It Is Not Only What You Say, It Is Also How You Say It: The Strategic Use of Campaign Sentiment

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What explains the type of electoral campaign run by political parties? We provide a new perspective on campaigns that focuses on the strategic use of emotive language. We argue that the level of positive sentiment parties adopt in their campaigns depends on their incumbency status, their policy position, and objective economic conditions. We test these claims with a novel data set that captures the emotive language used in over 400 party manifestos across eight European countries. As predicted, we find that incumbent parties, particularly incumbent prime ministerial parties, use more positive sentiment than opposition parties. We find that ideologically moderate parties employ higher levels of positive sentiment than extremist parties. And we find that all parties exhibit lower levels of positive sentiment when the economy is performing poorly but that this negative effect is weaker for incumbents. Our analysis has important implications for research on campaign strategies and retrospective voting.

What explains the type of electoral campaign run by political parties? To a large extent, scholars have conceptualized electoral campaigns along two primary dimensions. The first dimension captures *campaign content*—whether parties compete on policy or valence (Adams 2001; Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005; Adams, Scheiner, and Kawasumi 2016; Ansolabehere and Snyder 2000; Downs 1957; Schofield 2003). The second dimension captures *campaign focus*—whether parties adopt campaign messages that focus on themselves or their opponents (Elmelund-Præstekær 2008, 2010; Geer 2006; Hansen and Pedersen 2008; Lau and Pomper 2002; Skaperdas and Grofman 1995). One aspect of campaigns that is ignored in this two-dimensional framework is *campaign sentiment*, which refers to the emotive content of campaigns. Whereas campaign content and campaign focus address *what* parties say and *who* they say it about, campaign sentiment addresses *how* they say it.

Scholars are increasingly looking at how the emotive content of campaign messages affects voter behavior (Brader 2006; Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir 2000; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000; Roseman, Abelson, and Ewing 1986; Utych 2018; Weber, Searles, and Ridout 2011). The common thread in this literature is that voters are influenced not merely by the substantive content of campaigns but also by their emotive content. Studies have repeatedly shown that electoral campaigns can be manipulated to trigger emotional responses that, in turn, produce predictable changes in voter behavior. This raises a natural question. If campaign sentiment influences voter behavior, political actors should be strategic about its use. Are they? To date, there has been little research that explicitly looks at the strategic use of emotion in election campaigns. What research there is tends to focus on the historically majoritarian systems in the United States and the United Kingdom (Kosmidis et al. 2019; Ridout and Searles 2011).[1]

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1. Ridout and Searles (2011) look at the strategic use of emotion in several US Senate races, while Kosmidis et al. (2019) look at it in US presidential State of the Union addresses as well as British party manifestos and party leader speeches.

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In this article, we examine the strategic use of emotive language in European election campaigns. Studies that look at emotion in campaigns often focus on the use of images and music (Brader 2006; Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir 2000). However, language can also engender different types of sentiment, such as fear, anxiety, sadness, or optimism (Pennebaker 1993; Pennebaker and Francis 1996; Roseman et al. 1986). We build on a long tradition that emphasizes the way language can shape how individuals perceive the world around them (Edelman 1964, 1977; Hart, Childers, and Lind 2013; Hipt 1990). The importance of language is emphasized by Edelman (1985, 10), who argues that "political language *is* political reality." Of particular interest to us is whether parties adopt language that conveys positive or negative sentiment. Campaign messages that include positive emotive language encourage people to adopt a positive frame when evaluating the current state of the world, whereas campaign messages that include negative emotive language have the opposite effect.

Our theory is situated in the retrospective voting literature. Models of retrospective voting assume that individuals base their vote choice on the state of the world at election time, something that is usually attributed to incumbent performance in office. Although not necessary, the state of the world is typically understood in economic terms (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Nadeau, Lewis-Beck, and Bélanger 2013; Norpoth, Lewis-Beck, and Lafay 1991; van der Brug, van der Eijk, and Franklin 2007). The basic intuition is that people will vote for the incumbent when economic performance is above some threshold but switch to the opposition when this is not the case. The ability of individuals to vote retrospectively depends on a variety of contextual factors such as the ease with which they can attribute responsibility for economic performance to individual incumbent parties (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Powell and Whitten 1993). The core insight, though, is that vote choice is determined by how individuals *perceive* the state of the world.

Extant research largely assumes that voter perceptions are related to objective economic reality. In effect, individuals are expected to have a more positive view of the world and, thus, evaluate the incumbent more favorably when, say, the unemployment rate is low. What tends to be overlooked, though, is that political elites can exert agency and shape retrospective voting by using their campaign messages to frame how individuals evaluate economic reality. Scholars have recently shown that parties strategically use campaign messages to emphasize or de-emphasize economic issues (Vavreck 2009; Williams, Seki, and Whitten 2016). By altering the salience of economic issues, parties can influence how voters weigh economic conditions in their voting calculus. In this particular account, parties do not seek to change how voters perceive objective economic reality but rather how much they care about it.

We argue that a complementary strategy parties can adopt involves using emotive language to alter how individuals actually perceive economic conditions. Objective reality can be understood very differently depending on how it is framed. For example, a message stating that "the economic outlook is positive, with employment increasing by 150,000" provides a much more positive frame for viewing the world than a message stating that "employment increased by 150,000." Such differences in the strategic use of positive and negative emotive language can substantially influence how individuals perceive the world (Chong and Druckman 2007; Utych 2018; Zaller 1992) and, hence, how they vote. Our theoretical account provides an explanation for why supporters of different parties often hold varying perceptions of the same objective economic conditions (Anderson 2007; Duch, Palmer, and Anderson 2000; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989).

Our retrospective voting framework suggests that the level of positive campaign sentiment exhibited by political parties should depend on their incumbency status, their policy position, and objective economic conditions. Incumbent parties, particularly prime ministerial (PM) parties, should exhibit greater positive sentiment in their campaigns than opposition parties. This is because incumbents are expected to gain support when voters have a more positive view of the world. The campaigns of extremist parties should be characterized by less positive sentiment than those of more moderate parties. This is because extremist parties are expected to gain support when the world is viewed in a particularly negative light. The language that parties adopt cannot diverge too far from reality, though, or voters will become suspicious. This suggests that the campaign sentiment of all political parties will be tied to some extent to objective economic conditions. Thus, parties should exhibit greater positive sentiment when economic conditions are good. This increase in positive sentiment should be greater for incumbent parties, as they are the prime beneficiaries of improved economic conditions.

We test our claims using a novel data set we constructed of the emotive language used in over 400 party manifestos across eight European countries from 1980 to 2012. Party manifestos are obviously only one type of campaign message. However, they are of particular relevance as they contain the campaign messages parties have strategically chosen to present to voters, a look that is not filtered through the lens of the media. Moreover, party manifestos outline the overarching campaign strategy of parties in a way that, say, party press releases, which emerge irregularly throughout the campaign in response to ad hoc developments, might not. Historically, scholars have used manifestos to examine issue salience and party positions

(Budge et al. 2001). Our focus on the strategic use of emotive discourse thus helps to extend the use of manifestos in a new direction (Breeze 2011; Kosmidis et al. 2019). Our empirical results strongly support our theoretical expectations and have important implications for the literatures on both campaign strategies and retrospective voting.

THEORY

Existing research largely focuses on two dimensions of election campaigns. The first dimension, *campaign content*, has to do with whether parties compete on policy or valence. Early models of electoral competition were purely spatial and focused on the policy positions adopted by each party. More recent models incorporate nonspatial valence factors such as party competence, integrity, and experience (Adams 2001; Adams et al. 2005; Ansolabehere and Snyder 2000; Schofield 2003). The second dimension, *campaign focus*, concerns whether parties focus their campaign messages on themselves or their opponents (Elmelund-Præstekær 2008, 2010; Hansen and Pedersen 2008; Lau and Pomper 2002; Lau and Rovner 2009; Skaperdas and Grofman 1995). This dimension is sometimes referred to as campaign tone, with messages that focus on one's own party considered positive and those that focus on other parties considered negative (Geer 2006). In our opinion, this terminology is confusing as it mixes up the "focus" or target of campaign messages with the "tone" or sentiment of campaign messages, two things that are conceptually and empirically distinct (Ridout and Franz 2011).

