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The Micro-Foundation of Party Competition and Issue Ownership: The Reciprocal Effects of Citizens' Issue Salience and Party Attachments

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Abstract

While previous research on the reciprocal effects of citizens' issue attitudes and their party support emphasize citizens' issue *positions*, political competition revolves equally around issue *salience*, i.e., debates over which issue areas political parties should prioritize. Using multi-wave panel data from Germany and Great Britain, we analyze the reciprocal effects of citizens' issue salience and their party support over the period 1984-2009, and we conclude that citizens' issue priorities both influence and are influenced by their party attachments, and, moreover, that these effects are linked to parties' long-term policy emphases as articulated in their election manifestos. This effect is strongest among supporters of a small issue-orientated niche party, the Greens.

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Introduction

The study of how citizens' issue concerns influence their votes has prompted two, related, research agendas. The first, which is emphasized by spatial modelers and by many behavioral researchers, is that parties offer competing issue positions to voters whose decisions turn on the match between their own policy beliefs and parties' positions (see, e.g., Downs 1957; Pardos-Prado and Dinas 2010). This positional perspective prompts scholars to emphasize the electoral benefits political parties gain by presenting policies that reflect public opinion. The second perspective is that parties compete by emphasizing different issues pertaining to domains on which they enjoy issue ownership, in the sense that voters believe the focal party is well-equipped to address the issue (e.g., Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Green and Hobolt 2008). This perspective implies that parties talk past each other, with parties that enjoy reputations for wise economic stewardship emphasizing the economy, parties with strong reputations for fighting crime emphasizing the crime issue, and so on.

With respect to positional issue voting, a lively empirical literature investigates whether citizens choose parties on the basis of their policy positions or whether parties reciprocally cue their pre-existing partisans to adopt the party's positions (see, e.g., Evans and Andersen 2004; Carsey and Layman 2006; Dancey and Goren 2010). To date, however, we are unaware of parallel research that evaluates the reciprocal influences of citizens' party support and their issue salience. The link between these two serves as the micro foundation of issue ownership and party competition. In recent years, the focus has shifted to the conditional effect of issue salience, given research that concludes that issue ownership only affects the decision of those voters who think that the focal issue is important (Belanger and Meguid 2008: 479; see also Anand and Krosnick, 2003; Pardos-Prado et al. 2013). However, we still do not know whether citizens' issue salience represents an endogenous factor that drives their partisanship, or vice versa. That is the issue we address here. Specifically, we analyze a 26-wave German panel – and in supple-

mentary analyses we extend our focus to Britain – to evaluate the extent to which citizens' issue salience with respect to the national economy, the environment, crime, and immigration influenced their subsequent party support – a *partisan updating effect* – and the extent to which, reciprocally, citizens' party support shaped their subsequent issue priorities, an *issue cueing effect.*

We advance three arguments about the reciprocal relationships between citizens' issue concerns and their party support. First, building on previous findings that citizens' issue saliences are more malleable than their issue positions (e.g., Page and Shapiro 1992), we argue that citizens' issue concerns shape their party support and their party support shapes their issue priorities (the *reciprocal effects hypothesis*). This implies that issue salience is endogenous to partisanship (Walgrave et al. 2014). Second, we argue that the direction of the effects we identify – that, for instance, environmental concerns drive citizens towards green parties but away from the center-right parties that prioritize economic growth over environmental protection – are tied to the parties' long-term issue emphases, as articulated in their election manifestos (the *party manifestos hypothesis*). Third, we argue for a *Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis*, that mass-elite linkages with respect to citizens' issue salience are far stronger with respect to the Green Party – an issue-oriented niche party – than with respect to the mainstream German parties, the Social Democrats (SPD), the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), and the Free Democrats (FDP). This argument highlights the differences between catch-all parties that emphasize a wide range of issues and niche parties that emphasize specific issues on which they enjoy ownership.

We find support for all three hypotheses, and believe our results are important for several reasons. First, our findings in support of the reciprocal effects hypothesis pertain to the argument that issue ownership affects the voting decisions of only those individuals who prioritize the issue (Belanger and Meguid 2008: 477). However, we demonstrate here that citizens' issue priorities and their party support reciprocally influence each other.

Second, our empirical support for the party manifestos hypothesis, that individual-level partisan updating and issue cueing effects reflect the issue priorities German parties articulate in

their manifestos, illustrates how parties' manifestos mediate their ownership of different issue domains, and also parties' abilities to shape their supporters' issue salience (e.g., Walgrave et al. 2014). Our study of citizens' reactions to parties' manifesto-based issue emphases thereby extends earlier studies on the electoral effects of parties' manifesto-based positions (see, e.g., Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009). Below we discuss the implications of our findings for German parties' election strategies.

Third, our findings in support of the Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis extend the research of Meguid (2008) and Spoon (2011), who conclude that mass-elite linkages involving niche parties – specifically green and radical right parties – differ from those involving mainstream parties. Meguid and Spoon highlight differences in the types of issues niche parties emphasize, and we extend this perspective to show that the German Greens not only emphasize different issues than mainstream parties, but that the Greens are also vastly more successful in attracting support on the basis of the issues they emphasize, and in directing their supporters' attention towards these issues (and away from the issues they de-emphasize).

The Reciprocal Relationships between Citizens' Issue Salience and their Party Support: Hypotheses

In the United States, the debate over the reciprocal influences of citizens' partisanship and their issue positions has intensified in recent years. The conventional wisdom of the 1970s and 1980s – that mass partisanship was weakening and was largely driven by other political evaluations, including policy-based considerations (Jackson 1975; Page and Jones 1979; Fiorina 1981) – has been challenged by research that documents strengthening partisan ties that increasingly influence vote choice (e.g., Green et al. 2002; Hetherington 2001). Scholars have extended this debate by analyzing the reciprocal influences of citizens' issue positions and their partisanship across different domains (e.g. Goren 2005; Carsey and Layman 2006; Highton and Kam 2011; Dancey and Goren 2010). These studies conclude that partisanship influences American citizens' issue posi-

tions and political values. By contrast, studies conclude that European citizens' partisanship is less central to their self-images than are their issue positions, in particular that partisanship is more volatile in Europe than in the U.S., which implies that partisanship may not represent a salient identity to Europeans (e.g., Clarke et al. 2009). Empirical research by Milazzo et al. (2012) supports this perspective that European voters are "Downsian" in that their issue positions influence – but are not influenced by – their party attachments.

Although the studies summarized above support the primacy of European citizens' issue positions vis-à-vis their partisanship, there are reasons to doubt such a unidirectional causal relationship involving citizens' issue priorities. In particular, Budge and Farlie (1983) advance a saliency theory of party competition, which they support via empirical analyses of parties' election manifestos, that political parties in Europe (and elsewhere) selectively emphasize issues on which they have a competence advantage rather than directly engaging with rival parties' issues (see also Klingemann et al. 1994; Budge et al. 2001; van der Brug 2004). In this regard, scholars have developed the theory of issue ownership, that voters will support the party that owns the issue the voter prioritizes, so that a voter preoccupied with crime will support (all else equal) the party with a positive competence image with respect to law and order, voters preoccupied with the economy will support parties with positive reputations for economic stewardship, and so on (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003).

Empirically, research by Hobolt et al. (2009) analyzes the link between party leaders' issue emphases and rank-and-file citizens' issue concerns in Britain and Denmark, and documents that governing party leaders' annual speeches shape the diversity of these publics' issue priorities. Moreover, Green and Hobolt (2008) show that as parties converge ideologically, competence considerations that are central to issue ownership become more salient to voters. Specifically, extensive research on issue-based party competition argues that citizens' issue priorities shape their party support (e.g., Petrocik 1996; Klingemann et al. 1994; Clarke et al. 2009; Pardos-Prado et al. 2013).

