Choosing Your Battles Wisely?
Activist Preferences, Party Size and Issue Selection

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explain why parties emphasize particular positional issues in their campaigns – a hitherto understudied topic. The policy preferences of activists are shown to be an important influence on party platforms, and therefore, party emphasis decisions on positional issues. However, I find party size to be a more important determinant of parties' emphasis strategies than whether a party is 'mainstream' or 'niche'. Large mainstream parties—termed 'dominant parties'—de-emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme, whereas both small mainstream and small niche parties—'non-dominant parties'—emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme. Further, large niche parties appear to behave more like large mainstream parties than small niche parties in this respect. These patterns hold across Western and Eastern Europe, suggesting that, in a variety of information environments, the appearance of policy moderation may be viewed as advantageous by dominant parties, and potentially disadvantageous by non-dominant parties. However, the incentive to emphasize moderate issue positions appears to be stronger for dominant parties in less proportional systems than similar parties in more proportional ones. These analyses have implications for the responsiveness of party platforms to voter preferences.

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1   Introduction

Heresthetic is neither rhetoric nor magic. The heresthetician can neither create preferences nor hypnotize. What he can do is probe until he finds some new alternative, some new dimension, that strikes a spark in the preference of others.

The Art of Political Manipulation
WILLIAM H. RIKER

The 2015 General Election showed us that pursuing a centrist strategy was a catastrophic error. As former Cambridge MP and City Council Leader Professor David Howarth told us on this website immediately after the General Election last year, it is something 'we must never do again'.

Paul Pettinger, Head of Office for the Liberal Youth

This paper investigates the determinants of party emphasis on positional issues, and finds that an important factor influencing the level of emphasis a party places on an issue is the policy distance between its activists and the average voter on that issue. Furthermore, using a recently developed fixed effects ordered logit estimator, I find clear differences of strategy between traditionally large—or 'dominant'—and traditionally small—or 'non-dominant'—parties in Europe. Dominant parties typically emphasize issues where the party and its activists are closer to the average voter, whereas non-dominant parties typically emphasize issues where the party and its activists are further from the average voter. Party size emerges as a more important determinant of parties' emphasis strategies than whether a party is 'mainstream' or 'niche', with small mainstream parties behaving like small niche parties rather than their larger mainstream counterparts. The incentives I highlight appear to be stronger for dominant parties in less proportional electoral systems relative to similar parties in more proportional ones, whereas I find no discernible difference in the behavior of non-dominant parties in more and less proportional systems. These patterns hold across Western and Eastern Europe, suggesting that, in a variety of information environments, the appearance of policy moderation may be viewed as advantageous by dominant parties, but potentially disadvantageous by non-dominant parties.[1]

Work on 'heresthetics', 'issue competition', 'saliency theory' or 'issue ownership theory' (Robertson 1976; Budge and Farlie 1983; Riker 1993; Petrocik 1996; Green-Pedersen 2007) has long argued that parties primarily compete by drawing voters' attention to particular issues, in an effort to alter the dimensions on which they are evaluated by increasing the salience of favorable issues.[2] To date, researchers have amassed considerable evidence from a wide range

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[1]This runs contrary to previous research, which has suggested that policy extremism may be an electorally advantageous strategy in the new democracies of Eastern Europe—by reducing voter uncertainty in a low information context—whereas policy moderation may be preferable for parties operating in the established democracies of Western Europe (Ezrow, Homola and Tavits 2014).

[2]A concurrent empirical and experimental literature on the importance of "priming effects" argues that political advertising has a significant effect on voters' issue priorities (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick and Kinder 1990).

of countries that parties do focus disproportionately on issues that favor them.[3] However, although positional, or non-consensual, issues are a substantial focus of parties' campaigns,[4] standard ownership-based explanations of issue selection by parties largely deal with valence or consensual issues, and cannot explain party advantage on positional issues. In a positional context, an important determinant of a party's advantage on an issue is presumably the relative popularity of its position on the issue. Then, we must consider how parties come by particular issue positions – and in particular, what binds certain parties to winning positions, and others to losing ones.[5]

I suggest that the policy preferences of a party's activists may be a critical factor in its choices of which positions to adopt and, consequently, which issues to emphasize. In particular, on each issue, the policy choices of a party may be constrained by the preferences of its activists, forcing parties to take more extreme positions on issues on which their activists are more extreme. As a result, a dominant party is more electorally competitive when voters' attention is focused on issues on which its activists are relatively centrist. It is on these issues that dominant parties are able to take positions popular with the moderate voters that are key to their continued electoral success. Then, in order to maximize their electoral performance, a dominant party will tend to emphasize those issues on which its activists are relatively centrist, and de-emphasize those issues on which its activists are more extreme, thereby deflecting voters' attention to issues where it can take more popular positions. By contrast, non-dominant parties—parties which struggle to secure more than 10% of the vote—actually do better by emphasizing issues on which they and their activists are relatively extreme. This approach allows such parties to attract voters with extreme preferences on some issues, who are disenchanted by parties emphasizing centrist

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[3]For instance, Green and Hobolt (2008) observe that during the 2005 British elections, both Labour and the Conservatives campaigned predominantly on their respective 'owned' issues, while Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) note that during the period of left-wing governments in Denmark between 1993 and 2001, the right-wing opposition continually drew attention to immigration, an issue on which it was favored by voters. Other studies with similar findings include Druckman, Jacobs and Ostermeier (2004), Vavreck (2009), Dolezal et al. (2014) and de Sio and Weber (2014).

[4]In their analysis of whether issue engagement varied between consensual (or valence) and non-consensual (or positional) issues in U.S. Senate campaigns between 1998 and 2002, Kaplan, Park and Ridout (2006) found that 31 of the 43 issues addressed by candidates were non-consensual.

[5]Existing research on the sources of parties' issue ownership does not address this question. Research on the sources of parties' issue ownership has identified factors such as communication by parties, party performance, and association with particular social groups—such as the poor—as important (Walgrave, Lefevere and Tresch 2012; Walgrave, Lefevere and Nuytemans 2009; Brasher 2009; Holian 2004; Stubager and Slothuus 2013). Meanwhile, on an individual level, partisanship and policy attitudes have been identified as important for explaining a party's perceived ownership of an issue by voters. None of these studies focus on positional issues per se, and none seek to explain parties' positional choices on each issue. Meanwhile, a large formal literature has identified various 'centrifugal' forces that might lead parties to take divergent policy positions, but this work, by and large, has not been integrated with the literature on issue competition and issue selection. (For a review of the formal literature that finds non-convergence in equilibrium, see Grofman (2004).) Although a small but growing formal literature models parties' issue selection strategies with respect to positional issues (Amorós and Puy 2013; Dragu and Fan 2015), these studies do not help us understand the sources of party advantage on positional issues, as they take parties' issue positions to be exogenously determined.

positions on those issues. Consistent with this mechanism, I show that both dominant and non-dominant parties adopt more extreme policies when their activists are more extreme on an issue. However, whereas dominant parties de-emphasize their more extreme issue positions, non-dominant parties emphasize these positions.

The dffference in behavior I find between dominant and non-dominant parties may appear similar to the distinction that has previously been made in the literature between 'mainstream' and 'niche' parties (Meguid 2005), since mainstream parties are often 'dominant' and niche parties usually 'non-dominant'. Existing research suggests that niche parties may be primarily beholden to their 'non-centrist ideological clienteles', whereas mainstream parties are more responsive to changes in the policy preferences of the median voter (Adams et al. 2006; Ezrow 2008; Ezrow et al. 2011). However, while exactly which parties should be classified as niche rather than mainstream is a matter of some debate,[6] this discussion has mostly overlooked a category of parties that are frequently central players in European politics. These are parties that we might label 'small mainstream parties': parties that do not often obtain more than 10% to 15% of the national vote share—and so must be considered 'non-dominant'—but are considered 'mainstream' in large part due to their moderate economic platforms.[7] As a consequence, existing research does not generate clear expectations for the issues these parties should emphasize. Will small mainstream parties behave more like their larger mainstream counterparts, and emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are more centrist? Or will they behave like niche parties, and emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are more extreme? If the former question can be answered in the affirmative, then this suggests that what is key for a party's emphasis strategy is whether or not it is mainstream, and not whether or not it is dominant. Conversely, if the latter question can be answered in the affirmative, this suggests that the dominant/non-dominant distinction is more important for party emphasis strategy than the mainstream/niche distinction.

I find that, in fact, small mainstream parties consistently behave like their *niche* counterparts, rather than like larger mainstream parties – emphasizing their more extreme issue positions, rather than more centrist ones. Furthermore, I find suggestive evidence that *large* niche parties may behave more like large mainstream parties than their smaller niche counterparts, emphasizing their more centrist issue positions, rather than their more extreme ones. This suggests that non-dominant parties, regardless of their party family or ideological background, may

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[6]While Meguid (2005) defines parties which emphasize a single non-economic issue as 'niche' and large established center-left and center-right parties as mainstream, subsequent researchers have considered communist parties to be niche alongside extreme nationalist (or radical right) and green parties and socialist, social democratic, liberal, conservative and Christian democratic parties as mainstream (Adams et al. 2006).

[7]There are 23 such parties in my core sample, out of a total of 59 non-dominant parties in Western and Eastern Europe. For this analysis, I consider liberal, agrarian, Christian and social democratic parties which obtain less than 15% of the national vote share, on average, to be small mainstream parties. Such parties are commonplace in governing coalitions across Europe, and often assume the role of kingmaker in coalition negotiations.

view policy moderation as electorally costly, whereas dominant parties are instead rewarded for emphasizing centrist policies – corroborating other recent research arguing for the importance of party size in shaping party strategy (Klüver and Spoon 2014). That non-dominant parties may benefit by emphasizing their less centrist positions is consistent with the experience of the Liberal Democratic party in the United Kingdom – a classic example of such a party. In the 2015 general election, the Liberal Democrats lost 49 of its 57 seats in the British parliament, saw its vote share fall by two-thirds, and narrowly escaped a scalping.[8] While this electoral bloodbath must no doubt be attributed, in large part, to the Liberal Democrats' first experience of government since 1945, their 2015 election campaign was also notable for its emphasis on the party's 'centrism' rather than its radicalism[9]—a decision senior figures in the party later condemned as a mistake.[10] Similarly, the evolution of the Freedom Party of Austria's electoral strategy over the 2000s illustrates how dominant niche parties may prefer to emphasize their more centrist positions – in contrast with their smaller niche counterparts. For example, in the legislative elections of 2006 and 2008, although the FPÖ maintained its traditional focus on immigration and nationalist issues, its campaign literature increasingly took on a 'welfare chauvinist' hue.[11]

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 adapts saliency theory to the case of positional issues, and discusses how emphasis strategies may vary across different types of parties. Section 3 describes the data structure and proposed empirical strategy. Section 4 presents baseline results in support of the theory from a series of cross-national analyses, as well as some robustness checks. Section 5 investigates the support for specific party-level mechanisms implied by the theory, and Section 6 explores how electoral institutions may condition parties' emphasis strategies. Section 7 concludes.

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[8]Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, clung on to his seat with support from former Conservative voters, but saw his majority collapse by 25.7% to 4.2%.

[9]The party's campaign slogan in 2015 was "look left, look right, and then cross".

[10]Source: 'Why Centrism Doesn't Work for Minor Parties', last accessed 6 May 2016. The Liberal Democratic party has consistently been perceived as centrist by both researchers and the British electorate (Adams and Merrill 2006; Nagel and Wlezien 2010); in the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey, the Liberal Democrats were identified as the most centrist party in the British party system, with an average placement of 4.86 by experts on the left-right scale.

[11]This was true literally as well as substantively: the campaign graphics used by the FPÖ in the 2006 election campaign, for the first time, emphasized the color red. Meanwhile, its campaign slogans included 'Welfare not immigration' and 'Secure pensions not asylum millions', and the policies listed in its 2006 manifesto included repatriation of long-term unemployed immigrants and restricting welfare benefits to Austrian citizens. In 2008, the FPÖ increased its emphasis on economic and social policies further, advocating payments to compensate pensioners for inflation and halving value-added tax on fuel, medication and food. For further details on the FPÖ's campaigns in these two elections, see Luther (2008, 2009).

