

Do Voters Follow? The Effect of Party Cues on Public Opinion During a Process of Policy Change

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A large body of literature has demonstrated how citizens use party endorsements when shaping their policy opinions. However, recent studies question the centrality of party cues in shaping public opinion. This study advances the literature with a four-wave panel survey design that measures citizens' policy opinions before, during and after a controversial policy proposal to ban street begging was made by the Norwegian government in 2014. Two main findings inform previous work. First, voters are modestly affected by party cues as the proposition turns salient. Second, when a party shifts their policy position on a highly salient issue, voters do not automatically shift their opinions accordingly. Thus, the magnitude and direction of opinion change in the electorate indicate that party cue effects are modest and that instead of polarizing patterns across time parallel publics moving in the same direction independent of party cues are detected. These findings demonstrate that under some conditions, voters' opinion formation is less dependent on partisan elites than much of the previous work indicates.

Introduction

In democratic theory, the link between the political elite's policy positions and public opinion is a key concern. According to the responsible party model of political representation, it is normatively desirable that the opinions of party voters match the political parties' policy positions (Adams et al. 2011). The general conclusion drawn from decades of research into the mass–elite policy linkage is that of a reasonably close match between parties' policy positions and voters' policy opinions. Still, politics is dynamic, with parties introducing new policies and changing their policy positions in response to external crises, as a response to shifts in the power balance within a party, or even strategically, to attract voters or to position themselves

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towards future cooperation with other parties. A central question in studies of democracy is thus how do voters respond to changing behaviour by their preferred parties?

One strand of literature studying this mass–elite opinion dynamic investigates party cue effects. Taking as a starting point, the assumption that elites play a central role in shaping citizens' interpretation and formation of policy preferences, researchers assume that citizens successfully receive new elite information, connect it to their preferred party or candidate position and update their own opinions accordingly (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Chong & Druckman 2007). This assumption is challenged by two branches of literature on public opinion conducted mainly in European multi-party systems. The first branch of party cue studies argues that the automated processing of information assumed within the party cue literature is countered by the content of the political information (Aaroe 2012; Boudreau & MacKenzie 2014; Colombo & Kriesi 2017) and citizens' political predispositions (Togeby 2004; Lenz 2009; Slothuus 2010; Anduiza et al. 2013; Hellwig & Kweon 2016). A second branch of studies utilizing party manifestos to identify policy shifts finds that voters comprehend and react to changes in elite policy positions to a limited extent, especially within multi-party systems ruling through coalition governments (Adams et al. 2011, 2014; Fortunato & Stevenson 2013).

A more recent branch of studies utilizes an innovative analytical strategy studying voter reactions to party policy changes as they unfold in the real world based on observational data pre and post change. These quasi-experimental studies conclude that citizens do comprehend policy shifts as they occur (Plescia & Staniek 2017; Seeberg et al. 2017) and that the policy shifts guide opinions (Bisgaard & Slothuus 2018; Satherley et al. 2018).

This study builds on and expands the insights gained from previous studies by following Norwegian citizens' opinions on street begging before, during and after a proposal to criminalize this activity is introduced by the government in 2014. I study the effects of two instances of party endorsements. First, I investigate the effect of party endorsement on the policy proposal as it changes from a low-salience to a high-salience issue, and second, I study the effect of a sudden change in policy endorsement as one political party changes their policy position on the same issue. Utilizing a four-wave closely spaced panel from a nationally representative survey, I can investigate not only *if* but also *when* voters respond to policy cues. And by studying a policy process and the position-taking by all parliamentary parties on this matter, I can investigate *for whom* party cues play a role.

This study makes three key contributions. First, I find that party cues play a differential and modest role in forming public opinion, depending on the party's position-taking in the policy process. Second, I find support for party cues being more likely to affect voters' opinions if an issue is salient.

Third, I demonstrate that in the case of a sudden party policy shift, voters do change their opinions to align with the new policy position. Yet, blurring this last conclusion is the finding that all voter groups become equally opposed to the proposed change in policy in this period. I argue that this uniform movement is connected to the characteristics of the public debate leading up to the party policy shift.

Accordingly, in the scholarly discussion of the impact of party cues, this study takes a middle ground position, pointing out that party cues matter among some voter groups and during parts of a policy process, at least in the case under investigation here. I arrive at these conclusions through studying a policy process as it plays out in a real-world setting, with opinion data collected throughout the process. The study extends previous studies on party cue effects of policy change by following an entire policy process from low salience to high salience and looking at how public policy support is affected both by what parties say and what they do.

Theoretical Expectations: Party Cues and the Role of Party Support

A large body of literature on political behaviour has shown that citizens use partisanship to filter political information. In a complex world, few citizens are motivated or able to learn and remain current on all political issues debated in the political arena (e.g., Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996). Consequently, parties and politicians are influential in shaping public opinion as they supply citizens with their interpretations of politics through cues.

