

The Mobilizing Effect of Parties' Moral Rhetoric

Short Title: Parties' Moral Rhetoric

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Abstract

How does parties' use of moral rhetoric affect voter behavior? Prior comparative party research has studied party positions without much attention to how parties explain and justify their positions. Drawing insights from political and moral psychology, I argue that moral rhetoric mobilizes copartisan voters by activating positive emotions about their partisan preference. I expect this to hold among copartisans who are exposed to party rhetoric. To test my argument, I measure moral rhetoric by text analyzing party manifestos from six English-speaking democracies and measure mobilization using copartisan turnout in survey data. The results support my argument. Furthermore, I find evidence in support of the theoretical mechanism using survey experiments and panel survey data from Britain. The paper shows that moral rhetoric is a party campaign frame that has important consequences on voter behavior.

Replication Materials: The data, code, and any additional materials required to replicate all analyses in this article are available on the *American Journal of Political Science* Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/6KPFOK>.

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Frames shape the considerations that are salient when voters think about politics, influencing their behaviors and attitudes (Chong and Druckman 2007). This suggests that how parties frame their campaign messages is an important part of their electoral strategy. Yet, previous comparative party research has focused primarily on spatial models of political competition (see Adams 2012 for a review) and paid little attention to parties’ rhetorical tactics. We therefore lack a good understanding of whether and in what ways voters are affected by how political arguments are explained and justified.

In this paper, I focus on parties’ use of moral rhetoric. Parties have a choice of whether and how much to frame their positions as fundamental, moral beliefs about right and wrong. This choice is relevant in a broad range of issue areas. For example, in the 2017 U.K. general election, the Labour Party tried to frame foreign policy as a moral issue by advocating “ethical foreign policy,” with the Shadow Foreign secretary stating that Labour will “put human rights back at the heart of Britain’s foreign policy.”¹ In contrast, the Conservative Party took a more pragmatic approach, arguing that the party will continue to “keep hitting Nato spending target.”² Another example is welfare. In the U.S., proponents and opponents of government assistance can frame the debate in terms of deservingness, and the “judgment of who is deserving—as opposed to what is most effective—is at heart a moral one.”³ Non-moral, instrumental rhetoric about welfare focuses instead on “the efficacy of incentives,

¹Elgot, Jessica, “Labour pledges return to Robin Cook’s ethical foreign policy,” *Guardian*, May 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/may/12/labour-pledges-return-to-robin-cooks-ethical-foreign-policy>.

²Farmer, Ben and Gordon Rayner, “Tories ‘will keep hitting Nato spending target’ says Theresa May,” *Telegraph*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/10/tories-will-keep-hitting-nato-spending-target-says-theresa-may/>.

³Cohen, Patricia, “On Health and Welfare, Moral Arguments Can Outweigh Economics,” *New York Times*, May 7, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/07/business/economy/congress-benefits-fairness.html?_r=2.

returns on investment and long-run savings.”⁴

What consequences does parties’ moral rhetoric have on voters? I draw insights from political and moral psychology to develop a theory. To begin, I expect moral rhetoric to prime the moral intuitions of copartisan voters because voters are receptive to messages from the party they support (e.g., Brader and Tucker 2012; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Moral psychology suggests that heightened moral intuitions make people emotional (Haidt 2003*b*; Skitka and Wisneski 2011). If so, moral rhetoric should emotionally activate copartisans (see Lipsitz 2018). Specifically, I expect moral rhetoric to increase positive emotions, such as pride, hopefulness, and excitement, because moral rhetoric primes that the party is on a morally higher ground, making copartisans see their partisan preference in more favorable light (see Haidt 2003*a*; Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek 2007). Building on the literature on emotions and political participation (Brader 2005; Valentino et al. 2011), I argue that this positive emotional activation mobilizes copartisans. I expect this to hold among copartisans who are exposed to party rhetoric, i.e., the politically aware.

To test my argument, I create a measure of moral rhetoric by text analyzing party manifestos. I use a list of moral words based on the Moral Foundations Dictionary developed in the psychology literature (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009). With the dictionary, I measure the level of moral rhetoric in 64 party manifestos from six English-speaking democracies across 18 elections. Then, I link the measure with voter survey data to test whether moral rhetoric increases turnout among more educated (i.e., politically aware) copartisan voters. The results support my argument.

I provide two additional analyses as tests of the theoretical mechanism. First, I conducted survey experiments in Britain to test whether moral rhetoric from one’s party activates positive emotions. I find that respondents treated with moral rhetoric experience more positive emotions than those treated with non-moral rhetoric. Second, to test whether

⁴Ibid.

positive emotions stimulate mobilization, I analyze panel data from the 2015 British Election Study. I find that voters who held positive emotions about their party before the election were more likely to vote and engage in other political activities during the election than those who did not have such emotions. Thus, the results support my mechanism that moral rhetoric mobilizes through positive emotional activation.

The paper contributes to a number of research areas. First, it pushes the boundaries of comparative party research by examining the use of moral rhetoric. It has implications for existing work on whether party messages matter (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014; Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2017); our understanding of the non-ideological dimension of party competition (Adams and Merrill III 2009; Schofield and Sened 2006; Stokes 1992); and the dichotomy of value-based versus economic issue competition (De La O and Rodden 2008; Stegmueller 2013*b*; Tavits and Letki 2014; Tavits and Potter 2015). Second, my paper contributes to previous work on morality and politics (Clifford and Jerit 2013; Clifford et al. 2015; Lipsitz 2018; Ryan 2014; 2016) by extending this area of research to the party level and beyond the U.S. into a comparative context. Third, my paper adds to the literature on emotions and political participation (Brader 2005; Valentino et al. 2011) by showing that parties' moral rhetoric can influence the emotions and the mobilization of the base. I elaborate on these contributions, as well as avenues for future research, in the conclusion.

Morality and Emotions

To develop a theory about the effect of parties' moral rhetoric, it is important to understand what morality is and does to people. Psychologists define morality as a system of "interlocking sets of values, practices, institutions, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make social life possible" (Haidt 2008, 70). Morality is a system of prescriptive judgments about right and wrong developed through the

course of human history. It consists of normative beliefs that are deeply rooted and widely shared.