2 Theory

In this paper, I study the relationship between the positions parties occupy on issues, and their decisions over which issues to emphasize in their public statements.[12] In contrast with most previous research on parties' salience strategies, I emphasize that the position (i.e. policy platform) a party chooses on an issue, and the level of emphasis it places on the issue in its public statements are conceptually distinct. In making this distinction, I differ from work which equates a party taking an extreme position on an issue with emphasis, clarity or 'intensity' on the issue.[13] Emphasizing this distinction allows for the possibility that parties may emphasize an extreme position, or a centrist position. Likewise, parties may de-emphasize extreme *or* centrist positions.

The theory of party strategy I develop here draws heavily on saliency theory. Saliency theory has traditionally argued that parties will emphasize issues on which they are favored by voters, in an effort to alter the issues on which they are evaluated in elections. However, analyses of salience strategies in this literature—in which I include work on 'issue competition' or 'issue ownership—have mostly focused on 'valence' issues.[14] These are issues on which all voters are assumed to agree, in contrast with 'positional' issues, on which voters, and parties, are thought to disagree as to the best policies to pursue.[15] Consequently, saliency theory does not offer a compelling explanation of how a party may come to be favored by voters on a positional issue – in particular, how some parties come to have more popular issue positions than others. Insofar as researchers have explicitly addressed parties' emphasis strategies with respect to positional issues, parties' issue positions have been argued to be either fixed or enduring (Budge 1994; de Sio and Weber 2014). Meanwhile, how parties come by 'losing' issue positions, and why they are unable to stray from these positions in the short term, has received little attention. The possible explanations are numerous.[16] In this paper, I focus on the role that activists and core supporters may play in constraining parties to particular issue positions.

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[12] For other work that studies the complementarity between parties' position-taking and their salience strategies, see (Meguid 2008; Tavits 2008; Wagner 2012; de Sio and Weber 2014).

[13] This equivalence is implicit in directional theory (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), and also apparent in more recent work relating to parties' salience strategies (van der Brug 2004; Rovny 2012). For instance, Rovny argues that "[o]utlying positions are more distinguishable and capture attention, making the issue more prominent and the party more visible"(Rovny 2012, 5).

[14] This is because researchers believed voters unable to discriminate between parties on the basis of their policy proposals Stokes (1963).

[15] Commonly cited examples of valence issues include crime and economic growth. Such issues are considered to be valence issues because, for instance, whereas all voters prefer zero crime, voters disagree as to which party has better policies on the issue. By contrast, an issue such as redistribution is positional, as voters disagree as to how much redistribution is desirable, and not simply over how redistribution is best achieved. Of late, some researchers have argued that the distinction between valence and positional issues is overstated (de Sio and Weber 2014).

[16] For instance, following (Downs 1957, 109), we might hypothesize that party positions are stable over time as parties fear being considered "irresponsible" by voters.

The channels through which activists may influence party policy are straightforward if activists play a key role in the internal decision-making process of a party. In this case, the party leadership is more reliant on activist support for its survival, and may need the approval of activists when devising policy(Panebianco 1988; Schumacher, de Vries and Vis 2013). However, across parties and party systems, activists and core supporters—along with donors and civil society organizations—also provide parties with crucial financial and logistical resources.[17] Even as party membership and activism has declined across established democracies (Dalton 1988; Katz and Mair 1994), and even with media campaigning increasingly replacing local canvassing, canvassing by activists remains an important means by which parties mobilize and persuade likely voters.[18] Indeed, there is some evidence that the electoral payoff of local canvassing has either remained stable or increased over time.[19] Meanwhile, core supporters—politically engaged voters who identify with a party—provide parties with an increasingly important reservoir of volunteer campaign workers (Scarrow 2015), and may persuade their friends and family to turn out or to support a particular party. As such—and as has been argued by a large literature (McKenzie 1963; Schlesinger 1994; Aldrich 1983a; Miller and Schofield 2003)—we may expect that, when choosing issue positions, parties will endeavor to locate close to their activists, leading all parties to take non-centrist positions on some issues.[20]

Drawing on saliency theory, I argue that parties will disproportionately emphasize favorable issues in order to increase the electoral salience of these issues. A favorable issue is one which, if it were the only issue on voters' minds, would increase the party's vote share.[21] Then, parties targeting moderate voters will tend to emphasize issues on which their activists, and therefore their own issue positions, are more centrist. By doing so, they can downplay their more extreme positions on some issues and avoid repelling moderate voters who might be put off by these ex-

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[17]By activists, I refer to a party's rank-and-file members (Aldrich 1983b) and campaign workers (Johnson and Gibson 1974), and by core supporters, I refer to politically engaged voters who identify with a party.

[18]Numerous studies have found evidence for positive electoral payoffs from local campaigning by activists in a variety of political contexts – and especially for challenger parties or candidates (Denver, Hands and MacAllister 2004; Johnston and Pattie 2006; Karp and Banducci 2007; Karp, Banducci and Bowler 2008).

[19]In part, this may be because the proportion of undecided or de-aligned voters has increased, and because innovations in campaign technology have allowed parties to target expenditure and effort to marginal constituencies more effectively (Denver et al. 2003; Whiteley and Seyd 2003; Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse 2011).

[20]We may expect parties to respond to the policy preferences of large donors and affiliated civil society organizations in a similar manner – especially as technological changes encourage election campaigns to become capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive. Investigation of this additional channel is left to future work.

[21]To the best of my knowledge, no previous study has explicitly discussed how the policy preferences of a party's activists may directly influence its level of emphasis on different issues, or indirectly influence the importance of issues for the electorate. Although since at least Petrocik (1996), researchers have suggested that the issues a party owns relate to the policy preferences of its 'constituency' or 'coalition'—typically referring to a party's core voters—they have not sought to pin down a mechanism linking the policy preferences of some of a party's supporters to the issues it emphasizes. Most similarly, Miller and Schofield (2003) explain partisan realignment over the 20th century in the U.S. as driven by candidates seeking to woo disaffected activists to the existing activist coalitions backing their parties by taking a non-centrist position on a previously dormant issue. However, in their study, the implications of such actions by parties, if any, for parties' salience strategies and for the electoral salience of issues are not made explicit.

treme positions. On the other hand, parties targeting non-centrist voters will tend to emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are more extreme. By doing so, they are able to attract voters who are turned off by the centrist positions emphasized by other parties on these issues.

Nevertheless, the tendency of parties to focus on favored issues is just that – a tendency. Parties may feel compelled to address issues of importance to voters, and indeed, it is well-established that parties spend much of their campaigns focusing on issues which are already salient to voters, even if an issue is unfavorable.[22] Therefore, a party targeting centrist voters might still prefer to emphasize an issue on which its position is more extreme than on some other issues, if this particular issue is especially salient to voters. On the other hand, such a party will disproportionately emphasize the issue which, if it were the only issue important to voters, it would be preferred to all its opponents by the voters it is targeting. Therefore, in all cases, a party seeking centrist voters will emphasize the issue on which it is centrist *relative to its opponents* – and not necessarily the issue on which its position is most favorable relative to its positions on all other issues. Analogously, a party seeking extremist voters will emphasize the issue on which it is most extreme *relative to its opponents* – and not necessarily the issue on which its position is most extreme relative to its positions on all other issues.

In arguing that parties will want to emphasize their centrist positions to attract moderate voters, and their more extreme positions to attract extremist voters, I implicitly assume that voting behavior is best described by the proximity theory of voting, rather than the directional theory of voting. That is, I assume that a voter will prefer the party that is most proximate on issues important to the voter. Meanwhile, directional theory argues that a voter will prefer the party that most 'intensely' supports a position on her side of the issue, implicitly equating position-taking by parties with emphasis (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). This removes the possibility that parties may take a relatively extreme position on an issue while placing little emphasis on that issue in their public statements, a core assumption in the theoretical argument developed in this paper. Which of these two theories of voting behavior has more empirical support is a matter of heated and ongoing debate.[23] Insofar as this paper finds evidence that parties de-emphasize extreme issue positions in some cases, it lends further support to those arguing in favor of proximity theory and against directional theory as a summary of voter motivations.

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[22]This has been particularly noted in U.S. presidential and congressional campaigns (Kahn and Kenney 1999; Aldrich and Griffin 2003; Damore 2004, 2005; Sigelman and Buell 2004; Kaplan, Park and Ridout 2006; Sides 2006), but has also been observed in multiparty contexts like Austria and Denmark (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; Dolezal et al. 2014; Meyer and Wagner 2015).

[23]For a flavor of the debate, see Johnston, Fournier and Jenkins (2000), Macdonald, Rabinowitz and Listhaug (2001), Macdonald and Rabinowitz (2007) and Weber (2015). It was established that the two theories were statistically indistinguishable given existing methods and data (Lewis and King 1999), but recent experimental evidence has found greater support for proximity voting than directional voting in the lab (Tomz and Houweling 2008; Lacy and Paolino 2010).

2.1 Party Size, Party Family and Salience Strategies

Existing work leads us to expect that large, established, mainstream parties will focus their campaigns on obtaining or retaining moderate voters, whereas small niche parties—which rarely obtain more than 10% of the national vote—will concentrate on their 'non-centrist ideological clienteles' (Adams et al. 2006; Ezrow 2008; Ezrow et al. 2011; Adams 2012). Here, I consider liberal, socialist, social democratic, conservative and Christian democratic parties to be mainstream, whereas at a minimum, radical right, green and protest parties are classed as niche[24] Thus, we would expect large mainstream parties to target more centrist voters, and small niche parties to target more extreme voters. As such, the argument above would suggest that large mainstream parties should emphasize issues on which they and their activists are relatively centrist. On the other hand, small niche parties should emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are relatively extreme, so as to attract voters turned off by the centrist positions emphasized by large mainstream parties on those issues. If such niche parties were instead to behave like large mainstream parties, and emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are more centrist, then it is likely that they would lose the support of voters with more extreme preferences on those issues, without procuring the support of more centrist voters in their place—perhaps because centrist positions on those issues are 'owned' by the larger mainstream parties (Petrocik 1996).

However, we lack clear expectations for how small mainstream parties and large niche parties will behave. Neither category of parties has received much attention from researchers thus far, although small mainstream parties constitute a substantial fraction of parties in most European countries, and frequently participate in government.[25] Small mainstream parties are mainstream parties which do not often obtain more than 10% to 15% of the vote share, but are still considered 'centrist' due to their moderate positions on economic issues (Adams et al. 2006). Meanwhile, large niche parties are radical right, protest or green parties which have been able to secure, on average, a comparable share of the vote to large mainstream parties in recent elections. There are only a handful of such parties in existence;[26] however, as radical right and ethnoterritorial parties continue to gain support across Western and Eastern Europe, such parties are likely to become commonplace fixtures within European party systems. Which voters either type of party will target, and therefore which issues either type will choose to emphasize, is an open empirical

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[24]In the empirical analysis, I consider various approaches that have been used to classify parties as mainstream and niche. For a summary of the debate over classifying parties as mainstream or niche, see footnote 6 on page 4, as well as the discussion on page 16.

[25]Of course, researchers have studied the behavior and development of many of the parties in these categories in isolation.