Party cues are inherently connected to partisan bias. In *The American Voter*, Campbell et al. introduces citizens' party identification as an automated process: 'a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation' (Campbell et al. 1960, 133). The effect of such partisan bias on public opinion is consistently confirmed in US studies of public opinion (Zaller 1992; Bartels 2002; Chong & Druckman 2007). And although the theoretical assumption of automated updating processes has been challenged, with some focusing on party cues as informational shortcuts (e.g., Chaiken 1980; Kam 2005) and others on party cues as facilitating motivated reasoning (e.g., Taber & Lodge 2006; Lenz 2009; Slothuus & de Vreese 2010), both accounts suggest that partisans will follow cues from their preferred party and reject or ignore cues from opposing party sources, if they receive them. In Zaller's (1992, 241) words: 'people tend to accept what is congenial to their partisan values and to reject what is not.' Based on this account of partisan information bias, citizens should be more inclined to follow a party cue if they receive it and if they support the party advertising it.

Studies of party cue effects within multi-party systems find more inconsistent evidence of this mass–elite linkage. Studying party shifts through party manifestos, Adams et al. (2011) find that voters do not systematically notice party policy changes (and thus do not update their perceptions accordingly), while Plescia and Staniek (2017) find issue importance to regulate voters' attention to manifesto policy changes. Yet, other strands of literature argue that although voters may fail to notice party manifesto changes, they are sensitive to changing perceptions of parties among party experts and follow their lead (Adams et al. 2014). Moreover, by studying voters' perceptions of party positions from a long-term perspective, the conclusion of both European and American studies is that voters tend to pay attention to policy change and over time alter their perceptions of parties (e.g., Carsey & Layman 2006; Adams et al. 2012). In response to the inconclusive findings regarding party policy declarations and voters' perceptions of the same policy issues, Adams (2012, 413) suggests that voters may not be paying attention to what parties *say*, but rather to what they *do*.

Implicit in the party cue theory is the need for a transmitter of the party message to inform and affect partisans. Thus, the media debate is an important intermediary condition for the transmission of party cue effects. Togeby (2004) and Zaller (1992) argue that the more salient the policy issue is in the public debate, in the meaning of being written about in the newspapers and discussed by the political elite, the more efficiently the parties can transmit their policy stance to their voters. Citizens, for their part, are expected to respond differently to a changing information environment depending on their party preference and whether they are in alignment with their party's platform or not. I hypothesize that if there is a lack of accordance between the voters' attitudes and the party position, voters will change their policy opinion to come into alignment with their party, either because they want to be aligned with their party or because they trust the opinions of partisan experts. Empirically, this should play out as a polarization of opinions across groups of party supporters as levels of salience increase.

This study of a policy process to ban street begging demonstrates two features that make it particularly well-suited for studying party cue effects. First, the case at hand has the crucial feature of being low on the public agenda prior to the policy proposal, and second, I have collected opinion data on the issue of street begging from a low-salient period and spanning the entire policy process. Thus, I can empirically investigate how party cues affect citizens across different levels of salience. As most researchers tend to study policies that are already salient, the effect of party cues across different levels of salience is hardly studied (Druckman & Leeper 2012).

Based on the review of the party cue literature above and the specificities of this study I study the effect of party cues focusing both on what parties say and what they do through the following two hypotheses:

H1: The more salient the policy issue to ban street begging, the more likely party supporters are to align with their party's policy position.

H2: When a party shifts their policy position, their party supporters update their policy position to align with their party.

Studying Party Cue Effects in a Real-World Setting

I exploit a unique opportunity to study the relative influence of policy endorsements and political predispositions in a real-world political context by using representative panel data. Methodologically, this serves as an improvement on studies of party cues that have mostly been conducted within experimental settings. Experimental studies risk exaggerating party cue effects; first, by exposing respondents to only one message or way of thinking about a policy issue and failing to mirror today's competitive information environments (Sniderman & Theriault 2004; Chong & Druckman 2007; Slothuus & de Vreese 2010). And second, by distributing unequivocal policy information to all respondents, even those who are not normally exposed to political messages are primed. The observational studies of party cue effects also suffer from methodological weaknesses, mainly because the cross-sectional nature of most data used does not allow for sound causal inference.

To investigate the extent to which voters respond to a policy process in a real-world setting, I rely on data collected before, during and after the policy process is introduced and becomes a salient topic of public debate. I first estimate the extent to which more efficiently communicated party cues make voters move towards their preferred party's position. Second, I focus on the two waves bracketing the shift in one party's policy position related to the policy proposal to gauge the extent to which voters update their perceptions and align with their preferred party's new policy position.

The Policy Proposal to Criminalize Street Begging

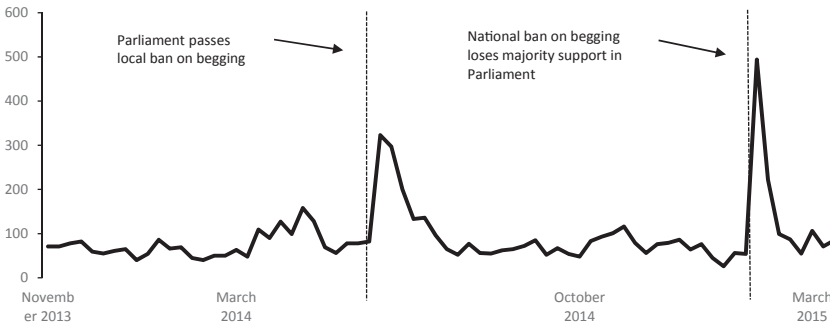
Proposals to ban street begging have been the subject of discussion in all Scandinavian countries in the last decade (Djuve et al. 2015). In the Norwegian context, the issue was raised following the 2013 general election, when, after eight years in opposition, the Conservative Party gained power together with the Progress Party, which had never been in government previously. They formed a minority government supported by the Christian People's Party and the Liberal Party. Following the change in government, two different proposals for a ban on street begging were considered within one year. Both proposals were framed by the government as an instrument to combat organized crime, human trafficking and forced labour, relating directly to the increase in Roma migrants to Norwegian cities following the