A key aspect of electoral campaigns that has traditionally been overlooked in the existing literature is *campaign sentiment*. Whereas campaign content and campaign focus address what parties say and who they say it about, campaign sentiment addresses the emotive content of campaigns and has to do with how parties say things. Empirically, there is considerable variation in the use of emotion across both the campaign focus and campaign content dimensions. It is known, for example, that campaigns that focus on one's own party do not always contain positive emotive content and those that focus on other parties do not always contain negative emotive content (Ridout and Searles 2011). In their analysis of campaign messages, Ridout and Franz conclude that "[campaign focus] and emotional appeals are not one and the same" (2011, 10). Studies also reveal significant variation in the use of emotion across the campaign content dimension (94–95). We know, for example, that parties use emotional appeals when discussing both policy and valence issues. Importantly, Utych (2018) finds that altering the emotive nature of the language used to describe political candidates influences how these candidates are evaluated even after controlling for the substantive content and focus

of the candidate descriptions. Thus, both conceptually and empirically, campaign sentiment represents a third and distinct dimension of electoral campaigns.

It is widely recognized that political actors make emotional appeals to the public (Hart et al. 2013), and recent research indicates that these appeals can have a significant effect on voter behavior (Brader and Marcus 2013; Marcus 2000). For example, Brader (2005, 2006) finds that campaigns evoking fear cause individuals to reconsider their political choices, whereas those evoking enthusiasm cause them to stick with their preexisting preferences. As another example, Utych (2018) finds that political candidates are evaluated more negatively when they are described using negative emotive language than when they are described using neutral emotive language. As a whole, this research is consistent with the idea that individuals process information differently depending on their emotional mood (Schwarz 2000).

If campaigns can be manipulated to elicit particular emotions and thereby influence voter behavior in predictable ways, as the existing literature suggests, then we should expect political actors to be strategic in their use of emotion. To date, there has been no cross-national research on whether and how these actors strategically employ emotion in multiparty elections. In this article, we argue that parties strategically use emotion in their campaign messages to frame the state of the world in either a positive or a negative light.

The incentive to frame the state of the world in a particular way can be tied to the logic underpinning models of retrospective voting. These models assume that individuals' vote choice depends on how they view the world. The state of the world is understood to be determined, at least partially, by the incumbent's performance in office. Individuals reward the incumbent when they perceive the state of the world to be good, but they punish her when they perceive it to be poor. Although not necessary, the state of the world is usually understood in terms of the economy.

If vote choice is influenced by how we perceive the state of the world, then parties have incentives to shape those perceptions through their campaigns (Vavreck 2009). One way parties can do this is through the substantive content of their campaign messages. For example, a party might highlight how its own policies and valence characteristics can change the world for the better, or it might emphasize how those of its competitors would make things worse. A complementary way to influence how voters perceive the world is through the emotive content of their campaigns. The use of positive sentiment can encourage voters to adopt a positive frame when evaluating the state of the world. In contrast, the use of negative sentiment can encourage voters to adopt a negative frame when assessing the world around them

(Utych 2018). In effect, parties can influence perceptions of the world and, hence, vote choice not only through the substantive content of their campaign messages but also through the emotive content of their campaigns. Indeed, it seems plausible that voters are better at assessing the overall sentiment in campaign messages than the often-detailed substantive positions that are staked out in these messages.[2]

In this regard, incumbent parties should exhibit higher levels of positive sentiment in their campaign messages than opposition parties. This is because incumbents, who are perceived as responsible for the current state of the world, can expect to gain support when voters view things in a more positive light.

> **Incumbent Party Hypothesis:** Incumbent parties use higher levels of positive sentiment in their campaign messages than opposition parties.

When there is only one party in government, it is clear who voters should hold responsible. It is much less clear, though, who they should hold responsible when there is a coalition government (Duch, Przepiorka, and Stevenson 2015; Powell and Whitten 1993). That the prime minister is the most visible member of the government and is widely recognized as the agenda setter (Duch and Stevenson 2013; Norpoth and Gschwend 2010) suggests that voters will hold the PM party more responsible than its coalition partners. Indeed, empirical evidence consistently shows that the economic vote for the PM party is large compared to that of other governmental parties (Debus, Stegmaier, and Tosun 2014; Duch and Stevenson 2008). A consequence is that PM parties have a particularly strong incentive to portray the world in a positive light and should therefore exhibit even higher levels of positive campaign sentiment than their coalition partners.[3]

> **Prime Ministerial Party Hypothesis:** Prime ministerial parties use higher levels of positive sentiment in their campaign messages than their coalition partners.

The level of positive sentiment parties exhibit in their campaigns should also depend on their policy position. Even

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2. Importantly, research has shown that emotional responses to the economic state of the world have a strong impact on how individuals evaluate political actors (Conover and Feldman 1986).

3. Some scholars suggest that voters may also attribute responsibility for the state of the world to the finance ministry party (Williams et al. 2016). However, the empirical support for this claim is rather mixed (Debus et al. 2014; Duch and Stevenson 2008). In our own analyses in app. A (apps. A–D are available online), we find little evidence that parties controlling the finance ministry use higher levels of positive campaign sentiment than their coalition partners.

controlling for their incumbency status, we would expect ideologically extreme parties to exhibit less positive sentiment than ideologically moderate parties. This is because voters are more likely to reject moderate parties and turn to more extreme parties when they perceive the state of the world to be particularly bad. Radical parties in Europe, for example, propose "root and branch" reform of the political and economic system and many adopt populist rhetoric that holds all moderate parties responsible for society's ills (Golder 2016; Mudde 2007). These parties do not just want voters to punish the incumbent; they want voters to abandon the mainstream parties altogether. This is most likely to occur when the current state of affairs is considered particularly problematic. This reasoning fits with media accounts linking the recent success of left- and right-wing radical parties to Europe's economic crisis.

> **Extreme Ideology Hypothesis:** Ideologically extreme parties use lower levels of positive sentiment in their campaign messages than ideologically moderate parties.

The level of positive sentiment parties exhibit in their campaigns should also vary with objective measures of the state of the world. While parties will try to use the emotive content of their campaigns to get voters to see the world through a particular frame, the extent to which they can do this is constrained by economic reality (Pardos-Prado and Sagarzazu 2016; Parker-Stephen 2013). Campaign messages that are too positive when times are bad or too negative when times are good are likely to be ignored by voters as they deviate from their own personal experiences (Ansolabehere 2006). Moreover, voters are likely to punish parties if the campaign sentiment they adopt paints a false, misleading, or out-of-touch picture. While there is some debate as to the size of these costs, there is evidence that honesty and integrity are considered positive attributes and that political actors are aware of the reputational costs associated with misleading voters (Nyhan and Reifler 2015). Given this, we should expect the level of positive sentiment exhibited by all parties to vary in line with objective measures of the economy.

> **Economic Performance Hypothesis:** Campaign messages will exhibit lower levels of positive sentiment when the economy is performing poorly than when it is performing well.

There are reasons to believe that economic conditions and incumbency status interact to determine levels of positive campaign sentiment. The negative effect of poor economic performance on positive campaign sentiment should

differ depending on whether a party is in government or not. This is because incumbent parties have an incentive to downplay the poor performance of the economy, whereas opposition parties have an incentive to exaggerate it.

Conditional Economic Performance Hypothesis: Campaign messages will exhibit lower levels of positive sentiment when the economy is performing poorly than when it is performing well. This negative effect is weaker for incumbent parties than for opposition parties.