[26]Regardless of the approach used to classify parties as mainstream or niche, we identify very few large niche parties in the core sample, with only three parties classed as large niche parties when using Meguid's definition of 'niche': the Freedom Party of Austria, the New Flemish Alliance in Flanders, and the Croatian Democratic Union.

question. Do small mainstream parties behave like large mainstream parties, and emphasize their centrist economic positions in order to attract moderate voters? Or do they, instead, like their niche counterparts, emphasize their more extreme positions on issues like civil liberties or immigration, in order to attract voters with non-centrist preferences on these issues? Similarly, do large niche parties like the Freedom Party of Austria continue to emphasize the extreme issue positions that helped them build a core vote base when they were small, or will they instead move to emphasizing more centrist positions, so as to improve their electoral position by attracting moderate voters? Empirically, I find that party size matters much more than a party's ideological history for parties' emphasis strategies in this respect, suggesting that the appearance of policy moderation is consistently viewed as advantageous by dominant parties and potentially disadvantageous by non-dominant parties, regardless of whether the party is mainstream or niche. This suggests that parties' issue emphases are not completely 'frozen', and not completely determined by their ideological history; instead, parties are able to adapt their emphasis strategies as circumstances change.

2.2   The Case of Austria

Figure 1: Classifying Parties in Austria
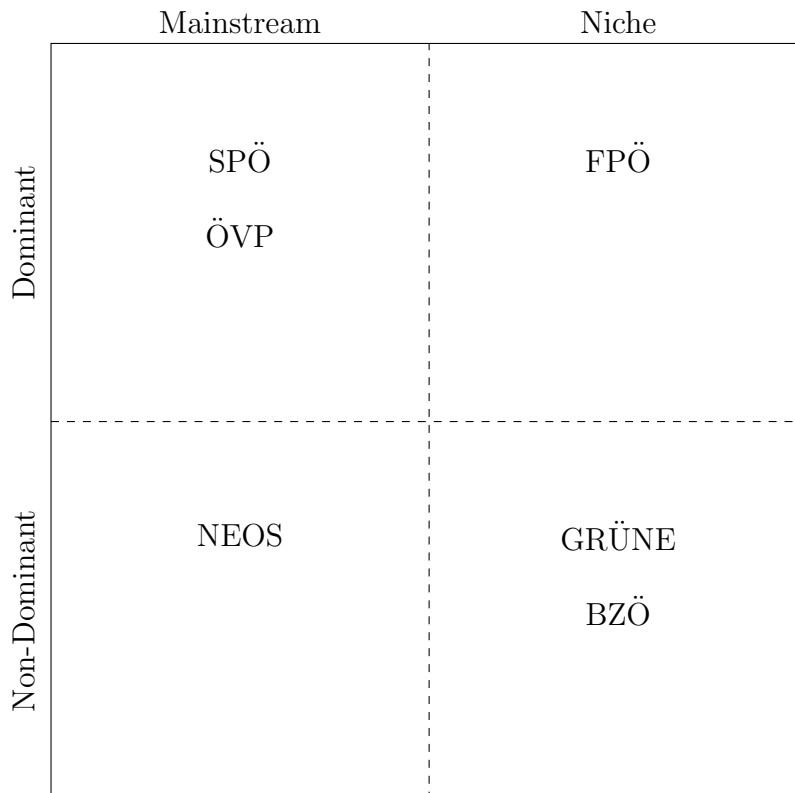
To illustrate how these various party categories may intersect, Figure 1 classifies parties in

one Western European country – Austria – according to both party size and party family.[27] The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) are the dominant mainstream parties in Austria, and have long been the two largest parties in the Austrian party system. Meanwhile, the Greens (GRÜNE) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) are both non-dominant niche parties, neither party having secured more than 10% of the national vote, on average, in legislative elections since 2000.[28] The New Austria (NEOS) provides an example of a non-dominant mainstream party, as a recently founded liberal party that obtained 4.9% of the national vote in its first and only legislative election thus far. Finally, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) provides one of the few examples of a large niche party in Europe. Since the election of Jörg Haider as its party leader in 1986, the FPÖ has been identified as a radical right or extreme nationalist party, strongly associated with fervent opposition to immigration and Euroscepticism. Unlike most radical right parties in Europe, the FPÖ has frequently obtained more than 20% of the national vote, and was the junior partner in a coalition government with the ÖVP after the 1999 legislative election.[29] If, like smaller niche parties, the FPÖ were to emphasize its more extreme issue positions, then we might expect it to continue emphasizing its hostility towards continued immigration into Austria into the 2000s. On the other hand, if it were to increasingly behave like other dominant parties, the FPÖ might broaden its issue profile to include greater emphasis on its increasingly centrist 'welfare chauvinist' positions on economic issues (McGann and Kitschelt 2005).

3   Data and Methodology

The preceding discussion leads us to expect that, if able to influence the importance of issues for voters through their emphases, parties seeking to obtain the support of moderate voters will de-emphasize issues on which the preferences of their activists are relatively extreme. Likewise, parties seeking the support of voters with extreme preferences on some issues will instead empha-size the issues on which the preferences of their activists are relatively extreme. To empirically investigate these claims, I estimate the effect of variation in activist extremism across parties on parties' emphasis decisions on a range of issues.

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[27]I only consider the parties that are included in the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

[28]The BZÖ are a radical right or extreme nationalist party, which emerged as a 'moderate' splinter party from the FPÖ in 2005. The BZÖ has never surpassed the 4% electoral threshold necessary to gain legislative representation.

[29]In testimony to its continuing electoral success, in the recent 2016 presidential elections, the FPÖ candidate Norbert Hofer emerged as the plurality vote winner in the first round of elections with 35.1% of the vote. At the time of writing, Hofer remains the frontrunner in polls leading up to the second and final ballot, scheduled for 22 May 2016. The FPÖ is also currently the front-runner in opinion polls for the next legislative election.

3.1 Data Description

I combine data from the 2014 European Election Study and the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey to construct a country-party-issue level measure of activist extremism and party emphasis for eight issues. The issues are:

1. State intervention in the economy

2. Redistribution

3. Taxes vs. spending on public services

4. Same-sex marriage

5. Civil liberties

6. Restrictions on immigration

7. EU integration

8. Environmental protection vs. economic growth

The exact wording of questions posed to survey respondents is given in Appendix A. These sources allow for a better measure of both these variables than earlier versions of the same surveys, as well as other cross-national surveys of a similar nature. First, for what seems the first time, experts were asked to classify the importance of issues for parties with reference to virtually the same issues as appeared in the European Election Study in the same year. Second, the 2014 European Election Study asks respondents to place themselves on an eleven-point scale on each issue, rather than simply asking whether, and how much, they agreed or disagreed with an issue position. The former generates a better measure of respondents' policy preferences as conceptualized here; the latter seems better suited to measuring respondents' preferences as conceptualized within a 'directional' framework (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). This is because, by the second measure, stronger disagreement may not necessarily indicate that a respondent has more extreme preferences, only more intensely held preferences. Third, the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey improves on earlier expert measures of party emphasis by asking experts to identify, and rank, the three most important issues for each party. By contrast, earlier surveys asked experts to identify the salience of an issue for each party on an eleven-point scale. This provides greater room for measurement error due to contamination, as experts, like voters, may misconstrue a party with a more extreme position as also placing more emphasis on that position. In my case, this kind of measurement error would be particularly problematic, as such contamination might spuriously imply that parties emphasize issues on which they are

more extreme. Further, the new measure is more clearly zero-sum: an increase in emphasis on one issue by a party implies a decrease in emphasis on some other issue.

The main outcome of interest is party emphasis on an issue in a given country. In the absence of a continuous measure of issue emphasis, I construct an ordinal measure using data from the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey. This variable takes values between 0 and 3, with an observation coded as 3 if an expert considered the issue the most important issue for a party, 2 if it was considered the second most important issue, and so on and so forth.[30] Activist extremism is coded using data from the 2014 European Election Study. Unlike the American National Election Study, the European Election Study does not ask respondents about aspects of their political behavior aside from voting; consequently, I cannot use indications of political activity to identify 'activists' among respondents.[31] Instead, I classify respondents who indicate a strong or moderate level of political interest, and as very or fairly close to a party as activists for that party.[32] Although imperfect, this is the best cross-national measure of activist preferences available. By this measure, 17.8% of respondents are classed as party activists.[33] I exclude parties with fewer than ten activists in the dataset from my analysis.

3.2 Empirical Methodology

I estimate the effect of activist extremism on parties' emphasis decisions using the BUC fixed effects ordered logit estimator proposed by Baetschmann, Staub and Winkelmann (2015). The latent model that I estimate is the following:

$$Y_{ijk}^* = X_{ijk}\beta_1 + \mathbf{Z}_{ijk}\boldsymbol{\beta} + \alpha_{ik} + \epsilon_{ijk}$$
$$Y_{ijk} = n \iff \lambda_{ik}^n \leq Y_{ijk}^* < \lambda_{ik}^{n+1}$$

Here, for each country i, Y_{ijk}^* measures each party j's (unobserved) level of emphasis on issue k, X_{ijk} measures the extremism of party j's activists on issue k, and $\mathbf{Z}_{ijk}$ is a vector of

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[30]Alternatively, we might interpret this variable as measuring how electorally valuable an issue is for a party. However, this would not substantially change the interpretation of most of my results; my analyses would still suggest that dominant parties benefit electorally by emphasizing issues on which they and their activists are relatively centrist, whereas non-dominant parties benefit by emphasizing their more extreme issue positions.

[31]For instance, Carmines and Woods (2002) use information on the political behavior of respondents to identify 'campaign activists'. Alternatively, researchers studying American party politics have frequently relied on conference delegate surveys to measure the preferences of delegates to the national nominating conventions in the US, a subcategory of individuals typically considered to be 'activists' (Carmines and Woods 2002; Stone and Abramowitz 1983; Layman et al. 2010). Of course, this approach cannot be used to measure the preferences of party activists outside the US, as I aspire to in this paper.

[32]Specifically, I considered respondents activists for a party were asked if they were 'very' or 'somewhat' interested in politics, and if they felt 'very' or 'fairly' close to that party.

[33]My results are virtually identical in statistical and substantive significance if I exclude respondents who are only 'somewhat' interested in politics and 'fairly' close to a party – although my measure of activist preferences is likely coarser. This restriction reduces the proportion of respondents classed as activists to 4.8%. Results using this alternative measure are reported in Appendix C.1.1.

control variables. Parties' observed level of emphasis on each issue k is measured by an ordered categorical response variable Y_{ijk}, which takes the value n when the unobserved value of Y_{ijk}^* is between λ_{ik}^n and λ_{ik}^{n+1}. In any country i, the extremism of party j's activists on issue k is measured as the absolute difference between the self-placement of party activists and the mean voter on that issue. Finally, in all specifications, I control for the standard deviation of activists' preferences, as parties may wish to de-emphasize issues on which their activists are divided, even if their activists are, on average, relatively centrist on the issue.

The theory developed in Section 2 suggests that a party's emphasis on an issue *relative to its opponents* will depend on the extremism of its activists *relative to its opponents' activists*.[34] To assess this relationship empirically, I include country-issue fixed effects, which are denoted α_{ik} in the regression equation above. This ensures that only variation in emphasis and activist extremism *between* parties on an issue in a given country is used to identify the desired effect. Country-issue fixed effects are crucial for identifying the correct effect. Without these fixed effects, we might, for instance, spuriously identify a positive association between activist extremism and party emphasis if it is the case that all parties place more emphasis on issues on which parties' activists are, on average, more polarized in a country – even if it is the case that, in a given country and for a particular issue, the party with more extreme activists places less emphasis on the issue than its opponents. The inclusion of country-issue fixed effects also controls for country, issue, and country-issue specific factors that may lead parties to emphasize some issues more than others – such as the greater salience of certain issues to voters (Sides 2006; Kaplan, Park and Ridout 2006).

In performing this analysis, the BUC fixed effects ordered logit estimator (hereafter BUC estimator) proposed by Baetschmann, Staub and Winkelmann (2015) is preferred to an unconditional fixed effects ordered logit estimator and to a linear fixed effects model estimated by OLS. The BUC estimator generalizes the conditional logit estimator to accommodate ordered dependent variables. When group sizes are small, the conditional logit estimator (Chamberlain 1980) allows us to consistently estimate coefficients in a model with both a binary dependent variable and fixed effects, when using an unconditional fixed effects logit estimator would produce coefficient estimates that are inconsistent as well as severely biased.[35] When dealing with an ordered dependent variable in a model with fixed effects, researchers have frequently recoded the dependent variable as a binary variable and used a conditional logit estimator to obtain consistent parameter estimates (Kassenböhmer and Haisken-DeNew 2009; Senik 2004). However, this requires the researcher to arbitrarily choose a threshold above which the dependent variable

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[34]For discussion of why this is the relationship of interest, see page 8.

