Labour market risks and political preferences: The case of temporary employment

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ABSTRACT

The political economy literature has gathered compelling evidence that labour market risks shape political preferences. Accordingly, insecurity fuels support for redistribution and left parties. The paper analyses this argument for temporary workers, a so far neglected risk category which has increased dramatically in the past two decades. Temporary workers also have been in the focus of recent insider-outsider debates. Some authors in this line of research have argued that temporary work leads to political disenchantment, e.g. non-instrumental responses such as vote abstention or protest voting. This contradicts risk-based explanations of political preferences. The article discusses both theoretical perspectives and derives conflicting hypotheses for the empirical analysis of temporary workers’ policy and party preferences. The review reveals considerable ambiguity regarding the questions which parties temporary workers can be expected to support and what the underlying motives for party choice are. Synthesising arguments from both perspectives, the article proposes an alternative argument according to which temporary workers are expected to support the ‘new’ left, i.e. green and other left-libertarian parties. It is argued that this party family combines redistributive policies with outsider-friendly policy design. Using individual-level data from the European Social Survey for 15 European countries, the article supports this argument by showing that temporary compared to permanent workers exhibit higher demand for redistribution and stronger support for the new left. Neither the risk-based nor the insider-outsider explanations receive full support. In particular, no signs of political disenchantment of temporary workers can be found. Thus, the findings challenge central claims of the insider-outsider literature.
INTRODUCTION

The political economy literature has gathered compelling evidence that exposure to labour market risks shapes political preferences (Cusack et al. 2006; Iversen & Soskice 2001; Mughan 2007; Rehm 2009; 2011a; Walter 2010). Accordingly, job insecurity - which is believed to have increased in a context of globalisation and de-industrialisation – leads workers to demand redistribution and to lean towards political parties promoting it, i.e. the left. While these are important insights into the formation of social policy and party preferences, the literature has largely neglected a pervasive individual risk factor in most European labour markets: temporary employment. Research across academic disciplines has documented detrimental effects of temporary employment on a range of socio-economic and psychological outcomes, but we still know strikingly little about its effects on political behaviour. Filling this research gap is desirable for three reasons.

First, temporary work has been identified as an important source of new inequality and insecurity in Europe (Maurin & Postel-Vinay 2005; King & Rueda 2008). By definition, temporary contracts provide more flexibility to employers and, in turn, substantially increase workers uncertainty about future income. Given this risk profile, temporary workers are a suitable group to test influential arguments about political behaviour implications of economic insecurity. Second, the surge of temporary contracts has reignited insider-outsider debates in the political economy literature. Insider-outsider theory argues that temporary workers are not only insecure, but also politically marginalised. It seems common wisdom that temporary workers are among a growing societal group of outsiders whose interests are neglected in the political process (Emmenegger et al. 2012; Marx & Picot 2013; Palier & Thelen 2010; Rueda 2005; 2007; Saint-Paul 1996). However, insider-outsider approaches have put forward diverging arguments about how temporary employment affects individuals' party preferences. As I will show, there is considerable empirical and theoretical ambiguity concerning the question which motivations and policy preferences underlie party choice.

Studying the political behaviour of temporary workers therefore is important to enhance our theoretical and empirical knowledge about the individual-level causal mechanism underlying insider-outsider conflicts. Third, temporary employment has turned into a major societal concern. Particularly given its prevalence among young citizens (Emmenegger et al. 2012), potential repercussions such as political disenchantment or radicalisation are causes for
concern. However, so far these potential consequences have rather been assumed than shown to exist empirically.

Based on these motivations, the present article studies political demand side effects of temporary employment. The primary research question is whether temporary workers differ significantly in their party preferences from their permanently hired counterparts and, if yes, in which direction?

The article makes three contributions. First, it critically reviews existing accounts from which predictions for temporary workers’ partisan orientation can be derived. The review reveals considerable ambiguity regarding the questions which parties temporary workers support and what the underlying motives for party choice are. While some contributions suggest that insecure workers respond highly rationally and goal-oriented to employment risks, others expect rather non-instrumental responses, i.e. alienation or disenchantment from mainstream politics. As result, the article derives competing hypotheses reflecting the causal underpinnings of temporary workers party choice. Second, the article proposes an alternative argument about temporary workers’ partisan orientation. It has been recently suggested that some workers with vulnerable labour market positions lean towards the new left, particularly highly skilled women in service occupations (Häusermann 2010). I argue that irrespective of gender, skill level and occupation, temporary workers have economic incentives ensuing from their particular risk profile to support the new rather than the old left. Hence, the argument combines insight from the risk as well as the insider-outsider literature to explain the political preferences of temporary workers. Third, I provide what to my knowledge is the first comparative empirical analysis testing the full set of theoretical implications of temporary work on political preferences.

