	6.507***	0.937***
	(0.043)	(0.051)
FDP Reacting	3.434***	4.154***
	(0.009)	(0.009)
SPD Reacting	3.941***	3.565***
	(0.007)	(0.008)
Linke Reacting	3.749***	3.965***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Grüne Reacting	3.716***	3.904***
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Day	0.014***	−0.073***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Women speaking	−0.059***	0.313***
	(0.006)	(0.007)
Reacting Age	−0.003***	0.004***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
AfD Reacting x Sanctity-Degradation Statement	0.191	0.160
	(0.302)	(0.304)
FDP Reacting x Sanctity-Degradation Statement	−0.024	0.010
	(0.059)	(0.062)
SPD Reacting x Sanctity-Degradation Statement	−0.102**	0.090*
	(0.047)	(0.052)
Linke Reacting x Sanctity-Degradation Statement	0.028	−0.098
	(0.069)	(0.072)
Grüne Reacting x Sanctity-Degradation Statement	0.003	−0.039
	(0.054)	(0.058)
Constant	−29.895***	137.705***
	(4.665)	(5.279)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−578,015.600	−443,635.600
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,156,097.000	887,337.200
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 56: Logistic Regression showing robustness results for the *Reaction Hypothesis*.

	Dependent variable:			
	Reaction	Interruption	Affirmation	Reaction
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Moral Statement	−0.003	0.006	−0.013	−0.004
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.007)
AfD Speaker	−0.062***	0.669***	−3.636***	−0.064***
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.084)	(0.015)
FDP Speaker	0.160***	0.018**	0.336***	0.154***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.013)
SPD Speaker	0.027***	−0.123***	0.250***	0.027***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Linke Speaker	−0.232***	−0.099***	−0.340***	−0.238***
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Grüne Speaker	0.114***	−0.167***	0.446***	0.109***
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.013)
date	−0.034***	−0.002	−0.070***	−0.045***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Women speaking	−0.050***	−0.092***	0.019***	−0.058***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Speaker Age	0.0002	−0.004***	0.005***	0.0005***
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0002)
Speech count	−0.0002***	−0.0001***	−0.0002***	
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	
Faction size				−0.00004
				(0.0001)
AfD Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.098***	−0.096***	−0.087	−0.096***
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.191)	(0.026)
FDP Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.011	−0.029*	0.024	−0.011
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.013)
SPD Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.010	−0.010	−0.005	−0.010
	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.011)
Linke Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.041**	−0.072***	0.008	−0.040**
	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.028)	(0.018)
Grüne Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.007	−0.012	0.004	−0.006
	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.013)
Constant	64.130***	1.760	132.417***	86.488***
	(2.987)	(3.842)	(4.454)	(2.970)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	3,204,404	3,204,404	3,204,404	3,204,404
Log Likelihood	−1,271,058.000	−870,468.200	−673,252.100	−1,274,392.000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,542,184.000	1,741,004.000	1,346,572.000	2,548,852.000

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 57: Logistic Regression showing the results of the *Reaction Hypothesis* and *Political disagreement Hypothesis* excluding the last term.

	Dependent variable:				
	Reaction	Interruption	Affirmation	Interruption	Affirmation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Moral Statement	0.009	0.015	0.003		
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.013)		
Vices Statement				0.061***	
				(0.018)	
Virtues Statement					−0.026*
					(0.014)
FDP Speaker	0.190***	0.039***	0.395***	0.035***	0.394***
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.009)
SPD Speaker	0.011**	−0.114***	0.221***	−0.114***	0.219***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Linke Speaker	−0.300***	−0.123***	−0.497***	−0.129***	−0.502***
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.015)
Grüne Speaker	0.086***	−0.166***	0.415***	−0.168***	0.416***
	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Day	−0.036***	−0.005**	−0.070***	−0.005**	−0.070***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Women speaking	−0.058***	−0.088***	0.009	−0.088***	0.009
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Speaker Age	0.001***	−0.003***	0.006***	−0.003***	0.006***
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)
FDP Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.014	−0.041**	0.033		
	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.021)		
SPD Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.009	−0.009	−0.003		
	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.018)		
Linke Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.055**	−0.068***	−0.033		
	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.036)		
Grüne Speaker x Moral Statement	−0.013	−0.011	−0.009		
	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.021)		
FDP Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.075**	
				(0.032)	
SPD Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.036	
				(0.027)	
Linke Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.140***	
				(0.050)	
Grüne Speaker x Vices Statement				−0.008	
				(0.035)	

