

# The Effect of Congruence in Policy Priorities on Electoral Participation

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper proposes the argument that voters are more likely to turn out at elections when candidates and parties address their issue concerns during the electoral campaign. Voters with high levels of congruence in policy priorities should perceive the campaign as more interesting and the election as more relevant and, hence, be more motivated to participate. At the same time, the vote choice should be facilitated as voters' attitudes towards the issues debated by parties are more accessible. The analysis based on data from the 2009 German election confirms the hypothesis, yet only among non-partisan voters. Party identification appears to compensate for the alienating and costly implications of low priority congruence.

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## 1. Introduction

Electoral participation is considered vital for the functioning and the legitimacy of representative democratic systems and a tremendous amount of research has been dedicated to explaining individual and aggregate-level differences in turnout. We can distinguish between a number of individual-level approaches, including sociological, psychological, and rational choice frameworks (Smets and van Ham 2013). The latter perspective, building on the Downsian spatial model, models voters' probability of turning out by looking at voters' policy positions in relation to parties' or candidates' (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Downs 1957; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000). This paper takes a related but novel approach by focusing on an aspect of policy preferences that has so far been overlooked in turnout research, namely voters' and parties' policy *priorities* and the extent to which they are congruent. Issue priorities are here understood as the policy issues that are considered as most in need of being addressed at a particular point in time; i.e., issues that are high on the political agenda – they might not be the same issues that are generally thought of as most important.

The main argument is that voters whose issue concerns are reflected in the election campaign are more likely to turn out at the ballot box than voters whose issue priorities are neglected by parties and in the media coverage of the election campaign. First, voters with high priority congruence levels should perceive the campaign as more interesting and the election outcome as more important and, hence, be more motivated to participate. In addition, they should have higher levels of confidence in the functioning of the representation process which should further motivate them to turn out. Second, voters who strongly care about the issues addressed by political parties and candidates should find the vote choice easier, being better able to access their own attitudes towards the issues at stake. The costs of turning out are thus lower for them, which should increase their turnout levels. These mechanisms should apply more strongly for voters who do not identify with a political party, for party identification is a very powerful mobilising factor and it facilitates the vote choice by serving as a cognitive

heuristic. Party attachment should therefore compensate for the demobilising effects of a lack of priority congruence.

After explaining the arguments in more detail, I test the hypotheses using data from the 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). Congruence in issue priorities is measured by linking voters' priorities with the salience of policy issues among election candidates as well as in the television and print news media covering the election campaign. The results confirm the arguments, showing that priority congruence increases the likelihood of turning out among non-partisans, while party identifiers have high turnout rates regardless of how salient their policy priorities are among elites. The insights offered by this study not only represent an important addition of our knowledge about individual differences in electoral participation. They also warn us that particularly voters who tend to be less integrated into the political process anyway, as they do not identify with a political party, are likely to become alienated by the political system if their policy concerns are not given sufficient attention. As a consequence, they are at a risk of withdrawing from political life. In this respect, the results of this paper align with previous findings showing that citizens whose policy priorities and positions are not well represented tend to be less satisfied with the functioning of democracy (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009; Muller 1970; Reher 2012, 2013).

## **2. Theory and Hypotheses**

### **2.1. Priority Congruence and the Motivation to Turn Out**

A major claim in the literature on spatial models of turnout is that a lack of representation of voters' issue preferences leads to alienation and, consequently, abstention (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Brody and Page 1973; Hinich and Ordeshook 1969; Kirchgaessner 2003; Plane and Gershtenson 2004; Thurner and Eymann 2000; Zipp 1985). Building on Downs' (1957) economic model of voting, this literature assumes that a voter is likely to abstain if either both candidates or parties are equally close to the voter's position ('abstention from indifference') or if the distance to the contestant closest to her position exceeds a certain threshold ('abstention

from alienation'). In the latter case no candidate or party represents the voter's policy preferences well enough to motivate her to bear the costs of voting. While this model focuses on positions in policy dimensions, I argue that a similar logic should apply for congruence between voters and representatives in issue priorities: Voters whose issue priorities are neglected in the political debate should become alienated and thus be less likely to turn out. I distinguish between two different forms of alienation rooted in priority disagreement: disinterest in the election and distrust in the political process.

First, a voter whose issue concerns are not addressed by political representatives prior to an election is likely to perceive the election campaign as uninteresting and the election outcome as having low relevance, for their issue concerns are not on parties' agendas for policy-making after the election. Voters who consider the issues that are emphasised in the campaign as important, on the other hand, should perceive the campaign and the election as relevant and stimulating (Campbell 1960) and hence become involved in it. They will also feel that it will make a difference which parties will be represented in parliament and in government after the election, since the legislation proposed by parties in the campaign concerns issues that are important to them. This argument is not entirely new – several studies have shown that “issue publics” tend to be mobilised when their groups' issue concerns are salient in the political debate; yet these studies lack a direct measure of issue priorities (Hutchings 2001; Sides and Karch 2008).

Furthermore, if voters' issue priorities are not addressed by parties and candidates, voters might have the impression that the representation process is not properly functioning. Indeed, as Reher (2012, 2013) has shown with regard to issue priorities and several scholars have with regard to issue positions (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011; Kim 2009), a lack in policy congruence is associated with lower levels of satisfaction with democracy. Dissatisfaction with the political process, or with the actors involved in it, may in turn alienate voters and make them less likely to turn out (although evidence on the relationship between political trust and

turnout is mixed (cf. Citrin 1974; Groenlund and Setaelae 2007; Hooghe and Marien 2013; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993)).

In the literature on electoral behaviour, issue priorities are often looked at in conjunction with issue positions, for they determine how important an issue position is to a voter and to parties (Abramowitz 1995; Giger 2011). With regard to turnout, it may certainly be the case that voters' congruence in priorities and their distance to parties' positions interact in some way. For instance, proximity in issue positions may only mobilise voters when they care about the issues addressed by parties, meaning that the effect is conditional on priority congruence. Priority congruence should, however, also have an independent effect from congruence in policy positions. This is most clearly the case for valence issues (Stokes 1963), where there is general agreement on the policy goal (e.g. lower unemployment or less environmental damage) and positions therefore do not differ. Here, parties' policy portfolios vary in terms of their prioritisation of policy issues rather than their issue stances (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983; Clarke et al. 2009; Green 2007; Petrocik 1996). If parties' policy priorities are congruent with a voter's, it thus means that her preferences are represented.

But in the case of spatial issues, where parties' and voters' policy goals do differ, priority congruence should also matter above and beyond its potential interaction effect with policy positions. Voters should be motivated to pay attention to the political debate if their issue concerns are debated regardless of how well their views are represented, since they need to pay attention in order to understand and evaluate the views that are promoted. Moreover, the election outcome will appear more relevant to a voter even if none of the parties reflect her views on her issue concerns. She should be more likely to vote even if only in order to prevent the party whose position she opposes most strongly from winning. Hypothesis 1 thus reads:

**H1:** *Higher levels of priority congruence are associated with a higher probability of turning out.*

## 2.2. Priority Congruence and the Costs of Voting

Whereas the relevance voters see in an election motivates them to turn out, the decision-making costs associated with voting are depress the likelihood of participating according to both rational choice frameworks (Aldrich 1993; Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968) and resource models that focus on variables such as education and income (e.g. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Congruence in issue priorities with parties and candidates should decrease voters' difficulty of evaluating parties based on their substantive policies, and consequently the costs of voting, which is the second mechanism through which priority agreement should promote turnout.

