

# **Issue Salience and Congruence Between Voters and Parties in The Netherlands**

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## **Abstract**

Political parties play a major role in the process of democratic representation. But parties face complex and often conflicting incentives when it comes to the formation of their policy positions: they have to balance being responsive to their own supporters, accommodating powerful interest groups, staying true to their ideology, and not drifting too far away from the median voter in society and competitors needed for government coalitions. We focus on the hypothesis that the extent to which parties are congruent with the preferences of their supporters on particular policy issues depends on the issue salience profile of the party. Analyzing the expressed positions of more than 25 thousand individuals and 10 parties on 30 policy issues in The Netherlands, we find considerable support for this conjecture. For parties that distribute their attention relatively equally across many policy issues, congruence does not vary across issues. But parties that focus on a small number of issues (niche parties) are more congruent than average on the salient issues and less congruent than average on the remaining ones. In sum, niche parties might represent closely the preferences of their core voters, but then only for the few issues they own.

## **Keywords**

policy congruence, political parties, public policy, public opinion, representation, salience

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## **Introduction**

The process of representation is central to politics and policy making in democracies, and political parties remain the major vehicles through which democratic representation is funneled. In standard normative accounts of the process political parties commit to particular policy positions before elections, voters select the parties that best represent their views and preferences, and the parties that get elected in government implement the policy pledges they have made (APSA, 1950). While spatial and directional positive theories of voting and elections disagree on how the mass-elite linkage is actually exercised (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1989), the importance of representation remains.

For representation to work, parties need to adopt positions that are in line with the preferences of the citizens. But parties face complex and often conflicting incentives when it comes to the formation of their policy positions. They have to balance being responsive to their own supporters, accommodating powerful interest groups, staying true to their ideology, and not drifting too far away from the median voter in society and possible coalition partners. Position taking is inevitably strategic as it unfolds in a contest for power and office. First, parties strategically decide which issues to emphasize, which positions to blur, and would try to refrain from taking any positions on issues that could be divisive or controversial for their potential voters (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge et al., 2001; Klingermann et al., 2006; Rovny 2013; Spoon et al., 2014). Second, when taking position on an issue, parties must not only represent their core supporters, but also try to attract new sympathizers or accommodate special interests (Strøm, 1990; Adams and Merrill, 1999; Lawson and Poguntke, 2004; van de Wardt et al., 2014). Given all the theoretically-plausible pressures parties face, the question of party responsiveness to and congruence with their voters must be approached empirically.

Research on policy representation has studied extensively the relationship between public opinion and public policy (Soroka and Wlezien, 2010; Lax and Phillips, 2012; see Erikson, 2015 for an overview), but it has mostly sidelined the mediating role of parties in translating the opinions of the people into policy decisions. The related literature on ideological representation (Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010; Powell, 2011) has been focused on the congruence between the preferences of the citizens and those of the elites elected in legislatures and government (Dalton, 1985; Belchior and Freire, 2015). But most of the existing studies have been conducted at the level of the party system rather than at the level of individual parties and have looked at congruence and representation along a

general ideological dimension rather than with respect to individual policy issues (Adams et al., 2006; Mattila and Raunio, 2006; Ezrow et al., 2011; Costello et al., 2012;). Yet, it is individual parties that contest elections and form governments, so they deserve attention in their own right. And lumping together positions on concrete issues into one or a couple of general dimensions can obscure important differences in representation *across* policy issues (see also Broockman, 2015).

In this study we focus on the question how party-voter congruence varies across parties and issues<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, we hypothesize that the issue attention profile of a party (the distribution of its attention across different issues) plays an important role moderating the extent of congruence across policy issues (see also Giger and Lefkofridie, 2014; Klüver and Spoon, 2014). Parties that distribute their attention relatively equally across many issues try to capture a diverse set of voters and have to make sure that they remain congruent with their opinions across all issues<sup>2</sup>. But parties that focus exclusively on a small number of issues (niche parties) cater to potential voters focused on a small set of issues of extreme importance to them. The upshot is that the fixation of the voters on these issues of high salience to them frees the niche parties from having to reflect the preferences of its voters on all other issues. Niche parties build their reputation and identity only with reference to very few issues of disproportionately high salience to them and to their voters. Since their electoral prospects hinge exclusively on these issues, niche parties can be expected to be more congruent with their supporters on the issues they own. But, at the same time, that leaves them relatively unconstrained with respect to all remaining policy issues, so that they can afford to be less congruent with their own supporters on them, accommodating other pressures from the environment, like interest group demands or the pull of the median voter.