The relationship between issue concerns and party support is mediated by the saliency of these issues to the voter (Budge and Farlie 1983), which may reflect her values or the social group with which she identifies (Krosnick 1990; Belanger and Meguid 2008). Hence we expect that the more important an issue is to the voter, the more likely that she will support the party that has the highest competence image with regard to this issue. We label this a *partisan updating effect.* However, a recent study by Walgrave and his colleagues (2014) presents evidence that party identification constrains citizens' abilities to receive and accept party messages. This is in line with the argument that partisanship functions as a perceptual screen (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964). Based on this, we can alternatively expect that citizens' party support shapes their subsequent issue priorities, which we label an *issue cuing effect.* These considerations motivate our first hypothesis:

H1 (The Reciprocal Effects Hypothesis): Citizens' issue saliences both influence and are influenced by their partisan affiliations.

Next we distinguish two different party-level factors that we believe condition the reciprocal effect hypothesis – firstly, party type as of niche versus mainstream parties and secondly, parties' issue ownership as transmitted through party manifestos.

Reciprocal effects of issues and partisanship: The case for Green Party exceptionalism

Our second hypothesis is motivated in part by the empirical work of Kitschelt (1994), Tarrow (1989), and Adams et al. (2006, 2012), who analyze the attitudes of political elites belonging to *niche parties*, specifically small, issue-focused parties such as green and radical right parties, along with the characteristics of these parties' rank-and-file supporters (Wagner 2012). These studies report findings that niche party elites, activists, and rank-and-file supporters place greater emphasis on issue debates than do their counterparts from mainstream parties, who frequently emphasize their party elites' leadership abilities and superior competence to govern. In particular, Kitschelt (1994) finds that niche parties' core supporters are strongly policy-oriented and ac-

tively oppose ideological "compromises" by their party's elites. Second, and related, niche party supporters are more likely to perceive and react to their preferred party's policy shifts than are mainstream partisans. In this regard Adams et al. (2006) demonstrate that unlike mainstream parties, niche parties' vote shares decline precipitously when these parties moderate their policy positions, and, moreover, that niche party supporters are more politically-engaged than are mainstream parties' supporters – findings which suggest that niche party supporters disproportionately monitor their preferred party's positions. Although these studies pertain to positional issues, to the extent that these patterns extend to issue salience they imply that mass-elite linkages should be disproportionately strong with respect to niche parties. Hence we expect citizens' issue priorities and their party support to exert stronger reciprocal effects with respect to niche parties. Here we follow Wagner's (2012: 845) definition of niche parties as "parties that compete primarily on a small number of non-economic issues". Given that the German Greens – a small party that prioritizes environmental issues, which we discuss in more detail below – is the only prominent niche party in Germany (Poguntke 1993), the studies summarized above suggest the hypothesis:

H2 (The Green Party Exceptionalism Hypothesis): The reciprocal influences of German citizens' issue salience and partisanship will be stronger with respect to the Greens than with respect to the mainstream parties.

Issue effects and the role of parties' election manifestos

The discussion of voter reactions to parties' issue emphases raises the question: How do parties communicate their issue emphases to the public? Here we focus on the issues that parties emphasize in their national election manifestos. The lengthy intra-party discussions and consultations involved in composing these documents, along with the extensive media coverage of manifestos, testify to their central role in national election campaigns (see Budge et al. 2001). In addition, Adams et al. (2011) report interviews with party elites from Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria, in which these politicians consistently assert that their party makes determined efforts to

campaign based on its election manifestos, while Baumgartner et al. (2009) report that the issues parties prioritize in their election manifestos are positively correlated with the issue domains they prioritize in other venues including parliamentary debates, legislative behavior, and government budgets.

Assuming that election manifestos are an important venue in which parties articulate their issue emphases, and also that these manifesto-based emphases reflect the issues parties emphasize in other venues, we next need to connect party manifestos to citizens' policy salience and partisanship. We argue that the reciprocal relationship between issue priority and partisanship (the reciprocal effects hypothesis) should be moderated by parties' policy emphases, namely that parties' issue emphases are the causal mechanism that drive the individual-level partisan updating and issue cueing effects that we estimate. Based on Zaller's (1992) receive-accept-sample model, we expect partisans that receive information about their preferred party's issue priorities to be more likely to accept this information, as they have general trust in this party (see also Walgrave et al. 2014). Reciprocally, we expect citizens who are concerned with a specific political issue to support parties which emphasize this issue in their manifesto. These considerations motivate the hypothesis:

H3 (The Party Manifestos Hypothesis): Citizens' issue priorities and their party support reflect parties' issue emphases, as articulated in their election manifestos.

Below we report empirical analyses of our three hypotheses in the context of Germany, an ideal test case given that the German panel survey data we analyze includes questions pertaining to many dimensions of citizens' issue concerns. The multiparty and proportional character of the German party system allows us to further generalize issue ownership theory, which has been tested almost exclusively in two-party, majoritarian systems such as the US and Britain. However in supplementary analyses using British panel data we report results that support substantive conclu-

sions that are identical to those we report for Germany. This suggests that our findings may apply generally across Western European electorates.

The German Party System and Issue Emphases

We evaluate our three hypotheses in the context of German politics, for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, Germany is an appropriate setting because it features a prominent green party which allows us to evaluate our green party exceptionalism hypothesis, and moreover the multiparty and proportional character of German politics allows us to evaluate important aspects of issue ownership theory outside the majoritarian contexts of the US and Britain, where it has previously been tested. Practically, Germany and Britain are the only western European polities for which long-term panel survey data is available that includes detailed questions about respondents' issue priorities and their party support, which we require in order to test our hypotheses. As we noted in the introduction, we have replicated our analyses on the British data, and these analyses support the same substantive conclusions as our German analyses.

Since the establishment of the West German democratic state in 1949, the German system has featured four major parties. The Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU; hereafter the CDU)[2] are a large, moderate, mainstream party that supports business-friendly, free-market economic policies, prioritizes economic growth over environmental protection, emphasizes law and order issues, and presents conservative positions on social issues along with a skeptical attitude towards immigration and multiculturalism (see, e.g. Pardos-Pardo et al. 2013). The Free Democrats (FDP) are a smaller market-liberal party which, like the CDU, advocates pro-business policies and which served as a junior partner in coalition government with the CDU between 1949-1957, 1961-1966,

[2] The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) can be considered one party, also forming one faction in parliament. The latter competes in the federal state of Bavaria. Hereafter we only refer to the CDU, which includes CSU partisans.

1982-1998, and 2009-2013. The major differences between the FDP and the CDU are that the FDP is even more strongly pro-business than the CDU, while de-emphasizing law and order, multiculturalism, and social issues.

The two major leftist West German parties over the past thirty years are the Social Democratic Party (the SPD) and the Greens, who formed an alternative leftist Coalition that was in government between 1998 and 2005. The SPD is a large, moderate, center-left party that typically supports expanding social welfare programs, that takes a mixed position on the trade-off between prioritizing the economy versus the environment (Benoit and Laver 2006), and that typically de-emphasizes law and order issues compared to its right-wing competitors. Finally, the Greens strongly emphasize environmental protection, de-emphasize economic growth and law and order issues, and also stake out more positive stances on multiculturalism than do the mainstream parties.