Krosnick (1989, 1990) found that voters tend to evaluate political candidates based on the issues they consider most important and frequently think about (see also Abramowitz 1995; Fournier et al. 2003; Lavine et al. 1996), which is less cognitively demanding because they can more easily access their attitudes towards these issues from their memory (cf. Fazio 1986). Moreover, voters should know quite a bit about issues important to them and are also likely to have stronger and clearer policy positions based on which they can evaluate parties' and candidates' positions (Weaver 1991). If we thus assume that voters evaluate how well parties' policy views match their own by comparing their own and parties' positions on the issues important to them, this evaluation should be easier if these issues are also emphasised by parties, making their positions and arguments more easily discernible.

But the same holds if the reverse is the case, and voters evaluate how well parties' views represent their own on the issues stressed by parties.<sup>1</sup> For it is easier for voters to understand

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<sup>1</sup> Rabinowitz, Prothro and Jacoby (1982) have investigated the question whether voters evaluate parties' positions on their own prioritised issue dimension or on issues that are most important to the public, yet their evidence is only indicative: they interpret the effect of proximity on an issue that is not a voter's priority on candidate evaluations as an effect of the "general social importance" of the issue, while not actually measuring the issue's salience in the political or the public debate. They find that both personal and general salience of an issue are relevant for its effect on candidate evaluations. To the author's knowledge there are no studies, however, that investigate to what extent voters take parties' priorities into account if they themselves do not consider them important.

parties' policy proposals and to match them with their own policy views if they also find these issues important, hold accessible attitudes, and know something about the issues. Voters whose issue priorities are not discussed by parties, on the other hand, will face substantial costs when trying to retrieve information on parties' views on the issues about which they are concerned, or when developing their own position on the issues stressed by parties. This should lead to higher turnout levels amongst voters whose issue priorities are congruent with parties'.

When explaining the argument I assumed that voters vote for the party whose policy position most closely matches their own. However, it equally applies to other models of issue voting, for instance issue ownership voting (e.g. Belanger and Meguid 2005, 2008; Green and Hobolt 2008; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave, Lefevre, and Tresch 2012). Here, we assume that voters will vote for the party that "owns" the issue they consider most important, meaning that they associate the party with the issue and/or judge it to be most competent in solving it. Here as well, voters will find the vote choice easier if parties frequently address the issues voters find important and voice clear policy proposals to solve them. Thus, again, voters whose policy priorities are congruent with parties should find the evaluation of parties and candidates and, hence, the vote choice easier and are thus more likely to turn out.

To summarise, voters whose policy issue priorities are emphasised by parties and in the media covering the political debate face lower costs when deciding for which party to vote. In addition, they will find the electoral campaign as well as the election outcome more relevant, for issues close to their hearts are at stake, and are thus more motivated to pay attention to the debate, which further reduces the perceived costs of information acquisition, and to participate in the election.

### **2.3. Party Identification, Priority Congruence and Electoral Participation**

The hypothesised effect of the representation of voters' issue concerns on their propensity to vote should be weaker amongst party identifiers than among non-partisans. Party attachment is a very strong predictor of both turnout and the vote choice and can compensate for the

alienation effect and the costs of voting induced by low levels of priority congruence. Party identifiers generally turn out at elections at higher rates than non-identifiers because they have an emotional attachment to their party and hence want to, and feel the obligation to, support it (Campbell et al. 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Since identification with a party can be understood as constituting a social group identity (Greene 1999), voters include their party in their self-conception (Tajfel 1974) and thus derive satisfaction and even self-esteem from its electoral success. But even in the absence of a party's prospect of winning the election, partisans experience "satisfaction from affirming a partisan preference" (Riker and Ordeshook 1968: 28), motivating them to turn out. In addition, party identification directly decreases the cost of voting, for party identifiers can assume that their party generally represents their preferences and therefore use their party affiliation as an information short-cut to the vote choice (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Downs 1957; Popkin 1991; Rahn 1993; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).

Party identification thus has a strong direct effect on turnout, but at the same time – and more importantly for the argument of this paper – it should also moderate the effects of other factors on turnout. The effects of priority congruence on both the perceived relevance of the election and the costs of voting should be weaker amongst party identifiers. At least in the short run, partisans should feel represented by their party regardless of how well it matches their policy preferences (Green and Palmquist 1990).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, partisans should perceive the election to be relevant even if their issue priorities are not addressed and be motivated to turn out and support their party. While long-term incongruence with one's party may eventually lead to alienation, it should at the same time erode party attachment.

Furthermore, the argument that voters are more likely to abstain when their priorities are not addressed in the campaign because they find the election *outcome* less relevant should

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<sup>2</sup> There is only weak evidence that disagreement with one's own party on issue positions leads to abstention (Narud and Valen 1996). This effect should be even weaker with respect to incongruence in priorities since it does not usually constitute a conflict between diametrically opposed preferences.



also be less valid for party identifiers. Partisans should have a considerable amount of trust that their party will act in their best interest after the election even if their priority congruence with the political elite is rather low before the election. If this trust had been eroded, for instance by serious policies disagreement, voters should also be less likely to indicate a party identity in the survey. In addition, partisans should feel more efficacious with respect to their party, meaning that they should be more likely than non-partisans to believe that they can influence the political agenda after the election through the organisational channels linking them to their party's leaders (Carman 2006: 108). This implies that partisans should also be more likely to trust into the representational system despite potential incongruence in issue priorities, making them less susceptible to abstention due to alienation from the political process.

The effects of priority congruence on the perceived relevance of the election and trust in the representative process, which I argue to affect turnout, should thus be diminished amongst party identifiers. The same should be the case for the influence of priority congruence on the costs of voting – the second mechanism linking priority congruence and turnout. In situations in which it is difficult to choose between parties because they do not address the issues that a voter finds most important and on which she seeks to base her vote choice, partisans can fall back on their party attachment, trusting that their party represents their preferences adequately enough (Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).

Similarly, if a party identifier wants to vote for the party that best represents her views on the issues that are salient in the political debate, but she does not have readily accessible attitudes on these issues because they are not salient to her, she can take cues from her party about what her position should be, given that she generally agrees with her party's views (Jacoby 1988). In support of this argument, Jackson (1975) found that partisans are more likely to base their vote choice on their partisan identity when policy voting is more costly due to equidistance. Party identifiers should thus be, first, less likely to be alienated by low congruence in issue priorities and, second, better able to compensate for the increased costs of voting induced by a lack of agreement on policy concerns. The second hypothesis thus reads:

**H2:** *The effect of priority congruence on turnout is stronger among non-partisan voters.*

### **3. Data and Method**

The case used to test the hypotheses is Germany at the 2009 federal election – primarily for reasons of data availability, but also because it is an important European country that shares many political, social, and economic characteristics with other Western democracies. The 2009 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) allows measuring priority congruence by linking issue concerns and priorities at the voter level and in the political debate amongst representatives. I use the post-election voter survey to measure voters' priorities and satisfaction with democracy and the candidate study, which was conducted after the election among candidates of the five parties represented in the *Bundestag* (CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, the Greens, and the Left), as well as the TV and print media content analyses, which provide data on the political content of TV news and newspapers during the election campaign, to measure issue priorities among representatives.<sup>3</sup>

Before explaining the measurement of congruence in issue priorities, I will give a brief overview of the 2009 German federal election and the issues that were emphasised by voters and representatives. The main competitors were the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD), who had been governing together in a Grand Coalition over the previous four years. Consequently, it was difficult for the parties to blame each other for policies for which they were jointly responsible. The CDU/CSU therefore sought to win the election based on its chancellor candidate Angela Merkel's popularity and voters' trust in her ability to handle the financial crisis. They succeeded, winning 33.8 per cent of the vote, while the SPD only achieved 23 per cent, enabling Merkel to form a coalition government with the smaller Liberal Democratic Party. At 70.8 per cent, turnout at the election was at a historic low. If my argument that voters are mobilised when their issue concerns are addressed holds true, the low aggregate

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the GLES 2009 and data access, see [www.gesis.org/en/elections-home/gles/](http://www.gesis.org/en/elections-home/gles/).

turnout may be explained by a lack of focus on substantive issues during the campaign, which some have called “boring” (Krewel, Schmitt-Beck, and Wolsing 2011) and “issue-less” (Schön 2011: 103). However, in this paper the focus is on individual-level differences in priority congruence and their effects on electoral participation.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

How salient each of the twenty issue categories used in the analysis was amongst voters, candidates, and the media is shown in Figure 1. While labour market issues, including unemployment, were most salient among voters, candidates and the media gave most attention to economic issues, including the economic crisis. Candidates’ concerns appear more similar to voters’ than the media’s issue priorities, amongst which we find issues such as foreign affairs, domestic security, and defense, which are not considered to be important concerns by voters.