Using individual-level data from the European Social Survey (ESS) for 15 European countries, the article shows that temporary employment does increase demand for redistribution and social protection. While there is a positive effect on support for new left, i.e. green and other libertarian parties, no such effect can be found for social democrats or communist parties. The article does not support the notion of political alienation of temporary workers. Temporary workers differ in their political behaviour from permanent workers, but they do not exhibit lower levels of party identification or other signs of political disenchantment, such as a lacking satisfaction with democracy or trust in political parties.
EXPLAINING POLITICAL PREFERENCES OF TEMPORARY WORKERS

Recently, there have been considerable advances in understanding micro-level effects of economic insecurity. One finding is that independent from the ‘usual suspects’ of income and education, exposure to labour market risk is an important determinant of redistributive demand (Cusack et al. 2006; Iversen & Soskice 2001; Rehm 2009; 2011a). The explanation is straightforward: labour market risk imposes uncertainty about future income. Independent from current income, this leads individuals to demand insurance against future income losses (Rehm 2009). The literature has mainly focused on and provided evidence for three risk factors fuelling demand for redistribution and social protection: skill specificity (Cusack et al. 2006; Iversen & Soskice 2001), occupational risk profiles (Rehm 2009; 2011a) and exposure to globalisation (Mughan 2007; Walter 2010).

A risk factor which so far has been neglected is temporary work. Temporary employment contracts have been expanded considerably in many European countries since the 1980s (King & Rueda 2008). Since deregulating employment protection for regular workers is politically difficult in these countries, change has mainly taken the form of ‘marginal’ flexibility, among others the expansion of temporary work (Saint-Paul 1996). In this view, the raison d’être of temporary contracts is to compensate employers for the rigidity of permanent workers with an additional tier of flexible jobs. Hence, employment risks in many European countries are concentrated on temporary workers, which makes the claim of the risk-exposure argument relevant. In fact, temporary employment has been shown to have strong negative effects on subjective job security (Burgoon & Dekker 2010; Maurin & Postel-Vinay 2005). This insecurity should translate into significantly higher demand for redistribution and social protection of temporary compared to permanent workers.

The hypothesised effect of temporary work on social policy preferences is quite intuitive and there already are some supportive findings, for instance regarding support for unemployment benefits and employment promotion measures (Burgoon & Dekker 2010; Rueda 2006). However, effects on preferences for redistribution have, to my knowledge, not been studied yet. Moreover, the literature has recently put forward a possible theoretical extension: while income and risk can be treated as distinct determinants of redistributive demand (Cusack et al. 2006; Rehm 2009), combinations of both have been argued to matter as well. Kim (2007) shows that individuals with high incomes may demand insurance against unemployment if their relative risks are sufficiently high. In a similar vein, Rehm et al. (2012) maintain that,
although risk and income are typically negatively correlated, risk does, to a certain extent, cut across income groups. They, too, expect individuals combining high income and high risk to demand insurance. Arguably, the joint effect of risk and income on redistributive demand is particularly relevant for the analysis of temporary work. First, employment risks of temporary workers are relatively high. Second, temporary contracts are widespread among high-skilled (and relatively well-paid) workers.¹ Hence, temporary workers with high incomes constitute a suitable example of a “cross-pressured group” as described by Rehm et al. (2012, p. 390; Rehm 2011b).

This notion should find its expression in an interaction effect between risk exposure (temporary contract) and current income as predictors of redistributive demand. While poor individuals tend to demand redistribution irrespective of risk, the effect of risk exposure should increase with income. Hence, holding a temporary contract should have a stronger (positive) effect on redistributive demand for individuals with high income than for those with low income. To my knowledge, this paper is the first to explore this argument on the micro level.

The main question addressed in this article is whether and how the risk profile of temporary workers is translated into patterns of party support. The literature on employment risks often assumes that insecurity spurs support for pro-welfare parties (Mughan & Lacy 2002; Rehm 2011b). However, most empirical studies do not actually measure partisan orientation or voting behaviour of ‘insecure’ workers (Burgoon & Dekker 2010; Iversen & Soskice 2001; King & Rueda 2008; Rehm 2009; 2011a; Rueda 2005; 2006). If it is investigated, it is usually narrowed down to support for left vs. non-left parties (Cusack et al. 2006; Rehm 2011b; Walter 2010). In this tradition, we could hypothesise that temporary workers lean towards the left (hypothesis 1).

An alternative perspective is provided by insider-outsider theory. It refines the argument about partisan implications of job insecurity by arguing that it can go along with political exclusion.² The recent insider-outsider literature postulates that the old left, i.e. social democratic parties, do not represent the interests of the entire working class anymore. Job insecurity is the key demarcation. As famously argued by David Rueda (2005) in post-industrial societies “labor is divided into two segments: those with secure employment (insiders) and those without (outsiders)” (p. 66). As the risk patterns of the two groups produce fundamentally different policy preferences (regarding redistributive policies and employment protection), social democratic parties have to make a choice which one to represent. Rueda concludes that they will focus on insiders as their core constituency while
neglecting interests of outsiders who tend to be “less politically active and electorally relevant” (p. 62).