According to the moral foundations theory (MFT), there are five moral foundations that constitute our moral “taste buds” (Haidt 2012, 131). Drawing from anthropology and evolutionary biology, the MFT argues that care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity are the building blocks of morality that are “organized in advance of experience” (Haidt 2012, 153). The theory explains that people instinctively think it is important to protect the weak, be fair, defend groups they are part of, show respect for legitimate authority, and leave certain things uncontaminated. People have intuitive repulsion to harm, cheating, betrayal, subversion, and degradation.

A consequence of this is that morality arouses our emotions (Haidt 2003*b*; Skitka and Wisneski 2011). It arouses gut feelings about good and bad that lead us to immediately view something positively or negatively. In fact, moral judgment functions like a switch that turns on the emotional part of our brain (Greene et al. 2001; Greene 2013). The emotion-inducing effects of morality can be consequential enough to make people engage in costly behavior (Baron and Spranca 1997; Fehr and Gächter 2002).⁵

⁵One might ask what the difference is between morality and values. Previous research suggests that existing work on values (e.g., Goren 2005; Goren et al. 2016) does not fully cover the concept of morality. According to Graham et al. (2011), “reciprocity, loyalty to one’s team or tribe, and concerns about bodily and spiritual purity are ubiquitous in anthropological accounts of morality, yet they do not appear among Schwartz’s 10 values” (368). Furthermore, while morality research connects morality with emotions and other-regarding judgments, such characteristics are missing in values research. This is because morality has evolutionary and biological origins, unlike values.

Moral Rhetoric and Mobilization

If morality and emotions are so tightly linked, moral rhetoric could have the consequence of activating the moral intuitions and thus the emotions of voters. Moral rhetoric is essentially a type of frame. If frames affect our thoughts by emphasizing some considerations over others regarding an issue or object (Chong and Druckman 2007), moral rhetoric is a frame that can shape political issues as moral issues by providing moral reasons to support one party over another. Moral rhetoric has the potential to make salient in the minds of voters that politics is a matter of moral right and wrong, activating their emotions. Lipsitz (2018) shares a similar intuition when she argues that moral appeals in political advertisements are a form of emotional appeal.

However, for moral rhetoric to benefit the party, the rhetoric needs to be credible to the receiver (Druckman 2001; Hartman and Weber 2009). Messages are not convincing when the recipient does not trust the source of the message. If so, moral appeals are most likely to increase the moral intuitions of voters who identify with the party, namely copartisans, who are attentive and favorably predisposed to the party's message. Lipsitz (2018) also highlights the importance of source credibility: "moral language in political advertising will resonate more with citizens when the ad is sponsored by a trusted candidate who they believe shares their interests" (62). This is in line with the theory of partisan motivated reasoning, which states that voters are favorably biased toward information that confirms their prior beliefs (Bisgaard 2015; Redlawsk 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006). People are inclined to accept information that reinforces their predispositions and evaluate congruent arguments as stronger. Meanwhile, the literature on partisan cue taking shows that voters follow the messages of their party to a great extent (Bisgaard and Slothuus 2018; Brader and Tucker 2012). These processes of partisan bias suggest that voters will have more morally convicted and hence more emotional attitudes toward politics when they receive moral rhetoric from

their own party.⁶

In particular, I expect moral rhetoric to heighten positive emotions, such as pride, hopefulness, and excitement, about one’s partisan preference. When it becomes salient in the minds of voters that their party is on a morally high ground, they are likely to adopt a more positive outlook. In fact, existing morality research argues that positive, elevated emotions are consequences of heightened moral intuitions (Haidt 2003*a*; Skitka and Wisneski 2011; Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek 2007). Other emotions like anger at rival parties and opposing voters can be stimulated if moral rhetoric is other-condemning (Lipsitz 2018), but I focus on positive emotions since they are likely to be more consistently activated. They will occur not only when moral rhetoric is self-promoting, but also when it is other-condemning: by criticizing the morality of their rivals, parties highlight that they themselves are on a morally higher ground. For example, during the 2017 presidential election in France, the leader of En Marche!, Emmanuel Macron, criticized the rival National Front for promoting harm and undermining the moral value of care: “I want to help with Muslim integration. If you follow the line of Marine Le Pen, you create a civil war.”⁷ The statement is an attack on the rival party and simultaneously indicates that En Marche! takes the morally higher ground.⁸

⁶In contrast, non-copartisans either are tuned into messages from a different party or have their attention evenly spread out across parties. Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu (2014) share a similar intuition when they claim that “supporters disproportionately seek out information about the party and believe its policy promises” (968).

⁷Joseph, Yonette, “In Their Own Words: Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron,” *New York Times*, May 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/05/world/europe/emmanuel-macron-marine-le-pen-quotes.html>.

⁸Another reason that I focus on positive emotions is that parties engage in more positive campaigning than negative campaigning to target copartisan voters. Studies in the U.S. show that positive ads are more effective than negative ads for mobilization (Brader 2006) and that parties use enthusiastic appeals to mobilize the base (Ridout and Searles 2011).

Importantly, positive emotional activation makes copartisans less reserved about political participation. The argument builds on previous research on the role of emotions in motivating political participation (Brader 2005; Marcus and MacKuen 1993; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Valentino et al. 2011). This line of research shows that the general emotional state of enthusiasm stimulates political activism. As Valentino et al. (2011) explain, affective intelligence theory and cognitive appraisal theory suggest that emotions shape behavior through a dual process of automatic physiological response and subsequent cognitive appraisal. Enthusiasm, which typically includes pride, hopefulness, and excitement, mobilizes by reinforcing existing loyalties and making voters act to achieve their preferences. Therefore, when voters hold heightened positive emotions as a consequence of moral rhetoric, I expect them to be more willing to participate in politics to advance their preferences.

However, I do not expect moral rhetoric to categorically mobilize all copartisans because voters vary in how much they are exposed to party rhetoric. Instead, moral rhetoric should mobilize copartisans who actually receive the rhetoric, i.e., the politically aware (Zaller 1992; Clifford et al. 2015). Partisans with high awareness are more attentive to rhetoric than those with low awareness. Moreover, the aware are likely to be more accepting of messages from their party due to high levels of cognitive ability that enable them to justify and rationalize their biases (Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Taber and Lodge 2006). Therefore, I hypothesize that moral rhetoric mobilizes copartisans who are more politically aware and thus exposed

In addition, on page 9 of the Supplementary Information (SI), I show that the campaign texts I analyze in the empirical section contain only a few negative moral appeals.

to party rhetoric.⁹

Research Design and Analysis

I conduct three kinds of analyses to test my argument. First, I test the relationship between moral rhetoric and mobilization using manifesto and survey data from six English-speaking democracies across 18 elections. Then, I test the mechanism of my theory. I test the link between moral rhetoric and positive emotions with survey experiments in Britain and the link between positive emotions and mobilization using panel data from the 2015 British Election Study. I will explain the analyses in turn.