### **3.1. Measuring Priority Congruence**

*Priority congruence* measures the salience of each voter’s issue priorities among candidates and in the media covering the election campaign. It is constructed by assigning to each respondent in the voter survey a score that indicates the proportion with which the policy issues that he or she considers most important are mentioned as most important by candidates and addressed in the TV and print news covering German politics prior to the election, respectively. The voter survey asked respondents in an open-ended question what they find are the most, second most, and third most important issues Germany is facing at the moment. Up to five issue categories mentioned by respondents in each of the three replies answer were recorded, meaning that up to fifteen issue categories per respondents are included in the data.

The candidate study asked candidates the same question, registering up to three issue categories for each of the three replies. The relative salience of each issue category among candidates is its percentage of aggregate issue mentions among all candidates, weighted by its importance (most important issues count three times as much and second most important issues twice as much as third most important issues) and by the candidates’ parties’ seat share

in the parliament after the election. These salience scores were then used to calculate the average salience of each voter's set of issue priorities, measuring voters' *candidate priority congruence*. When averaging the salience scores of the different issues mentioned by a respondent (one to fifteen), the issues were weighted according to whether they were mentioned as most important, second most important or third most important according to the same scheme as among candidates.

The second priority congruence variable measures the salience of voters' issue priorities in the news media during the election campaign. Whereas using media data to measure representatives' agendas is still unusual in the voting literature, it is becoming more common (Kriesi 2007; Statham et al. 2010). Since the media is one of voters' main sources of information about politics – for most voters never actually speak to political candidates or representatives or read a party manifesto – it can be considered an adequate measure of what voters perceive parties' agendas to be. The media content analyses of the GLES cover news items in the major news shows on the five major TV channels (*ARD, ZDF, RTL, and Sat.1*) and in the five major national newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, DIE WELT, BILD, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau, and die tageszeitung*). They only include news items related to German politics and political actors, which are likely to be linked to the electoral campaign during this period, and I only include items addressing substantive policy issues. The salience of each issue category is measured in terms of the proportion with which it is mentioned relative to the other categories. If an issue was the main aspect of a news report, it was given twice as much weight as a minor aspect. To measure priority congruence, voters were assigned the media salience scores of the issues they mentioned as most important, weighted by their importance. Since the two resulting priority congruence variables based on newspapers and TV news are strongly correlated (Pearson's  $r$  larger than .9), I averaged the two variables to measure *media priority congruence*.

The two resulting variables, *candidate priority congruence* and *media priority congruence*, have a range from the minimum, where a respondent's issue priorities are not

addressed by candidates or the media at all (the observed minima are at 0 and .2, respectively), to the observed maximum, which is at 25.4 for media congruence and at 28.8 for candidate congruence. The values correspond to the average (weighted) percentages of respondents' issue priorities on candidates' and the media's issue agendas.<sup>4</sup> The way in which congruence in issue priorities is measured here has important advantages over, for instance, measures that compare a voter's rank order of issues to those of candidates and the media (Lindeboom 2012). Most importantly, it gives a realistic and accurate indication of the importance or salience of a voter's issue concern in the political debate relative to other issues, taking account of degrees of differences in salience. However, one particular potential concern with the measure needs to be addressed since it might affect the validity of the results.

As we saw in Figure 1, economic issues were by far the most salient amongst candidates and in the media. As a result, voters who mentioned economic issues as most important tend to have high congruence scores. Figure 2 shows that priority congruence with candidates and the media is indeed higher among voters to whom economic issues are salient. The variable *economic issue salience* takes the value 0 when no economic issue was mentioned as a most important problem, 1 when economic issues were mentioned as third most important, and 2 or 3 when they were mentioned as second or first most important, respectively. While this pattern is plausible considering that these voters' priorities were in fact most salient in the debate, it is difficult to empirically distinguish between priority congruence and economic issue salience as they are highly correlated. Hence, if we find a relationship between congruence and turnout, it is conceivable that it actually masks a relationship between economic issue salience and turnout. While this relationship is theoretically implausible – why should voters who find economic problems most pressing be more likely to turn out for reasons other than the salience of their concern in the campaign? – I will perform a robustness test after the presentation of the main results that shows that it appears to be indeed congruence in issue priorities rather than concern about economic issues that increases turnout among non-partisans.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Appendix for details on the variables used in this study.

### 3.2. Indicators of Turnout, Party Identification, and Control Variables

The dependent variable *turnout* is a dummy indicating whether a respondent stated to have cast a vote in the 2009 federal election. Party identification (*PID*) is also measured as a binary variable, indicating whether a respondent is inclined to support a particular party. Here, a potential source of bias needs to be addressed, namely overreporting. If party identifiers are more prone than non-partisans to saying that they turned out even though they abstained, which studies have shown to be the case (Bernstein, Chadha, and Montjoy 2001; Brenner 2012; Karp and Brockington 2005), and if this abstention was to some extent due to priority disagreement, it may be that we observe a weaker relationship between congruence and turnout because of these overreporting patterns. However, it appears implausible that partisans who did not vote because they felt alienated even by their own party would feel obliged to report that they did vote. Rather, they might have either felt obliged to vote despite low priority congruence, which would confirm my hypothesis, or they were sufficiently alienated to neither vote nor lie about abstaining.

As control variables I include a range of variables that have been found to affect turnout in the past. *Age*, *sex*, and a dummy indicating whether a respondent lives in *East* Germany are basic socio-demographic predictors of turnout. Four *education* dummies, indicating the highest qualification earned, and subjective *social class* measure an individual's resources which facilitate voting by decreasing the cost of time and information acquisition (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Milbrath and Goel 1977).<sup>5</sup> Income should have a similar effect but is excluded due to a high number of missing values. Respondents' degree of *newspaper use*, measured as the cumulative number of days per week on which a particular newspaper is read, also taps the facilitative dimension. So does *political knowledge*, which indicates how many correct answers a respondent gave to three factual questions about the German political system.

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<sup>5</sup> An objective measure of class based on Erikson and Goldthorpe's (1992) class scheme has also been tested but yielded no different results. Since it has a high number of missing values, the subjective class measure is used instead.