[35]Beck (2015) observes that a an unconditional fixed effects logit estimator is consistent when the number of observations per group is large, as there is no incidental parameters problem. However, when group sizes are small, the unconditional fixed effects logit estimator is inconsistent. Further, although Katz (2001) and Coupé (2005) show that the bias in unconditional fixed effects logit estimates is small when the average group size is greater than sixteen, in my analysis, the average number of observations within each country-issue group is two.

takes the value one, and discards potentially important variation. A variety of approaches have been suggested for estimating an ordered logit model with fixed effects; in their survey of available estimators, Riedl and Geishecker (2014) show that the BUC estimator consistently delivers the most efficient, consistent and least biased parameter estimates.

The BUC estimator is a binary recoded conditional logit estimator, where the original dependent variable with N categories is recoded into $N-1$ different dichotomizations using $N-1$ thresholds. Each observation in the original dataset is then duplicated $N-1$ times. In this analysis, this entails recoding the original dependent variable using three different dichotomizations, and duplicating each country-party-issue observation three times. Parameter estimates are obtained by applying a standard conditional logit estimator to the new dataset, with standard errors clustered by country-party-issue, as the new observations are dependent by construction.[36] As with conditional logit estimates, it is not possible to recover marginal effects. For this reason, Angrist and Pischke (2009) suggest that practitioners use a linear probability model with a binary dependent variable in contexts where the incidental parameters problem may be a concern.[37] However, in my case, a linear fixed effects estimator assumes cardinality of the dependent variable, which seems a heroic assumption. Cardinality would require, for instance, that the gap in emphasis between a party's third most important issue and its second most important issue is the same as that between its third most important issue and any issue outside the top three. By comparison, the BUC estimator, like any ordered logit estimator, estimates values for the cutpoints dividing the latent issue emphasis scale into the emphasis categories we observe. This allows, for instance, the gap in emphasis between a party's third most important issue and its second most important issue to be smaller than that between its third most important issue and any issue outside the top three.[38] Regardless, using either an unconditional fixed effects ordered logit estimator or a linear fixed effects model produces substantively similar results to those I report in Section 4. For comparison, the baseline results are replicated using the latter two estimators in Appendix C.1.

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[36]In all specifications, I report standard errors clustered by country-issue, which allows for dependence between observations within country-issue clusters and so within country-party-issue clusters as well.

[37]Seek Beck (2015) for a discussion of the incidental parameters problem as it is encountered in political science research.

[38]By doing so, we address yet another potential concern: measurement error in the dependent variable, as we cannot distinguish between, for example, the fourth and fifth most important issue for a party using the available data. Although the loss of information from using a four point rather than an eight point scale means that our estimates are still inaccurate, the loss of efficiency is diminished when using an ordered logit estimator instead of OLS. Further, Beck (2015, 11-17) notes that when there are very few observations within a group fixed effect, an OLS estimator produces less accurate estimates than a conditional logit estimator.

3.3 Types of Parties

Per the discussion in Section 2, in the empirical analysis, we want to distinguish between dominant mainstream parties, dominant niche parties, non-dominant mainstream parties, and non-dominant niche parties. I identify dominant parties on the basis of their average vote share in national legislative elections between 2000–2012, a period which includes at least three legislative elections in all countries considered. In the main specification, parties are classed as 'dominant' if they received at least 15% of the national vote share, on average, in legislative elections in this period.[39] By the baseline measure, the median and modal number of dominant parties in a country is two, and the maximum number of dominant parties in a country is three. By comparison, the number of non-dominant parties in a country exhibits considerably greater variance, ranging between one and seven.

This is preferred to an approach that uses current vote share to classify parties as dominant, due to concerns about endogeneity. In particular, we may be concerned that a finding that dominant parties de-emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme but that non-dominant parties do not simply reflects that parties which are able to de-emphasize extreme issue positions are electorally successful. However, averaging parties' past vote share over several elections mitigates this concern, because results from a regression of current emphasis on variables including an average of past vote shares cannot be interpreted as causation running from emphasis to vote share, since the latter precedes the former in time. Thus, the results can more readily be interpreted as a party's past electoral performance influencing its current emphasis strategy.[40]

After applying these criteria, I obtain a core sample of 116 parties from 27 Eastern and Western European countries, of which 50 are dominant parties, and 56 are non-dominant parties. The full list of parties is given in Appendix B. In the main specification, I treat Belgium as two separate countries—Flanders and Wallonia—each with a distinct party system. This is because, with Flemish and Francophone parties only contesting the same seats in the Brussels Capital region, and otherwise contesting seats in Flanders and Wallonia respectively, each party's national vote share underestimates its true electoral strength in the seats it does contest.[41]

There is considerable debate as to how best to classify parties as mainstream or niche.

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[39]In Section 4, I analyze how party behavior changes as this threshold is varied.

[40]Averaging parties past vote shares rather than simply using lagged vote share helps mitigate a further endogeneity concern. In particular, if parties cannot freely change emphasis strategies from one election to the next then there remains the concern that a party that chose to emphasize an extreme position in an election in, say 2010, would receive a low vote share in 2010 and might find it hard to dramatically change its emphasis strategy by 2014. In that case, the party could have received a poor vote share in 2010 and emphasized an extreme position in 2014 because it emphasized an extreme position in 2010. In that case, parameter estimates in the regression would be inconsistent if 2010 vote share was used to determine whether a party was dominant or not. By contrast, classifying parties as dominant using an average of past vote shares over a much longer time span—2000-2012—is not as subject to this endogeneity concern. This is because a party that emphasized an extreme position in 2000 is rather less likely to be compelled to emphasize the same position in 2014, unless

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Min.	Max.
Full Sample				
Party Emphasis	0.58	0.00	0.00	3.00
Activist Extremism	0.85	0.73	0.00	4.95
Activist SD	2.70	2.65	0.00	4.50
Dominant Parties				
Party Emphasis	0.61	0.00	0.00	3.00
Activist Extremism	0.68	0.57	0.00	3.47
Activist SD	2.74	2.69	0.00	4.28
Non-Dominant Parties				
Party Emphasis	0.54	0.00	0.00	3.00
Activist Extremism	1.02	0.87	0.00	4.95
Activist SD	2.69	2.65	0.45	4.50

(Meguid 2005, 347–348) first uses the term 'niche party' to describe parties with three defining characteristics: (1) emphasis on non-economic issues, (2) appeal to voters from 'cross-cutting' political cleavages, and (3) emphasis on a single issue in their platforms. When operationalizing this definition, Meguid (2005) classifies radical right, green and ethno-territorial parties as niche, and the electorally dominant actors in the center-left, center and center-right blocs in each country as mainstream.[42] By contrast, Adams et al. (2006) classify communist, green and extreme nationalist (or radical right) parties as niche parties, and socialist, social democratic, liberal, conservative and Christian democratic parties as mainstream. I use both approaches to distinguish between mainstream and niche parties in my empirical analyses.[43] As in Meguid (2005) and Adams et al. (2006), party family designations are taken from the Comparative

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this emphasis strategy is electorally beneficial to the party.

[41]I treat the Brussels-Capital region as part of Wallonia, as French speakers vastly outnumber Dutch speakers in this region—with only 33% of adults resident in Brussels claiming fluency in Dutch, as compared to 95.6% in French (source: 'Language Usage in Brussels', last accessed 2 April 2016). Consequently, Francophone parties are overwhelmingly dominant in this officially bilingual region, procuring 84.33% of the Brussels-Capital region vote in the 2014 Belgian federal legislative election. My results are robust to treating Belgium as a single country, in which case no Belgian party crosses the 15% average vote share threshold necessary to qualify as a dominant party in the baseline analysis.

[42]In Meguid's analysis, what I term "small mainstream parties" are considered neither mainstream nor niche.

[43]Meyer and Miller (2015) suggest yet another approach: when comparing two parties in a party system, the party whose issue profile deviates more from the average issue profile can be considered more 'niche' than its competitor. However, as this approach relies on parties' emphasis decisions to classify parties as more niche or more mainstream, given that issue emphasis is the main outcome of interest in my analysis, I do not use this approach.

Manifesto Project. Finally, in all specifications, the handful of parties labeled as 'protest' parties by the Comparative Manifesto Project are classified as niche.[44]

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for party emphasis, activist extremism and the standard deviation of activists' preferences on each issue. As might be expected, dominant party activists are, on average, less extreme relative to the mean voter than non-dominant party activists.

4 Results

This section presents results that, cumulatively, support the view that party size is a more important determinant of parties' issue selection strategies than whether a party is 'mainstream' or 'niche'. I find that, in both Western and Eastern Europe, dominant parties consistently de-emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme, whereas non-dominant parties emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme. For ease of exposition, I first demonstrate the ability of party size to explain how activist preferences influence parties' issue emphasis decisions, before discussing why whether a party is mainstream or niche does not predict party strategy in this respect.

4.1 Comparing Dominant and Non-Dominant Parties

Table 2 reports parameter estimates for the ordered logit model for the case of dominant parties in Western and Eastern Europe. For dominant parties, across specifications, we find that an increase in activist extremism on an issue substantially decreases party emphasis on that issue. In all specifications, we find that disagreement among activists on an issue has no statistically significant effect on emphasis by dominant parties.[45] Model 1 presents results for the preferred specification for dominant parties, and Model 2 presents results when using a more restrictive approach to code party emphasis on each issue.[46] Coefficient estimates are similar for both models. In the preferred specification, the coefficient on the main explanatory variable of interest, activist extremism, is -0.476 and statistically significant at the 1% level.[47]

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[44]Examples of parties classified as 'protest' parties by the Comparative Manifesto Project include the AFD in Germany, the Pirate Party in Sweden, PvdD in the Netherlands, and UKIP in the United Kingdom.

[45]Results for the main explanatory variable of interest are virtually identical when the standard deviation of activist preferences on an issue is omitted as a control.

[46] For example, Model 2 does not merge the issue categories of deregulation and state intervention in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, whereas the baseline model considers these to be two aspects of the same issue. Similarly, Model 2 employs a more restrictive definition when coding party emphasis on immigration and same-sex marriage from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. For details, see Appendix A.

[47]Results are substantively similar, although no longer statistically significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.06$) when all parties are included in this analysis—that is, when including parties with fewer than ten activists in the sample. Loosening this restriction brings parties like the Free Democratic Party in Germany (with only seven activists) back into the sample, increasing the number of parties in the analysis from 116 to 190; however, it produces a much coarser measure of party activist preferences on each issue.

Interpretation of the magnitude of this effect is rendered more difficult since marginal effects cannot be recovered when using a conditional logit estimator. Nevertheless, coefficient estimates from a conditional logit estimator can be interpreted in terms of log odds ratios.[48] Consider, hypothetically, a party with probability 0.5 of emphasizing an issue at level k, and probability 0.5 of emphasizing the issue at level $k+1$. Then, it turns out that, to a reasonable approximation, an increase in activist extremism by one unit raises the probability of emphasizing at level $k+1$ by $\frac{\beta}{4}$, where β is the coefficient on activist extremism.[49] For example, suppose redistribution is the most important issue for some party with probability 0.5, and the second most important issue with probability 0.5. Then, the estimated coefficient of -0.476 on activist extremism from Model 1 implies that a unit increase in the average distance of the party's activists from the mean voter would shift its emphasis strategy such that redistribution would be its most important issue with probability $0.5 - \frac{0.476}{4} \simeq 0.38$ and its second most important issue with probability 0.62.