All conditional claims are symmetric (Berry, Golder, and Milton 2012), and the Conditional Economic Performance Hypothesis logically implies that the effect of a party's incumbency status on positive campaign sentiment depends on how well the economy is performing. Incumbent parties should always use more positive sentiment in their campaigns irrespective of the state of the economy. However, the positive effect of incumbency should be greater when the economy is performing poorly. This is because opposition parties will want to use particularly negative emotive language relative to incumbent parties in these circumstances as a way of emphasizing the poor state of the world.

Conditional Incumbent Party Hypothesis: Incumbent parties use higher levels of positive sentiment in their campaign messages than opposition parties. This positive effect is greater when the economy is performing poorly than when it is performing well.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

We test our hypotheses by looking at the strategic use of emotive language in European party manifestos. While much of the research on emotion and politics looks at the use of images and music, we return to an older tradition that examines how language shapes perceptions of the political world (Edelman 1964, 1977). As studies in linguistics and psychology have shown, language can engender different emotions (Pennebaker 1993; Pennebaker and Francis 1996; Roseman et al. 1986) and thereby influence the frame through which the world is perceived. By focusing on emotive language, our analysis contributes to an emerging literature looking at the use of emotion in political discourse (Rheault et al. 2016) and helps extend the study of manifestos beyond their traditional use as a means to examine issue salience and party positions (Breeze 2011; Kosmidis et al. 2019).

Party manifestos

Manifestos obviously represent only one type of campaign message. However, they are perhaps the most important type of campaign message as they contain each party's official platform. Parties spend considerable time deciding which issues to include in their manifestos and how much space to give them (Däubler 2012a, 2012b; Dolezal et al. 2012; Green and Hobolt 2008; Janda et al. 1995). We suspect that parties are just as strategic about the type of language they include (Breeze 2011). This is because "parties make determined efforts to campaign based on their . . . manifestos" and because the language and campaign messages found in manifestos are repeated when parties "communicate to the public via other avenues, such as campaign advertisements, party elites' campaign speeches, and media interviews" (Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011, 372). A consequence of this last point is that voters are exposed to the campaign messages in manifestos even if they do not explicitly read these documents. The importance of manifestos is also reflected in the fact that they play a key role in the government formation process (Däubler 2012a) and that parties make concerted efforts to implement their manifesto campaign pledges (Thomson et al. 2017).

Although it is often assumed that the electorate is uninterested in party manifestos, some voters do consult these documents. The German Election Study, for example, found that 32% of the public claimed to have read manifestos before the 2013 elections (D'Ottavio and Saalfeld 2016). Similarly, a poll in the UK found that 27% of respondents claimed to have looked at party manifestos leading up to the 2010 elections (Dathan 2015). Further evidence that voters actively seek out manifestos comes from online searches for these documents. Figure 1 presents data from the UK between 2004 and 2017 showing the frequency with which people used Google to search for the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Party relative to the frequency with which they used it to search for party manifestos.[4] Naturally, individuals are much more likely to use a party name as their search term than a party manifesto. The important thing to note, though, is that the relative frequency with which people searched for manifestos increased substantially just before the May 2005, 2010, 2015, and June

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4. A limitation of Google search term data is that they provide a relative, rather than absolute, measure of search term traffic. This means we can only interpret the data for a party manifesto search term relative to some second search term. In fig. 1 we use a party's name as a natural second "anchor" search term. The vertical axes, "Google Search Popularity," are scaled from 0 to 100, so that 100 represents the highest number of searches in a month that were conducted for the anchor search term between 2004 and 2017. The number of searches per month for both the party name search term and the party manifesto search term are then measured relative to this highest value. Thus, a Google search popularity score of 20 indicates that people used this search term at one-fifth the rate that they used the most popular search term in its most popular month.
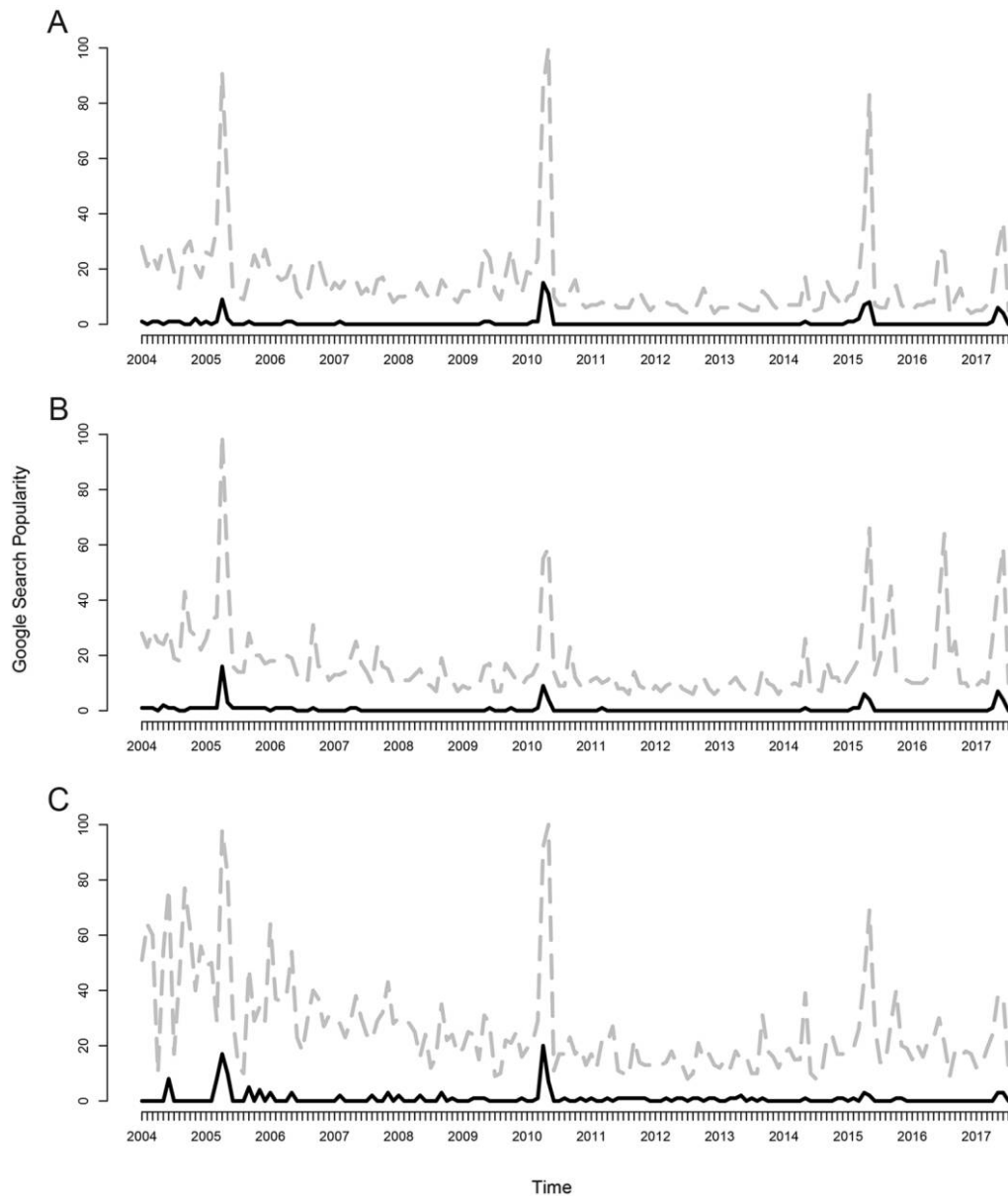
Figure 1. Google searches for party names and manifestos in the United Kingdom, 2004–17. Frequency with which individuals used Google to search for the Conservative Party (*A*), the Labour Party (*B*), and the Liberal Party (*C*) (*dashed lines*) relative to the frequency with which they used it to search for party manifestos (*solid lines*).