*Political interest* is a motivational as well as facilitating driver of turnout (Milbrath and Goel 1977). Controlling for political interest means reducing the risk of spuriousness, for voters who are more attentive to the political debate may adapt their priorities to parties' concerns and, consequently, have higher levels of priority congruence. Including political interest thus controls for the possibility that priority congruence and turnout are correlated because they are both caused by political interest (although there is evidence that agenda-setting effects are actually weaker among more politically interested and engaged individuals (Willnat 1997: 59)). For the same reason, I also control for voters' *attention to the election campaign*. A measure of perceptions of the *economic situation* is included in order to control for economic worries which may be picked up by the priority congruence variable, as indicated by its high correlation with economic issue salience. Moreover, perceptions of the *performance of the previous government* are controlled for as negative perceptions might both alienate voters and motivate them to vote for the opposition.

I also include two measures of congruence with parties in policy positions. As a predictor of 'abstention from alienation' I include the *left-right distance to the most proximate party* based on a respondent's own position on the left-right dimension and the positions which the candidates in the candidate survey assigned to their parties. 'Abstention from indifference' should be predicted by a lack of difference between respondents' distances to different parties (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006). It is measured by the *left-right distance differential*, which is the difference in a respondent's left-right distance to the two most proximate parties. I moreover include a variable measuring respondents' political *efficacy*, indicating to what extent respondents feel that turning out may have a political impact, and an indicator of their *duty to vote*. Lastly, respondents' reported turnout at the previous federal election in 2005 is included in order to control for a potential effect of previous turnout on priority congruence, for voters who regularly vote may pay more attention to the political debate and therefore be more strongly primed by the political debate.

#### 4. Results

Since the dependent variable is categorical, I estimate logistic regression models. First, I estimate the effects of the different measures of priority congruence on turnout across all voters. Models 1-1 and 1-2 (Table 1) show that neither candidate nor media priority congruence significantly affect turnout, meaning that Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed when including partisans in the sample. Among the control variables, political interest, perceptions of the economic situation, efficacy, the duty to vote, turnout in 2005, and party identification have significant effects on turnout in the expected directions. Age, sex, living in East Germany, education, social class, newspaper use, political knowledge, previous government performance, and the left-right distance variables have no significant effects.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

##### 4.1. The Moderating Effects of Party Identification

I now include interaction terms between priority congruence and party identification in order to test whether the reason why previously found no significant coefficients for priority congruence is that the effects only exist among non-partisan voters, as indicated by Hypothesis 2. The results in Table 2 suggest that this is indeed the case. The effects of both candidate priority congruence (Model 2-1) and media priority congruence (Model 2-2) are significantly ( $p < .05$ ) moderated by partisanship. The coefficients of the unmoderated term of congruence indicate the effects of congruence when the party identification variable equals zero, i.e., among non-partisans. Media priority congruence has a significant positive effect on turnout among non-partisans, while the effect of candidate priority congruence is not significantly different from zero.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The interaction effects as well as the direct effects of priority congruence are stronger and significant at a stricter level when the duty to vote is excluded from the models (the results are not shown here). The effect of candidate priority congruence among non-partisans then becomes significant at the .05-level. Excluding the duty to vote can be argued to be appropriate since its extremely strong effect is most likely partly due to endogeneity: Respondents who reported not to have voted should be less likely to agree that



[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 3, which presents the results of separate estimations of the models among partisans and among non-partisans, confirms that media priority congruence significantly affects turnout among non-partisans (Model 3-4) while the effect of candidate priority congruence is not significantly different from zero (Model 3-2) (although the effect is again significant when excluding the duty to vote). Among partisans, media priority congruence does not positively affect turnout (Model 3-3). Surprisingly, we find a significant ( $p < .05$ ) negative effect of candidate priority congruence among partisans (Model 3-1). Figure 3 illustrates the average probabilities of turning out for non-partisans and partisans at each level of candidate priority congruence, based on Model 2-1. Among non-partisans, the probability of voting increases with rising priority congruence, albeit insignificantly, as we Model 3-2 suggested. Turnout decreases among partisans with increasing congruence, which is inconsistent with the theory and hypotheses. I will not further discuss this result but it deserves a closer look in further studies. We also see that partisanship has a strong direct positive effect on turnout: across the levels of priority congruence, partisans have a reported turnout level of over 90 per cent, whereas among non-partisans, turnout ranges between 65 and 77 per cent.

[TABLE 3 AND FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The pattern of the predicted effects of media priority congruence on turnout is more in line with the hypotheses (Figure 4). We see a clear positive effect of congruence on turnout among non-partisans. A non-partisan voter whose issue priorities are not reflected in the media at all has a probability of turning out to vote of 63 per cent, while a non-partisan at the highest level of congruence will turn out with a probability of 80 per cent. However, even the turnout rate at the highest congruence level is below that of a party identifier at any level of priority congruence. Party identifiers generally have high turnout levels, yet they are not affected by priority congruence, as we found in the analyses.

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they have a duty to vote in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. However, I rely on the more conservative estimates controlling for the duty to vote here.

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

With regard to media priority congruence, the results thus confirm Hypothesis 1 in conjunction with Hypothesis 2: non-partisan voters are more likely to cast a vote if their issue priorities are more closely reflected by the media reporting on the political debate during the election campaign, while partisan voters' turnout rates are unaffected. For congruence with political candidates we observe a similar pattern, yet the effect on turnout among non-partisans is not statistically significant. The observation that congruence with the media has a stronger and more statistically certain effect on turnout than candidate congruence suggests that voters' impression of which issues are emphasised by parties in the election campaign is indeed strongly shaped by what the media chooses to focus on.

#### **4.2. Addressing the Question of Economic Issue Salience**

While the analyses above give us a clear picture of how congruence in policy priorities affects voter turnout, there is one potential validity issue with the measurement of congruence that remains to be discussed. As explained in Section 3.1, the nature of the measure entails that, in the context of the 2009 German election, mentioning economic issues as most important is strongly correlated with high priority congruence values. Further analyses are therefore needed in order to exclude the possibility that it is in fact economic concern that increases turnout amongst non-partisans rather than priority congruence. Model 4-1 in Table 4 is similar to previous models but includes the economic issue salience measure instead of the priority congruence variable. The results show that economic issue salience significantly interacts with party identification in a similar way as media priority congruence does: non-partisan voters who assigned greater importance to economic issues in the 2009 election were more likely to turn out, while no such effect existed amongst non-partisans.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

In order to find out whether it is priority congruence rather than economic issue salience that affects turnout among non-partisans, I test whether media priority congruence

interacts with economic issue salience when influencing turnout. This is effectively equivalent to testing whether the residual congruence in priorities, net of congruence from a concern about economic issues, affects turnout. We would expect to find a significant effect among those who do not consider economic issues most important, for they should pay attention to the extent to which their issue concerns are debated. Amongst voters who do consider economic issues as important, we should see weaker effects of the residual priority congruence or none, since one of their priorities is so overwhelmingly salient.

Model 4-2 in Table 4 shows that the effect of media priority congruence on turnout among non-partisans is indeed significantly moderated by economic issue salience. Figure 5 illustrates the average predicted probabilities of turning across media priority congruence levels for voters who ascribe different levels of importance to economic issues. As expected, among voters who did not mention economic issues as one of the three most important issues in Germany (who make up about half of the sample), those whose issue priorities were more frequently addressed in the news media were more satisfied with democracy than those whose concerns were neglected. This relationship is weaker and insignificant among voters who do prioritise economic issues – they are not more or less motivated to vote by the extent to which their other concerns are addressed. We can therefore conclude with some confidence that it is indeed the reflection of voters' issue concerns on the political agenda that motivates them to turn out.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

## **5. Conclusion**

This study shows that non-partisan voters whose issue priorities were emphasised in the media during the campaign of the 2009 German federal election were more likely to participate in the election. It thereby elucidates the importance of a policy-related factor that has not been given any attention in explaining individual differences in turnout so far, namely congruence in policy priorities. I argued that priority congruence affects both voters' motivation to turn out and the

costs of doing so. First, voters whose policy concerns are emphasised in parties' election campaigns should find the campaign more interesting and thus be motivated to pay attention to it and to turn out. Likewise, they should perceive the election outcome to be more relevant, for the issue agenda during the campaign gives an indication of which issues may receive attention later on in the policy-making process. Moreover, voters whose policy priorities are represented have been shown to be more satisfied with the functioning of the democratic system (Reher 2013), which might also motivate them to participate in it.