The Effect of Moral Rhetoric on Mobilization

To test my hypothesis, I measure moral rhetoric by text analyzing party manifestos from the Manifesto Corpus (Lehmann et al. 2017). Manifestos are an appropriate data source because they capture the overall party strategy throughout the campaign period. Manifestos set the framework of the party campaign and guide what is going to be said on the campaign trail. Moreover, manifestos are the only raw campaign texts that are available over time and across countries.

For sure, voters are not the only audience parties have in mind when writing manifestos. Manifestos speak to party members as well (Däubler 2012; Harmel et al. 2018). Yet, when a manifesto is used for intra-party coordination, it is meant to structure and guide members'

⁹One might argue that moral appeals are easier to grasp than other kinds of rhetoric, such as rationality-based arguments. Even if that is true, however, it does not mean that all copartisans are *exposed* to moral rhetoric. Comprehension comes after exposure. Rhetoric often appears in the details of a party's campaign message and not all copartisans pay attention to them.

campaign behaviors during the election (Eder, Jenny and Müller 2017). Interviews of party personnel reveal that “parties make determined efforts to campaign based on their policy manifestos” (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011, 372). Therefore, there is little reason to expect manifesto content to significantly differ from the messages that the party delivers during the campaign. This is echoed by the widespread use of manifesto-based measures of ideology and issue emphasis in party research.¹⁰

Measure of moral rhetoric

I measure moral rhetoric by calculating the proportion of quasi-sentences with moral content among all quasi-sentences in a manifesto. Quasi-sentences are the units at which the Manifesto Project measures a party’s policy position (Volkens et al. 2016). A quasi-sentence contains one statement, which may be a full sentence or less if a sentence contains more than one message and has to be split. Quasi-sentences are the units at which moral rhetoric would appear because if a party wants to use more moral rhetoric, it will frame more policy statements morally. Hence, a manifesto with a higher proportion of moral quasi-sentences means that the campaign was characterized by higher level of moral rhetoric.

Specifically, I use dictionary-based text analysis to determine whether a quasi-sentence

¹⁰An alternative data source is campaign speeches. However, using speeches is very challenging not only because of the unavailability of data across parties, time, and countries, but also because the most accurate measure is one that averages the level of moral rhetoric in all the speeches a party delivered throughout the campaign period. A measure that relies on a single or a few speeches could be inaccurate because I am interested in the overall level of moral rhetoric a party used throughout the campaign. Nonetheless, recognizing this potential problem, I have collected ten speech texts from Australia and New Zealand and calculated their level of moral rhetoric. In SI3 (pp. 8-9), I show that there is high correlation between my manifesto-based measure and the speech-based measure.

has moral content. I code a quasi-sentence as moral if it has at least one word from a dictionary of moral words based on the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD) developed in the psychology literature (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009). The MFD consists of words that resonate with the five moral foundations that underlie people’s intuitive ethics, as explained in the theory section: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. The MFD has a list of general moral words as well that do not exclusively fall into any one of the five foundations but are used morally.

For my purpose, I adapted the MFD to be more fitting in the party campaign context.¹¹ First, I made the dictionary more complete by adding words that are covered in the MFD in one form but not another. For instance, the original dictionary has the word stem “unequal*” under the fairness/cheating foundation but it does not capture “inequality” or “inequalities,” so I added “inequalit*.” Second, I eliminated words that are not moral on their own in the political context. For example, in religious sermons (which are the texts the MFD was initially used in), the word “oppose” may have negative moral connotations of subverting authority, but in politics it is typically a word that is used to indicate a position, which may or may not have moral content. Another example is “immigra*,” which on its own is not necessarily moral. The full dictionary I use is listed in SI1, along with evidence of the intercoder reliability of the changes I made to the original moral foundations dictionary (pp. 1-2). SI2 contains further details on the text analysis process (pp. 2-3).

The final measure, *Moral rhetoric*, includes parties from English-speaking democracies in the Manifesto Corpus: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S.

¹¹The MFD was developed to analyze religious sermons (Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009). Political scientists have adapted and used it in their research (Clifford and Jerit 2013; Clifford et al. 2015; Kraft 2018; Lipsitz 2018).

In total, *Moral rhetoric* covers 64 parties across 18 elections from six countries.¹² It ranges from 0.06 to 0.51 (mean: 0.30, standard deviation: 0.10). This is the first measure of moral rhetoric to be developed at the party-election level. Therefore, I have checked the validity of the measure in a number of ways in SI3 (pp. 3-9).

Measure of mobilization

For the dependent variable, I use copartisan turnout in election surveys. Turnout is one of the most important forms of political participation. Moreover, turnout is consistently asked in surveys across countries and over time. Waves one to four of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) are my primary data source. For elections not in the CSES, I use country-specific election studies.¹³ From the surveys, I use party ID questions to identify the copartisans of each of the parties in my moral rhetoric measure and exclude non-copartisans.¹⁴ The dependent variable (*Turnout*) is binary and coded ‘1’ if the respondent voted and ‘0’ otherwise.

As explained in the theory section, I expect moral rhetoric to mobilize the politically aware because they are more likely to have been exposed to party rhetoric. To measure

¹²Australia (2004, 2007, 2010, 2013); Canada (2015); Ireland (2007, 2011); New Zealand (1996, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011); U.K. (1997); U.S. (1992, 2004, 2008, 2012)

¹³Australia (2010); Canada (2015); New Zealand (1999, 2005); U.S. (1992)

¹⁴I believe that party identity is causally prior to moral rhetoric and mobilization. Previous research shows that party identity is one of the most stable individual-level political variables (Goren 2005; Green and Palmquist 1994). *Strength* of party identity, on the other hand, is likely to be influenced by moral rhetoric (this is especially the case since my theoretical argument is that moral rhetoric affects emotions toward one’s partisan preference). This is consistent with findings in the existing literature that although party attachment changes over time (Johnston and Pattie 1996; Neundorff, Stegmueller and Scotto 2011), the magnitude of the change is modest (Tucker, Montgomery and Smith 2018).

awareness, I use education. Educated copartisans have more resources than less educated copartisans to follow elite messages.¹⁵ Therefore, I interact *Moral rhetoric* and *Education*, with the expectation of a positive interaction effect. *Education* is normalized to range from zero to one.¹⁶

¹⁵My data are post-election surveys. Therefore, variables like political interest and political knowledge are endogenous, making them inappropriate indicators of exposure to party rhetoric. Education level, on the other hand, is determined before the election. Moreover, election studies consistently ask about education, but not political interest, political knowledge, or news consumption. In fact, the difficulty, number, and type of political knowledge questions that are asked differ across elections and countries.