< Figure 1 about here >

Figure 1 displays data collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP; Budge et al. 2001)[3], which plots the proportions of quasi-sentences in each party's election manifesto devoted to economic issues (Figure 1A), the environment (Figure 1B), law and order (Figure 1C), and the sum of the party's negative references to multiculturalism and their positive references to the na-

[3] The updated data available at https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/ was used for these analyses. To measure economic salience, we add the CMP items 401-416, which measure diverse aspects of the national economy such as free market economics, economy planning, and economic growth. Environmental saliency is measured using CMP item 501, which includes positive mentions of environmental protection. CMP item 605 is used to measure positive mentions of law and order. The sum of CMP items 601 (National Way of Life: Positive) and 608 (Multiculturalism: Negative) is our measure of the saliency of anti-immigrant sentiments. We follow Pardos-Prado et al. (2013) in conceptualizing immigration as an issue salience rather than a positional issue.

tional way of life, which appear relevant to immigration issues[4] (Figure 1D) over each election held between 1983 and 2009, the time period covered in the individual-level analyses presented below. Figure 1A documents that the mainstream parties – in particular the CDU and the FDP – strongly emphasized economic issues, compared to the Greens. As expected, the patterns in Figure 1B demonstrate that the Greens disproportionately emphasized environmental issues, followed by the SPD. Figures 1C and 1D document that the CDU disproportionately emphasized law and order issues while talking more negatively about multiculturalism (and positively about the national way of life). These patterns across the different issue domains comport well with experts' understanding of German parties' long-term issue emphases.[5]

Empirical Analysis

We evaluate our hypotheses via analyses of data from a unique 26-wave German panel study, the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), which tracks citizens' party support and issue salience between 1984 and 2009 through annual face-to-face interviews.[6] The study contains various samples, such as separate Eastern German and refreshment samples; however we limit our analysis to West German citizens. We exclude East Germans and immigrants as the nature of partisanship and political attitudes differs for these groups due to different socialization experiences (Neundorf 2009; Kroh 2014). We analyze 19,777 respondents with at least three observations on

[4] We note that the Comparative Manifesto Project codings do not include codings of immigration. which is why we analyze codings for multiculturalism and national way of life.

[5] These codings are consistent with surveys conducted by Benoit and Laver (2006), where political experts were asked to evaluate the relative emphases that parties placed on environmental protection versus economic growth.

[6] For more information on the SOEP contents and structure see Haisken-DeNew and Frick (2005) and Wagner et al. (2007).

the party support and issue priority variables, the minimum number required to estimate our models.[7] We conducted supplementary analyses using higher cut-off points which supported substantive conclusions identical to those we report below.

The key variables in our analyses pertain to respondents' partisanship and issue priorities. The partisanship question reads: "Many people in Germany are inclined to a certain political party, although from time to time they vote for another political party. What about you: Are you inclined – generally speaking – to a particular party?" Those who responded, 'Yes', were then asked, 'Which one?' and handed a card that listed all the parties. Those giving 'no answer' or 'don't know' were set to missing. The dependent variable was measured by distinguishing the supporters of the four major parties – the SPD, CDU, FDP, and the Greens – from independents and partisans of smaller parties.

Issue salience was measured by the degree of concern respondents expressed with respect to a series of issues. The question wording was: "What about the following areas: Are you concerned about them? ... 1. Very concerned; 2. Somewhat concerned; 3. Not concerned at all". We believe that the statement that somebody is "very concerned" denotes that the respondent prioritizes the issue, and we dichotomize the issue concern variable accordingly. The word concern was already used in Petrocik's seminal article (1996: 826) to capture individual-level issue saliency (see also Pardos-Prado et al. 2013). We analyzed the issues that are most appealing for evaluating our hypotheses, namely respondents' concerns over environmental protection, general economic development, crime, and immigration, which we see as closely related to concerns over

[7] We restrict the estimation to respondents with at least three valid responses, as this provides at least two changes in attitudes and/or partisanship per person. This is needed to identify the effect correctly, as otherwise the estimation is based on one change only, which could have been randomly positive, negative or non-significant. Only with at least two of those changes is it possible to identify the direction of the effect (e.g. issue cuing). For more information, see also Neundorf et al. (2011).

multiculturalism and the national way of life (the relevant issue domains that are included in the CMP codings).[8] The issue concern questions pertaining to the economy and the environment were asked across all 26 waves of the SOEP survey, and those pertaining to crime and immigration were asked between 1999 and 2009.

Exploring partisans' issue salience

Table 1 reports the proportions of respondents who stated that they were concerned with the four policy issues, stratified by party support. We see that partisans' issue concerns reflected their parties' manifesto-based issue emphases, in that, for example, the proportion of Green supporters who expressed environmental concerns (62.2%) sharply exceeded the corresponding proportions for mainstream parties' supporters and for independents (none of these groups exceeded 43%), while Green partisans expressed far less concern over the economy, crime, and immigration than did other respondents. This supports the view of the Greens as a single-issue niche party that owns the environmental issue, a pattern consistent with the Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis. In addition, consistent with the CDU's manifesto-based emphases, CDU supporters expressed the most concern with crime and immigration.

< Table 1 about here >

While the figures in Table 1 are suggestive, they do not allow us test the causal order of issue salience and partisanship. Do citizens take issue priority cues from their preferred party, or are citizens' party evaluations driven by their pre-existing issue priorities? Moreover, how do

[8] The issues are moderately correlated at 0.14 (environment and immigration) to 0.30 (economy and crime). However, because immigration and crime are correlated at 0.50 we decided to estimate separate models for each issue to avoid multi-collinearity issues. However we note that we also estimated models including all issues simultaneously, and these estimates supported substantive conclusions that were identical to those we report below.

these links connect to the issues each party emphasizes in its policy manifestos? Below we present longitudinal analyses that address these questions.

Statistical specifications using cross-lagged Markov Chain models

To evaluate our hypotheses we model the dynamics of SOEP respondents' party support and issue salience using cross-lagged Markov Chain modeling, which allows the consideration of autocorrelation in repeated observations as well as the inclusion of lagged time-varying effects of issue salience on partisanship, and vice versa. Markov models employ a first-order markovian structure allowing sequences of individual observations to be correlated, and recent studies by Clarke and McCutcheon (2009) and Neundorf et al. (2011) demonstrate that Markov models correctly specify the dynamics of individual-level partisanship.

Specifying the impact of respondents' lagged issue concerns on partisanship (*partisan updating effects*). We model party support via a series of multinomial logit equations. Specifically, the probability that a respondent *i* states that she is a partisan of party *k* at time *t*, relative to the probability that *i* is classified as an independent, is estimated as a function of overall intercepts, *i*'s reported partisanship at the previous panel wave at time $t - 1$ (the effect of which is allowed to vary across time[9]), and *i*'s expressed concerns with the economy, the environment, crime, or immigration at time $(t - 1)$. We estimated four different models to include one issue at a time. In the case of West Germany, which features four major parties and the example of environmental concerns, this model is specified as follows:[10]

[9] We allow these effects to vary across time because party support is influenced by time-specific events such as political scandals and crises that enhance (or depress) parties' popular appeal. For instance in 1999 the German media exposed the illegal campaign donations that the CDU had previously accepted under the leadership of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, a story line that badly damaged the CDU's image (Pappi, Shikano, and Bytzek 2004).