Second, individuals are more likely to have attitudes towards issues they find relevant and can more easily access these attitudes (Krosnick 1990). Assuming that voters make their vote choice based on an assessment of which party best represents their policy views, they should thus find the choice easier when parties debate their issue priorities, towards which they have accessible attitudes. Hence, both the motivation to turn out and the costs of doing so should be lower for voters with higher levels of priority congruence, which should increase their probability of casting their vote. The results of this study show that priority congruence indeed leads to higher turnout, yet only among non-partisan voters. This finding is explained by the ability of party attachment to motivate voters to turn out regardless of how well their issue priorities are represented. Moreover, party identification can serve as a heuristic device for the vote choice, which means that the information costs, which the vote choice entails when voters have difficulty accessing parties' stances on the issues they find most important, can be compensated for. The study thereby enriches our knowledge about heterogeneity in the causal explanations of why voters turn out, which has not been analysed to a great extent. Further research should investigate, first, whether other predictors of turnout are also less applicable to partisans and, second, which other voter characteristics and attitudes cause variation in the explanations of turnout.

An issue that was largely excluded from this study but demands further theoretical and empirical inquiry is the relationship between congruence in issue positions and issue priorities in the context of turnout. The arguments I propose as to why priority congruence should

influence turnout are in many ways similar to those provided by scholars studying the effects of position distance in a spatial framework on turnout. This is particularly the case for the alienation argument, according to which voters are likely to be alienated and abstain if no party is close enough to their position in a policy space (e.g. Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Plane and Gershtenson 2004). But how do congruence in priorities and congruence in positions interact?

What happens, for instance, when a voter's most important issue concern is heatedly debated amongst parties, yet none of their policy stances is close enough to the voter's position for her to feel represented? It might be that the effects are independent and additive, meaning that a lack of congruence in positions can be compensated for by a high degree of salience congruence. But one might also argue that the motivating and facilitative role of salience congruence only comes into play when a voter perceives the different policy options to be within a certain range of her opinion, for otherwise she will nevertheless feel alienated. Or it may be that voters do not even think about how well parties represent their positions when they do not perceive the issues that are debated as relevant. In these cases, there may be an interactive relationship between priority and policy congruence.

However, these questions are mostly relevant with regard to position issues, such as pro-choice vs. pro-life, where the combination of priorities and positions determine preferences. In the case of valence issues, such as reducing unemployment or sustaining economic growth, on which all actors occupy the same position in a policy space (Clarke et al. 2009; Stokes 1963), priority congruence is essentially equivalent to preference congruence, whereas position congruence is not applicable. In light of the increasing importance of valence issues (Green 2007), priority congruence therefore deserves much more attention in further research on voting as well as political participation more generally.

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**TABLES**

**Table 1.** Direct effects of priority congruence and party identification on turnout

	<b>Model 1-1:</b>			<b>Model 1-2:</b>		
	<b>Candidate priority congruence</b>			<b>Media priority congruence</b>		
	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value
Age	-.01	.01	.617	-.01	.01	.598
Female	.39	.29	.181	.42	.29	.141
East	.19	.29	.511	.21	.29	.473
Education: <i>Realschule</i>	.27	.33	.421	.23	.33	.498
Education: <i>Abitur</i>	.62	.59	.297	.58	.59	.322
Education: university	.21	.62	.737	.18	.62	.777
Social class	-.10	.17	.577	-.10	.17	.562
Newspaper use	.08	.05	.105	.08	.05	.103
Political knowledge	.11	.15	.474	.13	.15	.383
Political interest	<b>.69</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.001</b>	<b>.67</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.001</b>
Campaign attention	.25	.24	.309	.26	.24	.295
Economic situation	<b>.52</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>.042</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>.043</b>
Government performance	.14	.22	.545	.15	.22	.501
Left-right distance	-.18	.31	.553	-.15	.31	.638
Left-right distance differential	-.04	.25	.877	-.04	.26	.869
Efficacy	<b>.47</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.47</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.000</b>
Duty to vote	<b>.79</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.79</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.000</b>
Turnout 2005	<b>.65</b>	<b>.30</b>	<b>.033</b>	<b>.64</b>	<b>.31</b>	<b>.037</b>
PID	<b>.62</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>.028</b>	<b>.67</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>.018</b>
Priority congruence	.00	.02	.843	.02	.02	.328
Constant	<b>-6.56</b>	<b>.87</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-6.90</b>	<b>.85</b>	<b>.000</b>
Wald chi-squared	269.71		.000	270.88		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.44			.44		
N	1155			1155		

*Notes:* Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at  $p < .05$  are displayed in bold.

**Table 2.** Interaction effects between priority congruence and party identification on turnout

	Model 2-1:			Model 2-2:		
	Candidate priority congruence			Media priority congruence		
	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value
Age	.00	.01	.760	.00	.01	.747
Female	.42	.29	.148	.46	.29	.117
East	.20	.28	.473	.22	.29	.436
Education: <i>Realschule</i>	.33	.33	.317	.29	.33	.374
Education: <i>Abitur</i>	.61	.57	.282	.59	.57	.303
Education: university	.28	.63	.656	.26	.64	.689
Social class	-.07	.17	.666	-.09	.17	.603
Newspaper use	.07	.05	.144	.07	.05	.146
Political knowledge	.14	.15	.346	.17	.15	.269
Political interest	<b>.69</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.001</b>	<b>.67</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>.001</b>
Campaign attention	.29	.25	.246	.29	.25	.244
Economic situation	<b>.53</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.039</b>	<b>.53</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.036</b>
Government performance	.14	.22	.521	.15	.22	.507
Left-right distance	-.16	.32	.614	-.14	.32	.659
Left-right distance differential	-.06	.26	.807	-.05	.26	.849
Efficacy	<b>.48</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.48</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.000</b>
Duty to vote	<b>.78</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.78</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.000</b>
Turnout 2005	<b>.64</b>	<b>.30</b>	<b>.035</b>	.60	.31	.051
PID	<b>2.04</b>	<b>.68</b>	<b>.003</b>	<b>1.61</b>	<b>.47</b>	<b>.001</b>
Priority congruence	.04	.03	.118	<b>.07</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.023</b>
PID * priority congruence	<b>-.09</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.024</b>	<b>-.10</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.015</b>
Constant	<b>-7.62</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-7.64</b>	<b>.92</b>	<b>.000</b>
Wald chi-squared	260.58		.000	267.80		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.45			.45		
N	1155			1155		

Notes: Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at  $p < .05$  are displayed in bold.