Table 2: Dominant Parties

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	−0.476***	−0.463***	−0.538***	−0.392**	−0.711	−0.998***
	(0.169)	(0.171)	(0.166)	(0.168)	(0.438)	(0.476)
Std. Dev.	−0.037	−0.055	−0.006	−0.028	−0.079	-0.006
of Activist Prefs.	(0.283)	(0.303)	(0.304)	(0.397)	(0.368)	(0.464)
Observations	448	448	445	280	168	162
Log Likelihood	−520.053	−480.366	−510.340	−366.958	−152.751	−132.648

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Robust standard errors clustered by country-issue are reported in parentheses.

Model 3 re-estimates the same specification as in Model 1 after excluding three influential observations from the analysis: the country-party-issue observations for EU integration in Poland. In this case, the dominant party which placed the most emphasis on EU integration, Platforma Obywatelska, had activists who were, on average, more extreme on the issue. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that its actions were driven by unusual circumstances

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[48]That is, an increase in activist extremism by one unit entails an increase in $\exp(\beta)$ in the log odds ratio of raising emphasis from some level k to $k + 1$, where β is the coefficient on activist extremism.

[49]This comes from considering a first-order Taylor approximation of the logit function around the point $\beta = 0$. For the full derivation, see Appendix C.2.

rather than strategic considerations. In August 2014, Donald Tusk, then Polish Prime Minister and leader of Platforma Obywatelska, was elected President of the European Council, an event which prompted his resignation as Prime Minister and likely increased the prominence of the EU as a talking point for the Platforma Obywatelska. Excluding these observations results in a more negative coefficient estimate on activist extremism than in the preferred specification, implying that activist extremism may have a larger effect on parties' emphasis strategies than in the baseline model.

Model 4 and 5 report parameter estimates for dominant parties in Western Europe and Eastern Europe respectively. Model 6 replicates the analysis in Model 5 after excluding observations for EU integration in Poland. In all cases, we estimate a negative coefficient on activist extremism, which is statistically significant at conventional levels in the Western European case and in Eastern Europe when EU integration is excluded for Poland. That dominant parties respond similarly to activist extremism in both Western and Eastern Europe is somewhat surprising, as previous research has suggested that policy extremism may be an electorally advantageous strategy in the new democracies of Eastern Europe (Ezrow, Homola and Tavits 2014).

Table 3: Non-Dominant Parties

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	0.775***	0.746***	0.775***	0.852***	0.387	0.387
	(0.148)	(0.114)	(0.148)	(0.154)	(0.416)	(0.416)
Std. Dev. of Activist Prefs.	-0.220	-0.247	-0.220	-0.196	-0.199	-0.199
	(0.198)	(0.196)	(0.198)	(0.222)	(0.523)	(0.523)
Observations	472	472	471	328	144	143
Log Likelihood	-544.441	-501.983	-544.441	-422.317	-120.944	-120.944

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Robust standard errors clustered by country-issue are reported in parentheses.

Next, Table 3 reports parameter estimates for the ordered logit model for the case of non-dominant parties in Western and Eastern Europe. For non-dominant parties, across specifications, we find that an increase in activist extremism on an issue substantially *increases* party emphasis on the issue. This is consistent with the argument that non-dominant parties may be more concerned with retaining the support of 'non-centrist ideological clienteles' than obtaining support from moderate voters. Again, we find that disagreement among activists on an issue has

no statistically significant effect on emphasis. Model 1 presents results for the preferred specification for non-dominant parties, and Model 2 presents results when using a more restrictive approach to code party emphasis on each issue.[50] As before, coefficient estimates are similar for both models. In Model 1, the coefficient on activist extremism is 0.775 and statistically significant at the 1% level. Consider, now, a non-dominant party—like the Front National in France—and suppose that immigration is the most important issue for this party with probability 0.5, and the second most important issue with probability 0.5. Our coefficient estimate implies that a unit increase in the average distance of the party's activists from the mean voter would shift the party's emphasis strategy such that immigration would be its most important issue with probability 0.69 and its second most important issue with probability 0.31. Model 3 replicates Model 1 after excluding observations for EU integration in Poland; as might be expected, the resulting coefficient estimates are identical to those in Model 1.

Models 4 and 5 report parameter estimates for non-dominant parties in Western Europe and Eastern Europe respectively, and Model 6 replicates the analysis in Model 5 after excluding observations for EU integration in Poland. As in Models 1–3, we estimate a large, positive, and statistically significant coefficient on activist extremism for non-dominant parties in Western Europe. Although we estimate that activist extremism has a positive effect on emphasis for non-dominant parties in Eastern Europe, the effects are not statistically significant in either Model 5 or Model 6. However, it seems likely that this is driven by the fact that very few Eastern European countries contain more than one non-dominant party; as such, in both models, results depend on the information contained in only four countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic), implying a small sample size and large standard errors.

The decision to classify a party as dominant based on a 15% average vote share threshold may seem rather arbitrary. Consequently, Figure 2 shows the robustness of estimates to varying the average vote share threshold for a party to be classed as dominant. The y-axis shows the estimated value of the exponentiated coefficient on activist extremism for dominant parties as the threshold varies, with the x-axis showing the level of the threshold. Observe that for very low thresholds, there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between activist extremism and emphasis, and the sign of this relationship reverses for high thresholds. The sign reversal appears to occur for a threshold close to 10%. Furthermore, there is some evidence that the negative association between activist extremism and emphasis is stronger for higher thresholds. This provides further support for the view that parties which have traditionally obtained higher vote shares de-emphasize extreme issue positions, whereas parties with traditionally low vote shares emphasize these positions.

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[50]See footnote 46 and Appendix A for details.

Figure 2: Effect of Activist Extremism on Issue Emphasis by Vote Share Threshold
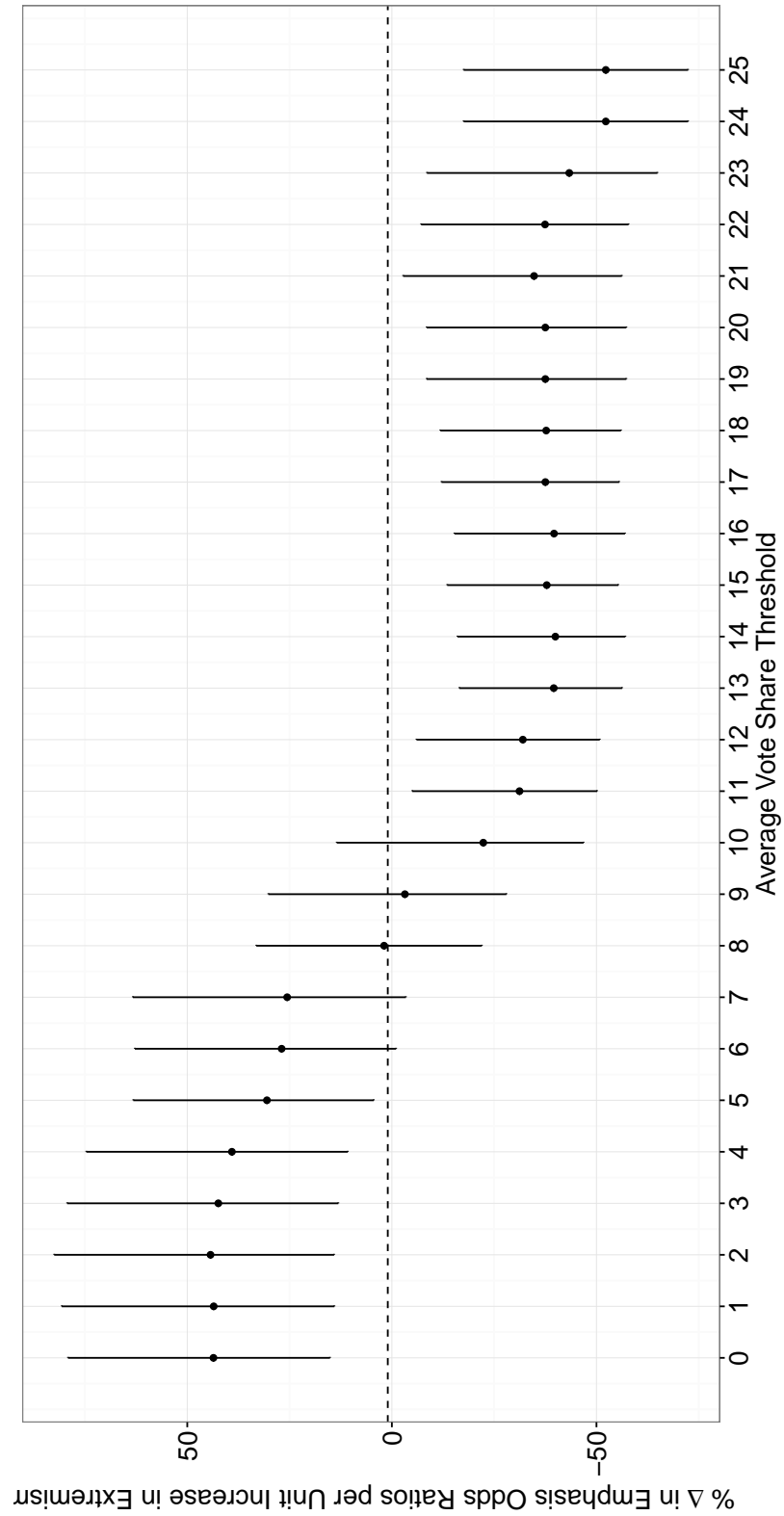
4.2   Comparing Mainstream and Niche Parties

As discussed in Section 2, it is natural to suppose that small niche parties should emphasize extreme issue positions, since these parties' electoral success depends on capturing voters far from the median voter on the issue they focus on. By contrast, large mainstream parties aiming to win a plurality of seats in the legislature must necessarily build a very broad coalition and capture voters close to the median on salient issues. Therefore, large mainstream parties can be expected to emphasize more moderate issue positions. However, this leaves open the question of how small mainstream parties, like the Democrats '66 in the Netherlands or the Free Democratic Party in Germany, should behave. Do these parties seek electoral success by trying to woo moderate voters on salient issues—like large mainstream parties—or do they behave more like niche parties and target voters who are non-centrist on some issues?

The results of my empirical analyses, presented in Table 4, strongly suggest the latter. Models 1 and 2 report parameter estimates for the ordered logit model when pooling dominant and non-dominant parties, but distinguishing between mainstream and niche parties. Model 1 compares the effect of activist extremism on issue emphasis for mainstream and niche parties, using the classification suggested by Adams (2012) – which classes communist, green, and radical right parties as niche parties, and all other parties as mainstream. The two (positive) coefficient estimates on activist extremism in Model 1 are within one standard error of each other, and so statistically indistinguishable. The estimates suggest that, on average, for both mainstream and niche parties, the more extreme are their activists on an issue, the more emphasis a party places on that issue. Model 2 repeats the same analysis using a classification scheme based on that proposed by Meguid (2008)—which classifies green, radical right, and ethno-territorial parties as niche, and all other parties as mainstream—and obtains similar results.[51]

Models 3 and 4 compare the effect of activist extremism on emphasis for small mainstream parties and niche parties. We obtain extremely similar coefficient estimates for both small mainstream parties and niche parties—suggesting that, in both cases, an increase in activist extremism would lead parties to place more emphasis on an issue rather than less. Indeed, in Model 3, the coefficient estimate on activist extremism for small mainstream parties is 0.755 and statistically significant at the 1% level. To illustrate the magnitude of this effect, consider a small liberal party—like the Democrats '66 in the Netherlands—and suppose that civil liberties is the most important issue for this party with probability 0.5, and the second most important issue with probability 0.5. Our coefficient estimate implies that a unit increase in activist extremism would shift the party's emphasis strategy such that civil liberties would be its most important issue with probability 0.69, and its second most important issue with probability 0.31.

Finally, Models 5 and 6 compare the effect of activist extremism on emphasis for large main-

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[51] All results reported in Table 4 are robust to only considering Christian democratic, liberal, agrarian, socialist and conservative parties as mainstream. Results available on request.