FDP Speaker x Virtues Statement					0.042*
					(0.023)
SPD Speaker x Virtues Statement					0.015
					(0.020)
Linke Speaker x Virtues Statement					−0.006
					(0.039)
Grüne Speaker x Virtues Statement					−0.012
					(0.023)
Constant	68.386***	7.055*	133.601***	7.078*	133.584***
	(3.260)	(4.160)	(4.932)	(4.160)	(4.932)
Term Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	2,734,606	2,734,606	2,734,606	2,734,606	2,734,606
Log Likelihood	−1,054,959.000	−733,053.600	−546,704.000	−733,049.100	−546,701.600
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,109,978.000	1,466,167.000	1,093,468.000	1,466,158.000	1,093,463.000
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

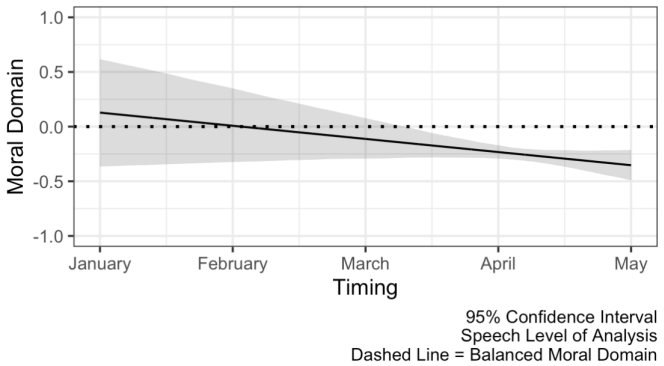
A5

Morality and Political Strategy

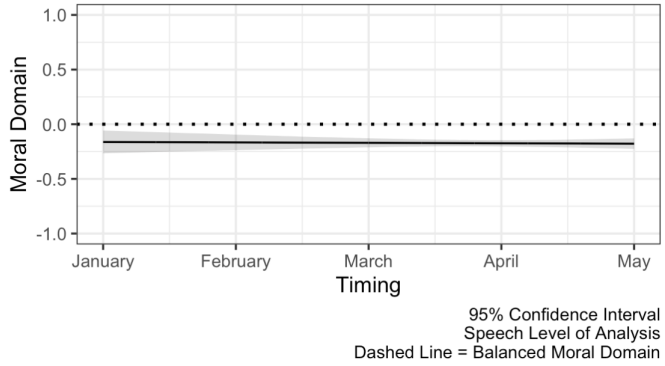
8.4 A5-Appendix to Chapter 5

8.4.1 Figures

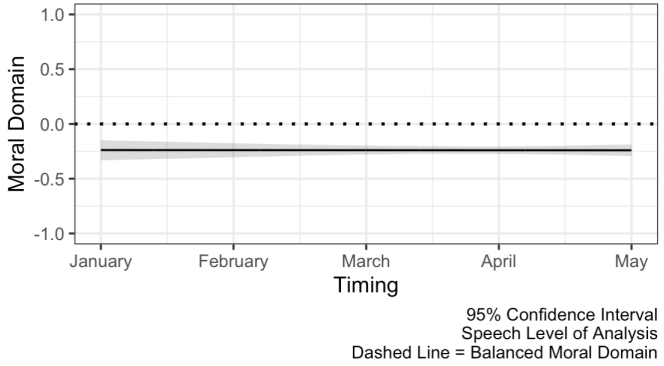
Figure 35: Simulated Moral Domain of left-wing political parties over the course of an election campaign.