**Table 3.** Effects of priority congruence on turnout among partisans and non-partisans

	Model 3-1: Candidate priority congruence – partisans			Model 3-1: Candidate priority congruence – non-partisans			Model 3-3: Media priority congruence - partisans			Model 3-4: Media priority congruence - non-partisans		
	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value
Age	.01	.02	.557	-.02	.01	.256	.01	.02	.516	-.02	.01	.262
Female	.73	.54	.174	.07	.38	.863	.77	.53	.150	.11	.38	.767
East	-.01	.39	.979	.43	.42	.302	.02	.39	.960	.42	.42	.316
Education: <i>Realschule</i>	1.00	.48	.036	-.29	.49	.547	.92	.47	.051	-.31	.49	.532
Education: <i>Abitur</i>	1.96	1.30	.132	-.46	.69	.506	1.90	1.28	.137	-.49	.69	.477
Education: university	2.05	1.47	.164	-.96	.88	.275	2.00	1.48	.176	-1.02	.89	.251
Social class	-.24	.26	.361	.06	.25	.807	-.21	.26	.432	.02	.25	.940
Newspaper use	.08	.08	.276	.09	.07	.205	.08	.08	.301	.09	.07	.181
Political knowledge	.18	.24	.452	.09	.20	.644	.19	.24	.440	.14	.20	.483
Political interest	.65	.37	.084	<b>.54</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.029</b>	.64	.37	.085	<b>.51</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.045</b>
Campaign attention	.63	.40	.117	.28	.33	.404	.59	.39	.135	.30	.33	.362
Economic situation	.58	.37	.114	.54	.36	.132	.60	.37	.103	.57	.36	.110
Government performance	-.49	.40	.222	.41	.34	.223	-.50	.39	.199	.51	.36	.161
Left-right distance	-.26	.39	.506	.04	.34	.909	-.24	.39	.545	.06	.35	.853
Left-right distance differential	.03	.33	.925	.42	.32	.187	-.01	.33	.977	.46	.31	.141
Efficacy	<b>.52</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.006</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.001</b>	<b>.53</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>.004</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.001</b>
Duty to vote	<b>.78</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.81</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.77</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.000</b>
Turnout 2005	.35	.64	.588	<b>.96</b>	<b>.38</b>	<b>.011</b>	.38	.64	.555	<b>.91</b>	<b>.37</b>	<b>.016</b>
Priority congruence	<b>-.07</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.047</b>	.04	.03	.161	-.05	.03	.102	<b>.07</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.022</b>
Constant	<b>-6.14</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-7.53</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-6.67</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-7.83</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>.000</b>
Wald chi-squared	129.26			105.04			131.38			102.26		
Pseudo R-squared	.37			.41			.37			.42		
N	815			340			815			340		

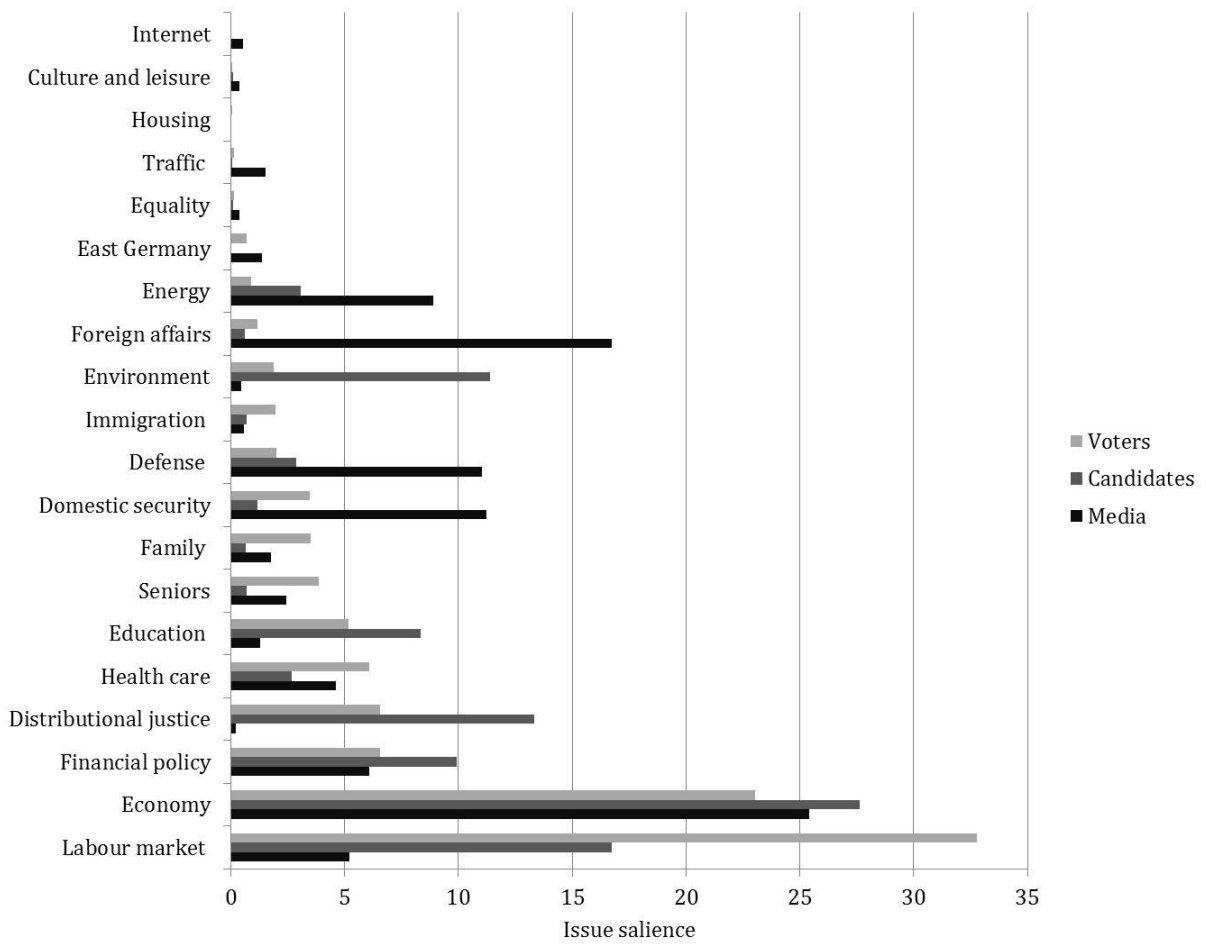
*Notes:* Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at  $p < .05$  are displayed in bold.