Empirically, we test these hypotheses using the rich opt-in panel data provided by *Kieskompas*, a voting advice application deployed in The Netherlands in the build-up to the 2012 parliamentary elections. The dataset contains 25,663 individual records containing detailed information about the policy preferences and political affiliations of potential voters.

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<sup>1</sup> Spoon and Klüver (2014, 2015) also find that the issue salience profiles of voters and parties (as expressed in election manifestos) are related and that the relationship varies by party type (Klüver and Spoon, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> It is actually an open question how voters weight their proximity to party positions on different issues in multi-dimensional space.

Moreover, the individual-level data is matched with information on the policy positions of all 10 major Dutch political parties competing at the election (for 30 issues in total).

Our statistical analyses find support in the data for the theoretical conjectures sketched above. Overall, congruence varies little with party type (defined by their attention profile). And for catch-all parties congruence does not vary with the salience their supporters attach to particular issues. But for niche parties, congruence is significantly higher for salient issues, and it is lower than average for the rest. In sum, niche parties might represent closely the preferences of their voters, but then only for the few issues they own, at least in the Dutch case.

### **Congruence, issue salience, and party attention profiles**

The main concept of our study – party-voters congruence – is an aspect of political representation. We locate congruence at the level of parties and their supporters, we conceptualize it with reference to particular policy issues, and we decompose it in two dimensions – average *proximity* (or *distance*) between the position of a party and its voters and *congruence proper*, which tracks whether the party has adopted the median position of its supporters (see Achen, 1978 for a discussion of different conceptualizations of representation).

Our main theoretical interest is in the possible influence of one aspect of political parties – namely, their attention profile– on congruence. By attention profile we mean the distribution of attention parties put across different issues in programmatic statements, public speeches, and other relevant verbal and non-verbal acts that demonstrate where the party’s priorities lie. The attention profile can have different scope, covering a smaller or larger range of issues; it can be concentrated to a different degree on only one or a couple of issues at the expense of the rest; and the concentration can be around issues of varying importance to society in general. The concept of issue attention profile is related to the distinction between mainstream and niche parties (Meguid, 2005, 2008), but it avoids the conceptual debates surrounding the latter (cf. Adams et al., 2013; Wagner, 2011; Meyer and Miller, 2015). When we use the term ‘niche party’ we only intend it as a shortcut for the type of party that has an issue profile concentrated on a very small number of issues that receive a disproportionate amount of attention, and do not wish to define what niche parties really are or to imply that they are altogether a different species of political parties (see Krouwel, 2012).

How is the issue attention profile of parties related to congruence and representation? Below we identify several mechanisms and hypotheses that link these two concepts. First, niche parties are often led by a highly ideological activist elite who rally around a small set of issues. Party elites are then more focused on policy goals concerning that set of issues, instead of competing for the median voter (Kitschelt, 1994;; Adams et al. 2006). When niche voters all rally around a specific issue, the parties that cater to them are strongly punished if they defect from their position on this issue, even if the majority public opinion differs or changes. Congruence with the median *party* supporter is then very strongly implied, at least for the issues the niche parties ‘own’.

Second, mainstream parties and niche parties differ in their time horizons (Ezrow et al., 2011: 279; Adams et al., 2006: 515) because niche parties are motivated by commitment to their core issues which often entail great societal change that could span decades. Third, niche parties’ organizational structure is found to be more horizontal and informal, since the party is created around an activist goal lacking hierarchical structures, and because these parties tend to be newer and smaller (Ezrow et al., 2011: 279; Matilla and Raunio, 2006). As a consequence, the communication lines between party supporters and party elites are clear and easily accessible, enabling a clearer stream of feedback between the groups.