¹⁶A concern one might raise is that education proxies socioeconomic status rather than political awareness and exposure. This concern, however, is mitigated because, as I will explain, I control for income in my models. Another reason that education is not a proxy for socioeconomic status is that because I analyze partisans, all respondents in my data arguably have some level of political interest. Therefore, education is a better measure of political awareness and exposure than it would be if I were analyzing voters in general. One might also be concerned that education is correlated with psychological variables like need-for-cognition (NC). However, it is unlikely that education is proxying NC in my analyses. If it were, moral rhetoric would not have an effect on the educated since, for those with high NC, the effect of moral rhetoric is likely to go in two opposite directions. First, high-NC people are known to have stronger, more persistent attitudes (Cacioppo et al. 1996). Therefore, they should be able to actively exercise their biases, which makes moral rhetoric more influential. At the same time, high-NC people are prone to scrutinize and be critical of messages (Cacioppo et al. 1996), which makes moral rhetoric less influential.

Control variables

In the analyses, I include controls at the individual, party, and election levels to account for factors that can confound the relationship between moral rhetoric and turnout. At the individual level, I include age, sex, and income (Blais 2000; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). *Income* ranges from zero to one. *Age* is continuous (in decades), and *Male* is binary.

At the party level, I control for niche party. Niche party identifiers might be less motivated to vote because of lower sense of political efficacy. At the same time, they might have more incentives to vote due to their strong commitment to the niche issue. Based on party family information in the Manifesto Project Database, I coded agrarian, green, special issue, and ethno-regional parties as niche.

At the election level, I control for effective number of electoral parties in the previous election. Higher effective number of parties can mean that there are more political options, higher competitiveness, and fewer wasted votes, incentivizing voters to vote (Powell 1982). On the other hand, in many multiparty systems, government formation and parties' policy-making power are not solely determined by election results, which can dampen the motive to vote (Jackman 1987). Data sources for $ENEP_{t-1}$ are the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems and the Constituency-Level Elections Archive (Kollman et al. 2016).

Results

Table 1 shows the results of two models. Model 1 is a logistic regression with party-election clustered standard errors. The clustered standard errors account for correlation in the error terms among copartisans who are exposed to the same campaign. The model also includes country fixed effects to account for country-specific attributes, such as the existence of compulsory voting and differences in voting rules. Model 2 is a logistic multilevel model with country, election, and party varying intercepts. The varying intercepts help account for unobserved group-level confounders that are not addressed in Model 1. My sample size is not always large within countries, elections, and parties. Multilevel modeling overcomes this

limitation by partially pooling group averages and group-level variation (Gelman and Hill 2007).¹⁷ Model 2 does not control for *Niche party* and $ENEP_{t-1}$ because the varying intercepts account for election- and party-level variation and including the controls, along with the varying intercepts, leads to overspecification.

Consistent with expectations, Table 1 shows that the interaction coefficients for *Moral rhetoric* and *Education* are reliably positive.¹⁸ Using Model 2, Figure 1 illustrates the marginal effect of *Moral rhetoric* on *Turnout*, along the values of *Education*. The histogram shows the distribution of *Education*. In the figure, the point at which the effect of moral rhetoric becomes positive and statistically significant is an education level of 0.95. About 15% of respondents in my data have an education level of 0.95 or above. For the rest, moral rhetoric has no effect.¹⁹

¹⁷Previous work, such as Bryan and Jenkins (2016) and Stegmueller (2013a), shows that it is problematic to use multilevel modeling when the number of countries is small. In SI5 (p. 10), I explain why I believe this is less of a problem in my study and the Bayesian multilevel model I have run to mitigate the concern nonetheless (Stegmueller 2013a).

¹⁸It is interesting that the coefficients on *Education* in Table 1 are not statistically significant. The direction of the coefficients is negative. This suggests the possibility that educated voters, who are exposed to party rhetoric, are demobilized when moral rhetoric is lacking.

¹⁹The coefficient estimate on *Moral rhetoric* is smaller in Model 2 than in Model 1. This is because the election varying intercepts in Model 2 account for unobserved election-level confounders, such as the moral character of party leaders and the extent of moral debate in the media, that are not controlled for in Model 1. The high election variance estimate in Model 2 does not go away when an observable election-level control is included (Model 6 of Table SI5.1 on p. 12), indicating the presence of unobserved covariates. Moreover, I have checked that the difference in coefficients is not because of correlation between moral rhetoric and election varying intercepts. The correlation is not statistically significant ($\rho = -0.14$, $t = -0.57$, p-value = 0.58), and the Hausman test fails to reject the null

Table 1: Effect of Moral Rhetoric on Turnout

	Model 1	Model 2
Moral rhetoric	2.95 (3.10)	-1.19 (2.09)
Education	-0.79 (0.72)	-0.40 (0.59)
Moral rhetoric \times Education	6.00* (2.18)	5.46* (1.51)
Age (decades)	0.25* (0.04)	0.26* (0.02)
Male	-0.12 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.08)
Income	1.11* (0.18)	0.99* (0.14)
Niche party	-0.42 (0.22)	
ENEP _{<i>t</i>-1}	-0.00 (0.26)	
Intercept	1.54 (1.20)	1.14 (0.84)
Country Fixed Effects	✓	
<i>N</i>	14835	14835
Likelihood Ratio	1278.34	
Log Likelihood		-2269.88
<i>N</i> : Party		28
<i>N</i> : Election		18
<i>N</i> : Country		6
$\hat{\sigma}^2$: Party (Intercept)		0.01
$\hat{\sigma}^2$: Election (Intercept)		0.67
$\hat{\sigma}^2$: Country (Intercept)		0.71

