

All the Prime Minister's Glory?

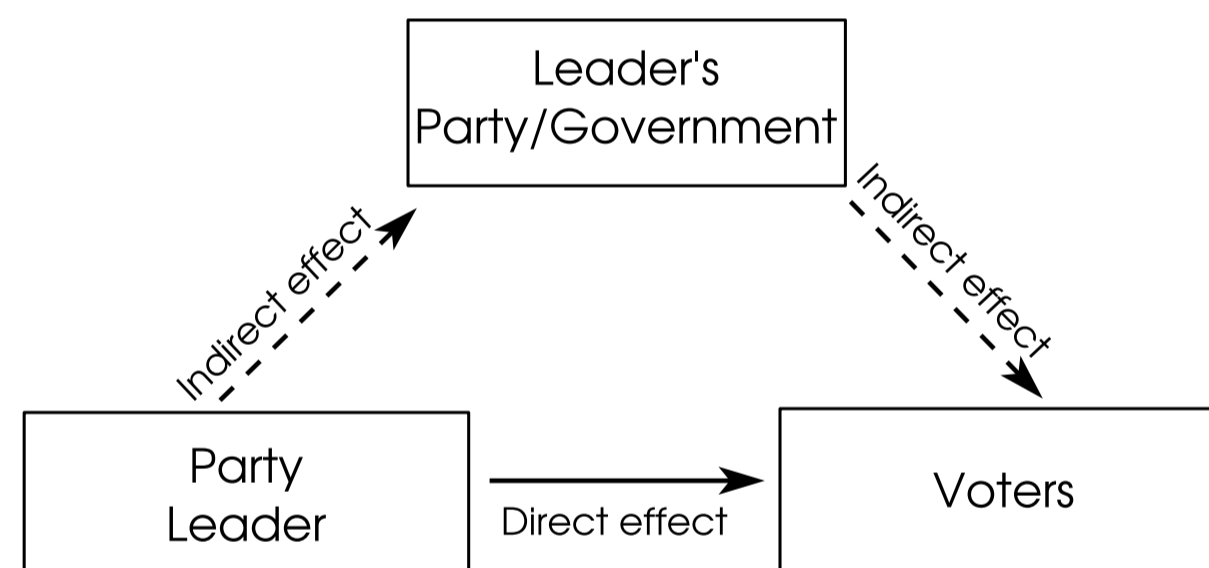
Leader Effects of Prime Ministers in Parliamentary Elections.

Mediation analysis

- Voters hold prime ministers accountable for their government's work.
- Leader effects of prime ministers are confounded with government evaluation by 6 to 50%.
- Mediation is not uniform – political context and the PM's leadership style matter.

Research question

Is the electoral impact of party leaders fully attributable to their personality or do voters also reward party leaders for good performance in office, when they lead the government as prime minister (PM)? In contrast to party affiliation, the government affiliation of party leaders has received scarce attention in the literature.



Adapted from King (2002)