In sum, niche parties generally show uncompromising long-term policy-seeking behavior, aligned with a partisan constituency electoral strategy. In contrast, mainstream parties tend to favor strategies based on the general electorate model and show more vote-seeking and short-term office-seeking behavior. Specifically, mainstream parties demonstrating office-seeking behavior leave room for moderation and flexibility on specific issues to increase chances for coalition negotiation.

In effect we expect that party-voter congruence and its relationship with the party issue attention profile would depend on the relative salience of the policy issue for the parties and their supporters. In other words, (party-specific) issue salience is hypothesized to moderate the link between party type and congruence.

It is well-established that parties compete not only by outmaneuvering each other by strategic positioning on a fixed set of issues, but by associating themselves with certain issues to the extent that they ‘own’ them (Budge and Farlie, 1983). However, parties that own a small set of issues offer little information (or send vague signals) about their stances on all

other issues, and, in turn, they receive few signals from their supporters about the positions the supporters espouse on these non-salient issues. Costello et al. (2012: 1228) state that because parties offer a ‘package deal’ to voters, it is likely that there are multiple issues on which a voter does not agree with the party they vote for. The only time this can be avoided is when the issue position on the salient issue is connected with party positions on other issues. Such a case where voters, politicians and party are all connected only occurs when they are constrained by the same ideology or belief system.

For niche party voters, this is not the case. They have rallied around a small set of issues that are typically not on the left-right dimension. These niche supporters come from different ideological backgrounds and do not make a homogenous group based on the classical divisions. These voters cannot assume that party positions are inherently connected, nor can the party itself easily determine the preferred position of its supporters on non-niche issues (Meguid, 2008; Adams et al., 2006).

This close link between issue salience and congruence is far more limited in the case of mainstream parties with broad issue profiles. For one, office-seeking behavior is expected to lead to lower congruence on specific issues because of the need for flexibility. So even when supporters assign a great deal of salience to a specific issue, the party is limited in its possibilities to fully converge to their preferences. Secondly, mainstream parties do in fact have a more homogeneous supporter group, because these parties can fall back on ideological cues based on class or religious ideology, and have a long history to inform future behavior (Worre, 1980; Schmidt, 1996). As a result, office-seeking behavior and ideology constrain parties to achieve high congruence for issues that are salient, but at the same time, ideology and the relatively homogenous supporter group also constrain congruence to fall too low for non-salient issues.

To sum up, the theoretical discussion leads to expect that (1) overall, niche and mainstream parties would not necessarily differ in their overall party voter congruence when average across many issues; that (2) issue salience would not necessarily moderate the effect of congruence for mainstream parties, but that (3) issue salience would have a moderating effect on congruence for niche parties. The next section outlines the research design with which we test empirically these conjectures.

## Data and measures

To test these hypotheses, we use the dataset of *Kieskompas*, a voting advice application deployed in the build-up to the 2012 Dutch national parliamentary election. The dataset contains the policy positions on 30 concrete policy issues of more than 650,000 respondents and the verified positions of all political parties on these same issues. In addition, the dataset has information about the party preferences of some of the respondents, including their past party vote and prospective vote intention. (see Table A1 and A2 in the Appendix for details and Krouwel et al., 2012, for a description of the issue selection process and calibration of parties on the issues).

Because our theoretical arguments relate to the relationships between parties and party supporters, we subsample the *Kieskompas* data to include *party supporters* only, defined as those respondents who reveal in the optional extra questions that they have voted for the same party at the previous 2010 parliamentary election and on which they intend to vote on in 2012. This leaves us with a sample of 25,663 records. (see Table A3 in the Appendix for descriptive data on the final sample).

We use two measures of party-voter *congruence*. First, we operationalize it as *proximity (distance)*, defined as the absolute value of the difference between the party position (as determined by *Kieskompas* based on various party statements) and the average position of the party supporters. The parties' and supporters' positions are measured on the same five-point Likert-scale with values ranging from “Totally disagree” to “Totally agree” (with the relevant policy statement). Second, we operationalize it as *congruence proper*, defined as a binary variable that takes the value '1' if the party position coincides with the median position of its supporters and '0' otherwise.