[10] The Baum-Welch algorithm implemented in the Syntax version of LatentGOLD (Vermunt and

$$\log\left[\frac{P(Greens_i(t)=1)}{P(Nonpartisan_i(t)=1)}\right] = \beta_{0G} + \beta_{1Gt}Greens_i(t-1) + \beta_{2Gt}SPD_i(t-1) + \beta_{3Gt}CDU_i(t-1) + \beta_{4Gt}FDP_i(t-1) + \beta_{5G}environment_i(t-1) \quad , \quad (1)$$

$$\log\left[\frac{P(SPD_i(t)=1)}{P(Nonpartisan_i(t)=1)}\right] = \beta_{0S} + \beta_{1St}Greens_i(t-1) + \beta_{2St}SPD_i(t-1) + \beta_{3St}CDU_i(t-1) + \beta_{4St}FDP_i(t-1) + \beta_{5S}environment_i(t-1) \quad , \quad (2)$$

$$\log\left[\frac{P(CDU_i(t)=1)}{P(Nonpartisan_i(t)=1)}\right] = \beta_{0C} + \beta_{1Ct}Greens_i(t-1) + \beta_{2Ct}SPD_i(t-1) + \beta_{3Ct}CDU_i(t-1) + \beta_{4Ct}FDP_i(t-1) + \beta_{5C}environment_i(t-1) \quad , \quad (3)$$

$$\log\left[\frac{P(FDP_i(t)=1)}{P(Nonpartisan_i(t)=1)}\right] = \beta_{0F} + \beta_{1Ft}Greens_i(t-1) + \beta_{2Ft}SPD_i(t-1) + \beta_{3Ft}CDU_i(t-1) + \beta_{4Ft}FDP_i(t-1) + \beta_{5F}environment_i(t-1) \quad . \quad (4)$$

In equation 1 $\beta_{1Gt}, \beta_{2Gt}, \beta_{3Gt}, \beta_{4Gt}$ denote stability coefficients which denote how *i*'s lagged partisanship affects her current likelihood of supporting the Greens (relative to her likelihood of being independent), where lagged partisanship is specified by the dummy variables $Greens_i(t-1)$, $SPD_i(t-1)$, $CDU_i(t-1)$, $FDP_i(t-1)$ which equal one if *i* supported the focal party at time $(t-1)$ and zero otherwise. Of course we expect that respondents who supported the Greens at time $(t-1)$ are likely to support the Greens at time *t*, i.e., we expect a positive coefficient estimate β_{1Gt}. Note that we also estimate effects on Green Party support of respondents' lagged support for the SPD, CDU, and FDP to evaluate whether different parties' elites provide differing cues with respect to the Greens. For instance we might expect SPD elites to cue their supporters to positively evaluate the Greens, given these parties' history of collaboration in national government.

Magidson 2008) was used to handle the large number of cases in our panel study. 25 start sets per model were estimated. The final set of parameters were estimated after 1000 EM iterations using the Newton's methods.

The coefficient β_{5G} in equation 1 denotes the impact of *i*'s lagged environmental concerns – represented by the dummy variable *environment*(*t* – 1) – on *i*'s partisanship at time *t*. A positive (negative) cross-lagged coefficient estimate on β_{5G} denotes that *i*'s lagged environmental concerns enhance (depress) her likelihood of currently supporting the Greens, which would be evidence of a *partisan updating effect* with respect to the Greens.

Specifying the impact of respondents' lagged partisanship on their issue concerns (*issue cueing effects*). We specify the probability that a respondent is concerned with a focal issue at time *t* as a function of overall intercepts, her issue concerns at the previous time (*t* – 1) as time-varying period effects, and her lagged partisanship. Below we present the specification for citizens' environmental concerns; the specifications for the remaining issues (the economy, crime, and immigration) display the same functional form:

$$\log\left[\frac{P(environment_i(t)=1)}{P(environment_i(t)=0)}\right] = \alpha_0 + \alpha_{1t} environment_i(t-1) + \alpha_2 Greens_i(t-1) + \alpha_3 SPD_i(t-1) + \alpha_4 CDU_i(t-1) + \alpha_5 FDP_i(t-1) \quad . \quad (5)$$

In equation 5 the coefficient α_{1t} denotes a stability coefficient that influence respondents' environmental concerns[11] while the cross-lagged coefficients $\alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4, \alpha_5$ capture the *partisan updating effects* of lagged partisanship. Thus a positive estimate on α_2, the coefficient on the $Greens_i(t-1)$ variable, will denote that respondents who supported the Greens at time (*t* – 1) were more likely to express environmental concerns at time *t*, when controlling for lagged environmental concerns – an estimate that would imply that the Greens cue their supporters to priori-

[11] Such time-specific effects include events such as environmental disasters (such as the Chernobyl nuclear accident), which depress or enhance respondents' environmental concerns independently of their partisanship.

tize the environment. The coefficients $\alpha_3, \alpha_4, \alpha_5$ represent parallel estimates of environmental cues associated with lagged support for the SPD, CDU, and FDP.

Control variables on initial partisanship and issue concerns. Finally, our specifications included individual-level covariates to account for factors that affected respondents' partisanship and issue priorities when they first entered the panel (see Neundorf et al. 2011). We expect that education, occupation, age, gender, church attendance and political interest affect respondents' initial partisanship and issue priorities. For example, the results show that those who are politically interested are more likely to be partisans and to be concerned about political issues. In supplementary materials we report the coefficient estimates on these variables.

Results

The reciprocal impact of issue salience and partisanship.

The upper panels (grey bars) of Figures 2A-2D display the estimated logit coefficients for equations 1-5 above, along with the 95% confidence intervals on these estimates.[12] The dark-grey bars represent *partisan updating effects* of respondents' lagged issue salience on their current party support for the four issue areas we analyze, while the light-grey bars display the coefficients of lagged partisanship on current issue priorities, i.e., *issue cueing effects*.

< Figure 2 about here >

The results displayed in the upper panels of Figures 2A-2D support the reciprocal effects hypothesis, that citizens' issue salience both influence and are influenced by their party support. The estimates in Figure 2B denote that, holding lagged partisanship constant, respondents with lagged environmental concerns were more likely to support the Greens and the SPD – and less

[12] For the interested reader, we also report the table including the numeric expression of these coefficients in the Appendix Table A1.

likely to support the CDU and the FDP – at the current panel, i.e., the coefficient estimates on lagged environmental concerns are positive with respect to the Greens and the SPD and negative for the CDU and the FDP ($p < .01$ in all cases). Recipro-cally, we estimate that lagged support for the Greens and the SPD cued respondents to prio-ritize the environment at the current panel, while lagged CDU and FDP support cued resp-ondents to de-emphasize this issue ($p < .01$). With respect to the economy (Figure 2A) we estimate that, ceterus paribus, lagged support for the CDU and the SPD cued respondents to prioritize this issue at the current panel, while lagged Green support cued respondents to de-emphasize the economy (all coefficients significant at $p < .01$). Finally, Figures 2C-2D display estimates that lagged crime and immigration concerns prompted respondents to with-draw support from the FDP, the SPD, and the Greens at the current panel ($p < .01$), and, rec-iprocally, that respondents who reported lagged support for these parties de-emphasized these issues at the current panel ($p < .01$). These estimates support the reciprocal effects hypothesis.