Although Rueda’s theory is primarily about party behaviour, it has implications for the partisan orientation of outsiders. The most direct one is that they should show lower support for social democratic parties compared to insiders (hypothesis 2). Rueda (2005) indicates two further possible implications: based on their interest to remove employment barriers, outsiders could support parties with a deregulatory stance, i.e. liberal or conservative parties (hypothesis 3). To be clear, this would in most cases conflict with their assumed redistributive preferences and would imply that they prioritise employment protection deregulation over generous social policies. The second possibility is that “losers in the labor market arena (outsiders who are not the focus of traditional left or right parties) may have reasons to turn away from mainstream options” (Rueda 2005, p. 72). This can essentially mean two things: either outsiders turn towards anti-system or protest parties, because “those in non-standard cheap labor have political incentives to oppose a system that provides few benefits” (King & Rueda 2008, p. 293). Given their resentment of mainstream politics and parties, right-wing populists would be a likely candidate to benefit from these incentives (hypothesis 4). Secondly, outsiders could become disenchanted with politics and retreat from participation entirely. Hence, they could tend to abstain from voting and show lower level of overall partisan identification (hypothesis 5). Häusermann and Schwander (2012) argue in this direction. They show descriptively that at least in some European welfare states outsider status in the labour market is associated with weak political integration in the form of voting abstention.

One should note that it is far from clear how hypotheses 4 and 5 can be integrated into the political economy models of partisan support. The risk-based literature essentially draws on a spatial model of party choice in which individuals base political decisions mainly on economic self-interest and the goal to affect public policies accordingly (Cusack et al. 2006; Rehm 2009). The same applies to Rueda’s (2005) argument, which rests on rather strong rationality assumptions (Emmenegger 2009) and is based exclusively on individuals’ economic considerations. Non-participation, however, is notoriously difficult to integrate into a rational choice framework and its explanation is usually complemented with social and psychological factors. A similar inconsistency occurs with regard to protest parties. Casting a vote for such parties is often seen as the result of negative feelings towards the system, e.g. distrust in political institutions, rather than of rational goal-orientation (Betz 1994; Norris 2005). Hence, the motives may be rather non-instrumental or ‘expressive’ (Schuessler 2000). To be clear, voting for protest parties can be explained in a rational choice framework (Van
der Brug et al. 2000), but is has to be spelled out yet how labour market risks relate to support for anti-system parties.\(^4\) The point here is that empirical support for the ‘alienation argument’ would challenge the primacy given to instrumental motives in political economy theories about how risk influences individual preferences.

A final hypothesis for the partisan orientation of temporary workers concerns a possible split within the group of left parties. Studying pension politics in Continental Europe, Häusermann (2010) argues that some atypical workers (in particular skilled women in part-time jobs) lean towards the ‘new’ or ‘libertarian’ left rather than towards traditional labour parties. As the employment risks of this group and their libertarian values underpin each other, they become a natural constituency for the new left, which, in turn, represents its policy interests.

Going beyond this specific argument, a more general claim about the alignment of the new left’s social policy position with the interests of workers exposed to employment risks can be made. From early on, it has been argued that green or libertarian parties and their voters can be placed on the left of the economic ideological dimension (Kitschelt 1988; Müller-Rommel 1985). The ideological alignment of these parties with economic leftism has, if anything, increased since the 1980s (Dalton 2009). Hence, left-libertarians are ‘left’ economically speaking and should, in principle, attract voters demanding generous social policies. From an insider-outsider perspective they should have an additional advantage over traditional labour parties in attracting temporary workers’ support: in contrast to social democrats and communists, the new left’s position on the welfare state should be less biased towards the interests of trade unions and labour market insiders. According to Kitschelt (1988), opposition to bureaucratic welfare-states and corporatism are among the defining characteristics of left-libertarian parties. Instead, their social policy profile is rooted in an egalitarian and feminist world view, which typically leads them to favour universalist programs. Most notably, left-libertarian and green parties in many countries have come to embrace (more or less directly) the idea of an unconditional ‘basic’ or ‘citizens income’ (Vanderborght & Van Parijs 2005 p. 83-86). To the extent that existing welfare states are perceived as being insider-orientated (e.g. due to strict eligibility criteria), an unconditional and universal benefit should be seen as an attractive alternative by temporary workers (see also Marx and Picot 2013).

-- Table 1 --

The differences within the group of left parties can be illustrated using salience data from the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2012), which measures how frequently topics are referred to
in party manifestos. Table 1 confirms that ecology parties put just as much emphasis on social justice as social democratic or communist parties do. Hence, although green parties are often depicted as pursuing post-materialist goals, social policy and redistribution are salient features of their election platforms. Where green parties differ from other left parties, however, is regarding their ideological proximity to trade unions, i.e. typical insider organisations (Palier & Thelen 2010). The manifesto data reveals a vast gap between social democratic and green parties in positive references to corporatism, which can be seen as an indicator for proximity to unions. This reinforces the argument that social democratic party strategies are to a stronger extent driven by the interests of labour market insiders.

In sum, I argue that temporary workers due to their risk profile have economic motives to support the new left. As opposed to the old left, these parties arguably represent the specific interests stemming from temporary worker’s vulnerable position in the labour market and with regard to social protection. In that way, the argument combines the main thrust of the risk literature with the social democratic dilemma postulated by insider-outsider theory. Hence, I expect temporary workers to show significantly higher support for new left parties across educational levels, gender and occupational groups (hypothesis 6).