To measure the *issue attention profile* of a party, for our purposes this being the defining variable between mainstream- and niche parties, we use 2012 data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (Volkens et al., 2014). We start with calculating the relative attention to all issues in a party's manifesto. Then, following the approach of Meyer and Miller (2015: 262), we compute the deviation of a party's issue attention profile from the overall system-level agenda according to the formula:

$$\sigma_p = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (x_{ip} - \bar{X}_{i,-p})^2}$$

where  $x_{ip}$  is the emphasis of party  $p$  on issue  $i$  and  $\bar{X}_{i,-p}$  the average emphasis of all parties other than  $p$  on issue  $i$ . (The average emphasis is weighted by the number of seats each party has prior to the 2012 election to get a more accurate representation of the system-level agenda.) The values are then standardized by subtracting the average level of deviation of all parties from the particular issue attention profile score of a party. In principle, the resulting measure is continuous, but we dichotomize it to capture the categorical differences between types of parties. Accordingly, we classify parties with a standardized score below zero as 'mainstream' and the rest as 'niche' (see Tables A4-A6 in the appendix for descriptive tables on the independent variables).

Based on the idea that people have more accessible attitudes on issues that are salient to them (Krosnick, 1990; Lavine et al. 1996), we operationalize *issue salience* as the fraction of party supporters that have expressed an opinion on a policy issue question, and then calculate it for each party and issue separately. We consider respondents who have *not* expressed an opinion as those who have answered a policy issue question with 'Don't know' or 'Neutral'.

We also employ three variables that control for alternative explanations and explore the robustness of the empirical results. First, we control for the within-party consensus of positions on an issue. When the positions of its party supporters are more dispersed, it is harder for parties to adopt a position that will satisfy all and, as a result, congruence will decline. To measure within-party consensus we rely on Tastle and Wierman's definition and formula (2007: 538):

$$Cns(I) = 1 + \sum_{p=1}^n \mathbb{P}_p \log_2 \left( 1 - \frac{|I_p - \mu_i|}{d_i} \right)$$

where  $\mu_i$  is the mean of issue  $i$  from party supporter group  $p$ ,  $\mathbb{P}_p$  is the probability of outcome  $I_p$ , and  $d_i$  is the width of issue  $I$ :  $d_i = I_{max} - I_{min}$ .

Second, we control for the median issue position of all respondents. Theoretically, when the party supporters' average position differs radically from the average opinion in society, the



pressure for parties to move towards the median voter become higher and it becomes harder for parties to be congruent with their own supporters. The measure we use to address this argument is defined as the absolute distance between the average position of the party supporters of a party and the median position of all respondents on an issue.

Third, in order to explore whether it is issue salience as such that matters for congruence or merely the issue *type*, we use a variable that tracks whether the individual issues fit into the socio-economic left-right or into the social progressive-conservative policy dimensions.

### **Analysis and results**

To commence the empirical analysis, Figure 1 presents a descriptive overview of how policy distance between parties and their supporters varies across party types and issue salience.

[Figure 1 about here]

The left panel of the figure shows the distributions of policy distance for mainstream and niche parties separately. The plot shows that the means and standard deviations of distance for the two party types are very similar and shows that there is no bivariate relationship between party type and distance when all types of issues are considered, and in the absence of potential confounders. The right panel of the figure plots policy distance against issue salience and adds linear regression and smoothing spline fit lines, estimated separately for mainstream and niche parties. For mainstream parties the linear regression line is flat, implying that policy distance does not vary systematically with issue salience. But the line for niche parties slopes downwards suggesting that for these parties policy distance decreases with salience, in line with our theoretical reasoning. We can relax the assumption that the relationship between policy distance and issue salience is linear and fit smoothing spline lines to summarize the data instead. The main inferences remain the same: niche parties are more distant than mainstream parties on issues with lower than average salience and closer (and increasingly so) for issues with higher than average salience.