2007 eastward EU expansion. The government platform included a change in statute, introducing a proposition to ban street begging at the municipal level. In July 2014, this bill was passed in parliament with one opposition party, the Center Party, securing majority support and a (voluntary) municipal ban was introduced from 1 July 2014.

The municipal ban was considered a step towards the implementation of a national ban on street begging, which had been part of the Progress Party's and the Center Party's political platforms since 2009. On 22 January 2015, the government sent out a proposal for a national ban on begging. The proposal was two-pronged and included (1) the criminalization of organized begging; and (2) the criminalization of citizens¹ facilitating such activity (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2015). In the public debate that followed, the second aspect of the proposal met a lot of criticism and was heavily debated in the media (e.g., Thomas 2014). Specifically, the second aspect was understood by many as punishing kind-hearted Norwegians who, in solidarity with the beggars, offered them money, shelter and food. After two weeks of massive public debate, the Center Party withdrew their original support for the proposal on 5 February 2015, and thus the minority government no longer had majority support in parliament to pass the proposal to introduce a national ban on street begging. This led the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to withdraw the suggestion, and the proposal for a national ban on begging never received parliamentary treatment.

The two policy proposals received increased coverage in leading newspapers and national television news across the policy process. Figure 1 shows a simple count of the weekly numbers of articles in all Norwegian newspapers covering the issue of street begging, conducted by searching the Norwegian full-text article database Retriever. The data clearly indicate that there is a

Figure 1. Media Coverage on the Street Begging Issue and Important Policy Process Events.



Note: Weekly media coverage from 4 November 2013 to 31 March 2015, measured as the number of articles published in Norwegian newspapers containing any constellation of the word 'beg*'. The months indicated on the X-axis identify when the four survey panel waves used in the analyses were conducted. Source: The Retriever database (www.retriever.no).

massive coverage connected both to the ratification of the municipal ban on street begging and to the Center Party's withdrawal of support for a national ban on street begging. Based on the media coverage, I argue that it is reasonable to assume that there was a gradual increase in the saliency of the proposition to criminalize street begging across the policy process. Before the policy proposal was launched, there was little focus on the issue of criminalizing street begging.²

I argue that the policy proposal to criminalize street begging is a case well-suited to studying the effect of party cues on public opinion. First, as the review shows, this was a controversial issue that received massive attention in the public debate, substantiating party cues to be communicated to the public. Moreover, the dynamic of the media coverage moving from low to high on the issue of street begging allows us to study party cue effects across different levels of the process, possibly adding new insights into the conditioning effects of party cues. Also, the parties' stance on the issue is simple to follow, with all the parties being either for or against a ban on street begging. This should provide clear party endorsements to the public. Last, it has the unique feature of a party changing its policy stance overnight, thus allowing us to study how supporters respond to actual policy change.

Data, Design and Measurement

To connect the development of the proposal to ban street begging with public support for this proposal, I utilize closely spaced individual-level data collected before, during and after the policy proposal is presented. To my advantage, I have been able to collect panel survey data through a university-driven online survey panel that consists of a representative sample of the Norwegian population.³ The data for this study were collected through online interviews conducted twice a year between November 2013 and March 2015, spanning the entire policy process and beyond. The panel was recruited by postcards based on a random draw of 25,000 inhabitants over the age of 18 from the Norwegian National Population Registry during summer 2013. After the recruitment, respondents were asked to continue their participation by providing their e-mail address when they responded to the first survey. A total of 4870 respondents entered their e-mail address, equaling a panel recruitment rate of 20.1 percent (Skjervheim & Høgestøl 2013). Eight hundred and ninety-two respondents fulfilled all four waves included in this study, making up the basis of the analyses.⁴ The representativity of the subsample used is good overall with regards to the variables included in the analysis, yet highly educated respondents and the two oldest age cohorts are overrepresented.⁵ Descriptive statistics of all variables are found in Section 1 of the Supporting information (SI).

In this study, I follow Bullock (2011, 497) and understand a party cue to be information that links a party to a stand on an issue. In my case, that issue is the proposal to ban street begging. To test the two hypotheses of party cue effects, I ran two sets of analyses. In the first group of models, I test H1: whether the voters respond differently to the proposal to ban street begging as party cues are more effectively communicated through increasing media coverage. The expected mechanism is that voters become increasingly aware of their party's policy position as the proposal is introduced and conveyed to voters through media. Empirically, then, the party cue hypothesis is supported through a polarizing pattern across the policy process as the supporters of parties supporting a ban and parties opposing a ban align with their party's policy stance. Here, I utilize all four panel waves.