Table 4: Comparing Mainstream and Niche Party Behavior

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism – Mainstream (1)	0.363*** (0.117)		0.755*** (0.173)		−0.462*** (0.166)	
Activist Extremism – Niche (1)	0.386*** (0.108)		0.786*** (0.155)		−0.930 (1.210)	
Activist Extremism – Mainstream (2)		0.364*** (0.090)		0.750*** (0.146)		−0.438*** (0.167)
Activist Extremism – Niche (2)		0.395*** (0.133)		0.826*** (0.177)		−0.950 (0.601)
Std. Dev. of Activist Prefs.	−0.208 (0.131)	−0.210* (0.126)	−0.206 (0.215)	−0.205 (0.199)	−0.019 (0.275)	−0.027 (0.295)
Observations	976	976	472	472	448	448
Log Likelihood	−1,520.341	−1,520.301	−544.401	−544.159	−519.784	−519.297

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

Note: Robust standard errors clustered by country-issue are reported in parentheses.

stream and large niche parties. Curiously, our estimates suggest that large niche parties—the Freedom Party of Austria or the New Flemish Alliance in Flanders—behave like large mainstream parties rather than small niche parties: for instance, the point estimate on activist extremism in Model 6 is -0.950, which implies that activist extremism may have a substantial negative effect on emphasis for such parties. Moreover, the coefficient estimate is more than two standard errors apart from that on activist extremism for small niche parties in Models 4, suggesting a likely genuine difference between the two cases.[52] Although the coefficient estimate on activist extremism is not statistically significant at conventional levels in either Model 5 or 6, we are relying on relatively few observations in these analyses, as the number of large niche parties in the sample is small.

In sum, these results strongly suggest the electoral strategy that a party chooses to adopt may depend primarily on the fraction of the popular vote the party perceives as attainable, rather than on the party's ideological history. In particular, they support the view that dominant parties—regardless of whether they are mainstream or niche—will emphasize the issues on which their activists are more centrist, while non-dominant parties consistently emphasize the issues on which their activists are relatively extreme.

5   Investigating the Mechanisms

The relationship I propose between party size, activist extremism and party emphasis in Section 2 relies on three assumptions: (1) parties take more extreme positions relative to the average voter when their activists, on average, are more extreme, (2) parties targeting moderate voters place less emphasis on extreme issue positions than on more extreme issue positions, and (3) parties seeking the support of less centrist voters place more emphasis on extreme issue positions than on less extreme issue positions. Furthermore, the evidence presented in Section 4 suggests that dominant parties tend to target centrist voters, and non-dominant parties tend to target more extreme voters. Therefore, if these three assumptions hold, we should observe, first, that all types of parties take more extreme positions on issues on which their activists are more extreme; second, that dominant parties place less emphasis on extreme issue positions than more extreme issue positions, and third, that non-dominant parties place more emphasis on extreme issue positions than on less extreme issue positions. I find support for all three hypotheses in the data.

Table 5 reports results from the relevant analyses. Models 1 and 2 report parameter estimates from linear fixed effects models where I regress parties' positional extremism on the extremism of their activists, for dominant parties and non-dominant parties, respectively. Here,

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[52]Naturally, this is not a rigorous hypothesis test since the two coefficient estimates result from separate regressions. Nevertheless, the results certainly suggest a difference between the two groups.

Table 5: Investigating the Mechanisms

	Dependent Variable:			
	Pos. Extremism		Issue Emphasis	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Activist Extremism	0.673***	0.673***		
	(0.199)	(0.183)		
Std. Dev.	0.870***	0.191		
of Activist Prefs.	(0.251)	(0.288)		
Pos. Extremism			−0.126**	0.214***
			(0.059)	(0.056)
Observations	448	472	448	472
R²	0.436	0.496		
Adjusted R²	−0.024	0.145		
Log Likelihood			−521.903	−567.185

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

Note: Robust standard errors clustered by country-issue are reported in parentheses.

a party's positional extremism is measured as the difference between its position on an issue, as measured by experts, and the preferences of the average voter in its country on the same issue.[53] Coincidentally, the coefficient estimates on activist extremism are 0.673 in Models 1 & 2, and both statistically significant at the 1% level. While the true parameters may not be identical, this indicates that regardless of whether a party is dominant or non-dominant within a political system, it will take a more extreme position on an issue when its activists are more extreme on that issue. Further, it is suggestive evidence that dominant and non-dominant parties respond equally strongly to the policy preferences of their activists. Of course, these particular results should not be interpreted causally, as it is likely that, in a given country, individuals with more extreme preferences on an issue will select into being activists for the party with more extreme platform on that issue. Nevertheless, the results reported here are consistent with the proposed mechanism linking activist preferences to parties' emphasis decisions: dominant parties de-emphasize an issue when their activists are more extreme on the issue *because* they espouse more extreme policies on the issue as a consequence.

Models 3 and 4 report parameter estimates from ordered logit models regressing emphasis on positional extremism using a BUC estimator, for dominant and non-dominant parties respectively. The coefficient estimate on positional extremism for dominant parties is -0.126, indicating that, as expected, such parties will place less emphasis on an issue when their issue position is more extreme. Also, as expected, the coefficient estimate on positional extremism for non-dominant parties is 0.214, indicating that such parties will place *more* emphasis on an issue when their issue position is more extreme.[54] In combination with our parameter estimates from Models 1 and 2, the results from these analyses cumulatively suggest that dominant mainstream parties—and possibly dominant niche parties—are seeking to reduce the electoral salience of issues on which their activists' preferred policies, and their consequently their own platforms, are more extreme. On the other hand, it appears that non-dominant parties, whether mainstream or niche, instead prefer to increase the electoral salience of issues on which their own platforms are more extreme, possibly to attract extreme voters who are disenchanted by the more centrist positions being emphasized by some dominant parties on such issues.

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[53]This is certainly an imperfect measure, as we are forcing measures of policy preferences from different surveys onto the same scale. However, this is preferred to a measure which locates the average voter at 5 on each issue and measures a party's extremism relative to this point, as, first, this may equate the preferences of the average voter with the status quo, and second, the European Election Study survey data makes clear that the location of the average voter may deviate considerably from 5 in many cases, particularly on issues such as immigration and redistribution.

[54]Surprisingly, both coefficient estimates are rather smaller than might be expected given our results from regressing emphasis on activist extremism. A possible explanation for this is that positional extremism is measured very imperfectly, as discussed in footnote 53. Consequently, the coefficients on positional extremism are likely subject to attenuation bias.

6 Electoral Institutions and Party Incentives

It seems natural that the electoral incentives parties face should be affected by the electoral system. In particular, highly majoritarian electoral systems may encourage a party to aggressively pursue a large vote share or risk destruction. Such an electoral system might be expected to compel more parties to aim for the center ground on salient issues. By contrast, in more proportional systems, parties may be able to survive and prosper more easily by targeting niche voters. Consequently, we might expect dominant parties in more majoritarian systems to follow an emphasis strategy emphasizing similarities with the median voter, and in more proportional systems, we might expect dominant parties to behave a little more like non-dominant parties. We find strong support for this pattern in the data. By contrast, there is little evidence that the behavior of non-dominant parties is strongly influenced by the electoral system.

I use the procedure suggested by Taagepera (2002) to calculate the effective national electoral threshold for each country – a measure of how large a party must be to obtain parliamentary representation in a political system. Based on this measure, I bisect the sample of dominant parties into those operating in countries with more and less proportional electoral systems. Likewise, I bisect the sample of non-dominant parties into those operating in countries with more and less proportional electoral systems. For each subsample, I regress emphasis on activist extremism. The results from each analysis are reported in Table 6. Model 1 presents results from an analysis of dominant parties operating in more proportional systems. Although we find that activist extremism has a negative effect on emphasis, the coefficient estimate is small relative to earlier estimates for dominant parties, and is not statistically significant. This suggests that dominant parties in countries like Austria, Sweden and Finland may not as face as strong incentives to pursue moderate voters on salient issues.

Model 2 presents results from an analysis of dominant parties operating in less proportional systems. Now, the coefficient estimate on activist extremism is -1.007 and is statistically significant at the 5% level. This implies a very strong negative effect for activist extremism on emphasis for dominant parties in such systems. To see this, consider a dominant party for whom redistribution is the most important issue with probability 0.5, and the second most important issue with probability 0.5. A coefficient estimate of -1.007 implies that a unit increase in activist extremism would shift the party's emphasis strategy such that redistribution would be its most important issue with probability 0.25 and its second most important issue with probability 0.75. This would seem to characterize the incentives facing parties like Labour and the Conservatives in the United Kingdom, and the Socialists and the Gaullists in France.

Next, Models 3 and 4 compare results for non-dominant parties operating in more and less proportional systems. It appears that non-dominant parties in both systems place more emphasis on an issue when their activists are relatively more extreme on the issues. Although Model 4

Table 6: Party Strategy in More and Less Proportional Systems

| | Issue Emphasis | | | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Activist Extremism	−0.234	−1.007**	0.615***	0.847**
	(0.282)	(0.437)	(0.164)	(0.384)
Std. Dev.	0.268	−0.231	−0.102	−0.148
of Activist Prefs.	(0.616)	(0.387)	(0.227)	(0.384)
Observations	168	200	288	168
Log Likelihood	−179.442	−229.492	−385.368	−186.471

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Robust standard errors clustered by country-issue are reported in parentheses.

shows a point estimate larger in magnitude compared to Model 3, the parameter estimates seem statistically indistinguishable. In sum, these analyses would suggest that the likelihood a dominant party will place more emphasis on issues on which its activists' preferences are relatively centrist is higher in more majoritarian systems than in more proportional ones, but the behavior of non-dominant parties is not strongly affected by the electoral system.

7 Conclusion

It is a well-established empirical finding that parties vary considerably in the issues they emphasize in campaigns. To explain this, researchers have long argued that parties prefer to emphasize issues on which they are favored among voters, so as to increase the electoral salience of those issues. However, how a party might come to be favored by voters on a positional issue has previously not been explained. This paper suggests that the policy preferences of a party's activists may be critical, as parties are forced to take more extreme positions on issues on which their activists are more extreme. As a consequence, a party seeking the support of moderate voters can increase its vote share by emphasizing the issues on which it, and its activists, are relatively centrist, and de-emphasizing issues on which, it and its activists, are relatively extreme. Conversely, a party reliant on the support of voters with extreme preferences on some issues emphasizes the issues on which it, and its activists, are relatively extreme.

Significantly, I find a clear difference of emphasis strategies between traditionally large—or 'dominant'—parties, and traditionally small—or 'non-dominant'—parties. I find that dominant

parties de-emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme, and non-dominant parties emphasize issues on which their activists are relatively extreme. I find party size to be more important than whether a party is mainstream or niche in this respect, as small mainstream parties, like their niche counterparts, typically emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are relatively extreme, and large niche parties, like their mainstream counterparts, appear to emphasize the issues on which they and their activists are more centrist. These results hold across Western and Eastern Europe, suggesting that, in a variety of information environments, the appearance of policy moderation may be viewed as advantageous by dominant parties, and potentially disadvantageous by non-dominant parties. Lastly, I find that the likelihood that a dominant party will emphasize issues on which it, and its activists, are more centrist is higher in more majoritarian systems than in more proportional ones, but find no evidence that the electoral system influences the behavior of non-dominant parties.

By turning the spotlight on positional issues, this paper clarifies some of the potentially sinister consequences of salience endogeneity for the responsiveness of parties to voters' policy preferences. The traditional focus of saliency theory on valence issues has highlighted that a party may be evaluated significantly on the basis of issues that it 'owns' during elections – or issues that voters believe the party, rather than its opponents, is best able to handle. However, the evidence provided here suggests the more troubling possibility that dominant parties may be able to take quite non-centrist positions on some issues, while de-emphasizing these issues so as to reduce their electoral salience. Consequently, governments may be able to make some policy decisions that are disliked by most voters, while facing little scrutiny. Activists, who may be unrepresentative of the population at large, may in turn exert a considerable influence on policy outcomes.