Figures 2A-2D allow us to directly compare the size of the reciprocal effects and to assess which effect is stronger. Despite significant cross-lagged effects in both directions – which supports the reciprocal effects hypothesis – the issue cuing effects are generally larger than the partisan updating effects. We see that especially for the Green Party, Green partisanship strongly cues voters to be concerned about the environment while depressing their concerns about the economy, crime, and immigration. This supports the Greens' profile as a single-issue niche party. We also estimate stronger issue cuing effects for SPD supporters for the issues of the economy and the environment, compared to the reciprocal partisan updating estimates.[13]

[13] In supplementary materials we further report the model fit, calculated as the difference in AIC between the model excluding a cross-lagged effect of issue saliency (at t-1) on partisanship and vice versa, and the model including these cross-lagged coefficients. The models including partisanship when predicting issue saliency clearly outperform the improvement of the model compared to the prediction of the partisan updating effect.

The question arises: Can we reasonably infer causal relationships from the statistical associations we estimate, i.e., that citizens' party support and their issue concerns reciprocally influence each other? While we cannot definitively resolve this issue, we see strong reasons to infer causal relationships. With respect to issue cueing effects, for instance, we uncover strong associations between survey respondents' lagged party support and their current issue concerns, even when controlling for respondents' lagged party support. Given the strong theoretical reasons we have outlined to expect citizens to take issue-based cues from political parties, and given that we also control for respondent characteristics including education, occupation, age, gender, church attendance, and political interest – thereby controlling for (at least some of) the factors that might jointly influence citizens' issue priorities and their party support – we infer that citizens' party support indeed exerts a causal influence on their issue concerns. This inference is strengthened by the empirical analyses we report below, which directly link the individual-level issue cueing processes we estimate from the panel data to the issues the parties emphasize in their election manifestos. Thus, while our analyses cannot definitively prove a causal relationship – a caveat that applies to most cross-lagged analyses of panel survey data – we infer that citizens' issue concerns and their party support do indeed reciprocally influence each other, and we employ causal language in the remainder of this paper. In this spirit we proceed.

Issue salience, partisanship and Green Party exceptionalism

The estimates displayed in Figure 2 support the Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis, that issue-based effects are far stronger with respect to the Greens than for mainstream parties. Specifically, for all four issue areas the coefficient estimates on the Greens – with respect to both partisan updating and issue cueing – are over three times the magnitudes of the estimates on any mainstream party. (In all cases the differences between the estimates on the Greens versus mainstream parties are statistically significant, $p < .01$.) This striking difference suggests that mass-elite linkages involving the Greens differ fundamentally from those involving the mainstream parties. Simply put, German citizens' issue priorities strongly influence – and are

influenced by – their support for the Greens, while the parallel effects with respect to mainstream parties are modest. And, we emphasize that this pattern extends to every issue we examine, not only the environment where we find – as expected – that environmental concerns push citizens towards the Greens (and vice versa): we also estimate that lagged concerns over the economy, crims and the environment drive citizens sharply away from the Greens – to a much greater extant than such concerns push citizens towards (or away from) any mainstream party – and that lagged Green Party support sharply depresses respondents' likelihoods of prioritizing these issues.

Linking individual-level issue effects to party manifestos

Next, we evaluate whether the issue-based effects we estimate correspond with the issue emphases the parties presented in their election manifestos. The lower panels of Figures 2A-2D display the parties' long-term issue emphases (averaged over the period 1983-2009) based on the CMP manifesto codings, presented earlier in Figure 1. These party-level issue emphases strongly correlate with the individual-level partisan updating and issue cueing effects we estimate from the German panel data. For example the Greens, followed by the SPD, most strongly emphasize environmental issues in their election manifestos (see the lower panel of Figure 2B), and we estimate strongly positive individual-level partisan updating and issue cueing effects on this issue with respect to these two parties, i.e., that lagged environmental concerns enhance citizens' support for the Greens and the FDP, and that lagged support for these parties prompts citizens to prioritize the environment (ceterus paribus). Meanwhile we estimate negative individual-level partisan updating and issue cueing effects on the environment with respect to the CDU and the FDP, the two parties that de-emphasize this issue in their manifestos (see the lower panel of Figure 2B). Overall, the correlation between the parties' manifesto-based environmental emphases and our estimates of individual-level partisan updating effects for each party as well as our issue cueing estimates is 0 98 (p = .001). These strong associations extend to the remaining issues: The CDU places the strongest manifesto-based emphasis on crime and immigration (see the bottom panels

of Figures 2C-2D), and it is the only party for which we estimate positive individual-level partisan updating and issue cueing effects on these issues, while we estimate strongly negative individual-level effects with respect to the Greens, the party which devotes the least attention to these issues. The correlation between the parties' manifesto-based crime emphases and our estimates of individual-level partisan updating effects is 0.90 (p = .001), while the correlation between the parties' crime emphases and our estimates of individual-level issue cueing effects is 0.94 (p = .001); and, the correlations on the immigration issue are 0.74 (p = .001) for individual-level partisan updating effects, and 0.75 (p = .001) for issue cueing effects. Finally, with respect to economic issues, the correlation between the parties' manifesto-based economic emphases are our estimates of individual-level partisan updating effects is 0.71 (p = .01) and the correlation between the parties' manifesto-based economic emphases and our estimated issue cueing effects is 0.63 (p = .01). These strong associations support the party manifesto hypothesis that parties' issue emphases, as articulated in their election manifestos, strongly influence citizens' issue priorities and their partisanship.

Illustrating the reciprocal effect of partisanship and issue salience

Figure 3 displays the substantive impact of our estimated issue cueing effects.[14] The figures plot the probabilities that a respondent who <u>did not</u> prioritize the focal issue (the economy, the environment, crime, or immigration) at the previous panel wave would prioritize this issue at the cur-

[14] For comparison purposes, in supplementary materials we report analyses pertaining to how lagged issue concerns (the economy, the environment, crime, and immigration) influence current party support. These analyses support the same substantive conclusions as the analyses we present here, on how lagged partisanship influence the issue priorities of respondents who did not express these issue concerns in the previous panel wave. We have further re-produced the graphs presented in Figure 3 for the stability of partisanship and issue salience, which are available in supplementary materials.

rent panel wave, as a function of her lagged partisanship. To better distinguish the strength of these effects, we further include the mean issue mobilization among independents as a baseline.

< Figure 3 about here >

Consistent with the Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis, we see that lagged Green Party support strongly cued respondents' current issue priorities. With respect to environmental issues, Figure 3B displays results that among respondents who did not report lagged environmental concerns, those who were political independents at the previous panel had a computed 22.2% probability of prioritizing the environment at the current panel wave, while for lagged Green Party supporters this computed probability jumped to 41.3%, nearly double that for independents. The Figure also displays how strongly the Greens cued their supporters to de-emphasize other issue areas: Figures 3A, 3C, and 3D display computations that among respondents who did not prioritize the economy, crime, and immigration at the previous panel wave, lagged independents had computed probabilities of 21.1%, 23.8%, and 16.4%, respectively, of prioritizing these issues at the current panel, while lagged Green Party supporters' computed probabilities of prioritizing these issues were only 16.4%, 11.3%, and 4.3%. These computations imply that the Green Party strongly cued its supporters' attention towards the environment, and away from all other issues. This suggests that the dramatic differences in Green Party supporters' issue priorities vis-à-vis mainstream partisans' priorities, presented earlier in Table 1, reflect in part the strong issue priority cues that Green Party supporters take from this party's elites. And this in turn implies that the close match between the Green Party's issue priorities, as reflected in its election manifestos, and its supporters' issue priorities, reflects in part he party's ability to shape its supporters' priorities.