In the second set of analyses, I turn specifically to the policy shift seen in the Center Party as they withdraw their support for the proposal to ban street begging nationally in the period where the issue was highly salient. I use this quasi-experimental setting to study H2: the degree to which party supporters respond to party cues understood as actual policy change by aligning their own opinions with their preferred party. In this analysis, I focus only on the last two waves, as the Center Party policy change happened five weeks before the last survey wave was fielded, thereby allowing for the policy shift to manifest among the party's voters. Empirically, H2 is supported if no change in opinion is observed among supporters of the proponent parties and Center Party supporters become increasingly more opposed to the policy proposal.

In each wave, respondents were asked to state their opinion on the statement 'Begging should be prohibited in Norway' along a seven-point bipolar Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' This serves as the dependent variable, normalized to run from 0 to 1, with 1 representing the respondents most supportive of a ban on street begging.

To test the first hypothesis, I include *party vote* based on which party the respondent voted for in the 2013 general election. The party voters have been divided into two groups: (1) voters of the three parties (Conservative Party, Progress Party, and Center Party) that launched the policy proposal, labelled *proponent parties' voters*; and (2) voters of the five opposition parties in parliament (Labor Party, Socialist Left Party, Green Party, Liberal Party, and Christian Democratic Party) who did not support the proposition, labelled *opponent parties' voters*.

Party cues have been shown to be more efficiently communicated the more salient the policy issue is (Zaller 1992; Togeby 2004). Thus, I measure party cue effects indirectly through issue salience, operationalized as media coverage. The expectation is that an increase in the coverage of the proposal to ban street begging leads to more efficiently communicated party cues to its partisans. Based on the timeline of newspaper coverage outlined in

Table 1. Mean Support for a Ban on Street Begging by Party Vote and Saliency of the Policy Proposal

	Low saliency	Mid-low saliency	Mid-high saliency	High saliency	Diff low saliency-high saliency
Proponent parties' voters (N = 392)	0.83 (0.012)	0.79 (0.012)	0.78 (0.013)	0.72 (0.013)	-0.11
Opponent parties' voters (N = 500)	0.61 (0.014)	0.58 (0.014)	0.55 (0.014)	0.45 (0.014)	-0.16

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Total change in mean value across all four waves reported in the rightmost column.

Figure 1, I argue that there is a steady increase in the salience of the policy issue during the period of study. During the first wave in November 2013, the proposal has not yet been introduced and the issue of criminalizing street begging is not high on the public agenda. During the spring and summer of 2014, the proposal to introduce a municipal ban on street begging is discussed and passed in parliament, eliciting increased media coverage of the issue. I expect this heightened salience to be reflected in the second wave in June 2014 but also in the third wave in October 2014. In January 2015, the issue becomes even more salient as the proposal for a national ban on street begging is announced and heavily debated, culminating in the Center Party withdrawing their support for the proposal.

To control for possible baseline imbalances between groups, the regression analyses include issue importance (1 = immigration issue important), gender (1 = female), age (continuous and included as a squared function in the analysis), education (1 = no education/elementary school, 2 = upper secondary school and 3 = university/university college) and geographical centrality (1 = least central municipalities, to 4 = most central municipalities) in the analyses.⁶ All control variables are treated as time invariant⁷ to minimize concerns related to reciprocal causation.⁸

The Effect of Party Cues across the Policy Process to Ban Street Begging

The analysis proceeds in three parts. First, I explore descriptively the effect of party vote on support for the policy proposal to criminalize street begging as it is introduced and becomes salient in the public debate. Second, I estimate panel models to ensure a robust test of the relationship between party support and policy support at the individual level, contingent on increasingly salient party cues. Third, I investigate the effect of actual policy change on voters' policy support, focusing the panel model on Center Party voters before and after their party moves from supporting a national ban on street begging to opposing it.

The distribution of support for criminalizing street begging seen in Table 1 indicates no clear support for H1 of the voters increasingly leaning towards their party's position as the scope of party cues increases with the salience of the policy proposal. Empirically, this would be reflected in a polarizing pattern with the proponent parties' voters leaning more towards 1 and the opponent parties' voters leaning more towards 0 as the communication of party cues increase. First, I identify a large gap in policy support across voter groups already from the outset. Still, both groups hold values on the upper half of the scale, indicating that the proposal to criminalize street begging seems to be in line with most people's preferences as it is

introduced, independent of party allegiance. Second, as the proposition to criminalize street begging is introduced and party cues on this issue are more efficiently communicated to their voters, I see the expected move towards less support for a ban on street begging across the opponent parties' voters. Yet the proponent parties' voters move in parallel with their opponent parties' peers, also becoming less supportive of a ban on street begging as the proposal is introduced and the issue becomes salient in the public debate. Third, the change in support seems to happen gradually over time, although the biggest drop in support among both groups of party supporters is seen between the two last waves when the policy proposal is highly salient and eventually fails.

I move from the inconclusive findings of the descriptive analyses to the second and third parts of the analysis, which makes use of dynamic panel models called growth models. The model is 'dynamic' because it takes into account respondents' different opinions towards street begging at the outset and allows them to change opinions at a different pace over time while taking into account the dependency of repeated observations within individuals.