2017 elections.[5] Significantly, those individuals who actively seek out manifestos tend to be more politically sophisticated than the average voter and thus are opinion makers in their social networks (Christakis and Fowler 2009; Kenny 1998). This again means we can expect the impact of the emotive language used in manifestos to be felt far beyond the set of individuals who explicitly read these documents.[6]

Manifestos have at least four desirable properties for testing our hypotheses. First, they provide parties with an opportunity to place their campaign strategy before voters in a carefully scripted way that is unfiltered by the media. This is important because our theory focuses on the strategic choices

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5. Given that many people access manifestos directly from party websites, which they reach by searching on a party name, the information shown in fig. 1 is almost certainly an underestimate of the extent to which voters seek out manifestos.

6. We recognize there is no consensus as to the overall reach of manifestos into the electorate. Importantly, if only a few voters are ex-

posed to the information in manifestos, then this works against us finding support for our hypotheses. This is because our theory is premised on parties having strategic incentives to use emotive language to shape voter perceptions of the state of the world. If the campaign messages in manifestos are not expected to reach voters, parties will have fewer incentives to use emotive language strategically, and it becomes less likely that we will find the patterns we predict in the data. In effect, party manifestos may well represent a difficult case for us.

parties make with respect to their use of emotive language and not on how party campaign messages are portrayed by the media. Parties do not exert the same degree of control over other types of campaign messages. For example, the content and style of televised debates is rarely under the control of individual parties, and party leaders often find themselves responding on the fly to the issues and questions raised by, and language and gestures used by, debate moderators, political opponents, and audience members. Second, manifestos outline the overarching campaign strategy of parties in a way that, say, party press releases or party election broadcasts, which often emerge irregularly throughout the campaign in response to ad hoc developments, might not. Third, manifestos are a type of campaign message that is used across Europe, thereby facilitating cross-national comparison. This is not true of other forms of campaign message. Unlike many countries, for example, Switzerland forbids political advertising on television and the radio, and parties generally conduct their campaigns in newspapers and on election posters. Other countries allow televised advertising, but there is considerable cross-national heterogeneity in how it is regulated (Holtz-Bacha and Just 2017). Similar variation exists when it comes to election debates or the extent to which parties and their candidates use websites and social media (Gibson 2004; Gibson and Römmele 2009). Fourth, European manifestos are available for a long period of time, something that allows us to examine how the same parties change their use of campaign sentiment as they move in and out of office.[7]

Our data set comprises 421 manifestos from 108 distinct parties between 1980 and 2012 from eight countries: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Existing studies that examine the use of emotion in election campaigns typically focus on individual countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom (Breeze 2011; Kosmidis et al. 2019; Rheault et al. 2016). Our analysis is the first to adopt an explicitly cross-national perspective. We focus on this particular set of countries largely for computational reasons—the method of sentiment analysis we use only works for manifestos written in English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Almost all of our countries have experienced coalition governments. This is important as our Prime Minis-

terial Party Hypothesis requires us to test the claim that PM parties exhibit higher levels of positive sentiment than their coalition partners. Party manifestos were obtained from the Political Documents Archive (Benoit, Bräuninger, and Debus 2009), which includes manifestos for all parties that win at least 1% of the valid votes in the election for which the manifesto was written. Our corpus of manifestos spans 70 national elections. The average manifesto contains 21,979 words and 879 sentences. In total, our manifestos comprise 9,274,954 words.

Consistent with salience theory, research has shown that parties rarely use manifestos to target their opponents (Budge and Farlie 1983a, 1983b; Dolezal et al. 2014). Instead, they use them to focus on their own policies. As we demonstrate, though, manifestos exhibit considerable variation in the extent to which they use positive and negative emotive language. This provides further support for our earlier claim that campaign sentiment is conceptually and empirically distinct from both campaign focus and campaign content.

Measuring campaign sentiment

We measure campaign sentiment using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program (Pennebaker, Booth, and Francis 2007). This is a tool for conducting automatic sentiment analysis widely used in the social sciences and increasingly in political science (Bryan and Ringsmuth 2016; Corley and Wedeking 2014; Owens and Wedeking 2011, 2012). The program scans documents and uses a language-specific dictionary to assign each word to one or more categories.[8] Each category groups words that share similar linguistic dimensions. For example, categories might be pronouns or verbs, psychological constructs such as affect or cognition, or linguistic dimensions. As the program scans a document, it increments the count of words belonging to each category. It then divides the final counts by the total number of words in the document, creating a measure of the percentage of words belonging to each category. As an example, LIWC could analyze a document and report that 15% of the words are verbs. Researchers have repeatedly verified that the LIWC categories accurately measure these underlying linguistic constructs. In particular, research has shown that LIWC categories have strong predictive, concurrent, and convergent validity (Alpers et al. 2005; Pennebaker, Booth, and Francis 2007; Pennebaker and Francis 1996).[9]

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7. Although manifestos have several desirable properties for testing our hypotheses, we do examine the strategic use of emotive language in other types of campaign messages—televised election debates, party election broadcasts, and party websites—in a case study of the 2013 German elections in app. D. The results are remarkably similar to those presented in the main text and in line with our theoretical predictions. Among other things, these supplementary analyses provide further support for the claim that parties adopt a consistent message across different forms of campaign media (Adams et al. 2011).

8. The English dictionary includes almost 4,500 words or word stems. It has been estimated that, on average, these words account for over 86% of the words people use in various forms of writing and speech (Pennebaker et al. 2007, 10).

9. LIWC can clearly misclassify individual words, particularly those that are used in an ironic or sarcastic manner (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010, 30). However, these errors rarely affect results at the document level as

Table 1. Mean Positive Words Scores and Negative Words Scores (%)

	Party Manifestos	Emotion Writing	Control Writing	Scientific Articles	Blogs	Novels	Talking
Positive words	3.02	3.28	1.83	1.33	3.72	2.86	3.42
Negative words	1.32	2.67	.71	.84	2.07	1.98	1.49

Note. The first column contains the percentages from our manifestos. The other columns present the percentages across a range of English-language texts (Pennebaker et al. 2007, 9–13). "Emotion writing" refers to writing that addresses deeply emotional topics, whereas "control writing" refers to writing that addresses nonemotional topics, such as plans for the day or everyday objects.

Two LIWC categories are of particular interest: (i) positive emotive words and (ii) negative emotive words. Each category is mutually exclusive in that words in one category do not appear in the other. Most words we use have no emotional valence, and, as a result, the scores for both categories are relatively low in all types of documents. In table 1, we show the mean percentage of positive and negative words for different types of text written in English. The mean percentage of positive words ranges from 1.33 (scientific articles) to 3.72 (blogs). The mean percentage of negative words ranges from 0.71 (daily writing) to 2.67 (emotion writing). In our sample of manifestos, the mean percentage of positive words is 3.02 ($\sigma = 1.91$), and the mean percentage of negative words is 1.32 ($\sigma = 0.79$).[10]

To better understand these two categories, consider the English dictionary. The positive words category contains 406 words such as *efficient*, *good*, or *improve*. The sentence below comes from the UK Conservative Party's manifesto in 1987. Positive words are italicized.

In the years our country has changed—changed for the *better*.

LIWC uses a probabilistic model that classifies words on the basis of how they are most commonly used. LIWC does better at analyzing longer texts than shorter ones. That the average manifesto contains about 22,000 words means that LIWC should provide accurate results in our particular application. Ultimately, concerns with the misclassification of words relate to potential measurement error in our dependent variable. Significantly, this type of measurement error does not affect the unbiasedness of one's parameter estimates; it simply leads to larger variances than would otherwise be the case. In other words, any measurement error resulting from the LIWC program will only make it harder for us to find statistically significant results. Finally, we recognize that there is other software that can conduct automatic sentiment analysis, such as AFINN (http://www2.imm.dtu.dk/pubdb/views/publication_details.php?id=6010), ANEW (http://csea.phhp.ufl.edu/media/anewmessage.html), Stanford's NLP (http://stanfordnlp.github.io/CoreNLP/), and WordNet-Affect (http://wndomains.fbk.eu/wnaffect.html). However, these programs are limited to only a few languages, typically English and Chinese, and do not have LIWC's long history of validation both within and across languages.

10. More descriptive information for our manifestos can be found in app. B, which contains histograms of positive and negative word scores.