Figures 3A-3D also display computations that reflect the mainstream parties' (more modest) abilities to shape their supporters' issue concerns. On crime and immigration, for instance, Figures 3C-3D illustrate that lagged support for the CDU – the party that most strongly highlights these issue in its manifestos – increases respondents' likelihoods of prioritizing crime and immi-

gration at the current panel wave by two to four percentage points (compared to lagged independence), while lagged support for the SPD and the FDP decreases respondents' likelihoods of prioritizing these issues by two to six percentage points. With respect to the environment, Figure 3B illustrates that lagged support for the SPD – which emphasized environmental issues more strongly than the CDU and FDP (see the bottom panel of Figure 2D) – increased respondents' likelihood of prioritizing environmental issues by about three percentage points (again compared to the baseline of lagged independence), while lagged support for the CDU and the FDP depressed the likelihood of subsequent environmental concerns by two to three percentage points.[15]

Robustness checks

We conducted additional analyses on the German data – along with extensions to British panel data – to assess the robustness of our conclusions. With respect to Germany, we analyzed whether our conclusions varied depending on which parties were currently in the national governing coalition, and we also estimated the parameters of models that specified longer time lags for the reciprocal relationships between respondents' issue priorities and partisanship, compared to the one-year lagged specifications reported above. In addition, to investigate the effects of possible measurement error we replicated our models while specifying partisanship as a latent variable. Lastly, we conditioned the cross-lagged effects on the age of the respondents to test the possibility that as citizens age these cross-lagged effects diminish, i.e., that older respondents increasingly resist updating their partisanship and their issue priorities. These analyses continue to support our substantive conclusions: we find that mass-elite issue linkages varied only modest-

[15] For comparison purposes, in supplementary materials we report analyses pertaining to how lagged concerns about an issue (the economy, the environment, crime, and immigration) influence current partisanship. These analyses support the same substantive conclusions as the analyses we present here, on how lagged partisanship influence the issue priorities of respondents who did not express these issue concerns in the previous panel wave.

ly depending on the governing coalition, and our conclusions are robust to specifications with longer time lags, that account for measurement error and are not conditioned by age.

Most importantly, we replicated our analyses using data from the British Household Panel Study, which collected information from British citizens annually between 1991 and 2007. While the British party system does not feature a prominent Green Party (or any prominent niche party), so that we could not evaluate the Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis, our analyses continue to support the reciprocal effects hypothesis, in that we conclude that British citizens' issue priorities both influence and are influenced by their partisan affiliations, and the party manifestos hypothesis, that the British parties' manifesto-based issue emphases are associated with citizens' issue priorities and their party support. These findings on Britain, a political system that differs from Germany's in that it features fewer major parties, plurality-based elections, and (typically) single-party governments, suggest that the reciprocal issue cueing and partisan updating effects we identify – along with the links between citizens' issue priorities and parties' manifesto-based issue emphases – may constitute a general pattern across western European party systems.

Discussion and Conclusion

We believe our findings have several implications for issue ownership theory and for mass-elite issue linkages. First, our results support the micro foundation of issue ownership theory. In this paper we have presented theoretical arguments and empirical evidence that German (and British) citizens reward parties that share their issue concerns, and that the individual-level effects we identify are strongly related to the issue priorities the parties enunciate in their election manifestos. However, we also present evidence that citizens reciprocally update their issue concerns in response to their preferred party's priorities. Moreover, based on our research we can conclude that role of partisanship – at least in terms of issue salience – is more important than previous research on issue positions as suggested. The importance of different policy domains to German and British citizens is clearly affected by their (lagged) party support. The good news for issue

ownership theory is that we also identify consistent reciprocal effects, whereby citizens' lagged issue priorities influence their current party support. This finding supports a central component of issue ownership theory.

Furthermore, we have identified two party-level factors that moderate the interplay between citizens' issue concerns and their partisanship. First, we present empirical support for a *party manifestos hypothesis*, that parties' issue emphases as articulated in their election manifestos are associated with citizens' tendencies to update their party support to fit their pre-existing issue priorities, and to reciprocally update their issue priorities to fit with their pre-existing party support. Second, our findings supporting the Green Party exceptionalism hypothesis imply that the German Greens not only emphasize different issues from the mainstream parties, but that issue linkages between the Greens and their supporters voters are far stronger than the mass-elite linkages involving the CDU, SPD, and FDP. We conclude that citizens' issue concerns strongly influence their support for the Greens and that Green Party support strongly affects citizens' issue salience, but that these reciprocal effects are far weaker with respect to the mainstream German parties. This implies that the Greens' electoral fortunes disproportionally rise or fall based on their success in establishing the "terms of the debate" in German national elections, i.e., that the issue emphasis model of electoral competition advanced by scholars such as Petrocik (1996) and Belanger and Meguid (2008) is especially relevant to the Greens. Furthermore, our findings suggest that Green Party supporters' strong environmental concerns – and their lack of concern about the economy, crime, and immigration – reflect not only citizens choosing the Greens on the basis of their issue priorities, but the Green party's success in shaping their supporters' issue priorities.

Our findings also have implications for mainstream parties' issue emphasis strategies. To the extent that parties prioritize the strength of their proto-coalition, our findings imply that the mainstream parties of the right, the FDP and the CDU, should de-emphasize the environment since citizens' environmental concerns depress both parties' support and also enhance support for

the SPD and (especially) the Greens.[16] Simply put, Germany's center-right parties benefit from keeping environmental politics off the political agenda, for even if this outcome only modestly increases electoral support for the CDU and the FDP, the effect of enhancing their own support and depressing support for both members of the rival coalition considerably enhances the center right parties' prospects for governance.

Our findings raise several questions for future research. The first is: To what extent do our findings of green party exceptionalism generalize to green parties outside of Germany, and to niche parties more generally?[17] We are cautious about answering this question, first because the British party system – the case that we analyze in our robustntess checks (and the only other European polity for which we have panel survey data that allows us to test our hypotheses) – does not feature a prominent green party (or any other niche party), so that we cannot evaluate green party exceptionalism in this context. Second, we note that while we have presented several alternative theoretical arguments in support of green party – and more generally, niche party – exceptionalism, including arguments pertaining to niche parties' organizational characteristics, the policy focus of niche parties' political elites, and the greater political engagement of niche party supporters, our empirical analyses of the German Greens do not allow us to parse out these alternative explanations. Hence while we believe we present a convincing case for German Green Party exceptionalism, we defer consideration of the generalizability of this finding for future research.

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[16] Meguid (2008) notes that mainstream parties can keep niche parties' issues off the political agenda either by ignoring these issues (a dismissive strategy) or by co-opting the niche party's positions (an accomodation strategy). The issue issue perspective that we employ here – which focuses on citizens' issue priorities, not their positions – is most consistent with a dismissive strategy. We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

[17] We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

Other issues that we plan to explore in future research include the character of mass-elite issue linkages with respect to the small, far left German party *Die Linke* (formerly the Party of Democratic Socialism), which only become relevant in West German politics after 2004; whether the German parties' issue emphases respond to their supporters' issue concerns even as these parties reciprocally cue their supporters' concerns (as we demonstrate in this paper); whether German parties can cue citizens' issue concerns in the wider public, i.e., beyond those who are their current supporters (see, e.g., Hobolt et al. 2009); and, how the reciprocal partisan updating and issue cueing processes we identify are mediated by citizens' levels of education and political interest.