To test the party cue hypothesis, I estimate growth models where observations across time are nested within respondents. This makes growth models a hierarchical model. I build explanatory models at both levels of the hierarchy, with the repeated observations measuring change at the individual level and the respondent-level factors accounting for differences in opinions across respondents. I include random effects at both levels of the hierarchy to allow for unexplained random variation to be taken into account (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal 2008). The models are specified using maximum likelihood estimation and standard errors are clustered by respondents in order to account for serial correlation and heteroscedasticity.

the models compare consecutive waves directly, to most soundly measure the change in policy support across different levels of salient party cue communication. Crucial to testing the two hypotheses in this study, the party vote and party cue variables are interacted across waves, which allows the two voter groups to respond differently to the policy proposal as the volume of party cues increases with the salience of the issue and as one party changes their policy stance.

Table 2 shows the estimates from the models that utilize all four panel waves surrounding the proposition to criminalize street begging. Expanding the results from Table 1, the first estimate in the left column points at very high overall levels of support for a ban on begging (.92 on a 0 to 1 scale). The second estimate identifies that the party vote gap in support of a ban on street begging as the issue was of low salience was $-.20$ on a 0 to 1 scale and clearly distinguishable from 0 ($p < .001$). This replicates the descriptive analysis by pointing to exceptionally high levels of public support for a ban

Table 2. Effects of Party Cues on Policy Support across Party Voters and Level of Policy Process Salience

	Low salience to mid–low salience	Mid–low salience to mid–high salience	Mid–high salience to high salience
Constant	0.918*** (0.06)	0.846*** (0.06)	0.856*** (0.06)
Proponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1}	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Opponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1}	-0.204*** (0.02)	-0.186*** (0.02)	-0.222*** (0.02)
Low salience	0.000 (.)		
Mid–low salience	-0.044*** (0.01)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Mid–high salience		-0.005 (0.01)	-0.064*** (0.01)
High salience			
Proponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × Low salience	0.000 (.)		
Opponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × Low salience	0.000 (.)		
Proponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × Mid–low salience	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	
Opponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × Mid–low salience	0.016 (0.01)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Proponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × Mid–high salience		0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Opponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × Mid–high salience		-0.038* (0.01)	0.000 (.)
Proponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × High salience			0.000 (.)
Opponent parties' voters _{<i>t</i>=1} × High salience			0.000 (.)
Controls	YES	YES	YES
Waves	2	2	2
Units	857	857	857
Observations	1,714	1,714	1,714

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients and standard errors in parentheses based on linear mixed-effects models on consecutive waves. Full models are available in Supplementary information (SI). The models are run on a balanced panel, and controls for issue importance, gender, education, age (sq.) and geographical centrality were included. Proportional weights are applied and cluster-robust standard errors are reported.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

on begging, independent of voter groups (.92 for proponent parties' voters and .72 for opponent parties' voters).

Yet the crucial question is whether the gradual increase in party salience connected to the introduction of the proposal – thereby increasing the pool of party cues directed at its supporters – leads to a change in support for a ban on begging and, importantly, whether this change differs between opponent parties' voters and proponent parties' voters. If it does, this serves to support a party cue effect. The third and fourth estimates in the left column of Table 2 confront this question by comparing opinion change in the two lower salience periods. The third estimate tells us that proponent parties' voters become 0.044 points (on a 0 to 1 scale) *less* supportive of a ban on street begging in this period ($p < .01$), while opponent parties' voters become 0.028 points ($-0.044 + 0.016$) (on a 0 to 1 scale) less supportive of a ban on begging ($p < .01$). Thus, in the low-salience period, I find no support for systematic differences in opinion change between the two groups of party supporters and thus no party cue effect ($0.016, p = .27$). Consequently, the partisan gap in support of a ban is only minimally reduced from -0.20 to -0.19 .

The middle column of Table 2 compares the effect of the two party groups before and after the proposal for a local ban on begging is introduced, marking the movement from a mid-low salient to a mid-high salient period in terms of media attention. The first two estimates reaffirm the high mean level of support for a ban and the big difference in the level of support between the two party voter groups. In terms of a change in support, the small magnitude and statistical insignificance of the third estimate tells us that proponent parties' voters' opinions are not changed as the policy proposal is introduced and ratified ($-0.005, p = .66$). Moreover, combining the third and the fourth estimates, I find that the supporters of the opponent parties become 0.043 points ($-0.005 + -0.038$) (on a 0 to 1 scale) less supportive of a ban on street begging in this period, and this estimate is clearly distinguishable from 0 ($p < .001$). Thus, as the policy issue of banning street begging becomes more salient, the opponent parties' voters become more opposed to the proposal while no reaction is found among the voters of the proponent parties. Comparing change across groups, I find the change among opposition parties' supporters to be significantly different from that of the proposition parties' voters ($-0.038, p < .01$), and thus there is a modest yet significant increase in the party support gap from 0.19 to 0.22 ($p < .001$), supporting H1.