Continuing the analysis, we report the results from a series of linear regression models in Table 1 (the models are specified with standard errors clustered at the policy issue level to capture possible statistical non-independence within issues). Model 1 includes the main variables of interest - issue salience, party type and their interaction, as well as opinion

consensus within groups of party supporters. The interaction effect between issue salience and niche parties is negative and statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that the data is consistent with the hypothesis that niche parties have policy positions that are closer to the ones of their supporters for the issues salient to their supporters and further away for issues of lower salience. As expected, the more consensual the opinions of party supporters are, the closer average supporter position and party position become. Interestingly, in this model niche parties appear, overall, as being significantly more distant from their supporters than mainstream ones, but we consider this result in light of the descriptive information presented in Figure 1 and the significant interaction.

[Table 1 about here]

Model 2 adds the variable controlling for the distance from the median of all respondents of the average position of the party supporters, which however fails to reach significance. Importantly, the interaction effect between issue salience and party type remains negative and significant. In Model 3 we add the variable capturing issue characteristics and its interaction with party type. While the positive coefficient of the issue type variable suggests that on socio-economic left/right issues the positions of parties are more distant from their supporters than on progressive-conservative issues, there is no variation of the effect with party type. Furthermore, the interaction between issue salience and party type is still significant, implying that it is not driven by differences in the type of issues. (Additional models are presented in the Appendix).

Moving to the analysis of congruence proper, Table 2 presents another set of three models that summarize results from three logistic regression analysis (again, standard errors are clustered at the issue level). The pattern of findings is very similar to the one uncovered in the analysis of policy distance. The interaction between issue salience and party type is positive and significant (so that congruence increases for salient issues and niche parties). In general, niche parties are marginally less likely to be congruent with their supporters' median positions. Within-party consensus continues to play an important role in increasing congruence, and the distance from the grand median continues to have no effect (Model 5). Issues that fit the socio-economic left-right dimensions are less likely to be congruent, but the effect does not vary with party type (Model 6).

[Table 2 about here]

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the empirical analysis supports the view that parties with an issue attention profile focused on relatively few issues (niche parties) are closer to and more congruent with the positions of their supporters on the issues salient to the latter, but less so for non-salient issues. As theoretically expected, for political parties that pay attention to more topics (mainstream or catch-all parties), distance and congruence do not vary with issue salience.

These findings agree with theoretical intuitions about niche parties being less constrained on the issues that they do not ‘own’. This flexibility that niche parties enjoy can be important for accommodating special interests or strategic policy maneuvers without alienating their core supporters, even if they happen to disagree with the positions the parties adopt on non-salient issues.

Clearly, it will be worth testing whether the empirical patterns uncovered in the Dutch national parliamentary elections case analyzed here will generalize to other countries and elections. It could be that the Dutch case presents an easy test for the theoretical arguments explored here, because the political system features parties that cover the full range of variation in terms of the concentration of their issue profiles: from single-issue to traditional, ideologically-based catch-all parties. It should be noted that our results contradict recent findings about party-voter congruence in Switzerland that argued for a general effect of individual-level salience and found niche parties to be more congruent (Giger and Lefkofridie, 2014).

Coming back to the normative questions that motivate this article, our findings present a challenge to democratic representation. Niche parties play the election game on a small number of salient issues on which they represent their voters relatively well. But if and when they get in government, they have to address all issues, salient or not. If voters are willing to forgo parties taking positions incongruent with their own on all but the most salient issues, then the representation mechanism between citizens and public policy breaks down.