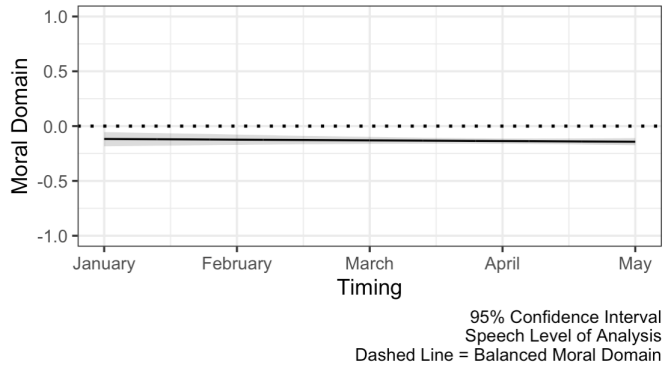
(1) Europe Écologie Les Verts



(2) La France Insoumise

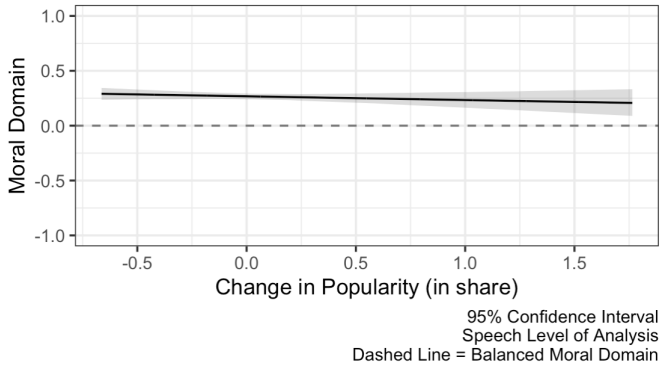


(3) Parti Communiste Francais

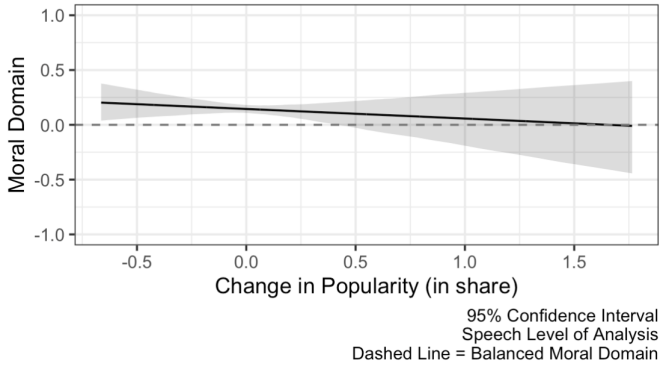


(4) Parti Socialiste

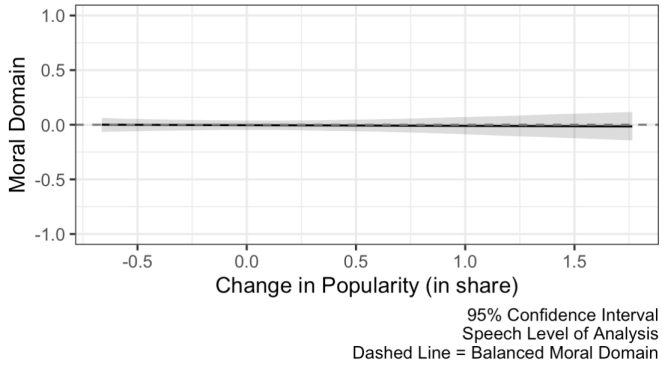
Figure 36: Simulated Moral Domain of political parties when experiencing a change in popularity (in share).