The right column of Table 2 compares the two data waves covering the period when the policy proposal was at its most salient, the volume of party cues was big and when the Center Party shifted their opinion on the proposed national ban. The two first coefficients restate the high mean level of support for a ban on street begging but also show that there is now a wider

gap between the two voter groups than there was when the policy issue was less salient in the public debate, reflecting the polarization effect identified in the middle column. Moving on to the interaction effect, both voter groups respond to the introduction and debate surrounding the proposal for a national ban on street begging by becoming significantly less supportive of the proposition. The third estimate confirms the findings of the descriptive analysis, showing that the proponent parties' supporters become 0.064 points (on a 0 to 1 scale) less in favour of a ban on street begging between the mid-high-salience and the high-salience wave ($p < .001$), whereas the opponent parties' voters become even more opposed to a ban on begging, shifting their opinions -0.099 points ($-0.064 + -0.035, p < .001$) (on a scale from 0 to 1) in this period. Put together, as party cues are at its strongest, party cue effects are evident in the significant difference in magnitude of policy opinion change between proponent and opposition parties' voters ($-0.035, p < .05$), supporting H1. This led to a modest widening of a partisan gap from 0.22 to 0.26 ($p < .02$), driven by the opposition parties' voters. Yet, speaking against H1 is the finding that both groups become more negative towards a ban on street begging.

This analysis following a policy proposal through all its stages from introduction to decision and beyond shows that from the outset, even before the policy proposal is introduced, the two groups of party supporters differ distinctly in their level of support for banning street begging, although both voter groups supported a ban in the beginning. As the policy process unfolds, I find that both voter groups become less supportive of a ban on begging. Yet their opinions change at a significantly different pace as the policy debate becomes increasingly salient, with opponent parties' voters becoming substantially less supportive of a ban. This difference is reflected in a seven percentage point increase in the partisan gap in support across the policy process. This finding of a modest polarizing effect is confirmed by using different operationalizations and model specifications (see SI Sections 5 and 6). Thus, I find modest support for H1, identifying a party cue effect among opponent parties' supporters, but not among proponent parties' supporters.

There are several possible explanations for this weak differentiated pattern. Given the high level of alignment between the proponent parties' voters and the party elite at the outset, the very modest polarizing effect may be caused by a ceiling effect among the proponent parties' voters. SI Table S3 further informs this possibility, showing first that the level of support for a ban on begging differs across supporters of the three proponent parties, with the Progress Party voters being most in favour, and second, that the Progress Party voters only shift marginally across the policy process, whereas the Conservative Party and Center Party voters show more volatile opinions towards the policy process as it becomes salient. Thus, Progress

Party voters seem mobilized already at the outset. Moreover, SI Figure S2 shows that the Progress Party and the Center Party are consistently vocal in debating street begging in the media throughout the period of study, whereas the Conservative Party is less present in the policy debate. This may be explained by street begging being viewed as an immigration-related issue. With the Progress Party being a nativist party, their voters are primed to place themselves on the supportive side of a ban. Thus, I ascribe the patterns of movement among proponent parties' voters to the different parties' mobilization on the street begging issue at the outset.

The Effect of a Party Policy Shift on Partisan Policy Support

As mentioned above, following the entire policy process to criminalize street begging allows us to study the effect of party cues under a second, and arguably stronger, condition: that of an actual policy shift as the Center Party moves from supporting a ban on street begging to opposing it. Based on H2, I expect to see increased opposition to street begging among Center Party voters and no difference among the other proponent parties' voters. To analyse the effect of party policy change on the Center Party voters, I estimate a pre–post panel model that relies on the two last survey waves fielded around the sudden change in party cues that Center Party voters experience in February 2015. By limiting the analyses to these two waves, the number of respondents is considerably larger, adding important power to the analysis when modelling change in the small group of Center Party voters (71 out of 1986 respondents included in this analysis voted for the Center Party in 2013). For this analysis, policy change is a binary indicator that takes the value 0 for observations before the party policy shift and 1 for observations after the Center Party's policy shift. Center Party voters is also a binary indicator that takes the value 1 if a respondent identifies as having voted for the Center Party in the 2013 general election and 0 for the 2013 voters of the other proponent parties, the Conservative Party and the Progress Party. To test the party cue hypothesis that Center Party voters should respond to their party's policy change by becoming less supportive of a ban on begging, the policy shift and Center Party voter variables are interacted.

Table 3 displays the results. The first estimate shows that before the change in policy, there was already a difference across Center Party voters and voters for the government parties in terms of their support for a ban on begging, with the Center Party voters being 0.098 points (on a 0 to 1 scale) less supportive than the voters of the other proponent parties ($p < .001$). The main interest, however, is in the next two estimates, revealing whether

the change among Center Party supporters is any different from the pre-post change observed among other party voters. The second estimate tells us that as the Center Party shifts from supporting the proposal for a national ban on street begging to opposing it, the support for a ban decreases by 0.069 points (on a 0 to 1 scale) among the other proponent parties' voters ($p < .001$). Most important for the party cue hypothesis, the second and third estimates combined indicate that Center Party voters also change their attitudes in this period, becoming 0.096 points ($-0.069 + -0.027$) more skeptical of a ban on street begging (on a 0 to 1 scale) ($p < .001$). Yet comparing the magnitude of change for Center Party voters and the other proponent parties' voters, the difference in reaction to the policy change seems negligible ($-0.027, p = .414$). I also ran the same analysis separating partisan from non-partisan Center Party voters, yet no difference in effect is found (see SI Table S10).