To sum up, we can distinguish two main theoretical perspectives at the political preferences of temporary workers. The risk literature leads us to predict support for redistribution and left-parties. The insider-outsider literature deviates from this expectation and comes in essentially two variants: temporary workers could either abandon social democracy in favour of market-liberal parties or be fully disintegrated from the political system and support anti-system or no parties. Finally, based on a combination of both perspectives, we could expect to observe increased support of the new (i.e. libertarian) left. The remainder of the article will analyse these predictions empirically.

DATA DESCRIPTION AND CASE SELECTION

The analysis is based on two pooled waves from the European Social Survey (conducted 2007-2011), which is one of the few data sources providing comparative information on employment contracts and political behaviour. To increase comparability, the analysis is restricted to EU and EFTA countries. In the used waves, the ESS includes 23 countries belonging to this group. From this sample, I exclude countries with low shares of temporary
contracts in the workforce. In these cases, the absolute number of actually observed temporary contracts is extremely small, so that they cannot be analysed in a meaningful way. I apply a threshold of five percent (of temporary contracts in total employment) for the inclusion. This excludes Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia, and Romania from the analysis (Figure 1). Further countries had to be omitted because of an excessive number of missing values for important variables (Cyprus, Ireland, Greece, and Portugal). After excluding countries with low shares of temporary contracts in the workforce or missing information, the sample consists of individuals from 15 European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK). To facilitate interpretation, the sample is restricted to dependent workers (i.e. those who report to be in paid employment, but not self-employed. This also excludes those primarily in education such as apprentices or working students). Hence, there are only two types of individuals in the sample: workers with open-ended or temporary employment contracts.

--- Figure 1 ---

The main explanatory variable is contract type (dummy with value one if worker has a temporary contract). All models include a set of control variables which are conventional in this type of analysis: age, age squared, skill level (low, medium, high), household income (measured as country-specific deciles), church attendance (dummy with value of one if respondent goes to church at least once a month), a dummy for trade union membership and a dummy for public sector employment. In addition, a dummy for migrant status is included, as it can be hypothesised that they are overrepresented in temporary jobs (King & Rueda 2008). The definition of all variables and summary statistics can be found in the appendix (Table A1).
ATTITUDES TOWARDS REDISTRIBUTION AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The first step of the analysis is examining potential determinants of party support: social policy demand and perceptions of the political system. The former is crucial for the causal argument of the risk literature, while perceptions of the political system are important to assess the political disenchantment argument.

Preferences for redistribution are measured by agreement to the statement: “the government should reduce differences in income levels” (on a five-point scale). While frequently used, this variable is rather general. Therefore two more specific items from wave four of the ESS are included. The first measures support for government intervention in the labour market by asking whether respondents think it is “governments’ responsibility to ensure a job for everyone who wants one”. For the sake of comparability, the answer options are collapsed into a five-point scale as well. The other (dichotomous) variable measures support for egalitarian pensions. Respondents are coded as in support of egalitarianism if they state that low earners should get the same or higher pensions compared to high income earners (as opposed to “higher earners should get a larger old age pension than lower earners”). Given their higher risks of unemployment and fragmented employment biographies, government job provision and egalitarian social policy directly benefit outsiders (Häusermann 2010).

Models 1-3 in Table 2 show that temporary workers differ significantly from permanent workers in the expected direction for all three variables. This confirms the expectation derived from the risk literature that temporary employment increases the likelihood to support redistribution and social protection.

--- Table 2 ---

It was further hypothesised that income and contract type interact as determinants of redistributive preferences. The theoretical argument was that employment risks have a weaker effect on redistributive support for low incomes than for (cross-pressured) high-income earners. In fact, interaction terms of contract type and income added to Models 1-3 are all statistically significant (Table A2 in the appendix). Since interactions in non-linear models are interpreted best in substantive terms, Figure 2 plots the average effects of temporary
employment on the probability to strongly agree with redistribution, labour market intervention and egalitarian pensions over different income levels. As theoretically expected, the effect of temporary work does make no or only a small difference for low income workers. For this group, it was expected that their current position in the income scale alone provides a motivation to demand redistribution. As hypothesised, all three effects increase with income, which suggests that, in line with the theoretical discussion, employment risks have a stronger impact on policy preferences for middle and high incomes.

--- Figure 2 ---

To measure attitudes towards the political system, I use two variables in the ESS indicating whether respondents feel alienated from the political process. The first question asks how satisfied respondents are “with the way democracy works” in their country (0 “extremely dissatisfied” to 10 “extremely satisfied”). The second question asks how much respondents trust political parties (0 “no trust at all” to 10 “complete trust”). We would expect significant effects of contract type on at least one of the variables, if the claim of the insider-outsider literature holds that temporary workers are systematically less integrated into mainstream politics. However, such a disenchantment effect cannot be detected in the data. Models 4 and 5 show no relationship between holding a temporary contract and negative attitudes towards the political system. One could expect that this negative finding is partly explicable by the heterogeneity of temporary workers. However, interactions of contract type with skill and income level (not shown, but obtainable upon request) yield no further insights as they are statistically insignificant for both models.