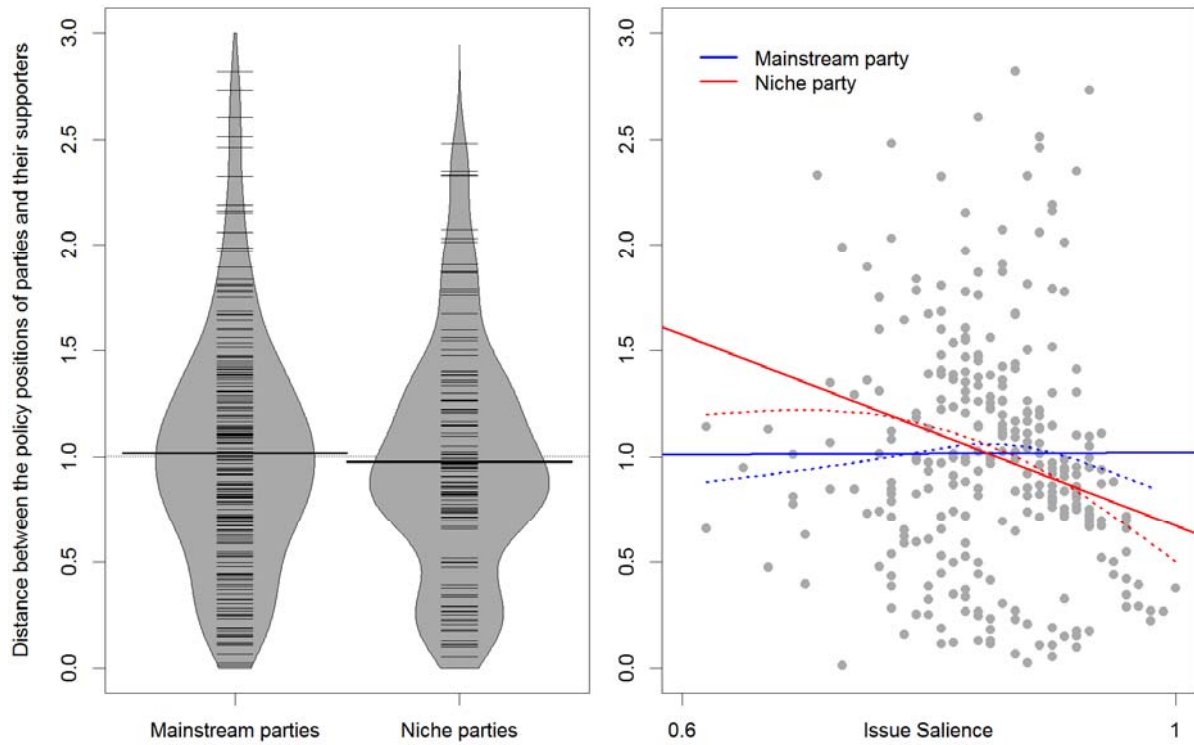
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## Figure and tables



**Figure 1. Policy distance across party types and issue salience.** *The left panel shows a 'beanplot' of the distributions of policy distance for mainstream and niche parties. The horizontal black lines represent observations and the grey areas summarize the densities of the distributions. The right panel plots policy distance against issue salience. The grey dots are observations. The solid lines are linear regression fits, and the dotted lines are cubic smoothing spline fits (in blue for mainstream and in red for niche parties).*

**Table 1.**Modeling distance between the issue positions of parties and their supporters

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
(Intercept)	1.90 (0.46) ***	1.93 (0.46) ***	1.86 (0.34) ***
Salience	0.65 (0.60)	0.63 (0.60)	0.53 (0.45)
Niche party	1.54 (0.68) *	1.45 (0.68) *`	1.30 (0.64) *`
<b>Salience*Niche party</b>	<b>-1.89 (0.78) *</b>	<b>-1.77 (0.78) *</b>	<b>-1.56 (0.73) *</b>
Consensus (within-party)	-2.30 (0.39) ***	-2.32 (0.39) ***	-2.27 (0.39) ***
Distance from median	-	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)
Left/Right issue	-	-	0.23 (0.09) *
Left/Right issue*Niche party	-	-	-0.07 (0.09)
Adjusted R-squared	0.14	0.15	0.17

Notes: OLS regression. 300 observations (10 parties; 30 issues). Outcome variable: Distance between party position and the average position of its supporters. Standard errors clustered at the issue level.

Significance codes: \*\*\* 0.001 \*\* 0.01 \* 0.05 ` 0.10

**Table 2.**Modeling congruence between the issue positions of parties and their supporters

	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
(Intercept)	-2.04 (2.04)	-2.30 (2.14)	-1.98 (1.71)
Salience	-1.94 (2.44)	-1.90 (2.40)	-1.61 (2.13)
Niche party	-6.11 (3.13) `	-5.54 (3.09) `	-4.94 (3.17)
<b>Salience*Niche party</b>	<b>7.34 (3.61) *</b>	<b>6.61 (3.59) `</b>	<b>5.96 (3.65) `</b>
Consensus (within-party)	4.40 (1.71) **	4.53 (1.70) **	4.29 (1.74) *
Distance from median	-	0.23 (0.18)	0.12 (0.20)
Left/Right issue	-	-	-0.71 (0.32) *
Left/Right issue*Niche party	-	-	-0.04 (0.55)
Deviance	350.57	349.65	342.28

Notes: Logistic regression. 300 observations (10 parties; 30 issues). Outcome variable: congruence between the party position and the median position of its supporters. Standard errors clustered at the issue level.