If we were to code this sentence as the whole document, the positive words score would be 7.69, indicating that $1/13 = 7.69\%$ of the words are positive. The negative words category contains 499 words, such as *beaten*, *danger*, or *unimpressive*. The sentence below comes from the UK Liberal Party's manifesto in 1987. Negative words are italicized.

Too many elderly people suffer from *isolation*, *fear* and *cold*.

If we were to code this sentence as the whole document, the negative words score would be 30.00, indicating that $3/10 = 30.00\%$ of the words are negative.

The levels of positive or negative word scores vary across different languages. This is shown by the box plots in figures 2*A* and 2*B*. The manifestos written in Portuguese, for example, exhibit much higher levels of both positive and negative words than the manifestos written in other languages. In our upcoming analyses, we take account of the heterogeneity across languages in the use of positive and negative words through the use of language fixed effects.

Ultimately, our hypotheses are concerned with the overall level of positive sentiment exhibited in a manifesto. Since manifestos contain both positive and negative words, our dependent variable, Positive Sentiment, is calculated as the positive words score minus the negative words score for a given manifesto. The theoretical range for our dependent variable is +100% if all words were positive to −100% if all words were negative. In line with the fact that most words lack emotional valence, the observed range for Positive Sentiment is −0.68% to 7.60%, the mean is 1.70%, and the standard deviation is 1.45%. Figure 2*C* provides box plots for Positive Sentiment. The manifestos written in Dutch have the lowest mean levels of Positive Sentiment, while those written in Portuguese have the highest.

Independent variables

To test our hypotheses, we created two variables capturing a party's incumbency status. Incumbent Party is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 when the party is in government, 0 otherwise. Incumbent Party × Prime Ministerial Party is
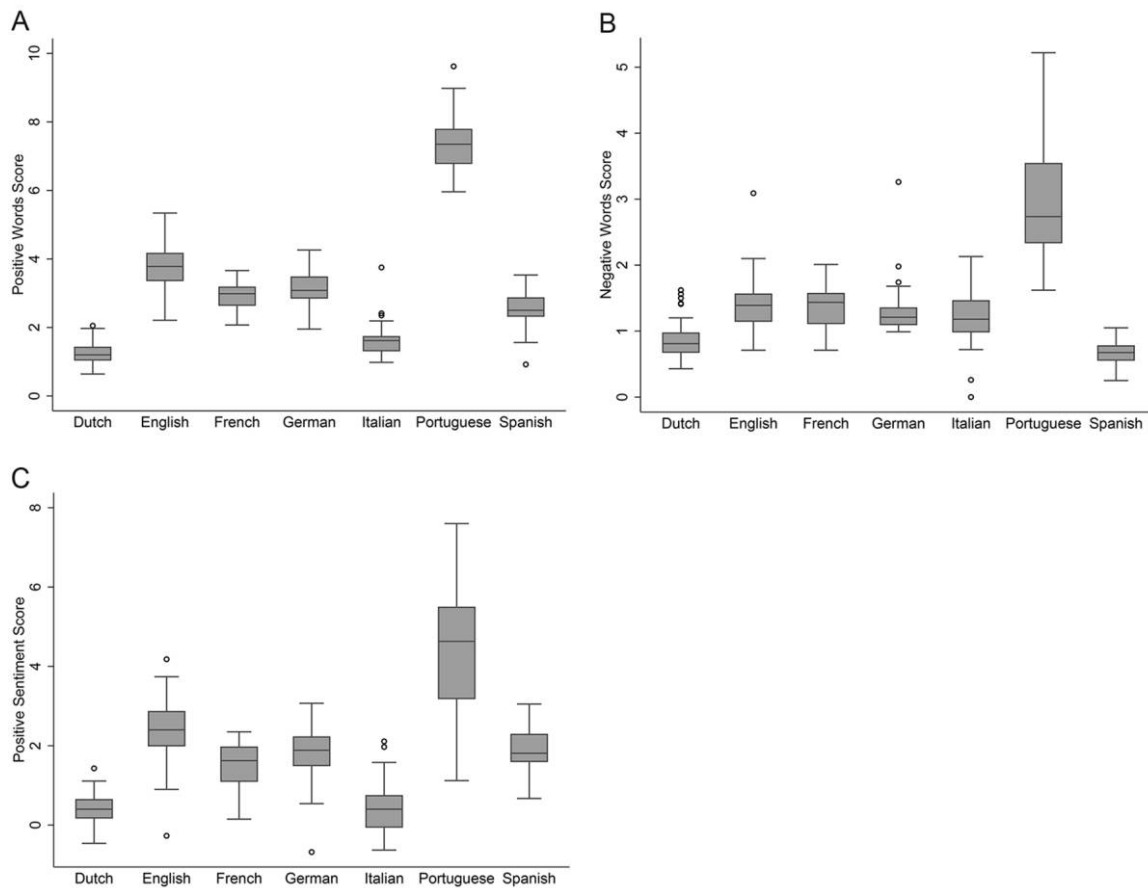
Figure 2. Positive words scores (*A*), negative words scores (*B*), and Positive Sentiment (*C*) by language.

another dichotomous variable that equals 1 when the party is the PM party, 0 otherwise.[11] Information on a party's incumbency status comes from Glasgow, Golder, and Golder (2011).

We created two variables to evaluate our Extreme Ideology Hypothesis. Left-Right captures a party's position on a 0–10 Left-Right scale as identified by country experts (Döring and Manow 2015). Left-Right is a quadratic term designed to test the conditional claim that extremist parties use less positive sentiment than moderate parties. As an alternative strategy for evaluating our hypothesis, we created a third variable, Extremist Party, based on a party's "family." Extremist Party is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 if a party belongs to a party family on the extreme Left (Communist) or extreme Right (Far Right), 0 otherwise (Döring and Manow 2015).[12]

We also created measures of economic performance. We focus on unemployment, inflation, and growth, as the economic voting literature suggests that these indicators are "related to changes in support for the government in many countries" (Powell and Whitten 1993, 392). Unemployment is the unemployment rate (International Monetary Fund 2015), Inflation is the inflation rate (World Bank 2012), and Growth is the percentage growth in real gross domestic product expenditures from the Penn World Tables 9.0 (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015). We lag these variables by a year, to ensure they reflect the economic conditions at a time before the parties write their manifestos. We also create interactions between each of them and Incumbent Party to test the conditionality of the Conditional Economic Performance Hypothesis and the Conditional Incumbent Party Hypothesis.

Model specification and results

We test our hypotheses using ordinary least squares with bootstrap standard errors clustered by election. We cluster the standard errors to take account of the fact that the content and language used in manifestos are unlikely to be independent in a given election. We employ bootstrap standard errors because the literature is unclear as to when the number of

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11. We do not need to include a dichotomous variable, Prime Ministerial Party, in our empirical analysis even though it is a constitutive element of our interaction variable. This is because its inclusion leads to perfect multicollinearity given that Prime Ministerial Party is only equal to 1 when the party is also an incumbent party (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006, 70 n. 8).

12. Our results remain robust if we also classify Green parties as extreme Left.

clusters is sufficiently large to justify the asymptotic assumptions underlying traditional cluster-robust standard errors (Esarey and Menger 2018; Wooldridge 2003, 135).[13] We also include language fixed effects to take account of the fact that users of different languages differ in their proclivity to employ positive and negative emotive words.[14]

The results of 11 different models are shown in table 2. Models 1 and 2 focus on the relationship between positive sentiment and incumbency status. Models 3 and 4 add our indicators of party position. Models 5–7 add our economic indicators. Models 8–11 examine the conditional relationship between incumbency status and our three economic indicators, first separately and then together. Our models are specified so that the coefficients on the constant terms indicate the average language fixed effect.[15] The standard deviation for the language fixed effects is denoted by σ_u, while σ_e indicates the standard deviation for the idiosyncratic error terms associated with the manifestos. The intraclass correlation coefficient, ρ, captures the proportion of the total variance attributable to the language fixed effects. In line with the information in figure 2 showing the strong impact that language has on the proclivity to use emotive words, the values of ρ reported in table 2 (0.79–0.84) indicate that the language fixed effects play a large role in explaining the variation we observe in the use of positive sentiment.