PARTY PREFERENCES

The next step is to analyse party preferences of temporary workers. For this purpose, I use a party identification variable rather than vote choice. The latter is only reported retrospectively in the ESS. Since there can be a considerable time gap between the last election and data collection and since many temporary contracts have a rather short duration, there is no reliable
information about respondents’ labour market status at the time of the election. Party identification is a meaningful indicator for the purpose of this paper. There is plenty of evidence that party identification does not only measure a stable affective attachment to a party but that it is updated according to changing preferences (e.g. Abramowitz & Saunders 2006; Clarke et al. 2004; Thomassen & Rosema 2009). Based on the reasoning by Fiorina (2002) and following comparable recent studies (Marx & Picot 2013; Oesch 2008; Rehm 2011b) I assume party identification to at least partly reflect rational evaluations. These studies also point to important advantages of the variable over vote choice: its comparatively slow-moving character makes it a more conservative test for effects of (transient) labour market status on political behaviour and reduces election-specific influences (ibid.). Finally, the wording of the party identification measure in the ESS comes relatively close to a rational understanding of the concept.7

The theoretical discussion led to multiple hypotheses about temporary workers’ partisanship. To analyse these predictions, I recoded the country-specific answers to the party identification question into party families using the classification from the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al. 2012). Table 3 summarises how the hypotheses on party preferences correspond to the classification in the Manifesto Project. In most cases, the match between the hypotheses and party families is straightforward. Rueda’s (2005) argument is tested by using, first, support for social democrats or communists as a dependent variable and, second, support for parties, which can be expected to deregulate employment protection, i.e. liberals or conservatives (hypotheses 2 and 3). The protest-party hypothesis (4) and the new-left hypothesis (6) are analysed using the party families of nationalist and green parties, respectively.8 Finally, disenchantment with politics (hypothesis 5) is operationalised as lower overall party identification. As the classification in the Manifesto Project is time invariant, some parties were subjectively recoded based on a literature review.9 A descriptive overview of party support by contract type and country can be found in the appendix (Table A3)

--- Table 3 ---

Support for each party family was investigated by running separate binary logistic regressions.10 The sample for the regressions differ, as only countries were included which have the respective type of party in their party system. Moreover, all models were repeated
excluding respondents from the four post-communist democracies in the sample (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) since it has been argued that their party systems are difficult to compare to Western European ones (Marks et al. 2006). The full regression results can be found in the appendix (Table A4) and Figure 3 shows the average effects of temporary contracts on the probability of feeling close to different party families. The results can be quickly summarised: based on the findings (and 95% confidence intervals), all but one hypothesis can be discarded as the effects of temporary employment are not significantly different from zero. The only group of parties for which support differs significantly between temporary and permanent workers is the new left. On a 90% level of confidence the results remain the same (only the composite left category in the sample including CEE countries becomes significant).

The negative findings for social democrats as well as for “old left” and “left total” are striking from the discussed theoretical perspectives. They qualify the expectation derived from the risk literature that temporary workers support the left in general. Temporary workers do not support the old left despite their increased risk and their stronger demand for redistribution. This seems to lend tentative support to the notion formulated by Rueda (2005) that temporary workers feel left behind by social democracy, because it exclusively represents the interests of labour market insiders. However, this would actually imply a significantly negative effect on support for the old left and a positive effect on support for liberal and conservative parties. Both expectations are not confirmed by the data. In addition, the negative finding for overall party identification can be read as clear evidence against the notion of political disenchantment. On the individual level, not “feeling close” to a party arguably would be a minimum requirement for such a diagnosis.

--- Figure 3 ---

SUPPORT FOR THE NEW LEFT: TESTING ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Given the cross-sectional structure of the data, it is difficult to interpret the correlation between temporary work and new left support in causal terms. To rule out the most relevant alternative explanations, the finding is subjected to a number of robustness checks (Table 4).
A first possible alternative explanation is that temporary workers could be clustered in occupational groups with pronounced post-materialist or libertarian value patterns (Häusermann 2010; Kitschelt & Rehm 2006). Both, direct measures of post-materialist values and membership in the occupational group of ‘socio-cultural specialists’ have been found to be strong determinants of green party support (Dolezal 2010; Oesch 2008). Hence, the question is whether temporary workers support the new left because of their risk profiles or because they are concentrated in occupational groups leaning towards it anyway. I test for such a spurious correlation with various alternative model specifications: first, I include two attitudinal measures serving as proxies for libertarian or post-materialist values: agreement to the statement “gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish” and the question how important it is “to care for nature and environment” (Model 2). As these variables directly control for post-materialist values, they should explain away a spurious correlation between temporary work and new left support. Second, to eliminate potential bias of membership in an occupational group, dummies for one-digit categories from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) are included in Model 3. Model 4 adds a dummy for membership in the occupational group of socio-cultural specialists, which is a particularly strong predictor of green party support (see Oesch 2008 for operationalisation and theoretical discussion). Finally, Model 5 includes self-placement on the left-right scale as a control variable. For the sake of simplicity, the robustness checks are only conducted for the smaller sample of respondents from Western European party systems.