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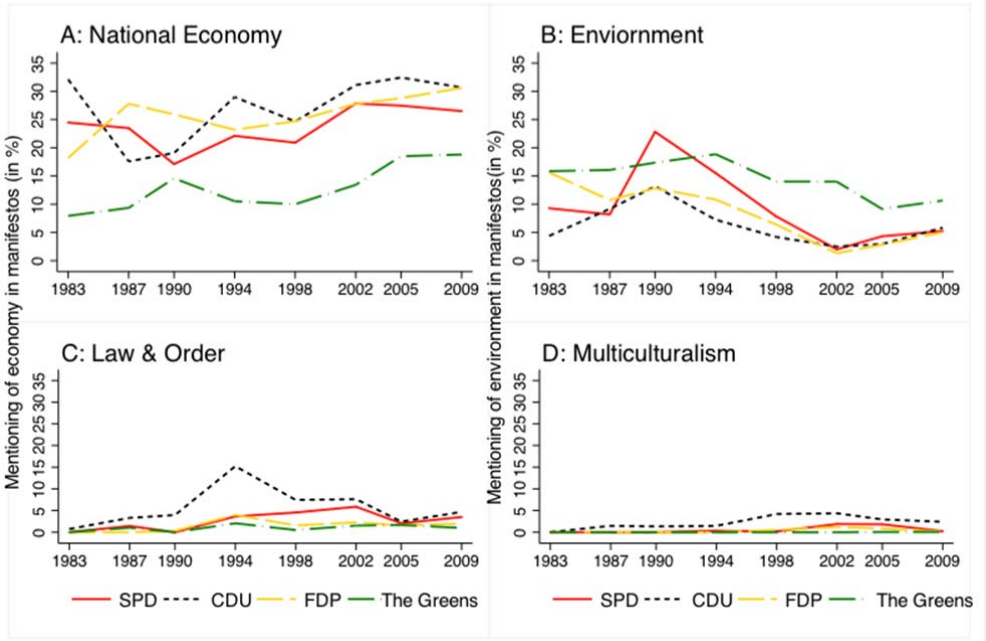
Table 1: German Partisanship and Issue Salience (in %)

Party ID	Concern with…			
	Nat. Economy	Environment	Crime	Immigration
Independent or other Party (49.0%)	32.6	35.1	46.3	31.0
SPD - Social Democrat (20.6%)	33.8	42.9	45.6	25.5
CDU/CSU - Christian Union (22.8%)	33.0	30.9	49.6	34.6
FDP - The Liberals (2.6%)	31.5	31.9	34.7	23.0
The Greens (5.1%)	25.3	62.2	21.6	6.3
Total	32.6	37.1	45.4	29.2

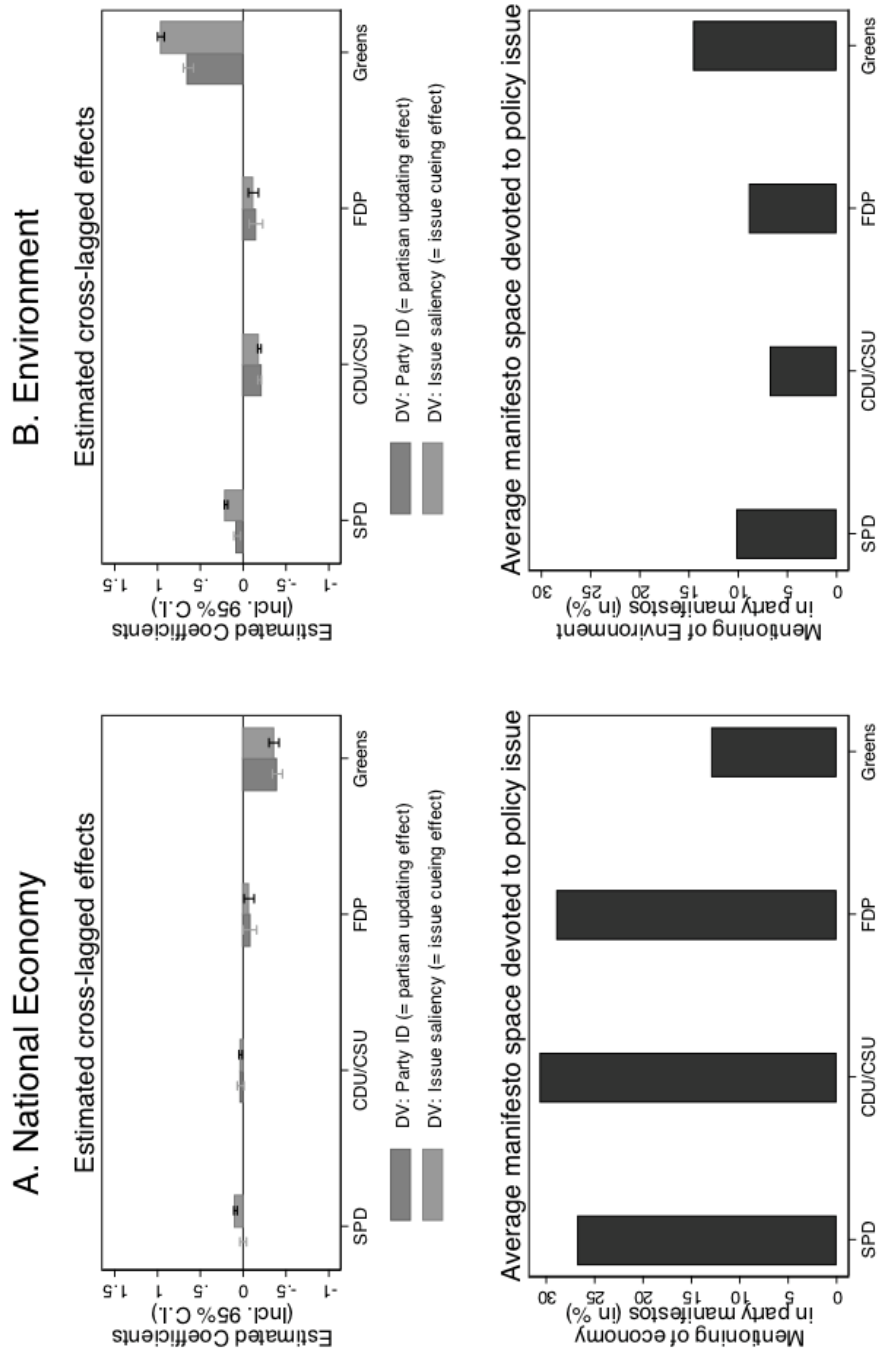
Notes: Proportion of partisans (and independents) who say that they are concerned about each single issue. The percentages are computed over the set of 14,912 respondents who gave valid responses in at least three waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) that tracked respondents' party support and issue priorities between 1999 and 2009. The SOEP questions relating to respondents' issue priorities and their party support are given in the text. Of the 49% that are grouped as independent, 2.3% identified with smaller parties.