**Table 4.** Direct and moderating effects of economic issue salience on turnout

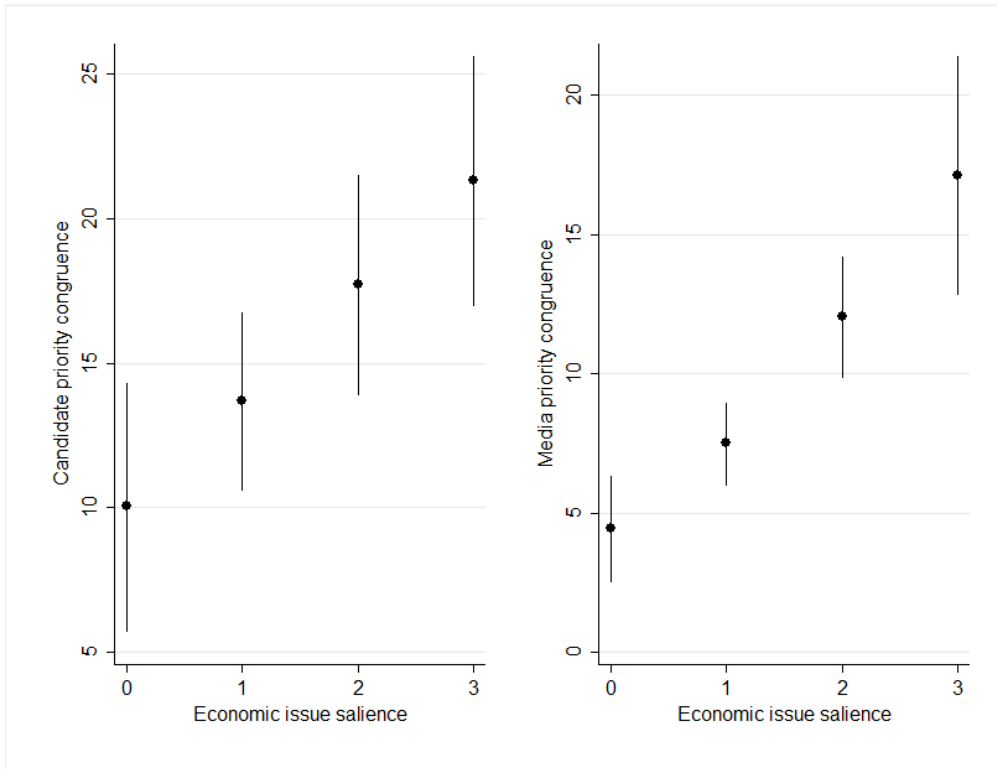
	Model 4-1			Model 4-2 (non-partisans only)		
	Coef.	SE	p-value	Coef.	SE	p-value
Age	.00	.01	.721	-.02	.02	.192
Female	.48	.29	.101	.18	.38	.634
East	.19	.28	.495	.38	.41	.348
Education: <i>Realschule</i>	.31	.33	.352	-.43	.52	.405
Education: <i>Abitur</i>	.65	.57	.261	-.57	.74	.443
Education: university	.23	.65	.721	-1.34	.98	.174
Social class	-.09	.17	.613	.07	.26	.788
Newspaper use	.07	.05	.136	.09	.07	.194
Political knowledge	.15	.15	.302	.14	.20	.487
Political interest	<b>.69</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>.001</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>.047</b>
Campaign attention	.25	.25	.320	.18	.32	.565
Economic situation	<b>.53</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.038</b>	.59	.37	.109
Government performance	.15	.22	.512	.48	.31	.119
Left-right distance	-.14	.32	.658	.48	.37	.189
Left-right distance differential	-.06	.26	.821	.04	.35	.904
Efficacy	<b>.49</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.000</b>
Duty to vote	<b>.77</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.81</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.000</b>
Turnout 2005	<b>.61</b>	<b>.31</b>	<b>.049</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>.39</b>	<b>.028</b>
Economic issue salience	<b>.34</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.017</b>	<b>.96</b>	<b>.35</b>	<b>.006</b>
PID	<b>1.27</b>	<b>.36</b>	<b>.000</b>			
Economic issue salience * PID	<b>-.53</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.007</b>			
Media priority congruence				<b>.30</b>	<b>.12</b>	<b>.014</b>
Economic issue salience * media priority congruence				<b>-.11</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.007</b>
Constant	<b>-7.34</b>	<b>.89</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-8.93</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>.000</b>
Wald chi-squared	268.40		.000	114.07		.000
Pseudo R-squared	.45			.44		
N	1155			340		

Notes: Logistic regression results. Standard errors are robust because data is weighted for proportionality of the numbers of respondents from West and East Germany. Coefficients that are significant at  $p < .05$  are displayed in bold.

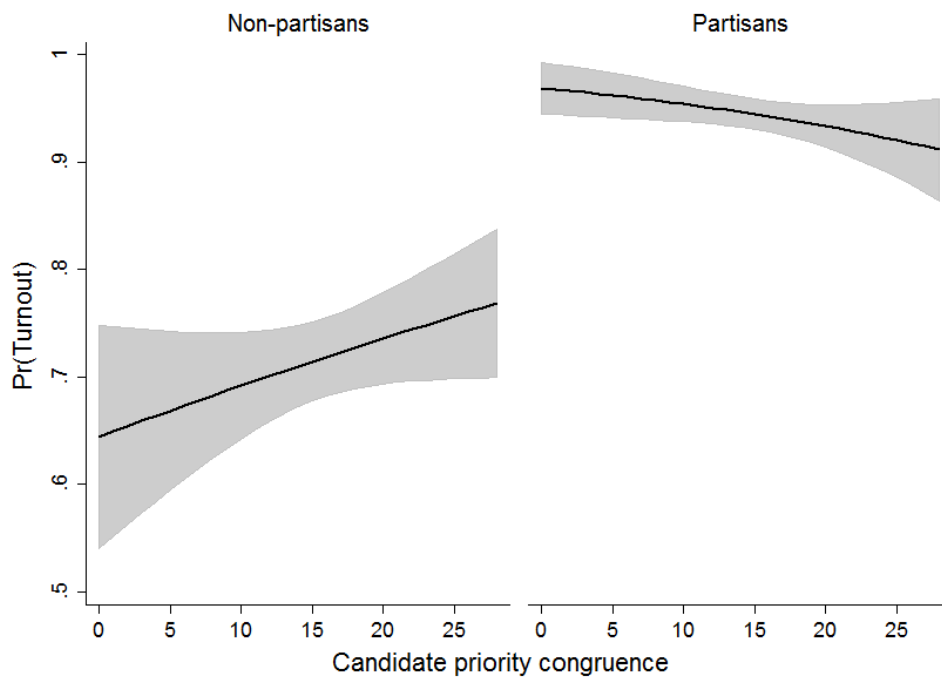
## FIGURES



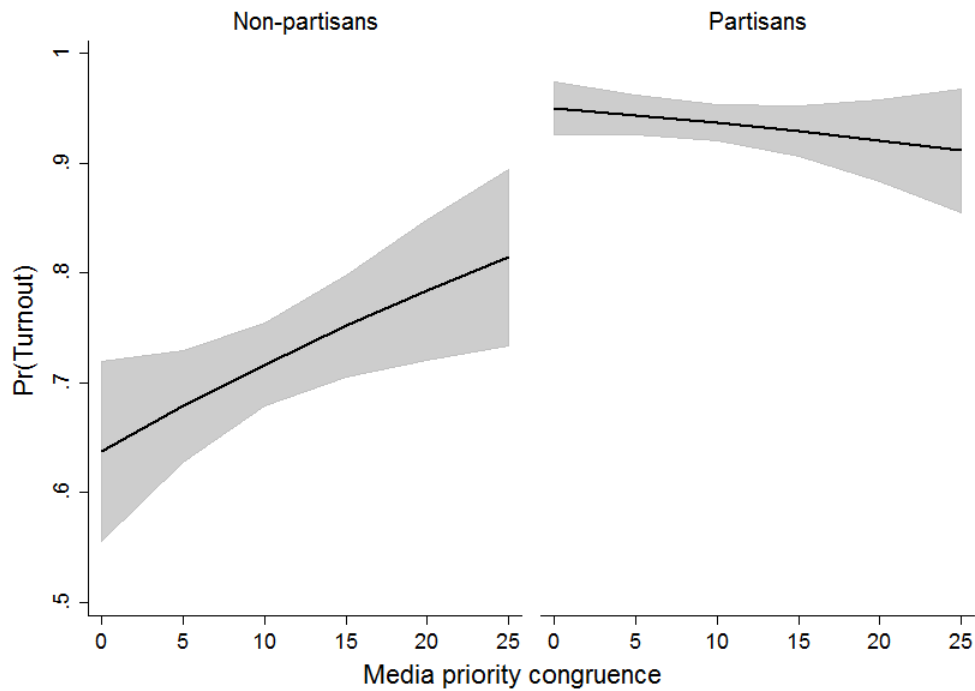
**Figure 1.** Salience of issue categories among voters, candidates, and the media