As Table 4 shows, the additional control variables behave as expected and the finding is robust across all alternative specifications (although significance decreases in some models to the 5%-level). Besides attitudinal variables and occupation, some demographic variables potentially bias the result. Support for green parties is particularly strong among the young and urban residents (Dolezal 2010). Although the baseline model controls for age already, I re-ran the regression excluding those aged 30 or younger (not shown) to make sure results are not driven by overrepresentation of young workers in temporary contracts. Moreover, I added a dummy variable for residency in (suburbs of) big cities (not shown). Ultimately, I excluded respondents from countries whose parties were subjectively recoded (Denmark, Netherlands, and Norway, see footnote 8) and then stepwise from each individual country (not shown). For all these alternative specifications, the effect of temporary contracts remains basically unaltered (however, mostly significant on 5%-level only).
CONCLUSIONS

The article analysed policy preferences and party choice of a crucial and growing risk category in European labour markets: temporary employment. The main research question could be answered in the affirmative: temporary and permanent workers do show significant differences in their political preferences. However, these differences are not fully explainable by existing theories. In line with risk-based explanations of political preferences, temporary workers are more likely to demand redistribution. Contrary to the claim that left parties should attract insecure workers, this could only be confirmed for the new left, i.e. green and other left-libertarian parties. The lack of general support of temporary workers for left parties could be read as tentative evidence for the notion from the insider-outsider literature that social democrats have difficulties to integrate non-standard workers. That said, none of the main claims derived from insider-outsider literature could be fully confirmed: temporary workers neither appear to massively defect from social democracy nor do they support deregulatory parties or show any signs of political disenchantment.

The alternative argument put forward in this article was that temporary workers support the new left. Such a pattern would be in line with the specific employment and social risks of temporary workers and reflect a potential insider-orientation of other left parties. Hence, the hypothesis synthesises elements of the risk-based and the insider-outsider explanation of political preferences. The analysis provided clear comparative evidence for new left’s ability to attract insecure and precarious workers. The finding has proven very robust and various alternative explanations could be ruled out. Moreover, the effect being significant in a pooled sample indicates a general European trend. Although the literature typically depicts new left parties as representing value-based political demands, the results suggest that more attention should be paid to their economic and social policy positions. My argument rests on the claim that the new left combines the advantages of pro-welfare parties with a more ‘outsider-friendly’ stance in the design of social policies (cf. Häusermann 2010; Marx & Picot 2013), for instance by advocating an unconditional basic income. However, we still know strikingly
little about the political supply side of the argument. Future research should therefore pay
greater attention to the social policy profile of new left parties. More generally, basing the
analysis of insider-outsider politics on parties’ actual policy supply (rather than on party
families) would be an important advancement.

What are the implications of the results for the discussed theories? The risk-based explanation
seems applicable to temporary workers, although with the above-mentioned qualifications for
social democratic parties. An important contribution to this literature is the finding of an
interaction between current income and risk, a claim which so far has not been proven on the
micro level. If measured as temporary work, risk does, by tendency, align the preferences of
high-income individuals to those of the poor. Of course, one should be careful when assessing
the relevance of this alignment on the macro level. However, my findings indicate that the
share of temporary workers could be a relevant variable for future macro-level analyses of
social policy demand or reforms. A testable prediction is that expansionary social policies
receive stronger support and are easier to implement where the share of temporary workers is
large, particularly among the high skilled.

Concerning insider-outsider theory, the review revealed considerable ambiguity in this strand
of literature with regard to the logic of outsiders’ political behaviour (which seems to be
inconsistently attributed to either instrumental or non-instrumental motives). Although the
article only analysed a subset of outsiders empirically, it does suggests that insider-outsider
theory is in need of clarification (if not revision) of its micro foundation. Authors in this
tradition should spell out precisely which characteristics make individuals (perceive
themselves as) outsiders and how these characteristics translate into distinct patterns of
political behaviour. Such a theory should ideally account for effects of the outsider status on
both, ‘expressive’ and ‘instrumental’ motives. Empirically, advances in this direction are most
likely to come from analyses accounting for labour-market transitions, as persistence and
mobility are conceptually crucial to identify outsiders. Unfortunately, panel data combining
political attitudes and sufficiently detailed labour market information are still quite rare.

There are two limitations of the present analysis both indicating paths for future research.
First, party identification is only one possible measure of party choice. Ideally, the results
would be replicated using actual election data. While this is difficult with currently available
data sources, the persistent labour market problems in many European countries will
hopefully encourage the inclusion of detailed information on the employment status in
national election studies and comparative data sets.
Second, the present analysis is rather devoid of context and only looks at general European trends. Some recent contributions argue, however, in favour of more contextualised analyses, since the political behaviour of precarious workers is understood best against the background of national political institutions and labour market structures (Lindvall & Rueda 2012; Marx & Picot 2013). Accordingly, it can be criticised that the pooled analysis may disguise important cross-sectional differences and that some of the hypotheses (including political disenchantment) may receive support for specific cases. For instance, party competition could be an important intervening factor. Cases in point are social democratic parties, who are said to be particularly sensitive towards electoral trade-offs imposed by left-wing competitors (Kitschelt 1999; Merkel et al. 2008). Exploring the effect of country-specific variables on insider-outsider gaps (and labour market risk in general) would be a fruitful next step to advance the literature.
REFERENCES


### Table 1: Salience of social justice and corporatism by party family (2000s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Family</th>
<th>Social Justice</th>
<th>Corporatism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecology parties</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social democrats</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>0.71***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals and conservatives</td>
<td>3.51***</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist parties</td>
<td>2.39***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Average percentage of manifesto sentences with positive reference to social justice and corporatism. *** = sig. difference to ecology parties $p<0.01$. The sample includes all countries covered by the analysis (see below). *Source:* Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2012).