Significance codes: \*\*\* 0.001 \*\* 0.01 \* 0.05 ` 0.10

**Online Appendix to 'Issue Salience and Congruence Between Voters and Parties in The Netherlands'**

**Table A1: Party names and ideological categorization in 2012 Dutch National Election**

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Full name</i>	<i>Ideological category</i>
CDA	Christen Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democrats
CU	Christen Unie	Christian Progressives
D66	Democraten 66	Progressive Liberals
GL	GroenLinks	Greens
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid	Social democrats
PvdD	Partij van de Dieren	Animal Party
PVV	Partij van de Vrijheid	Right-Wing Populist
SGP	Staatskundig Gereformeerde Partij	Christian Conservatists
SP	Socialistische Partij	Socialists
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	Conservative Liberals



**Table A2: Policy issues: question wording and policy type**

<i>Number Issue</i>	<i>Question wording (Dutch)</i>	<i>Type (0=Prog-Cons, 1=Left-Right)</i>	
1	euro	Nederland moet in de euro blijven	0
2	EU integration	Verdere Europese integratie is goed voor Nederland	0
3	Eurosupport	Om de euro te behouden is het goed als Nederland zwakkere eurolanden financieel steunt	0
4	Turkey	Turkije mag nooit lid worden van de Europese Unie	0
5	Organ donor	Alle volwassenen zijn automatisch orgaandonor, tenzij zij expliciet hebben aangegeven dat niet te willen	0
6	Gay marriage	Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen weigeren homostellen te trouwen	0
7	Punishment	In Nederland moet strenger worden gestraft dan nu, ook bij kleine vergrijpen	0
8	Coffeeshop	Alle coffeeshops moeten worden gesloten	0
9	Roads	Om files op te lossen moeten meer wegen worden aangelegd	0
10	Work travel costs	Werknemers moeten belasting gaan betalen over hun reiskostenvergoeding, net als over het inkomen	1
11	ritual slaughter	Ritueel slachten moet worden verboden	0
12	student loans	In plaats van een gift moet de hele studiefinanciering een lening worden	1
13	child support	Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen	1
14	risk health	Het eigen risico moet worden verhoogd om de gezondheidszorg betaalbaar te houden	1
15	hospitalstay	Patiënten moeten gaan betalen voor iedere dag dat zij in het ziekenhuis liggen	1
16	hightax	Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet omhoog	1
17	pension age	De AOW-gerechtigde leeftijd moet 65 jaar blijven	1
18	dismissal law	Het moet voor bedrijven makkelijker worden om werknemers te ontslaan	1
19	unemployment	Op de werkloosheidsuitkering (WW) mag worden bezuinigd	1
20	mortgagecut	De hypotheekrenteaftrek moet op termijn volledig worden afgeschaft	1
21	socialhousing	Bewoners van sociale huurwoningen die veel verdienen moeten een extra huurverhoging gaan betalen	1
22	foreignaid	Op ontwikkelingssamenwerking mag worden bezuinigd	1
23	defense	De Nederlandse defensiemacht mag blijvend worden verkleind	1
24	burka	Het dragen van een boerka moet worden verboden	0
25	generalpardon	Jonge asielzoekers die al lang in Nederland zijn, moeten een permanente verblijfsvergunning krijgen	0
26	artsubsidies	De overheid moet bezuinigen op kunstsubsidies	1
27	nuclearpower	In Nederland mogen nieuwe kerncentrales worden gebouwd	0
28	alcoholage	Alcoholgebruik door jongeren onder de 18 jaar moet worden verboden	0
29	Economic intervention	De overheid moet meer ingrijpen in de economie	1
30	euthanasia	Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen met professionele hulp een einde aan hun leven maken	0