Still, looking at the direction of the effect, the Center Party voters do become significantly less supportive of a ban, as proposed by H2. Interestingly, the lack of a significantly different pattern of change across voter groups seems to be driven by the finding that voters of the other two proponent parties become equally less supportive of a ban on begging in this period, as already identified in the previous analyses. I find it likely that this finding, resembling Page and Shapiro's theory of parallel publics (1992), is related to the heated public debate challenging the policy proposal for a national ban on street begging. I discuss this argument further in the concluding section.

Discussion and Implications

To further understand how party cues shape public opinion in a real-world setting, this study has examined a policy proposal to criminalize street begging that was high on the political agenda in the Norwegian public debate in 2014 and 2015. The results indicate that although parties play a role in shaping citizens' opinions, they face considerable constraints, speaking to a more moderate role for party cues in explaining citizen opinion change when compared to the findings in much of the previous literature (e.g., Zaller 1992; Chong & Druckman 2007; Seeberg et al. 2017). Testing two different hypotheses on party cue effects, I first find modest evidence for H1 stating that party cues are more influential among salient policy issues, adhering to the argument set out by Togeby (2004). Second, I find some support for a differentiated role of party cues, shown through a modest polarizing effect across the policy process, driven by the voters of the opposition parties. That said, the parallel movement found between voter segments clearly challenges the conventional party cue expectation of a polarizing effect across voter segments as they align with their preferred party's policy position.

Table 3. Change in Center Party Voters' Support for Banning Street Begging Pre and Post Party Policy Shift

	Support for a ban on street begging
Centre Party voters _{<i>t</i>-1}	-0.098** (0.04)
Policy shift	-0.069*** (0.01)
Centre Party voters _{<i>t</i>-1} × Policy shift	-0.027 (0.03)
Constant	0.758*** (0.08)
Controls	YES
Waves	2
Units	605
Observations	1,210

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients and robust standard errors in parentheses are based on a linear mixed-effects model fitted for the two waves before and after the change in party cues for Center Party voters. Full models are found in the Supplementary information (SI). The models are run on a balanced panel, and controls for issue importance, gender, education, age (sq.) and geographical centrality were included. Proportional weights are applied.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Third, the quasi-experimental analysis of a sudden change in the policy position for the Center Party concludes in a similar vein, identifying parallel movement in policy opinions across voters of the Center Party, now opposing the ban, and the government parties, still supporting a ban, thus offering only partly support for H2. Rather than resonating with the conventional work on party cues, this finding speaks to a literature on parallel publics, first laid out by Page and Shapiro (1992). I return to this issue below. To sum up, this study indicates modest support for the expectation of an effect of party cues on policy attitude change in contrast to what much of the party cue literature argues.

To reach this conclusion, I relied on a four-wave panel survey allowing the effects of the policy process to manifest in the electorate while simultaneously preventing other events or actions from confounding the relationship of interest. This allows for better external validity as party cue effects are studied in a real-world setting. Despite its analytical strengths, this study has some limitations. Arguably, the fact that I measure party cues only indirectly may affect the conclusions I draw. I do not know when each respondent is informed about their party's policy position. Rather, I project that the salience of the policy proposal on street begging regulates the volume of party cues reported in the media. Figure S2 in the SI indicates that this assumption may not apply equally across parties. I see that the Progress Party and the Center Party dominate the media debate, substantiating the argument that some party supporters are more likely to receive party cues

than others. The media analysis further informs these findings by pointing out that the most stable group of proponent parties' voters, the Progress Party voters, has the most vocal party elite while the opponent parties with the most volatile voters are less prominent in the public debate.

I argue that the party's prominence in the media on an issue reflects the significance that the party places on that policy. The Progress Party and the Center Party both consider immigration a core issue, and as street begging today is considered a consequence of migration, these parties are known for loudly asserting their opinions on the subject. For the opposition parties, and especially the leftist parties, street begging is arguably a hard issue through which to attract voters, thus they seem to keep a low profile in the debate until it becomes very salient. Consequently, the relationship between opposition parties and their voters' policy views is more fortuitous than is the situation for the proponent parties and their voters. In sum, there is some supportive evidence to show that the effect of party cues on opinion change is moderated by the significance placed by a party on the issue at hand.

As the magnitude of studies of partisan bias indicate, there are strong reasons to believe that group preferences differ and shift differently over time. As policy moves in conservative direction, as is the case for the street begging policy proposal, I would expect polarization across partisan lines. Yet, this study connects to an emerging group of studies, consisting mainly of US studies, showing that such heterogeneity is not pervasive. According to this literature, over-time similarity, labelled 'parallel publics' appears to be the norm, especially for issues of economy and welfare (e.g., Page & Shapiro 1992; Enns & Wlezien 2011). The mechanism for this parallel shift in opinion is that different social groups similarly interpret the political signs and stimuli that they receive from the outside. This speaks well to the findings of the first analysis signifying that although proponent parties' voters move more, both partisan groups become more negative towards a ban on street begging across time. Moreover, it speaks to the second analysis finding that despite the Center Party changing their behaviour by deciding to oppose the proposal that they had previously supported, the Center Party voters became no more opposed to the policy proposal than supporters of the other proponent parties that did not change their mind.