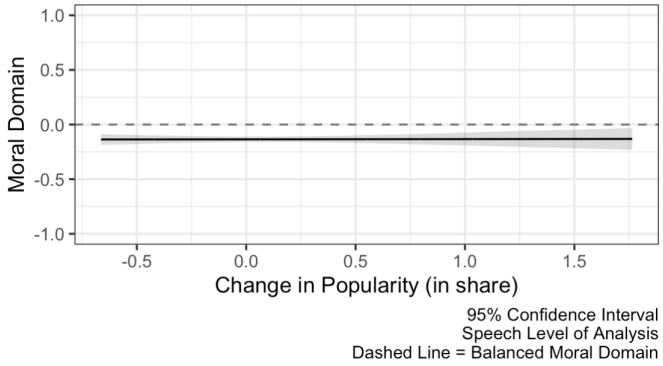
(1) Rassemblement National (or FN)



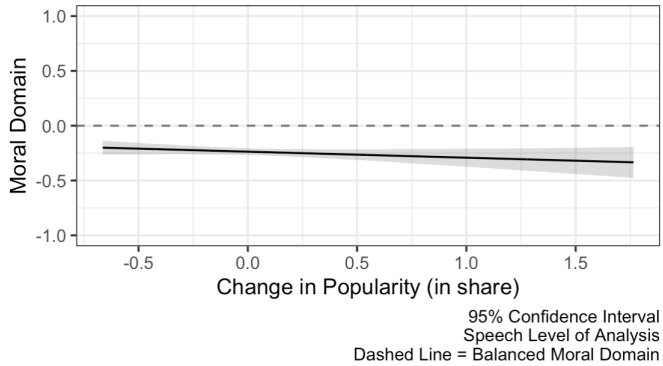
(2) Reconquete



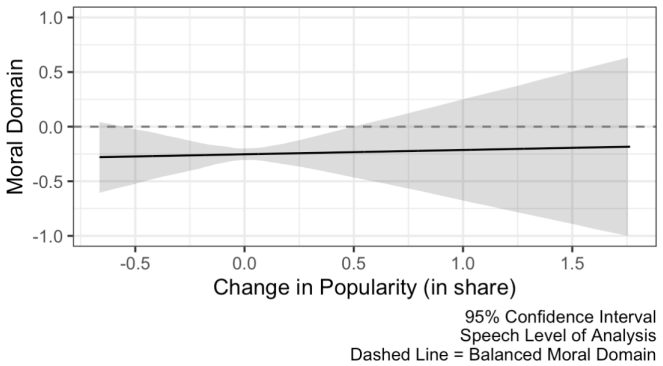
(3) Union pour la Démocracie Francaise



(4) Parti Socialiste

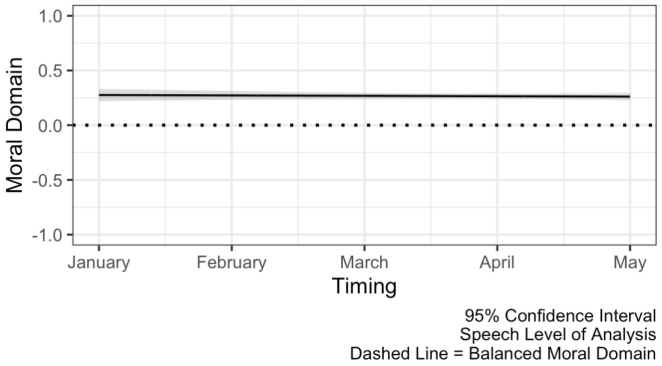


(5) Parti Communiste Francais

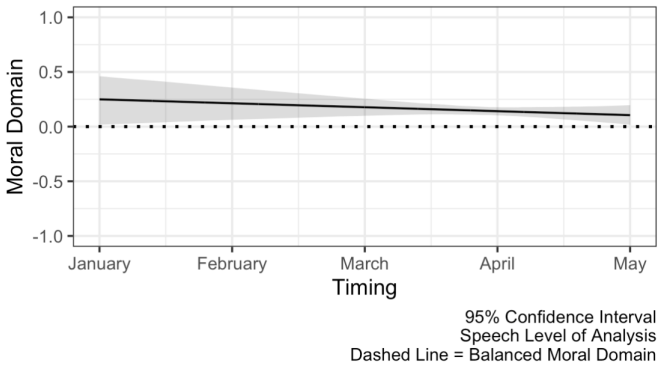


(6) Europe Écologie Les Verts

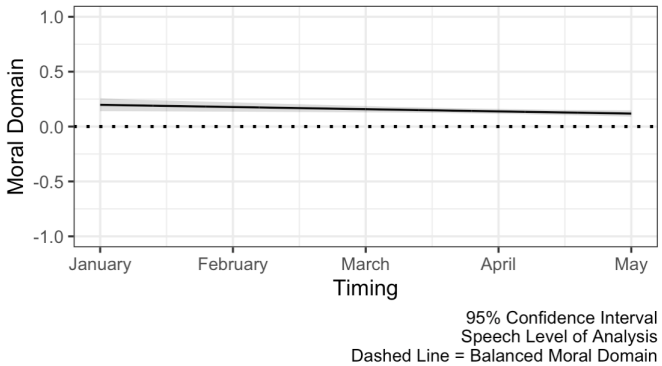
Figure 37: Simulated Moral Domain of right-wing political parties over the course of an election campaign.



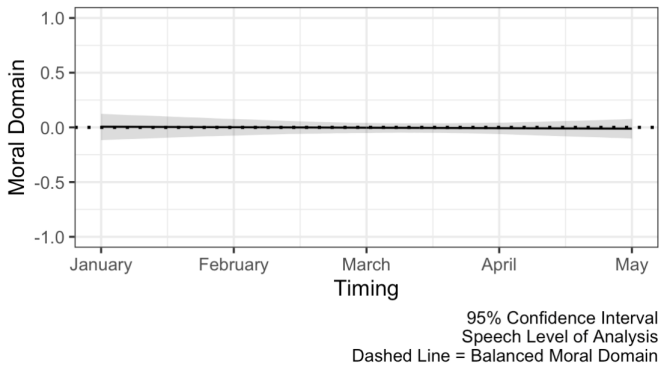
(1) Rassemblement National (or FN)



(2) Reconquete



(3) Les Républicains (or UMP)



(4) Union pour la Démocracie Francaise

8.4.2 Regression Tables

Table 58: Linear Regression on Moral Domain (Basic Models).

	Dependent variable:			
	- |Moral Domain|			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Δ Popularity	0.020			0.021
	(0.016)			(0.016)
Timing		0.004		−0.004
		(0.024)		(0.025)
Home Region			0.011	0.012
			(0.012)	(0.013)
UMP/LR	−0.022	−0.023	−0.028	−0.028
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.020)
UDF	0.122***	0.123***	0.123***	0.122***
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
FN/RN	−0.154***	−0.154***	−0.157***	−0.156***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
LFI	0.046**	0.046**	0.046**	0.046**
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
PCF	−0.062**	−0.062**	−0.062**	−0.062**
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
PS	0.064***	0.064***	0.058***	0.058***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.022)
EELV	−0.081**	−0.082**	−0.081**	−0.080**
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
R	0.034	0.033	0.033	0.034
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Speech Length	−0.00000	−0.00000	−0.00000	−0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Constant	−0.171***	−0.173***	−0.170***	−0.168***
	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.021)	(0.027)
Campaign Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	422	422	422	422
R^2	0.400	0.398	0.399	0.401
Adjusted R^2	0.381	0.379	0.380	0.379
Residual Std. Error	0.096 (df = 408)	0.097 (df = 408)	0.096 (df = 408)	0.096 (df = 406)
F Statistic	20.929*** (df = 13; 408)	20.728*** (df = 13; 408)	20.821*** (df = 13; 408)	18.148*** (df = 15; 406)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 59: Linear Regression on Moral Speeches (level of moralization).