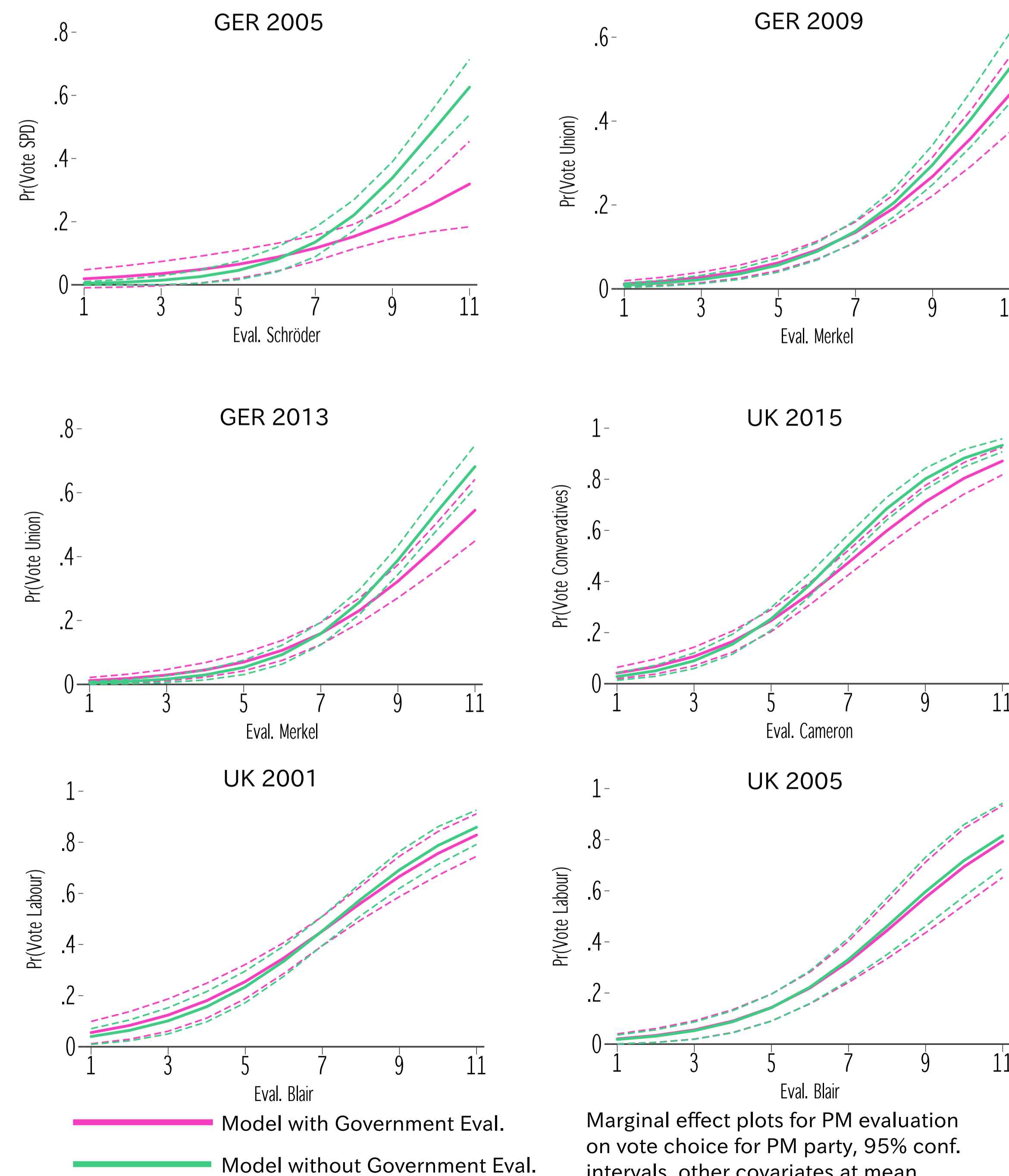
Data & Model

I use survey data from the British Election Study and the German Longitudinal Election Study to analyse elections in which a prime minister ran for re-election after a completed term.

I model citizens' vote choice as binary decisions to either vote for the party of the prime minister or any other major national party using logistic regressions. Leader effects of prime ministers are measured with eleven-point thermometer scales. Besides voters' government evaluation the models include common predictors of vote choice. I check for mediation comparing full models with government evaluation to reduced models without government evaluation. I use the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) technique to separate coefficient changes that are the result of rescaling from true changes in coefficients.

Leader effects of prime ministers are significantly mediated by voters' evaluation of their government's work in the majority of elections. Mediation varies between elections and between prime ministers. Gerhard Schröder's leader effect is mediated considerably in the German federal election in 2005. Leader effects of David Cameron and Angela Merkel are partially mediated as well.

The mediation of Merkel's leader effect is lower in 2009 than in 2013 since most voters were satisfied with the government's crisis response and government evaluation had less influence on vote choice. Tony Blair's leader effect is not mediated by voters' evaluation of his government's work. All leader effects of prime ministers have a significant influence on voters' choices.



KHB-Results

Election	Confounding-Perc.
UK 2001	10.48
UK 2005	6.42
UK 2015	22.37 **
GER 2005	50.12 *
GER 2009	12.95 *
GER 2013	28.10 **

Significance test of mediation presented with confounding-perc. *(p<0.05),**(p<0.01).

Are all prime minister equal?

Prime ministers enjoy greater flexibility than the governing party, they may be evaluated independently from their government if they can sustain a dominant leadership style like Tony Blair.

A natural experiment

Could the causal relationship worked in the opposite direction? If parliamentary systems have personalised voters may evaluate the government more positively because it is led by a party leader they like. I use a natural experiment to check my assumed causal relationship: In 2010 Christian Wulff, prime minister of Lower Saxony was replaced as-if-randomly after the German president resigned due to a scandal. Wulff left his government because he was chosen to become president and was replaced by David McAllister. I use data from a German pollster and find no influence of replacement on government evaluation. In contrast becoming PM improves the evaluation of McAllister.