As predicted by the Incumbent Party Hypothesis, model 1 shows that incumbent parties use significantly more positive emotive language than opposition parties. This is indicated by the positive and significant coefficient on Incumbent Party.[16] The effect of incumbency is substantively large—positive sentiment is 34% [24.6%, 44.9%] higher for incumbent parties than opposition parties (95% two-tailed confidence intervals are shown in brackets here and following). Importantly, the positive and statistically significant coefficient on Incumbent Party is robust to the use of party fixed effects. This is particularly compelling evidence in support of our Incumbent Party

Hypothesis as it indicates that the same party alters its use of positive sentiment in the predicted manner when it moves in and out of office.[17] Our results here are in line with those reported by Rheault et al. (2016) in their analysis of emotional polarity in British parliamentary debates. As predicted by the Prime Ministerial Party Hypothesis, the results in model 2 indicate that PM parties adopt even higher levels of positive sentiment in their manifestos than their coalition partners. This is indicated by the positive and significant coefficient on Incumbent × Prime Ministerial Party.

Figure 3 provides a graphical summary of our incumbency results. It shows how the predicted level of Positive Sentiment changes with a party's incumbency status using the results in model 2. The solid lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals. Non-PM incumbent parties exhibit 23.0% [12.9%, 34.5%] more positive sentiment than opposition parties. PM incumbent parties exhibit 41.1% [30.0%, 53.8%] more positive sentiment than opposition parties. And PM incumbent parties exhibit 18.0% [8.8%, 27.5%] more positive sentiment than non-PM incumbent parties.[18] These results are qualitatively similar across all the models in table 2.[19] Overall, our results with respect to incumbency are strongly supportive of our theoretical argument and are consistent with the idea that parties think and act strategically, not only about the substantive content of their party manifestos but also about the emotive language they use to convey that content. Our results speak directly to empirical studies finding that voters hold PM parties more responsible for the state of the world than their coalition partners (Debus et al. 2014; Duch and Stevenson 2008, 2013; Duch et al. 2015). This is because they suggest that PM parties are aware of this voter behavior and alter their campaign strategy in response by adopting more positive sentiment than their coalition partners.

13. Results are stronger with traditional cluster-robust standard errors; they are also robust to not clustering the standard errors.

14. Our results are qualitatively similar if we employ country fixed effects (app. C).

15. The individual estimates of the language fixed effects are shown in app. C.

16. Incumbents arguably have weaker incentives to frame the world in a positive light when there is low clarity of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993). However, there is only limited support for this conjecture in our data. When we add an interaction term between Incumbent Party and a dichotomous variable for coalition government, we find that the coefficient on the interaction term is negative, indicating that incumbent parties in coalition governments do use less positive sentiment than those in single-party governments. However, the coefficient on the interaction term is not statistically significant.

17. To use party fixed effects, we need sufficient within-party variation in our covariates over time. Although it is limited, we have just enough variation on a party's incumbency status to employ party fixed effects for the specification shown in model 1. Of the 108 parties for which we have manifestos, 32 exhibit variation in their incumbency status, with 22 having been incumbents more than once. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient within-party variation (or indeed any variation for covariates such as Extremist Party) to feasibly employ party fixed effects in our other models.

18. The confidence intervals in fig. 3 overlap slightly. However, overlapping confidence intervals are not necessarily evidence that the differences between point estimates are statistically insignificant. Indeed, we know that these differences are significant as the coefficients on Incumbent Party and Incumbent Party × Prime Ministerial Party in model 2 are both statistically significant.

19. Not too much should be read into the statistically insignificant coefficients on Incumbent Party in models 8 and 11, as these coefficients capture the effect of being a non-PM incumbent party when inflation (as well as unemployment and growth) is zero.

Table 2. Positive Sentiment in European Party Manifestos

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11
Incumbency:											
Incumbent Party	.53***	.36***	.15**	.26***	.27***	.24***	.26***	.05	.34**	.23**	.14
	(.07)	(.08)	(.06)	(.08)	(.08)	(.07)	(.08)	(.11)	(.14)	(.10)	(.16)
Incumbent Party × Prime Ministerial Party	...	.28***	.24***	.24***	.21**	.24***	.24***	.23***	.26***	.24***	.24***
	...	(.07)	(.07)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)
Ideology:											
Left-Right	...	...	.41***	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	(.07)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Left-Right²	...	...	−.04***	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	...	...	(.01)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Extremist Party	...	...	...	−.50***	−.49***	−.45***	−.50***	−.47***	−.45***	−.51***	−.43***
	...	...	...	(.10)	(.11)	(.11)	(.10)	(.10)	(.11)	(.10)	(.10)
Economic conditions:											
Inflation	...	...	...	...	−.03**	...	...	−.04***	...	...	−.04**
	...	...	...	...	(.01)	...	...	(.01)	...	...	(.01)
Unemployment	...	...	...	...	...	−.03**	...	...	−.02**	...	−.03**
	...	...	...	...	...	(.01)	...	...	(.01)	...	(.01)
Growth	...	...	...	...	...	...	−.001	...	...	−.004	−.02
	...	...	...	...	...	...	(.01)	...	...	(.01)	(.01)
Economic conditions and incumbency:											
Incumbent Party × Inflation	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	.04**	...	...	.03*
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	(.02)	...	...	(.02)
Incumbent Party × Unemployment	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	−.01	...	−.01
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	(.02)	...	(.02)
Incumbent Party × Growth	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	.01	.01
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	(.02)	(.02)
Constant	1.56***	1.56***	.77***	1.72***	1.85***	1.94***	1.72***	1.90***	1.92***	1.73***	2.13***
	(.15)	(.15)	(.14)	(.16)	(.20)	(.20)	(.17)	(.20)	(.20)	(.16)	(.21)
Language fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manifestos	421	421	382	412	391	405	412	391	405	412	388
Elections	70	70	69	70	64	68	70	64	68	70	63
Within R^2	.10	.11	.18	.18	.21	.19	.18	.22	.19	.18	.22
Between R^2	.001	.08	.10	.16	.45	.02	.17	.47	.02	.17	.32
Overall R^2	.03	.04	.07	.03	.001	.02	.03	.002	.02	.03	.00
σ_u	1.35	1.34	1.39	1.36	1.43	1.40	1.36	1.43	1.40	1.36	1.46
σ_e	.69	.69	.63	.66	.66	.64	.66	.65	.64	.66	.63
ρ	.79	.79	.83	.81	.83	.83	.81	.83	.83	.81	.84

Note. Dependent variable: Positive Sentiment. Bootstrap standard errors clustered by election are shown in parentheses. Two-tailed significance tests.