### Table 2: Attitudes towards redistribution, labour-market intervention, egalitarian pensions, satisfaction with democracy and trust in political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reduce income differences (1)</th>
<th>Ensure jobs (2)</th>
<th>Egalitarian pensions (3)</th>
<th>Satisfaction democracy (4)</th>
<th>Trust political parties (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.021**</td>
<td>-0.015*</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>-0.034*</td>
<td>-0.072***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.009]</td>
<td>[0.008]</td>
<td>[0.036]</td>
<td>[0.019]</td>
<td>[0.015]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age2</td>
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<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.000]</td>
<td>[0.000]</td>
<td>[0.000]</td>
<td>[0.000]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (low) Reference category</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>0.169**</td>
<td>0.063</td>
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<td>[0.062]</td>
<td>[0.104]</td>
<td>[0.149]</td>
<td>[0.071]</td>
<td>[0.074]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
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<td>-0.343***</td>
<td>-0.515***</td>
<td>0.525***</td>
<td>0.312***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>[0.126]</td>
<td>[0.091]</td>
<td>[0.084]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.241***</td>
<td>0.315***</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-0.230***</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>[0.026]</td>
<td>[0.045]</td>
<td>[0.059]</td>
<td>[0.044]</td>
<td>[0.035]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.055</td>
<td>-0.250</td>
<td>0.836***</td>
<td>0.617***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.081]</td>
<td>[0.094]</td>
<td>[0.184]</td>
<td>[0.092]</td>
<td>[0.090]</td>
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<td>-0.036</td>
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<td>-0.086</td>
<td>0.295***</td>
<td>0.301***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>[0.128]</td>
<td>[0.102]</td>
<td>[0.080]</td>
<td>[0.056]</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>[0.043]</td>
<td>[0.087]</td>
<td>[0.075]</td>
<td>[0.050]</td>
<td>[0.063]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
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<td>0.118*</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.115**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>[0.069]</td>
<td>[0.055]</td>
<td>[0.073]</td>
<td>[0.054]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.071***</td>
<td>-0.086***</td>
<td>0.105***</td>
<td>0.050***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>[0.013]</td>
<td>[0.014]</td>
<td>[0.010]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.275***</td>
<td>0.304***</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.044]</td>
<td>[0.063]</td>
<td>[0.093]</td>
<td>[0.048]</td>
<td>[0.030]</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.909***</td>
<td>4.909***</td>
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<td>[0.796]</td>
<td>[0.421]</td>
<td>[0.305]</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Models 1-2: ordered logistic regressions; Model 3: binary logit; Models 4-5: OLS; robust standard errors (clustered by country and wave) in brackets; population size and design weights applied. * $p<0.1$; ** $p<0.05$; *** $p<0.01$. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country &amp; year dummies</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>11,344</td>
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<td>21,996</td>
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</table>

| (Pseudo) $R^2$ | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.15 | 0.14 | 0.16 |
Table 3: Correspondence between hypotheses and Manifesto Project party families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>Type of party</th>
<th>Expected sign</th>
<th>Party family in Manifesto Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Ecology parties (ECO), communists (COM), social democrats (SOC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Old left</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>SOC + COM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Liberal parties (LIB), conservative parties (CON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Extreme right</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Nationalist parties (NAT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>New left</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ECO</td>
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</table>

Notes: Abbreviations correspond to Volkens et al. (2012).

Table 4: Support for new left (excluding CEE countries) robustness checks, binary logistic regression

<table>
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<th>(5)</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.001**</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
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<td>[0.000]</td>
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<td>0.227***</td>
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<td>[0.079]</td>
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<td>[0.081]</td>
<td>[0.086]</td>
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<td>[0.081]</td>
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<td>-0.089</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td>-0.289***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>[0.105]</td>
<td>[0.100]</td>
<td>[0.097]</td>
<td>[0.093]</td>
<td>[0.109]</td>
</tr>
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<td>Public sector</td>
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<td>0.295***</td>
<td>0.208***</td>
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<td>[0.106]</td>
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<td>-0.003</td>
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<td>[0.021]</td>
<td>[0.024]</td>
<td>[0.022]</td>
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<td>Gay rights</td>
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<td>-0.119</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>[0.072]</td>
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<td>Occupation dummies</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.270**</td>
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<td>[0.123]</td>
<td>[0.107]</td>
<td>[0.111]</td>
</tr>
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<td>-4.603***</td>
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<td>-3.873***</td>
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<td>[0.882]</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16,340</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Logistic regressions; robust standard errors (clustered by country and wave) in brackets; population size and design weights applied. * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Occupation dummies: ISCO-88 one-digit groups.
FIGURES