This paper opens the door to many exciting avenues for future research. While this paper relies solely on cross-sectional data, a time-series analysis would allow us to explore how the issues on which parties are favored by voters might be influenced by changing activist composition. Further, the example of the FPÖ in Austria suggests that non-dominant parties may move to emphasizing issues on which they, and their activists, are more centrist as they become electorally established. Conversely, previously dominant parties might move to emphasizing their more extreme issue positions if their electoral position decays to the point that they cease to be dominant. Future work could evaluate the evidence for these processes, by analyzing how the emphasis strategies like the now dominant Scottish National Party in Scotland, or the formerly dominant Liberal Party in the United Kingdom, evolved over time.

Appendix A   Coding Decisions

Table A.1: **Coding Issue Emphasis by Parties: Approach (1)**

EES 2014 Voter Survey[55]	CHES 2014 MIP Issue Category
Q17.1 You are fully in favour of state intervention in the economy.	1. State Intervention; Deregulation
Q17.2 You are fully in favour of the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor in (*country*).	2. Redistribution
Q17.3 You are fully in favour of raising taxes to increase public services.	3. Public Services vs. Taxes
Q17.4 You are fully in favour of same-sex marriage.	4. Social Lifestyle; Religious Principles
Q17.5 You fully support privacy rights even if they hinder efforts to combat crime.	5. Civil Liberties
Q17.6 You are fully in favour of a restrictive policy on immigration.[56]	6. Immigration; Multiculturalism
Q17.7 The EU should have more authority over the EU Member States' economic and budgetary policies.	7. EU Integration
Q17.8 Environmental protection should always take priority even at the cost of economic growth.	8. Environment

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[55]For each issue, respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale from 0 to 10. The '0' end of the scale for each issue is given below.

[56]Observations for this issue were recoded so that '10' measures the most right-wing position possible on this issue.

Table A.2: **Coding Issue Emphasis by Parties: Approach (2)**

EES 2014 Voter Survey[57]	CHES 2014 MIP Issue Category
Q17.1 You are fully in favour of state intervention in the economy.	1. State Intervention
Q17.2 You are fully in favour of the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor in (*country*).	2. Redistribution
Q17.3 You are fully in favour of raising taxes to increase public services.	3. Public Services vs. Taxes
Q17.4 You are fully in favour of same-sex marriage.	4. Social Lifestyle
Q17.5 You fully support privacy rights even if they hinder efforts to combat crime.	5. Civil Liberties
Q17.6 You are fully in favour of a restrictive policy on immigration.[58]	6. Immigration
Q17.7 The EU should have more authority over the EU Member States' economic and budgetary policies.	7. EU Integration
Q17.8 Environmental protection should always take priority even at the cost of economic growth.	8. Environment

[57]For each issue, respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale from 0 to 10. The '0' end of the scale for each issue is given below.

[58]Observations for this issue were recoded so that '10' measures the most right-wing position possible on this issue.

Appendix B   List of Parties

Table B.1: **Classification of Parties in Baseline Sample**

Country	Dominant Parties	Non-Dominant Parties
Austria	FPÖ, ÖVP, SPÖ	NEOS, GRÜNE
Bulgaria		GERB
Croatia	HDZ, SDP	ORaH
Czech Republic	ODS, ČSSD	KDU-ČSL, KSČM, ANO 2011, TOP 09
Denmark	V, SD	DF, KF, RV, LA, SF
Estonia	EK, ER, IRL	SDE
Finland	KESK, KOK, SDP	KD, VIHR, VAS, PS
Flanders	CD&V, N-VA, SPA, VB	Groen
France	PS, UMP	EELV, PG, FN
Germany	CDU, SPD	Grunen, Linke
Greece	ND, PASOK	SYRIZA, KKE, XA, ANEL, Potami
Hungary	Fidesz, MSZP	DK, JOBBIK
Ireland	FF, FG	Sinn Fein
Italy	PD, FI	M5S, LN
Latvia	SDPS, V	NA, ZZS
Lithuania	LSDP	TS-LKD, DP, LRLS, TT
Poland	PO, SLD, PiS	KNP
Portugal	PSD, PS	
Romania	PDL, PNL, PSD	
Slovakia	Smer-SD	KDH
Slovenia	SDS, SD	DeSUS
Spain	PP, PSOE	ERC, Podemos
Sweden	M, SAP	C, KD, FI, MP, V, FP, SD
The Netherlands	CDA, PvdA, VVD	D66, GL, PVV, SP
United Kingdom	CONS, LAB, LIB DEM	Green, UKIP
Wallonia	PS, MR	ECOLO

Table B.2: **Classification of Parties by Party Family and Size**

Country	Large Mst.	Large Niche	Small Mst.	Small Niche
Austria	ÖVP, SPÖ	FPÖ[59]	NEOS	GRUNE
Bulgaria			GERB	
Croatia	SDP	HDZ		ORaH
Czech Republic	ODS, ČSSD		ANO 2011, KDU-CSL, KSČM, TOP 09	
Denmark	V, SD		KF, LA, RV, SF	DF
Estonia	EK, ER, IRL	SDE		
Finland	KESK, SDP, KOK		KD, VAS, PS	VIHR
Flanders	CD& V, SPA	N-VA		Groen
France	PS, UMP		PG	EELV, FN
Germany	CDU, SPD		Linke	Grunen
Greece	ND, PASOK		SYRIZA, KKE, Potami	XA, ANEL
Hungary	Fidesz, MSZP		DK	JOBBIK
Ireland	FF, FG			Sinn Fein
Italy	PD, FI			M5S, LN
Latvia	SDPS, V		ZZS	NA
Lithuania	LSDP		TS-LKD, DP, LRLS, TT	
Poland	PO, SLD, PiS		KNP	
Portugal	PSD, PS			
Romania	PDL, PNL, PSD			
Slovakia	Smer-SD		KDH	
Slovenia	SDS, SD			DeSUS
Spain	PP, PSOE		Podemos	ERC
Sweden	M, SAP		C, KD, V, FP	FI, MP, SD
The Netherlands	CDA, PvdA, VVD		D66, SP	GL, PVV
United Kingdom	CONS, LAB, LIB DEM			Green, UKIP
Wallonia	PS, MR			ECOLO

Table B.3: **Classification of Parties by Average Vote Share, 2000–12**

Country	0–15%	15–30%	30–45%
Austria	NEOS, GRÜNE	FPÖ	ÖVP, SPÖ
Bulgaria	GERB		
Croatia	ORaH		HDZ, SDP
Czech Republic	KDU ČSL, KSČM, ANO 2011, TOP 09	ODS, ČSSD	
Denmark	KF, DF, LA, RV, SF	V, SD	
Estonia	SDE	EK, ER, IRL	
Finland	KD, VIHR, VAS, PS	KESK, SDP, KOK	
Flanders	Groen	N-VA, SPA	
France	EELV, PG, FN	PS	UMP
Germany	Grunen, Linke	CDU	SPD
Greece	SYRIZA, KKE, XA, ANEL, Potami		ND, PASOK
Hungary	DK, JOBBIK		Fidesz, MSZP
Ireland	Sinn Fein	FG	FF
Italy	M5S, LN		PD, FI
Latvia	NA, ZZS	SDPS, V	
Lithuania	TS-LKD, DP, LRLS, TT	LSDP	
Poland	KNP	PO, SLD, PiS	
Portugal			PSD, PS
Romania		PDL, PNL	PSD
Slovakia	KDH	Smer-SD	
Slovenia	DeSUS	SDS, SD	
Spain	ERC, Podemos		PP, PSOE
Sweden	C, KD, FI, MP, V, FP, SD	M	SAP
The Netherlands	D66, GL, PVV, SP	CDA, PvdA, VVD	
United Kingdom	Green, UKIP		CONS, LAB
Wallonia	ECOLO	PS, MR	

Appendix C Technical Appendix

C.1 Robustness Checks

C.1.1 Alternative Coding of Party Activists

Table C.1: Dominant Party Results with Alt. Measure of Activist Prefs.

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	-0.441^{***}	-0.466^{***}	-0.498^{***}	-0.445^{***}	-0.462	-0.700^{*}
	(0.179)	(0.186)	(0.183)	(0.215)	(0.325)	(0.354)
Std. Dev.	-0.013	-0.057	-0.006	-0.172	0.282	0.429
of Activist Prefs.	(0.244)	(0.255)	(0.252)	(0.305)	(0.416)	(0.476)
Observations	1,344	1,344	1,335	840	504	495
Log Likelihood	-521.008	-480.706	-511.478	-366.546	-154.067	-144.290

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

Table C.2: Non-Dominant Party Results with Alt. Measure of Activist Prefs.

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
supporterext	0.804^{***}	0.768^{***}	0.804^{***}	0.847^{***}	0.656	0.656
	(0.113)	(0.117)	(0.113)	(0.124)	(0.322)	(0.322)
supportersd	-0.244	-0.278	-0.244	-0.158	-0.478	-0.478
	(0.154)	(0.157)	(0.154)	(0.176)	(0.350)	(0.350)
Observations	1,416	1,416	1,413	984	432	429
R^2	0.043	0.038	0.043	0.058	0.012	0.012
Max. Possible R^2	0.556	0.526	0.557	0.601	0.432	0.434
Log Likelihood	-543.303	-501.480	-543.303	-423.314	-119.413	-119.413

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

Tables C.1 and C.2 replicate the results reported in Tables 2 and 3, respectively, using an alternative approach to code the preferences of party activists on each issue – excluding

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[59]Here, classification of parties as mainstream or niche is based on the approach in Meguid (2008): ethnic, nationalist, green and protest parties are classified as niche, and all other parties are classified as mainstream. Party family designations are taken from the Comparative Manifesto Project.

respondents who are only 'somewhat' interested in politics and 'fairly' close to a party, but retaining those who are only 'somewhat' interested in politics but 'very' close to a party. The results are virtually identical in statistical and substantive significance to those reported in the paper. This restriction reduces the proportion of respondents classed as activists from 17.8% to 4.8%.

C.1.2 Replication of Baseline Results by FE Logit

Tables C.3 and C.4 replicate the results reported in Tables 2 and 3, respectively, using an unconditional fixed effects ordered logit estimator in place of the BUC estimator. The BUC estimator is preferred to the unconditional fixed effects logit estimator as the latter produces estimates that are inconsistent as well as severely biased when group sizes are small (Beck 2015; Katz 2001; Coupé 2005). Regardless, the results we obtain are substantively similar: in all cases, we find a negative and statistically significant coefficient on activist extremism for dominant parties, and a positive and statistically significant coefficient for non-dominant parties.

Table C.3: Dominant Party Results Replicated by FE Logit

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	−1.600***	−1.600***	−1.784***	−1.540***	−2.091***	−2.875***
	(0.403)	(0.403)	(0.414)	(0.487)	(0.797)	(0.911)
Std. Dev. of Activist Prefs.	−0.705	−0.705	−0.730	−1.332	−0.257	−0.146
	(0.556)	(0.556)	(0.575)	(0.855)	(0.757)	(0.858)
Observations	448	448	445	280	168	165
Log Likelihood	-194.41	-194.41	-187.79	-111.51	-79.96	-72.98

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

Relative to the results obtained when using a BUC estimator, the estimated coefficients on activist extremism are consistently larger in magnitude – whether for dominant parties or non-dominant parties. For example, in Model 1 in Table C.3, the coefficient estimate on activist extremism is −1.600, as compared to −0.476 in Table 2. This implies an effect of activist extremism on party emphasis that is at least three times larger in magnitude than suggested by the baseline results. However, this is likely a result of bias in our estimates, as previous analyses have shown that when the number of observations in a group is 2, $\hat{\beta} \to 2\beta$ as $N \to \infty$ (Andersen 1973, 66). As previously stated, in my analysis, the average number of observations within each country-issue group is two.