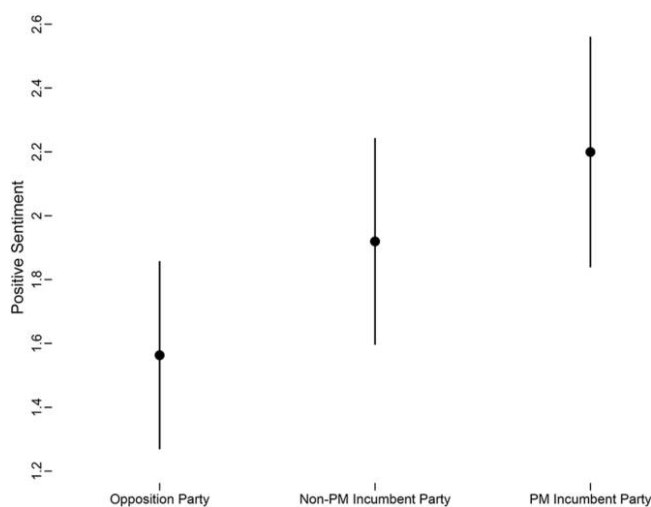* $p < .10$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

Figure 3. Predicted level of Positive Sentiment conditional on incumbency status based on model 2 in table 2. Lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals.
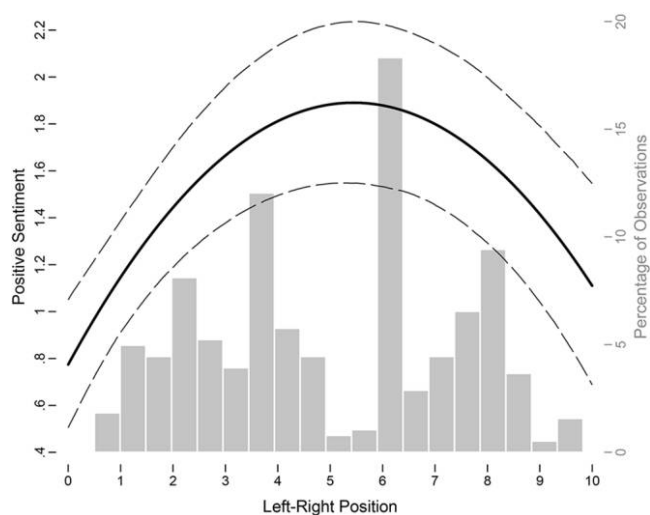

Figure 4. Predicted level of Positive Sentiment for opposition parties across the Left-Right policy space based on model 3 in table 2. Dashed lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals.

As predicted by the Extreme Ideology Hypothesis, ideologically extreme parties use less positive sentiment than moderate parties. This is indicated by the positive and significant coefficient on Left-Right and the negative and significant coefficient on Left-Right^2 in model 3. Together these coefficients indicate that positive sentiment first rises and then falls as a party's position moves across the policy space. This is graphically illustrated in figure 4. The solid line indicates the predicted level of positive sentiment exhibited by opposition parties on the basis of model 3.[20] The left vertical axis indicates the predicted value of Positive Sentiment. The right vertical axis pertains to the histogram and indicates the percentage of observations at different values of Left-Right. Positive sentiment is maximized when a party's policy position is at 5.45 and declines sharply as a party's position moves toward either the extreme Left or Right. This is exactly in line with our theoretical story.

Further support for the Extreme Ideology Hypothesis comes from model 4. As predicted, the coefficient on Extremist Party is negative and significant, indicating that ideologically extreme parties exhibit less positive sentiment than moderate parties. Again, this effect is substantively large. For example, model 4 indicates that extremist opposition parties employ 29.3% [18.6%, 40.0%] less positive sentiment than moderate opposition parties. Our results with respect to how a party's

policy position influences its level of positive sentiment are qualitatively similar across all the models in table 2.[21]

In line with the Economic Performance Hypothesis, parties adopt less positive sentiment when the economy is performing poorly with respect to inflation and unemployment. This is indicated by the negative and significant coefficients on Inflation in model 5 and Unemployment in model 6. These particular results suggest that campaign sentiment does vary in line with objective economic conditions, just as the economic voting framework would lead us to expect. There is no evidence, however, that positive sentiment varies with economic growth. This is indicated by the substantively small and insignificant coefficient on Growth in model 7. Interestingly, our results with respect to economic conditions are consistent with previous research showing that unemployment and inflation have a significantly stronger impact on the emotional polarity of British parliamentary debates than economic growth (Rheault et al. 2016). They are also consistent with research showing that the extent to which parties emphasize economic issues in their manifestos varies systematically with inflation and unemployment but not with growth (Williams et al. 2016). Combining these results suggests that objective economic conditions (inflation, unemployment) influence not only how much space parties give to economic issues in their manifestos but also the emotive content of the language parties use to convey their political messages.

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20. The shape of this line is the same for incumbent parties. The only difference is that the line would be shifted up to reflect the higher level of positive sentiment exhibited by incumbent parties, something indicated by the positive and statistically significant coefficients on Incumbent Party and Incumbent Party × Prime Ministerial Party in model 3.

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21. To maximize our sample size when evaluating our Extreme Ideology Hypothesis, we focus on the dichotomous Extremist Party variable in models 4–11. However, our inferences are robust to substituting in our Left-Right and Left-Right^2 variables instead.
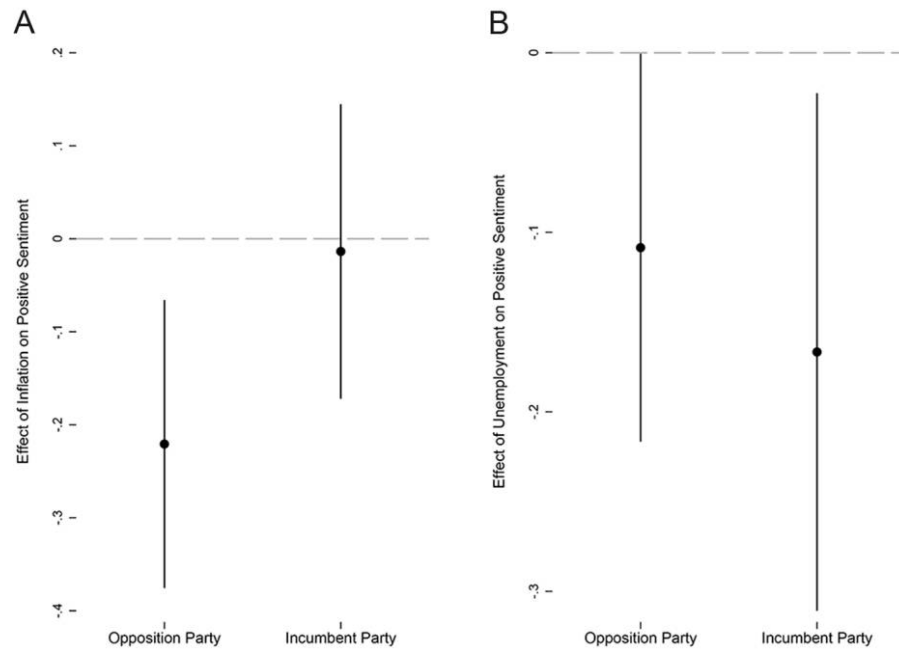
Figure 5. Effect of objective economic indicators on Positive Sentiment conditional on incumbency status. *A*, Effect of a 1 standard deviation increase in inflation on Positive Sentiment for opposition and incumbent parties based on model 8 in table 2. *B*, Effect of a 1 standard deviation increase in unemployment on Positive Sentiment for opposition and incumbent parties based on model 9. Lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals. Coefficient on Incumbent Party × Inflation is 0.04 (SE = 0.02), while the coefficient on Incumbent Party × Unemployment is −0.01 (SE = 0.02).

Does the effect of objective economic conditions vary with incumbency status as the Conditional Economic Performance Hypothesis predicts? Strong support for this exists with inflation. This is indicated by the negative and significant coefficient on Inflation and the positive and significant coefficient on Incumbent Party × Inflation in model 8. To evaluate the conditional effect of economic performance and incumbency status in more detail, figure 5*A* plots the effect of a 1 standard deviation increase in inflation on Positive Sentiment for opposition and incumbent parties. Inflation has a strong negative and significant effect on positive sentiment for opposition parties. Although the effect of inflation remains negative for incumbent parties, it is much smaller and is no longer significant. This is consistent with our claim that incumbent parties use positive campaign sentiment to frame poor economic performance in as good a light as they can, whereas opposition parties try to frame it in as bad a light as they can.

There is no support for the Conditional Economic Performance Hypothesis when we focus on unemployment. The results in model 8 indicate that unemployment always reduces positive sentiment. However, the magnitude of this effect does not vary with incumbency status. This is indicated by the negative and significant coefficient on Unemployment and the insignificant coefficient on Incumbent Party × Unemployment. As figure 5*B* visually demonstrates, a 1 standard de-

viation increase in unemployment has a similarly sized negative effect on positive sentiment for both opposition and incumbent parties—the two confidence intervals overlap almost entirely. As model 11 indicates, our results with respect to inflation and unemployment are robust to including all three of our measures of objective economic performance in the same specification.[22] That we obtain slightly different conditional results with respect to inflation as opposed to unemployment suggests that parties may feel they can use emotive language to frame some economic conditions more than others. One interpretation is that incumbent parties feel free to ignore inflation when it comes to the emotive content of their campaign messages but not unemployment.