All this seems to suggest that opinions shift in the same direction because they respond to the same contextual information. That said, this study does not enable us to conclude that opinions shift in the same direction for the same reasons. With regard to the analysis of the Center Party's sudden shift it is plausible that Center Party supporters respond to their party changing their policy position while the other proponent parties' voters may respond to the intense public debate following the announcement of a national ban on street begging which focused on humanitarianism and on solidarity. The

design used here does not allow me to successfully separate these two causal mechanisms that may be at play here. To unveil the substantial content that guide the shift an experimental approach or a more qualitative design would be beneficial. That said, the finding of parallel publics in a European setting with stronger ideological orientation and on an arising polarizing cleavage like immigration adds leverage to the literature. Moreover, the fact that parallel publics is identified in individual-level analyses on short-term opinion change is an innovation that potentially expands the application of the theory of parallel publics into a new domain. Still, more studies using an individual-level approach to study public opinion change is needed to realize this contribution. On its own, this study has limited generalizability. Yet, seen in connection with the studies above focusing on issue areas of both welfare and the economy, my study of an immigration-related policy change adds another important issue area to the pile of empirics that show the moderate importance of party cues in affecting voters position-taking.

The system of democratic decision-making hinges on the premise that people do not uncritically follow elite manipulations but take information and their own considerations into account. In reference to multi-party democracies like Norway, Bullock (2011) and Adams (2012) argue that policy considerations should be relatively more influential there, as party elites exert less influence on people than what the classical studies (based in large part on the US context) acknowledge. The case of street begging supports this view by highlighting that there is some support for party cue effects influencing opposition party voters as the policy issue turns salient, the pattern of parallel shifts in opinion across the partisan spectrum indicates that political elites may face constraints on their abilities to shift citizens into alignment with the party view. In relation to the party cues literature, expecting a processing of information in favour of citizens' preferred parties, these findings are bad news. However, in relation to democratic decision-making ideals where, the finding of parallel publics that respond equally to the same contextual information may be good news.

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NOTES

1. Humanitarian and other voluntary organizations providing beggars with clothes, food and shelter were exempt from this proposal.
2. The exception was a campaign initiated by the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* in summer 2012, focusing on Roma migrants occupying and littering parts of a recreational area in Oslo.
3. The data used for this article are available upon request from the Norwegian Center for Research Data http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsddata/serier/norsk_medborgerpanel_eng.html.

4. By basing the analyses on a balanced panel I minimize the methodological concerns related to missing data that cannot be ignored (Singer & Willett 2003), assuming that the data is MCAR. This means that the observed values should constitute a random sample of all observed variables given there are no missing data (Singer & Willett 2003, 157).
5. For a more thorough analysis of the representativity of the samples used in this article, please confer Section 2 of the Supporting information (SI).
6. Due to missing data on the education variable, the number of units is slightly reduced from the descriptive analysis
7. This means that all variables are based on values from the respondents' first wave of participation.
8. The danger of reciprocal effects is potentially high in the study of party cues, as parties are likely to attract and repel different voters depending on their message.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Table S1. Operationalization

Table S2. Descriptive Statistics for all Variables Included in the Analyses

Table S3. Mean Support for a Ban on Street Begging by Party Vote and Time

Figure S1. Support for a Ban on Begging across Different Samples. Numbers are Bases on the Standardized Scale Ranging from 0 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 1 ‘Strongly Agree’, with Middle Point 0,5 ‘Neither/Nor’. Based on Data from Wave 1.

Table S4. Comparing the Different Samples on the Variables Included in the Analyses

Figure S2. Media Analysis of the Proposal to Ban Street Begging across all Political Parties during the Policy Process 2013–2015. Based on the Number of Articles Published in Norwegian Newspapers Containing the Party Name and Minimum One of the Words ‘Begging’, ‘Beg’ or ‘Beggar’. *Source:* The Retriever database (www.retriever.no).

Table S5. Effects of Party Cues on Policy Support across Party Vote and Level of Policy Salienc. Full Model

Table S6. Change in Centre Party Voters’ Support for Banning Street Begging Pre and Post Party Policy Change. Full Model

Table S7. Effects of Party Cues and Contingent Effects on Policy Support across Time. Unbalanced Panel

Table S8. Effects of Party Cues on Policy Support across Party Vote and Level of Policy Salienc Using Different Estimation Techniques

Figure S3. Mean Change across Time Based on Party Vote. Reported Entries are Mean Standard Deviations for Each Respondent Estimated from All Four Data Points. The Dotted Line Identify Average Standard Deviation across 857 Units.

Figure S4. Mean Change across Time Based on Scale Distribution_{t1}. Reported Entries are Standard Deviations Estimated from All Four Data Points from Each Respondent.

Table S9. Effects of Party Cues on Policy Support across Partisanship and Level of Policy Salienc

Table S10. Effects of Party Policy Shift on Centre Party Voters’ Policy Support across Partisan Voters and Voters

Table S11. Effects of News Consumption on Policy Support across Level of Policy Salienc

Table S12. Change in Party Voters’ Support for Banning Street Begging before and after the Issue Becomes Salient