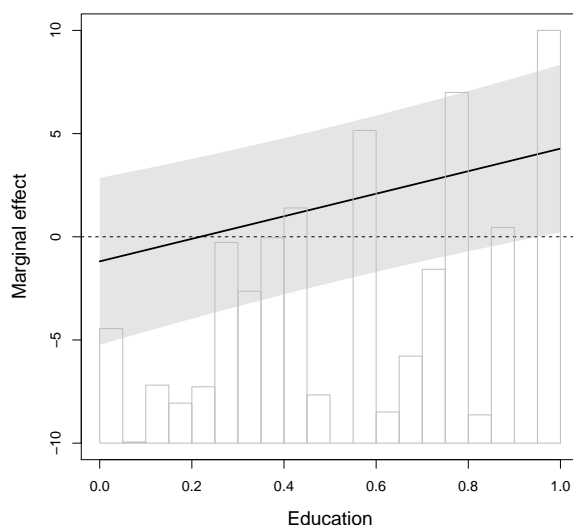
Note: The dependent variable is *Turnout*, coded '1' if the copartisan voted and '0' if not. Model 1 is a logistic regression with party-election clustered standard errors. Model 2 is a logistic multilevel model with country, election, and party varying intercepts. * $p < 0.05$

To interpret the results more substantively, Figure 2 presents predicted probabilities. I use Model 2 in Table 1 to estimate predicted probabilities of turnout for a voter with an education level of one (the maximum value of *Education*), across the range of *Moral rhetoric*.²⁰

($H = -155.96$, p-value = 1.00).

²⁰Predicted probabilities are not meaningful when the marginal effect of moral rhetoric is not statistically significant (which is the case for the low-education voter). I further explain in

Figure 1: Marginal Effect of Moral Rhetoric on Turnout



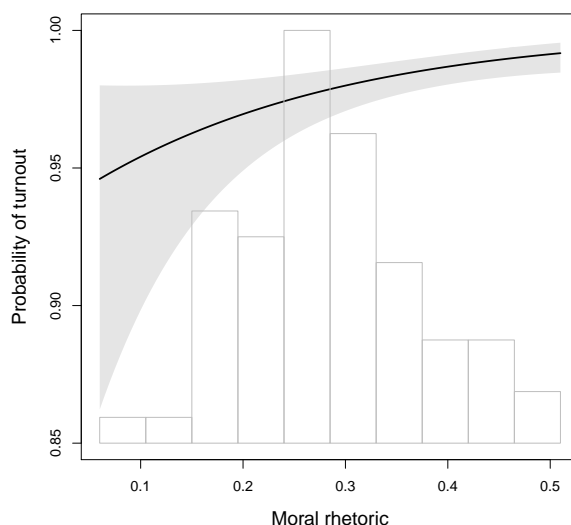
Note: The solid line indicates the marginal effect of *Moral rhetoric* on *Turnout*, along values of *Education*. The shades are 95% confidence intervals. Results are based on Model 2 in Table 1. The histogram shows the distribution of *Education*.

Other variables are held constant at their mean or mode. The histogram shows the distribution of *Moral rhetoric*. The solid line illustrates that when *Moral rhetoric* moves from one standard deviation below the mean (0.20) to one standard deviation above the mean (0.39), there is a two percentage point increase in predicted probability of turnout (first difference: 0.02, 95% CI: [0.00, 0.05]). Moving from the minimum (0.06) to the maximum (0.51) value of *Moral rhetoric* results in a four percentage point increase in predicted probability of turnout, from 0.94 to 0.99 (first difference: 0.04, 95% CI: [0.00, 0.17]). Considering that there are other campaign strategies parties use to mobilize the base, the effect of moral rhetoric is non-trivial. If maximum levels of moral rhetoric result in a 0.99 predicted probability of turnout, moral rhetoric can help parties achieve basically the highest copartisan turnout rate that is possible.²¹

SI5 (pp. 11, 16).

²¹Turnout levels are high because I examine educated copartisans, who have high baseline probabilities of voting. Moreover, my data include Australia, which has a compulsory

Figure 2: Substantive Effect of Moral Rhetoric on Turnout



Note: The solid line indicates predicted probabilities of turnout for a voter with an education of one (maximum value), along the range of *Moral rhetoric*. The shades are 95% confidence intervals. Results are based on Model 2 in Table 1. The histogram shows the distribution of *Moral rhetoric*.

I find these results to be robust (pp. 10, 12-14 of SI5). The robustness tests consistently show that moral rhetoric mobilizes copartisans who are more likely to have been exposed to party rhetoric.²²

voting system. The penalty for abstaining is not extremely high in Australia (The Electoral Commission 2006), thereby making the usual incentives to not vote present there as well (Australian Electoral Commission 2016). Nonetheless, I have checked that the results hold when I exclude Australia from the analysis (Models 3 and 4 of Table SI5.1 on p. 12).

²²One might ask whether it makes more sense to analyze the effects of subsets of moral foundations. In SI5 (pp. 10-11, 15), I show that it is not the case and that my measure of moral rhetoric, which captures all foundations, is more appropriate.

Tests of the Theoretical Mechanism

I now turn to testing whether positive emotional activation is how moral rhetoric mobilizes copartisan voters. For the first part of the mechanism, i.e., that moral rhetoric activates positive emotions, I conducted survey experiments in Britain, which is a good setting for two reasons. First, it is useful to conduct experiments in an English-speaking country because I can add to the vignettes some of the words from the moral dictionary I used for the text analysis to further validate my observational research design. Second, current politics in the U.K. is not extremely intertwined or dissociated with morality, enabling a fair test of the effect of moral framing.

For the second part of the mechanism, i.e., that positive emotions mobilize copartisans, I use panel data from the 2015 British Election Study. The survey included a battery of questions on the emotions that voters have about parties running in the 2015 election, providing an opportunity to measure voters' emotions about their party. In subsequent waves, the survey asked about political participation. This helps alleviate the endogeneity problem that would exist in analyzing single-wave survey data.²³

Survey experiment on the effect of moral rhetoric on positive emotions

The experiments were carried out through Prolific, a crowdsourcing platform for researchers developed in the U.K. (Palan and Schitter 2018). Prolific has sociodemographic information on its panelists and information on party identity, which is measured through “Which political party do you most identify with?” Therefore, I am able to restrict respondents to the appropriate pool of copartisans. Participants on Prolific are not nationally representative,

²³The link between emotions and political participation is well established in the literature, but my analysis is a contribution because (1) the link has been rarely examined in a non-U.S. setting and (2) much of previous research studies emotions in a non-partisan context or in reference to a specific political figure rather than the party overall.

but not only does Prolific provide a bigger sample of British respondents than platforms like MTurk, it has better population naivety, response quality, and participant diversity (Peer et al. 2017).