Our last hypothesis, the Conditional Incumbent Party Hypothesis, has to do with how the effect of incumbency status varies with objective economic conditions. Recall that we expect the positive effect of incumbency on campaign sentiment to be greater when the economy is performing poorly. We obtain strong support for this when we focus on inflation. This is indicated by the positive and significant

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22. We do not examine the conditional effect of economic growth in fig. 5. Consistent with our previous discussion, there is no evidence that growth ever has a significant effect on positive sentiment. This is indicated by the insignificant coefficients on Growth and Incumbent Party × Growth in models 10 and 11.
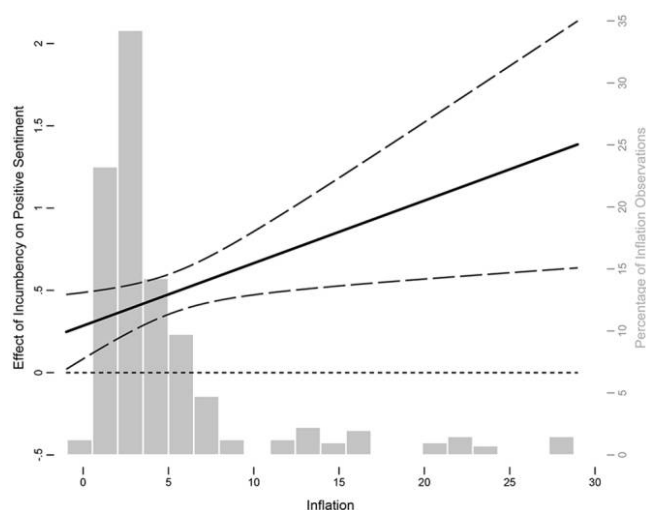
Figure 6. Effect of being the incumbent prime ministerial party on Positive Sentiment across the observed range of inflation based on model 8 in table 2. Dashed lines represent two-tailed 95% confidence intervals.

coefficient on Incumbent Party × Inflation in model 8. In figure 6, we plot the effect of being the incumbent PM party on positive sentiment across the observed range of inflation. As predicted, this marginal effect, which is always positive and significant, grows in magnitude with higher rates of inflation. We do not obtain such strong support for the Conditional Incumbent Party Hypothesis when we focus on unemployment. While we find that incumbency status always increases positive campaign sentiment as predicted, we do not find that the magnitude of this effect increases with unemployment. This is indicated by the insignificant coefficient on Incumbent Party × Unemployment in model 9.

CONCLUSION

Scholars have recently shown that campaigns can engender different types of emotion and thereby shape voter behavior and perceptions of the world in predictable ways. An implication of this is that political parties have incentives to be strategic not only about the substantive content of their campaigns but also about the kind of sentiment they use to convey that content. Some parties should adopt sentiment that frames the world in a positive light, whereas others should adopt sentiment that frames it in a negative light.

Building on the logic underpinning models of retrospective voting, we employed a novel data set on the emotive language used in over 400 European party manifestos to examine how the level of positive sentiment exhibited by political parties depends on their incumbency status, policy position, and objective economic conditions. As predicted, incumbent parties, especially PM parties, exhibit greater positive sentiment than opposition parties. Also in line with our expectations, we found

that ideologically extreme parties adopt much less positive sentiment than moderate parties and that all parties adopt significantly less positive sentiment when objective economic conditions are poor. These results suggest that parties are indeed strategic about the type of emotive language they employ in their manifestos. Our case study of the 2013 German elections in appendix D provides evidence that parties are also strategic with respect to their use of emotive language in other types of campaign messages.

Our findings have important implications for the study of election campaigns and party strategies. First, scholars have conceptualized campaigns along two primary dimensions. The campaign content dimension captures whether parties compete on policy or valence. The campaign focus dimension captures whether parties focus their campaigns on themselves or their opponents. We have argued that campaign sentiment, which captures the emotive content of campaigns, represents a conceptually and empirically distinct third dimension. Campaigns are about what parties say, who they say it about, and how they say it. In effect, political parties have a larger arsenal of campaign strategies available to them than is assumed in much of the existing literature. While recent studies have demonstrated that campaign sentiment can influence voter behavior in predictable ways, our analysis is the first to present cross-national evidence that political parties deploy campaign sentiment in a strategic manner in multiparty contexts.

Second, our argument provides a possible explanation for why people hold different perceptions of objective economic conditions and why these differing perceptions are frequently tied to an individual's partisan identity (Anderson 2007; Duch et al. 2000; MacKuen et al. 1989). While our findings suggest that parties use campaign sentiment to strategically frame the state of the world, they are not necessarily inconsistent with research showing that voters generally respond to objective economic reality (Lewis-Beck, Martini, and Kiewiet 2013; Lewis-Beck, Nadeau, and Elias 2008; Nadeau et al. 2013). As Gelman and King (1993) note, high-information and balanced electoral campaigns between parties with competing strategic interests can produce "enlightened preferences" on the part of voters.

Although the strategic use of campaign sentiment helps to explain the divergent perceptions of the economy among voters, our findings are encouraging in that they also indicate that campaigns are not completely devoid of information. That all parties use less positive sentiment when the economy is performing poorly suggests that objective economic conditions constrain the strategic use of campaign sentiment. In effect, campaigns retain some information content despite the incentives parties have to manipulate the emotional responses

of voters. Viewed in this light, the advent of "fake news" and campaigns of deliberate misinformation are a cause for concern, in that these developments may serve to weaken the constraints offered by objective economic conditions and thereby provide parties with more room to engage in the strategic manipulation of emotions.

Third, scholars typically examine campaign strategy at the party or candidate level. Several studies, for example, claim that trailing candidates are more likely than frontrunners to adopt "attack campaigns" (Skaperdas and Grofman 1995). Relatively little attention is paid to how the broader electoral context in which parties compete constrains their strategic choices (Vavreck 2009). Our finding that objective economic conditions constrain the strategic use of campaign sentiment suggests that an election's macroeconomic context affects the choices parties make with respect to their campaign strategy (Pardos-Prado and Sagarzazu 2016; Parker-Stephen 2013). As such, studies of campaign strategy that cover multiple elections should pay greater attention to the context in which their elections take place.

Fourth, the strategic use of campaign sentiment by political parties has implications for democratic accountability. If voters are susceptible to the manipulation of campaign sentiment, then the link between government performance and the electoral success of incumbent parties is weakened. Whether this ultimately helps or harms the reelection prospects of government parties is, however, unclear. As we have argued, incumbent parties have an incentive to employ positive campaign sentiment to portray the world in the best possible light. To the extent that scholars have empirically examined the role of emotions in politics, most have focused on negative sentiment (Utych 2018) and the effectiveness of messages that trigger fear or anger (Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). We know much less about the effectiveness of messages designed to convey positive sentiment. As a result, we need more research to assess whether, or when, the use of campaign sentiment disadvantages incumbent parties.

We still know relatively little about the strategic use of emotive content in election campaigns. Here we have focused on the use of broad emotive categories—positive and negative sentiment. Future research might fruitfully focus on whether parties are strategic with respect to their use of more specific emotions such as fear, anger, or enthusiasm. Alternatively, scholars could look at whether the overall amount of emotive content in election campaigns has changed over time (Rheault et al. 2016). Do some parties, such as populist parties or those with charismatic leaders, use more emotion in their campaigns than others? How do parties respond to the emotive content in their rivals' campaigns? Does the emotive content of a party's current election campaign de-

pend on how that party performed in the previous election? To a large extent, the field of research looking at the strategic use of campaign sentiment is wide open.

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