	Dependent variable:
	Moral Speeches
Δ Popularity	−0.004
	(0.017)
Timing	−0.001
	(0.026)
Home Region	0.029**
	(0.013)
UMP/LR	−0.003
	(0.021)
UDF	−0.027
	(0.030)
FN/RN	0.087***
	(0.021)
LFI	−0.032
	(0.023)
PCF	0.015
	(0.027)
PS	0.012
	(0.023)
EELV	0.102**
	(0.040)
R	−0.023
	(0.031)
Speech Length	−0.00000
	(0.00000)
Constant	0.369***
	(0.029)
Campaign Fixed Effects	YES
Observations	422
R^2	0.174
Adjusted R^2	0.144
Residual Std. Error	0.102 (df = 406)
F Statistic	5.716*** (df = 15; 406)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

8.4.3 Robustness Checks

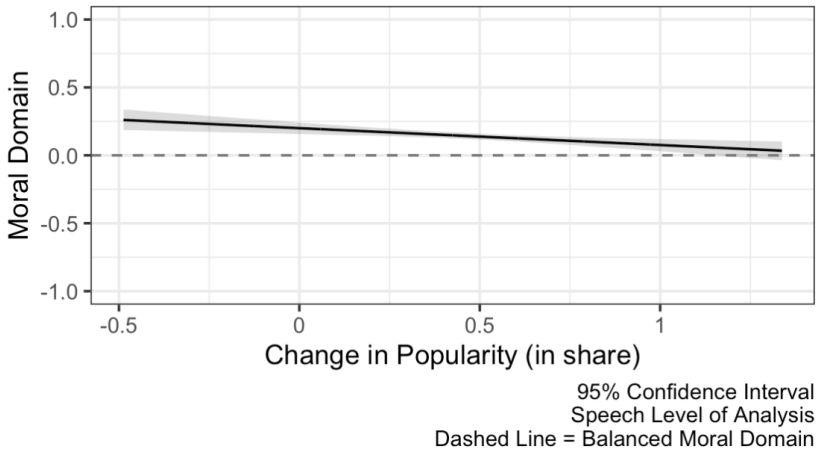
Table 60: Linear Regression on the negative absolute value of Moral Domain (Robustness Check for Home Region).

	Dependent variable:
	- |Moral Domain|
Home Region (Presidential or Regional)	0.016
	(0.013)
Home Region (Presidential and Regional)	−0.009
	(0.021)
UMP/LR	−0.027
	(0.018)
UDF	0.124***
	(0.027)
FN/RN	−0.156***
	(0.018)
LFI	0.047**
	(0.020)
PCF	−0.063***
	(0.023)
PS	0.060***
	(0.019)
Tokens	−0.00000
	(0.00000)
Constant	−0.172***
	(0.015)
Campaign Fixed Effects	YES
Observations	422
R^2	0.388
Adjusted R^2	0.370
Residual Std. Error	0.097 (df = 409)
F Statistic	21.624*** (df = 12; 409)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

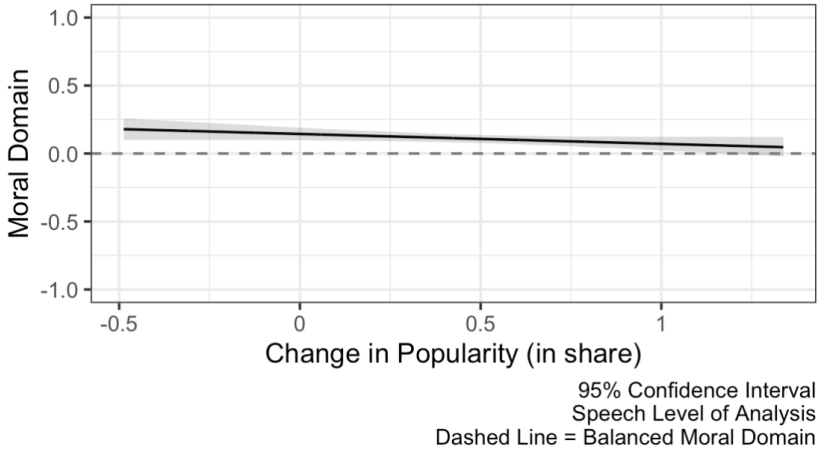
Table 61: Linear Regression on negative absolute value of Moral Domain (Robustness Check for Popularity).