Figure 1: Temporary employees as percentage of the total number of employees by country, 2009

![Bar chart showing percentage of temporary employees by country in 2009. Source: EUROSTAT. Notes: grey bars: included in analysis; light grey: excluded because of low percentage; black: excluded because of missing values.](chart1.png)

Figure 2: Conditional effect of contract type on preferences for redistribution, labour-market intervention and egalitarian pensions

![Graphs showing predicted probabilities (Panels A, C, E) and average effects of temporary contracts (Panels B, D, F) with 95% confidence interval for different levels of income and three outcomes (strongly agree with redistribution, strongly agree with government responsibility for jobs and support for egalitarian pensions). Based on Table A2 in the appendix.](chart2.png)

Notes: Predicted probabilities (Panels A, C, E) and average effects of temporary contracts (Panels B, D, F) with 95% confidence interval for different levels of income and three outcomes (strongly agree with redistribution, strongly agree with government responsibility for jobs and support for egalitarian pensions). Based on Table A2 in the appendix.

Figure 3: Average effects of temporary contracts on party support and 95% confidence intervals

![Graph showing average effects of temporary contracts on party support with 95% confidence intervals.](chart3.png)
Figure 3. Average effects of temporary contracts on party support and 95 per cent confidence intervals

Notes: Average effects of discrete change from permanent to temporary contract on the probability to support party family, based Table A4 in the appendix.
According to EUROSTAT data (own calculations), around one fourth of the temporary workers in the EU hold a tertiary degree. Among the remaining workers, upper secondary degrees clearly dominate.

So far there is no conclusive empirical evidence for effects of insider-outsider divides on party choice. Two single-country studies (Lindvall & Rueda 2012; Marx & Picot 2013) confirm, but also qualify the relevance of insider-outsider divides. The comparative work by Emmenegger (2009) finds that temporary workers do not differ systematically from insiders.

Lindvall and Rueda (2012) argue that support by outsiders varies over time and depends on the positioning of social democrats in the respective election. While plausible, such a contextualised analysis is beyond the scope of the present article.

Insecure workers may support the radical right, because they see themselves as competing with migrants over scarce resources (Mughan et al. 2003).

Changes in the measurement of household income and lacking information on sector of employment lead to major inconsistencies between wave four and previous waves of the ESS.

Outsiders are typically operationalised as composite groups. Rueda (2005; 2006) includes the unemployed, involuntary part-timers and temporary workers. While this is justifiable conceptually, recent analyses found substantial heterogeneity within this group (Emmenegger 2009; Marx & Picot 2013). Häusermann (2010) and Häusermann and Schwander (2012) define outsiders based on occupational risk profiles. This approach has its merits, but tends to conflate occupational risk and value patterns, which both are theoretically expected to affect upon social policy and party preferences (Kitschelt & Rehm 2006). To isolate the effect of a specific labour market risk, I restrict the analysis to temporary workers, which admittedly is only one category of outsiders (albeit an important one). This limits comparability to previous findings of the insider-outsider literature.

Compared to traditional measures, the question (“Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties?” and “Which one?”) lacks a time horizon signifying endurance of the attachment. As Thomassen and Rosema (2009) note, this ‘closeness variant’ “appears to be based on the spatial analogy used in proximity models that are rooted in rational choice theory” (p. 47). The wording, hence, facilitates the use of the variable as a proxy for party preferences at particular points in time.
The line between new and old left is more difficult to draw than suggested by the categorisation into party families. Various social democratic parties have come to embrace post-material goals. However, social democrats have to balance competing interests, including those of their traditional (but shrank) working-class electorates and unions (Kitschelt 1999), particularly when confronted with credible left-wing competitors (like it is the case in most European countries). For these historical reasons, “the diverging interests of labor market insiders and outsider is especially problematic for social democratic parties” (Merkel et al. 2008, p. 36). Notwithstanding important differences across social democratic parties, one can plausibly expect them to maintain a stronger ‘insider-orientation’ in their positions on social and labour market policies than other parties (see also Table 1).

There are three main changes: first, a number of parties with agrarian roots were recoded. This concerns the Swiss SVP (recoded as liberal/conservative), the Finish Centre Party (liberal/conservative) and the True Finns (nationalists). Second, some of the former radical left parties in the Nordic countries have moved towards a ‘new left’ profile by adopting a libertarian and ecologist agenda. I recoded two of this cases as new left (the Danish and the Norwegian Socialist People’s Parties), because they constitute the clearest examples of Nordic ‘eco-socialism’ and in both cases it has been argued that their re-orientation forestalled the rise of other new left parties (Arter 2012). Moreover, the Dutch D66 was reclassified from social democratic to new left. Third, next to the True Finns two more parties were recoded as extreme right: the Belgian Vlaams Belang (originally regionalists) and the Norwegian Progress Party (originally single issue party).

The results do not change if the models are specified as multinomial regressions with a trichotomous dependent variable (support for party, support for other party, support for no party). Results are obtainable upon request.