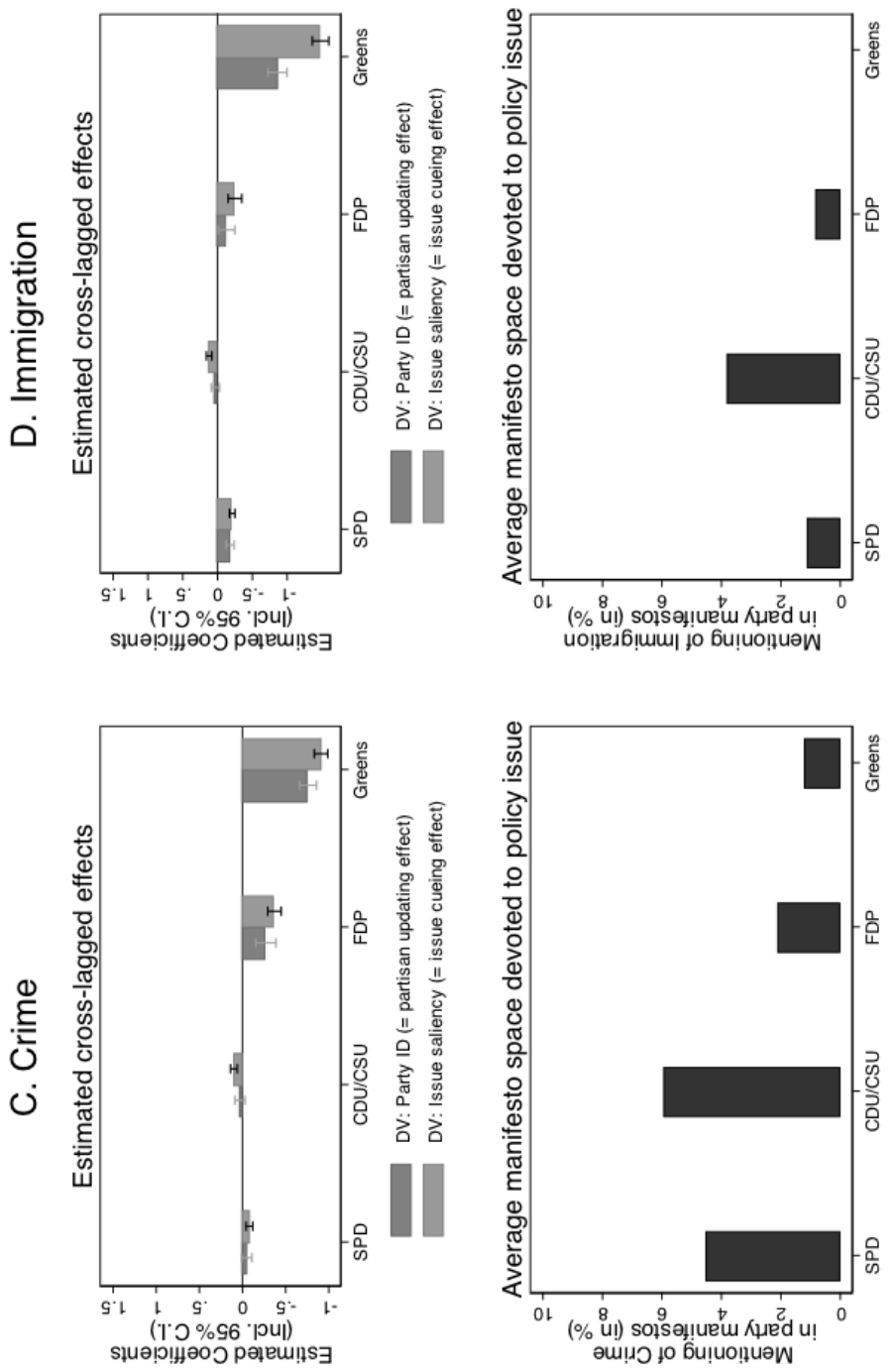
Figure 1: Proportions of the German Parties' Election Manifestos Devoted to four Policy Issues, 1983-2009



Notes: The figures display the proportions of quasi-sentences in each German political party's election manifesto that pertained to four different political issues, as coded by the Comparative Manifesto Project, for each election between 1983 and 2009.

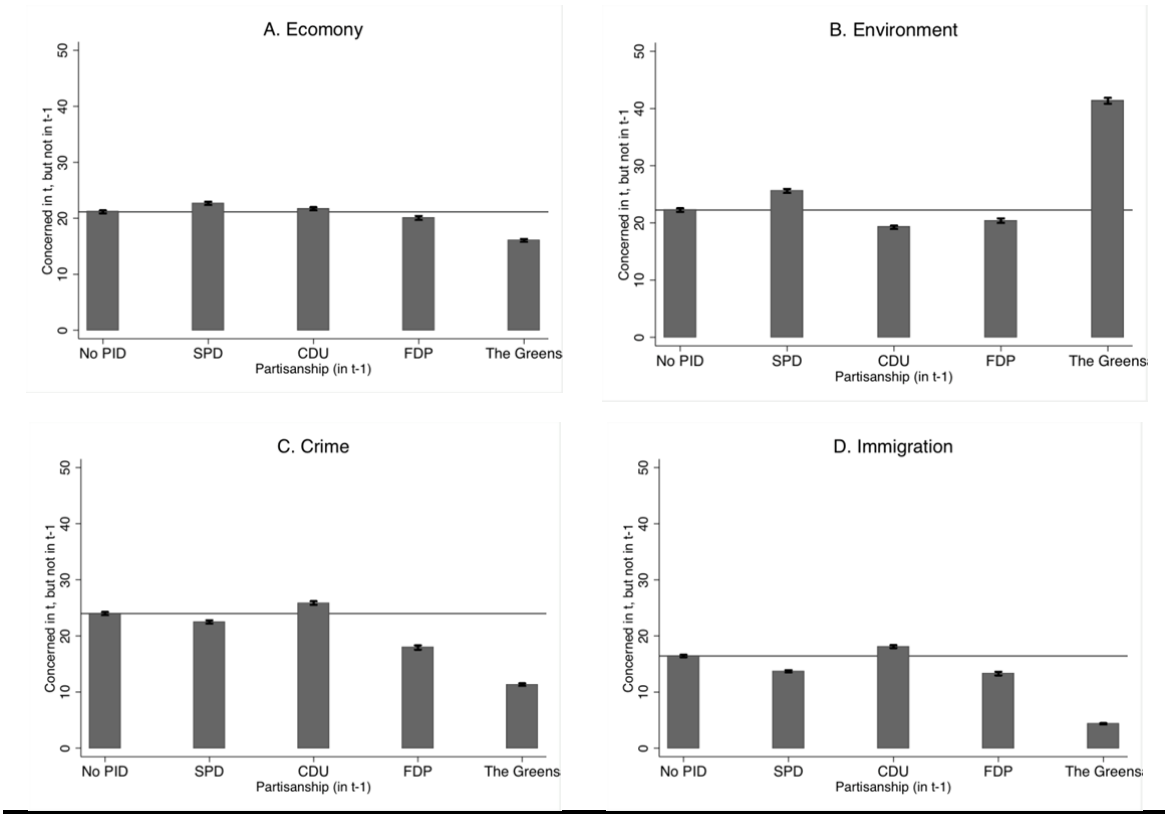
Figure 2: Comparing Averaged German Party's Manifestos (1983-2009) and Estimated Cross-Lagged Effects





Notes: The upper figures (grey bars) display the estimated cross-lagged logit coefficients and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The dark grey-bars in Figure 2A-D display the estimates of the issue cuing effect DV=partisanship) and are based on a mulitnomial logistic regression where the base category is no or other party identification. The light grey-bars display the estimates of the partisan updating effect (DV=issue saliency) and are based on a logistic regression in which the base category is not being concerned with the focal issue. The lower figures (black bars) display the average proportion of quasi-sentences in party manifestos measured by the CMP devoted to the issue.

Figure 3: Predicted Issue Salience Inflow as a Function of Respondents' Lagged Partisanship



Notes: Figure 3 displays the computed issue salience inflow (incl. 95% confidence intervals), stratified by lagged partisanship. These computations are based on the parameter estimates reported in Figure 2, of the effects of lagged partisanship on SOEP respondents' issue salience. The vertical lines correspond to the mean issue salience inflow among independents.