I conducted two experiments: one on Labour identifiers and another on Conservative identifiers. The experimental design is very similar for both groups. The vignettes are different because respondents have to see messages from their party. Nonetheless, the conceptual treatment is the same (moral rhetoric). For the sake of space, I will describe the Labour experiment ($N = 100$) and leave details of the Conservative experiment ($N = 261$) in SI6 (pp. 19-21).

The survey starts by randomly assigning participants into one of two groups: moral rhetoric and non-moral rhetoric. The moral rhetoric group sees a hypothetical campaign message from the Labour Party that uses moral rhetoric. The vignette mostly consists of appeals to individualizing foundations, but also appeals to a binding foundation and general morality. The non-moral rhetoric group sees a substantively equivalent message using non-moral rhetoric, i.e., a vignette that contains pragmatic, consequentialist argumentation, which is a kind of non-moral rhetoric that is commonplace in party campaigns and seen as an alternative to moral rhetoric in previous research (Ferraiolo 2013; Marietta 2008; Mucciaroni 2011). Having the two treatment groups makes the experiment a hard test by pitting moral rhetoric against a potentially convincing alternative.

The following are the vignettes. The moral rhetoric group sees the first part in brackets; the non-moral rhetoric group sees the second part in brackets. Bolded words are from the moral foundations dictionary:

“Labour has a plan [for a better, fairer / to rebuild and transform] Britain.

*First, we will raise tax on the top 5 per cent of earners. [We believe in the social **duty** to contribute to a **fair** taxation scheme for the common **good**.
/ With higher taxes on the richest, we can fund services and housing while reducing the deficit.]*

*Second, we will rewrite the Conservatives’ Brexit White Paper. We will [**se-cure equality** laws, consumer **rights**, and environmental **protections** that are key to our **values**. / retain the benefits of the Single Market and the Customs Union that are in our economic interests.]*

*Third, we will end zero-hours contracts. We need to [**protect** workers from **abuse, injustice, exploitation**, and insecurity. / increase productivity in the workforce and boost economic recovery.]*

*Do not let the Tories [distort your **values** / drag you back]. Labour stands for your [**morals** / interests].”²⁴*

The vignettes were written based on the positions that the Labour Party took in the 2017 general election and were taking at the time of the experiment. Moreover, they were carefully written to refer to the same policy goal so that the vignettes only differ in how positions are explained and justified. The policy areas discussed in the vignettes—taxation, Brexit, and working conditions—are issues that are important to the Labour Party and issues where moral and non-moral frames can equally be naturally used.²⁵ In SI6 (p. 18), I show that pre-treatment sociodemographic variables are balanced and that treatment was successfully randomized.

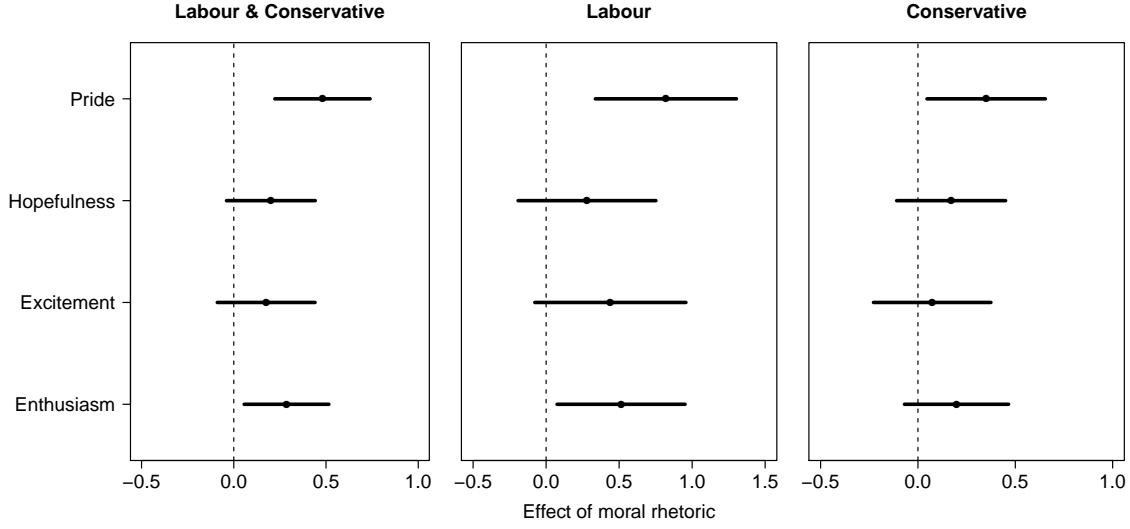
Post-treatment, the survey asks five questions about emotions in random order: “To what extent does the message make you feel **proud** / **hopeful** / **excited** / **angry** / **disgusted**?”²⁶ Answer options are “not at all,” “slightly,” “moderately,” “much,” and “very much.” I analyze the effects of moral rhetoric on *Pride*, *Hopefulness*, and *Excitement*, each ranging from one (not at all) to five (very much). I also take the mean of these variables to create a measure of average positive emotion—*Enthusiasm*.

²⁴I have done a manipulation check of these vignettes, which I explain in SI6 (p. 17).

²⁵I have checked that the vignettes are not different in their convincingness (p. 17 of SI6).

²⁶The questions follow the format used in emotions research (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Valentino et al. 2011).

Figure 3: The Effect of Moral Rhetoric on Positive Emotions



Note: Each point indicates estimated difference in means between moral rhetoric and non-moral rhetoric groups on the respective emotion. Horizontal lines are 95% confidence intervals. The first plot shows results for the pooled data. The second and third plots show results for Labour and Conservative, respectively.

Combining the data for Labour and Conservative, the first panel in Figure 3 shows the average treatment effects, i.e., differences in means between the moral rhetoric group and the non-moral rhetoric group. It shows the effects of moral rhetoric on *Pride*, *Hopefulness*, *Excitement*, and *Enthusiasm* with 95% confidence intervals. Overall, moral rhetoric increases positive emotions as expected. The result is very clear for *Pride*. The moral rhetoric group expresses significantly higher levels of pride than the non-moral rhetoric group does.²⁷ Meanwhile, coefficient estimates for *Hopefulness* and *Excitement* are positive but not statistically significant. Nonetheless, the moral rhetoric group expresses significantly higher levels of overall positive emotion (i.e., *Enthusiasm*) than the non-moral rhetoric group does. The second and third panels in Figure 3 show the results separately for Labour and Conservative. We again see that the effect is the clearest for *Pride*.