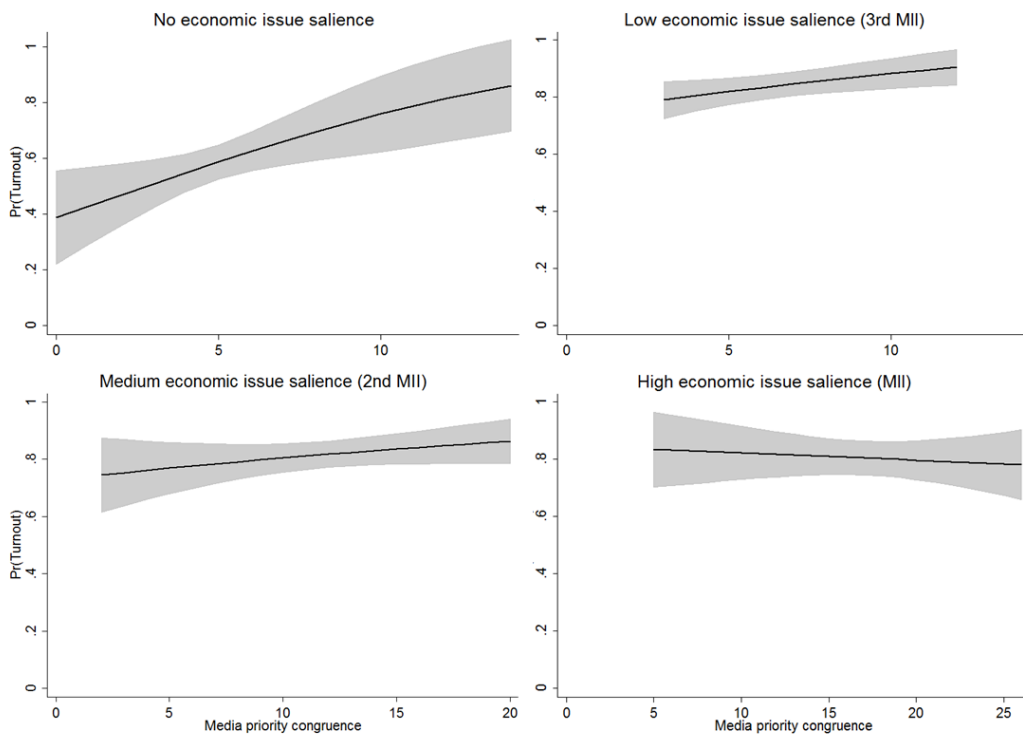
**Figure 2.** Means of candidate and media priority congruence across levels of economic issue salience with 95% confidence intervals



**Figure 3.** The effect of candidate priority congruence on turnout among non-partisans and partisans (Notes: based on Model 2-1; average predicted probabilities at each congruence level with control variables at observed values)



**Figure 4.** The effect of media priority congruence on turnout among non-partisans and partisans (*Notes:* based on Model 2-2; average predicted probabilities at each congruence level with control variables at observed values)



**Figure 5.** Predicted probabilities of turnout across media priority congruence levels by economic issue salience (*Notes:* based on Model 4-2; average predicted probabilities at observed congruence levels with control variables at observed values)



**APPENDIX. Variable details**

<b>Label</b>	<b>Variable construction / survey item</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Mean (std. dev.)</b>
Turnout	“Many voters didn't get around to voting or did not participate in the federal election on 27 September for other reasons. What about you? Did you vote or not?”	0 = did not vote 1 = voted	.79 (.40)
Candidate priority congruence	<i>Cf. in-text explanation</i>	<i>Cf. in-text explanation</i>	14.84 (6.57)
Media priority congruence	<i>Cf. in-text explanation</i>	<i>Cf. in-text explanation</i>	9.65 (6.33)
PID (party identification)	“Many people in Germany are inclined to support a particular political party for a longer period of time even if they occasionally vote for another party. What about you? In general terms, are you inclined to support a particular political party? And if so, which one?”	0 = no party identification 1 = party identification	.64 (.48)
Age		Age in years (16-94)	50.17 (18.31)
Female	Sex	0 = male, 1 = female	.53 (.50)
East	Place of residency	0 = West Germany 1 = East Germany, incl. Berlin	.35 (.48)
Education (4 dummies)	“What general school leaving certificate do you have?” (cf. in-text explanation of school forms)	1) No qualification or <i>Hauptschule</i> (9 years of schooling, non-academic focus) (reference category)	.42 (.49)
		2) <i>Realschule/Mittlere Reife</i> (10 years of schooling)	.36 (.48)
		3) <i>Fachhochschulreife</i> or <i>Abitur</i> (12-13 years of schooling, highest secondary school degree, academic focus, qualifying university)	.10 (.30)
		4) University degree	.12 (.32)
Subjective social class	“There is a lot of talk about social class these days. Which of these social classes do you consider you belong to?”	1 = underclass 2 = working class 3 = lower middle class 4 = middle class 5 = upper middle/upper class	2.99 (.99)
Newspaper use	Number of days per week on which a respondent reads a newspaper, additive	Number of days per week (range: 0-24)	4.55 (3.56)
Political knowledge	Additive scale of number of correct answers to the questions: (1) At which elections can EU citizens who are not German citizens vote in Germany? (local elections); (2) What percentage of the national vote must a political party receive in order to be represented in the Bundestag? (5 per cent); (3) Does the first or the second vote in a federal election determine the number of seats a party wins in the Bundestag? (second vote)	0 = no correct answer ... 3 = three correct answers	1.57 (.91)

(APPENDIX continued)

<b>Label</b>	<b>Variable construction / survey item</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Mean (std. dev.)</b>
Political interest	"How interested in politics are you?"	1 = not interested at all 2 = not very interested 3 = middling 4 = quite interested 5 = very interested	2.71 (1.03)
Attention to the election campaign	"How closely did you follow the election campaign?"	1 = not closely at all 2 = not very closely 3 = fairly closely 4 = very closely	2.39 (.79)
Evaluation of the current economic situation	"Now we come to the economic situation in Germany. How in general terms would you rate the current economic situation in Germany?" (original five-point scale collapsed)	1 = bad 2 = neither good nor bad 3 = good	1.47 (.61)
Government performance	"Now thinking about the performance of the government in general, how good or bad a job do you think the government has done over the past four years?"	1 = very bad job 2 = bad job 3 = good job 4 = very good job	2.33 (.67)
Left-right distance to the most proximate party	Distance between a respondent's own position on the left-right scale (1= left, 11 = right) and the closest party's based on his/her placement of the five major parties	0 = no distance ... 10 = largest distance (at opposite ends of spectrum)	.59 (.85)
Left-right differential	Distance between the party placed closest to respondent's position and the party placed second-closest on the left-right scale	0 = no distance ... 10 = largest distance (at opposite ends of spectrum)	.76 (.83)
Efficacy	"Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens. [... W]here would you place yourself?"	1 = who people vote for won't make any difference ... 5 = who people vote for can make a big difference	3.56 (1.34)
Duty to vote	"I would now like to ask what you think about some general statements on politics. Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. [...] "In a democracy it is the duty of all citizens to vote regularly in elections."	1 = strongly disagree 2 = tend to disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = tend to agree 5 = strongly agree	3.67 (1.32)
Turnout 2005	"If you think back to the federal election four years ago on 18 September 2005, were you eligible to vote?" → "And did you vote?"	0 = did not vote 1 = voted	.81 (.39)
Economic issue salience	Indicates whether economic issues were mentioned in reply to "What do you think is the [second / third] most important political problem facing Germany today?"	0 = no economic issue mentioned 1 = economic issue third most important 2 = economic issue second most important 3 = economic issue most important	1.26 (1.34)