Table C.4: Non-Dominant Party Results Replicated by FE Logit

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	1.653***	1.550***	1.653***	1.665***	1.313*	1.313*
	(0.248)	(0.253)	(0.248)	(0.267)	(0.702)	(0.702)
Std. Dev.	−0.218	−0.288	−0.218	−0.126	−0.605	−0.605
of Activist Prefs.	(0.305)	(0.305)	(0.305)	(0.337)	(0.699)	(0.699)
Observations	472	472	471	328	144	143
Log Likelihood	-194.41	-194.41	-187.79	-111.51	-79.96	-72.98

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

C.1.3 Replication of Baseline Results by OLS

Next, Tables C.5 and C.6 replicate the results reported in Tables 2 and 3 using OLS in place of the BUC estimator. In cases where the incidental parameters problem may pose a concern, researchers have frequently advocated using OLS instead of a conditional logit or an unconditional fixed effects logit estimator, as this allows us to recover marginal effects uncontaminated by any inconsistently estimated fixed effects (Angrist and Pischke 2009; Greene 2005, 697). However, there are three concerns with using an OLS estimator in my case. First, when there are very few observations within a group fixed effect, it emerges that an OLS estimator produces estimates that are less accurate than those produced by a conditional logit estimator (Beck 2015, 11–17). Second, an OLS approach assumes a cardinal dependent variable – a heroic assumption in my case, as this requires, for instance, that the gap in emphasis between a party's third most important issue and its second most important issue is the same as that between its third most important issue and any issue outside the top three. Third, as the BUC estimator estimates values for the threshold parameters in addition to the regressors, it reduces the loss of efficiency that results from using a four point scale rather than an eight point scale to measure the distribution of party emphasis across eight issues.

Still, the results we obtain using OLS are very similar to those obtained using the BUC estmator, albeit with estimates for the effect of activist extremism on parties' issue emphasis that are smaller in magnitude for dominant parties and non-dominant parties. However, this might be explained by any attenuation bias that results from assuming cardinality of the dependent variable in OLS. This seems likely, as there are several issues which both dominant and non-dominant parties place little emphasis on, when emphasis is measured using a four point scale (see Figures C.1 and C.2) – for instance, civil liberties and the environment. Consequently, for

Table C.5: Dominant Party Results Replicated by OLS

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	−0.263**	−0.245*	−0.290**	−0.237	−0.319	−0.403*
	(0.130)	(0.127)	(0.126)	(0.151)	(0.250)	(0.232)
Std. Dev.	−0.068	−0.073	−0.066	−0.088	−0.059	−0.058
of Activist Prefs.	(0.159)	(0.157)	(0.162)	(0.314)	(0.148)	(0.152)
Observations	448	448	445	280	168	165
R^2	0.734	0.737	0.742	0.799	0.586	0.608
Adjusted R^2	0.517	0.522	0.531	0.645	0.196	0.235

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

Table C.6: Non-Dominant Party Results Replicated by OLS

	Issue Emphasis					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Activist Extremism	0.516***	0.462***	0.516***	0.579***	0.211	0.211
	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.106)	(0.104)	(0.308)	(0.307)
Std. Dev.	−0.064	−0.071	−0.064	−0.042	−0.070	−0.070
of Activist Prefs.	(0.156)	(0.151)	(0.156)	(0.165)	(0.411)	(0.409)
Observations	472	472	471	328	144	143
R^2	0.524	0.527	0.523	0.473	0.691	0.690
Adjusted R^2	0.193	0.199	0.194	0.195	0.287	0.290

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

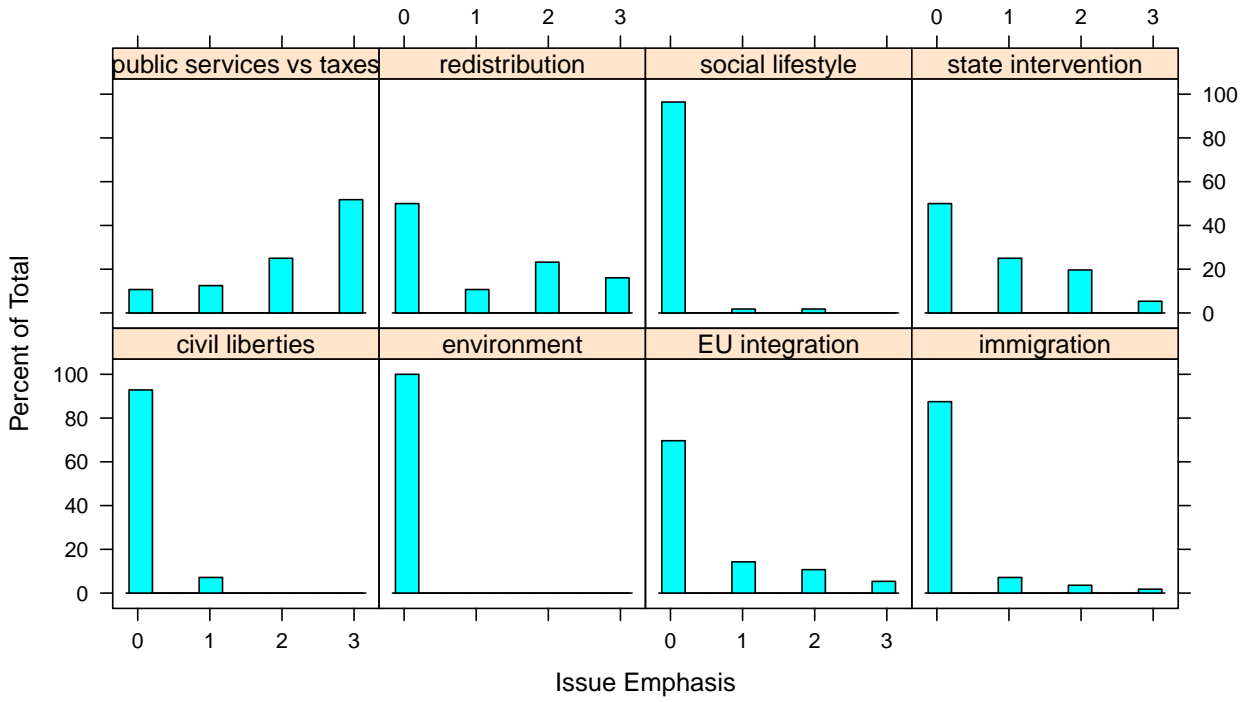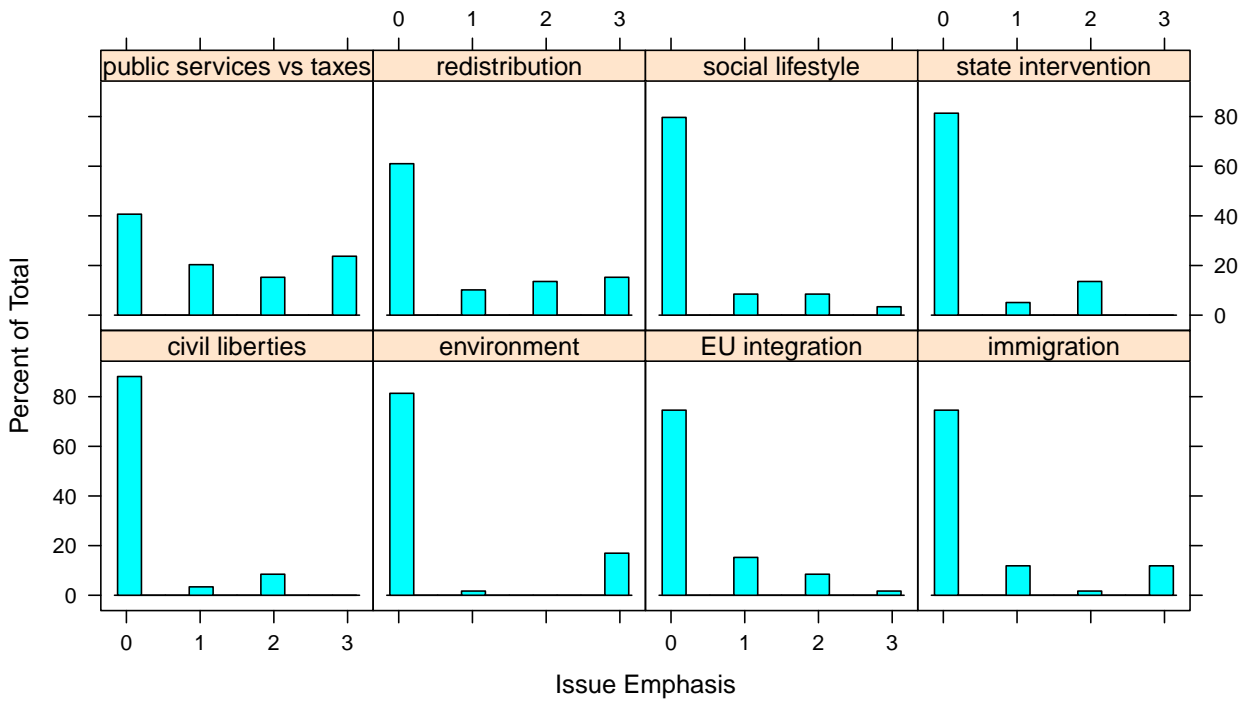Figure C.1: Histogram of Dominant Party Emphasis by Issue

Figure C.2: Histogram of Non-Dominant Party Emphasis by Issue

some issues, there is likely considerable unmeasured variation in the dependent variable, which is accounted for to some extent by allowing the threshold parameters to vary (as in the BUC estimator).

C.2 Taylor Approximation of Predicted Probabilities from a Conditional Logit Estimator

For a conditional logit estimator, although predicted probabilities and marginal effects cannot be recovered, any estimated coefficient β can be interpreted in terms of log odds ratios. For instance, in my analysis, an increase in activist extremism by one unit entails an increase in $\exp(\beta)$ in the log odds ratio of raising emphasis from some level k to $k + 1$, where β is the coefficient on activist extremism.

Let x measure the average distance of party j's activists on an issue from the mean voter. If p denotes the probability a party will emphasize an issue given x,

$$p = \frac{e^{x\beta + \alpha}}{1 + e^{x\beta + \alpha}}$$

where β is the estimated coefficient on x, and α represents the sum of the relevant country-issue fixed effect and any controls. Let p_1 denote the probability that party j will emphasize the issue when $x = m$, and p_2 denote the probability that party j will emphasize the issue when $x = m + 1$. We can then write β as a function of p_1 and p_2 as follows:

$$\beta = \log\left[\frac{p_2}{1 - p_2}\right] - \log\left[\frac{p_1}{1 - p_1}\right]$$

By exponentiating both sides and rearranging, we can express p_2 as a function of p_1 and β:

$$p_2 = \frac{\frac{p_1}{1 - p_1}e^{\beta}}{1 + \frac{p_1}{1 - p1}e^{\beta}} \equiv f(\beta) \tag{1}$$

where $f(\beta)$ is a function defined according to equation (1). Given p_1 and β, we can then calculate the new probability p_2 that party j will emphasize an issue when x increases by one unit.

Rather than solving for p_2 given β and p_1, as a rule of thumb, we can also approximate the change in predicted probabilities following a one unit increase in activist extremism using a Taylor series approximation of $f(\beta)$, where β is the coefficient on activist extremism. For our purposes, it suffices to use a linear Taylor approximation of $f(\beta)$ around the point $\beta = 0$. Our estimates of β are, in most cases, sufficiently small that this provides a relatively accurate

approximation.

$$f(\beta) \approx f(0) + \beta f'(0)$$
$$= p_1 + \beta\, p_1(1 - p_1)$$

Now, consider again the example I analyze on page 19, where a party may emphasize an issue at level k with probability 0.5 and at level $k+1$ with probability 0.5. In this example, $p_1 = 0.5$. Then,

$$p_2 \approx 0.5 + \beta(0.5)^2$$
$$= 0.5 + \frac{\beta}{4}$$

Thus, to a reasonable approximation, an increase in activist extremism by one unit raises the probability a party will emphasize the issue at level $k+1$ by $\frac{\beta}{4}$.

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