²⁷Using ordered logit, I calculated the predicted probabilities of respondents answering that they feel much proud. For the moral rhetoric group, the predicted probability is 0.22. For the non-moral rhetoric group, the probability is 0.15 (first difference: 0.07, 95% CI: [0.02, 0.12]).

These results are robust to using ordered logit models. Moreover, I have used responses to the filler questions on anger and disgust to check that moral rhetoric does not have any effect on negative emotions. Further details are in SI6 (pp. 16-17). In sum, experimental evidence supports the first part of my theoretical mechanism, i.e., moral rhetoric increases positive emotions.²⁸

Survey analysis of the effect of positive emotions on mobilization

I now turn to testing the second part of the mechanism, i.e., that positive emotions stimulate mobilization. Using panel data in the 2015 British Election Study, I examine two dependent variables. One is *Turnout*, a binary variable indicating whether the respondent voted or not. The question is from wave 6 (post-election). The second dependent variable is *Activism*, for which I use a series of questions in wave 5, the election wave, that ask respondents whether they did the following in the last seven days: “done any work on behalf of a political party or action group,” “given any money to a political party, organization or cause,” “displayed an election poster,” and “tried to persuade somebody which party they should vote for.” *Activism* is coded ‘1’ if the respondent did one or more of those activities. It is coded ‘0’ if the respondent did none.

To measure emotions, I use questions in wave 4 (pre-election) that ask respondents how they feel about parties. The questions ask if respondents feel proud or hopeful about each major party, and I analyze responses about the party that respondents identify with. There-

²⁸One might ask whether the effects on positive emotions are unique to copartisans. Therefore, I have administered the same experiments on out-partisans and find that moral rhetoric does not increase positive emotions. Moral rhetoric neither affects negative emotions. The results make sense because, as explained in the theory section, rhetoric matters more to voters who align with the party and are thus receptive to its content. Further details are in SI6 (pp. 21-22).

fore, I first coded the party identity of respondents using the question in wave 4 that asks “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?” Then I created a binary variable, *Proud*, which is coded ‘1’ if respondents say that they feel proud about their party and ‘0’ if not. *Hopeful* is coded ‘1’ if respondents feel hopeful about their party and ‘0’ otherwise.²⁹

I run logistic regressions. All models control for age, gender, income, education, and strength of party identity, which can confound the relationship between positive emotions and mobilization. Moreover, controlling for strength of party identity teases out the effect of emotions, apart from other evaluations of and attitudes toward one’s party. *ID strength* is measured in wave 4, the same time that emotions are measured. Table SI7.1 (p. 23) presents descriptive statistics of all the variables.

Table 2 shows the results. The models include both *Proud* and *Hopeful* as predictors, with *Turnout* as the dependent variable in the first column and *Activism* as the dependent variable in the second column. The coefficients for the two emotions are reliably positive. In terms of predicted probabilities, using the second model, when all other variables are held constant at their mean or mode, copartisans who are both proud and hopeful are

²⁹The question asks about emotions specifically in reference to the party, unlike the question I used in my experiments. However, the two questions are not inconsistent with each other. First, the one in the British Election Study is a reasonable way to measure emotions toward one’s partisan preference in a non-experimental setting. Second, my experiments geared respondents to think about the party because, before respondents were shown the vignette, they read “Now, imagine that a UK General Elections is approaching. On the next page, you will see a campaign message from the Labour/Conservative Party.” Therefore, the emotions reported in the experiments are likely to reflect those toward the party. I believe that is one of the reasons I do not see moral rhetoric having any effect on negative emotions, as discussed on page 22.

Table 2: Effect of Positive Emotions on Mobilization

	Turnout	Activism
Proud	0.30* (0.11)	0.72* (0.05)
Hopeful	0.34* (0.09)	0.24* (0.05)
Age (decades)	0.27* (0.03)	-0.12* (0.01)
Education	0.12* (0.02)	0.11* (0.01)
Income	0.04* (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Male	-0.13 (0.08)	0.27* (0.05)
ID strength	0.73* (0.07)	0.94* (0.04)
Intercept	-0.76* (0.24)	-4.15* (0.14)
Log Likelihood	-2457.54	-6723.42
<i>N</i>	15414	15563

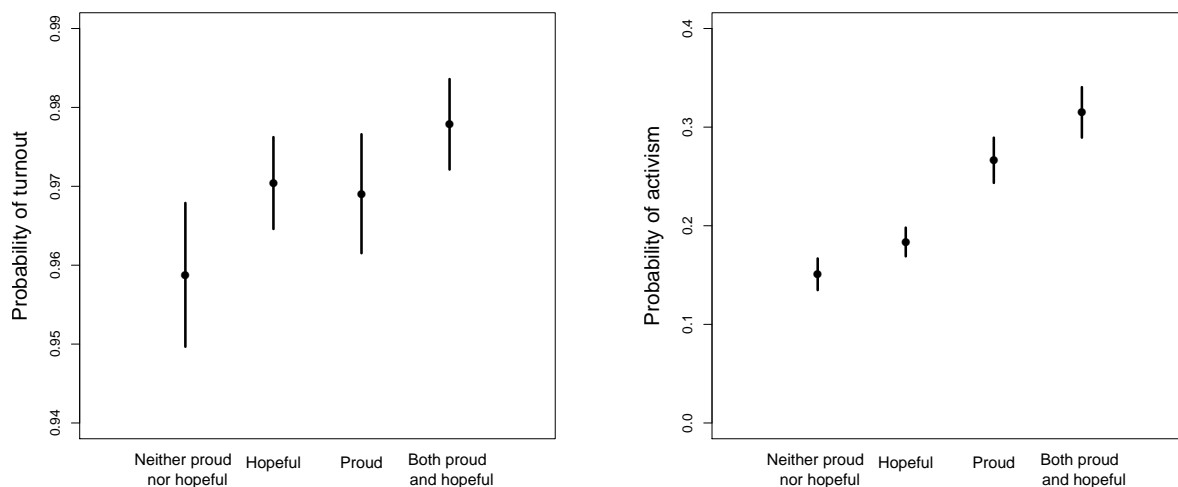
Note: The first dependent variable, *Turnout*, is coded '0' if the respondent did not vote and '1' if the respondent voted. The second dependent variable, *Activism*, is coded '0' if the respondent did not engage in any political activity and '1' if the respondent engaged in at least one. Table entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$

mobilized with 0.31 probability. Those who are neither proud nor hopeful are mobilized with 0.15 probability. Copartisans who are not proud but hopeful are mobilized with 0.18 probability, and those who are proud but not hopeful are mobilized with 0.27 probability. Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities and their 95% confidence intervals for *Turnout* and *Activism*, respectively.