	Dependent variable:
	- |Moral Domain|
Δ Popularity (2)	0.001
	(0.001)
UMP/LR	−0.022
	(0.019)
UDF	0.123***
	(0.028)
FN/RN	−0.155***
	(0.020)
LFI	0.045**
	(0.022)
PCF	−0.063**
	(0.025)
PS	0.064***
	(0.020)
EELV	−0.083**
	(0.037)
R	0.032
	(0.029)
Tokens	−0.00000
	(0.00000)
Δ Popularity (2) x UMP/LR	0.002
	(0.002)
Δ Popularity (2) x UDF	−0.001
	(0.003)
Δ Popularity (2) x FN/RN	−0.001
	(0.002)
Δ Popularity (2) x LFI	0.003
	(0.006)
Δ Popularity (2) x PCF	−0.013*
	(0.007)
Δ Popularity (2) x PS	−0.002
	(0.002)
Δ Popularity (2) x EELV	0.002
	(0.054)
Δ Popularity (2) x R	0.005
	(0.010)
Constant	−0.169***
	(0.021)
Campaign Fixed Effects	YES
Observations	422
R^2	0.416
Adjusted R^2	0.385
Residual Std. Error	0.096 (df = 400)
F Statistic	13.559*** (df = 21; 400)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

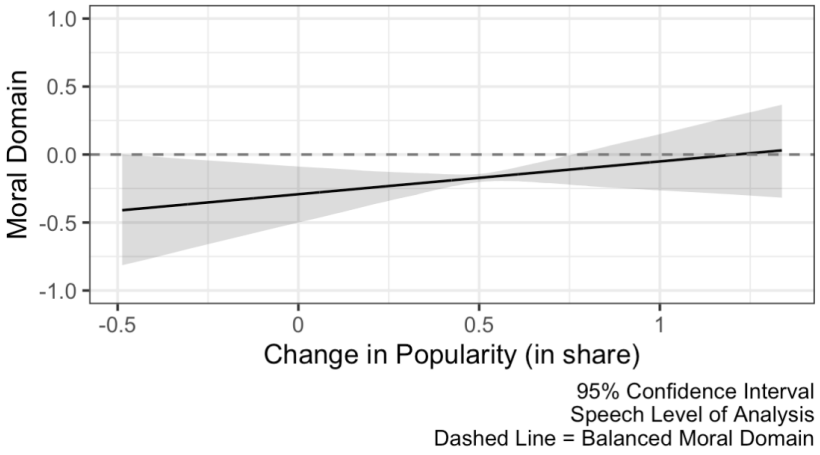
Figure 38: Robustness check: simulated Moral Domain when experiencing a change in popularity (in share).



(1) Les Républicains (or UMP)



(2) La République En Marche



(3) La France Insoumise

Mannheim, 01.06.2025

To Whom It May Concern,

This document formally details the individual and joint contributions of the undersigned authors, Clara Husson and Dr. Nicola Palma, regarding **Chapter 2, Section 2** *Measurement of Morality* and **Chapter 3** of this dissertation.

Our joint work resulted in the following peer-reviewed publication:

> Husson, C., & Palma, N. (2025). Broadening the study of morality in multiparty settings through a novel dictionary translation and validation methodology. *Political Psychology*, *46*(3), 487-510.

We contributed equally to the foundational aspects of this research and the preparation of the manuscript. Our collaborative work encompass:

- The drafting and refinement of the entire manuscript.
- The conceptualization and elaboration of the Theoretical Framework.
- The Literature Review.
- The design and development of the validation procedure.
- The data collection of the Party Manifestos for the primary analysis.
- The performance of the Descriptive Analysis.
- The execution of the Regression Analysis.

Dr. Nicola Palma's contributions to this research include:

- The expert application of the translation procedure for the Italian and Spanish language corpora.
- The implementation of Interpolation Techniques for the main analysis.

Clara Husson's contributions to this research include:

- The design and development of the translation procedure.
- The application of the translation procedure for the French and German language corpora.
- The data collection for the validation procedure.
- The data cleaning process for the validation procedure data.
- The execution of the Text Analysis for the validation procedure.
- The performance of the Correlation Analysis for the validation procedure.
- The data cleaning of the corpus used for the main analysis.
- The Text Analysis conducted on the corpus of the main analysis.

Sincerely,