I find that these effects are robust (pp. 23-24 of SI7). The robustness tests provide consistent support for the second part of the theoretical mechanism, i.e., positive emotions about one's partisan preference increase mobilization.³⁰

³⁰The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that when copartisans are positively emotionally activated (which can be achieved with moral rhetoric, based on experimental evidence

Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities of Turnout and Activism



Note: The plots show predicted probabilities and 95% confidence intervals for *Turnout* (left) and *Activism* (right). Other variables are held constant at their mean or mode.

Conclusion and Discussion

Drawing insights from political and moral psychology, I have argued that parties' moral rhetoric mobilizes copartisans who are exposed to party rhetoric, i.e., the politically aware, and that this is due to increased positive emotions about one's partisan preference. To test the argument, I created a novel measure of moral rhetoric by text analyzing party manifestos. Using the measure and election survey data, I find that higher moral rhetoric increases the likelihood of turnout for the more educated. Moreover, I have presented evidence in

in the previous section), they are more likely to be mobilized. It is not possible to state the extent to which the positive emotions of partisans in the British Election Study are a consequence of moral rhetoric. Nevertheless, from the data, I have created some proxy measures of moral intuition about politics. I find that partisans with stronger moral intuition are more likely to have positive emotions. This suggests that the positive emotions are, to some extent, coming from heightened moral intuitions. SI7 has more details on the analysis (pp. 25-26).

support of the theoretical mechanism. Survey experiments show that moral rhetoric activates positive emotions about one’s partisan preference. Panel survey data show that such positive emotions increase mobilization.

My paper makes a number of contributions. First, it pushes the boundaries of comparative party research. It shows that rhetoric is an important campaign tactic that has been overlooked in the comparative parties literature that focuses mostly on left-right position-taking. By studying the way in which political arguments are made, my paper advances our understanding of whether party messages matter—a question of considerable debate (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014; Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2017). I show that they do, at least as far as party rhetoric is concerned: the rhetoric that parties use to frame their messages has consequences on voter behavior.

Moreover, the concept of moral rhetoric speaks to the literature on party valence by showing that there is a component to non-policy appeals that is not captured by character-based traits like competence, integrity, unity, and charisma (Abney et al. 2011; Adams and Merrill III 2009; Schofield and Sened 2006; Stokes 1992; Zakharova and Warwick 2014). Although integrity and unity may have some moral bases, that is not necessarily the case for competence and charisma. Competence and charisma can instead be conceptualized as types of pragmatic, consequentialist appeal. Therefore, moral rhetoric suggests that there is more to the non-policy dimension of party competition than is summarized by the concept of valence.

Moral rhetoric also has implications for the practice of distinguishing between economic and sociocultural issues. Research on issue competition largely assumes that economic issues are interest-based while sociocultural issues are value-based (De La O and Rodden 2008; Stegmueller 2013*b*; Tavits and Letki 2014; Tavits and Potter 2015). However, parties can use varying degrees of moral argumentation in discussing both economic and sociocultural issues. Similarly, voter preferences on the two dimensions can have low or high moral bases depending on how issues are framed by political elites.

Second, my research contributes to previous work on morality and politics. One strand of the literature examines moral convictions among voters and shows that they are associated with more intense political preferences (Ryan 2014; 2016). Another strand of research measures moral rhetoric in the media to understand how it is used in a specific issue and how it influences public opinion on the issue (Clifford and Jerit 2013; Clifford et al. 2015). By examining the media, the studies address one of the sources of voters' moral convictions. Nonetheless, the political sources of moral conviction have rarely been directly studied. An exception is Lipsitz (2018), who examines the patterns and the consequences of moral rhetoric in the campaign ads of candidates in U.S. elections. My study extends this line of research by focusing on parties in a comparative context. Parties are one of the most important players shaping the political debate and how voters think of politics. Incorporating party rhetoric can help us get a fuller account of the relationship between morality and political attitudes.

In addition, my paper contributes to studies on morality and politics by examining the positive emotional consequences of morality. This challenges the practice in previous morality research of focusing on negative, anger-related consequences (e.g., DeScioli and Kurzban 2013; Ryan 2016). Recognizing this oversight as well, recent studies argue that positive emotions can emerge on issues that voters support with moral conviction (Skitka and Wisneski 2011) and in response to the moral rhetoric of the candidate one supports (Lipsitz 2018). Morality does not have to entail negative emotions, and there is much reason to explore its positive emotional consequences (see also Haidt 2003*a*; Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek 2007). This observation is particularly relevant for party research since parties would want to activate positive emotions among their base, considering the backfiring effects of negative campaigning that previous research has identified (Banda and Windett 2016; Dowling and Wichowsky 2015; Pattie et al. 2011).

Third, my paper advances understanding of the relationship between emotions and political participation. Previous research has documented the power of emotions in stimulating political participation (Marcus and MacKuen 1993; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000;

Ryan 2012; Valentino et al. 2011). My study implies that the link between emotions and political participation can be created by moral rhetoric. In the context of party competition, the party base is the most relevant group of voters to study because parties aim to mobilize their base rather than everyone. Therefore, my paper shows that parties can use moral rhetoric to influence the emotions and thus the mobilization of copartisan voters.

On a final note, future research can build on the findings in this paper and pursue questions that will further deepen our understanding of rhetoric in party competition. For example, what are the conditions under which parties are more or less likely to use moral rhetoric? When might moral rhetoric backfire? Can moral rhetoric be persuasive on non-partisans? What is a party's optimal mix of moral rhetoric and non-moral, pragmatic rhetoric? This paper examines how moral rhetoric affects the mobilization of the party base, but a host of interesting questions remain for future research.

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