**Table A3: Number of party supporters per party**

	<i>2010 vote</i>										
	CDA	CU	D66	GL	PvdA	PvdD	PVV	SGP	SP	VVD	Total
CDA	<b>1740</b>	111	77	40	88	5	45	6	33	283	2428
CU	233	<b>953</b>	23	22	42	4	23	18	16	67	1401
D66	357	53	<b>4118</b>	770	937	33	52	3	173	1242	7738
GL	46	42	184	<b>2281</b>	327	26	16	0	108	39	3069
PvdA	216	86	758	1362	<b>5046</b>	64	150	1	822	369	8874
PvdD	8	12	57	172	64	<b>308</b>	23	0	86	29	759
PVV	45	14	20	15	58	19	<b>1705</b>	6	67	386	2335
SGP	62	53	3	1	1	0	38	<b>275</b>	6	27	466
SP	119	62	219	466	1065	63	330	1	<b>2437</b>	249	5011
VVD	540	29	322	45	113	16	614	5	66	<b>6800</b>	8550
Total	3366	1415	5781	5174	7741	538	2996	315	3814	9491	40631
<b>Core</b>	<b>1740</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>4118</b>	<b>2281</b>	<b>5046</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>1705</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>2437</b>	<b>6800</b>	<b>25663</b>

**Table A4: Issue attention profile per party**

<i>Party</i>	<i>Nicheness</i>	<i>Standardized Nicheness</i>
PvdA	2.61	-1.34
CU	2.51	-1.22
CDA	2.74	-1.10
D66	2.77	-0.98
VVD	3.11	-0.72
SP	3.36	-0.36
GL	4.57	0.95
PVV	6.05	2.82
SGP	6.66	3.02
PvdD	12.64	9.08

*Note:* Calculation based on Meyer & Miller (2015), using unique emphasis of 44 issues in the parties' 2012 manifestos, as coded by the Comparative Manifesto Project.

**Table A5: descriptive statistics supporter group specific salience**

	<i>Party</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Minimum Issue</i>	<i>Maximum Issue</i>
<i>Mainstream</i>	PvdA	0.85	0.06	0.71	0.96	Economic intervention	Eurozone membership
	CU	0.84	0.07	0.62	0.94	Economic intervention	Gay Marriage
	CDA	0.82	0.06	0.68	0.95	Economic intervention	Eurozone membership
	D66	0.84	0.07	0.66	0.98	Economic intervention	Eurozone membership
	VVD	0.85	0.06	0.73	0.93	EU membership Turkey	Foreign aid
	SP	0.86	0.07	0.70	0.96	European integration	Contribution hospital stay
<i>Niche</i>	GL	0.87	0.07	0.68	0.96	Economic intervention	General pardon
	PVV	0.88	0.05	0.71	0.99	Economic intervention	Foreign aid
	SGP	0.88	0.06	0.76	0.100	Financial support Eurozone	Gay Marriage
	PvdD	0.84	0.07	0.63	0.94	Economic intervention	Ritual slaughter
	<i>Mainstream</i>	0.84	0.06	0.62	0.98		
<i>Niche</i>	0.86	0.06	0.63	0.100			

**Table A6: descriptive statistics supporter group consensus**

	<i>Party</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Minimum Issue</i>	<i>Maximum Issue</i>
<i>Mainstream</i>	PvdA	0.65	0.08	0.51	0.79	Burka prohibition	General pardon
	CU	0.61	0.09	0.43	0.75	Automatic organ donor	General pardon
	CDA	0.61	0.07	0.47	0.77	Gay marriage	Eurozone membership
	D66	0.67	0.08	0.51	0.83	Burka prohibition	Eurozone membership
	VVD	0.59	0.08	0.42	0.72	Automatic organ donor	Higher punishments
	SP	0.62	0.06	0.47	0.74	Automatic organ donor	Contribution hospital stay
<i>Niche</i>	GL	0.64	0.08	0.52	0.84	Ritual slaughter	Financial support Eurozone
	PVV	0.57	0.12	0.34	0.81	Automatic organ donor	Foreign aid
	SGP	0.59	0.08	0.45	0.83	Taxing high incomes	Euthanasia
	PvdD	0.57	0.08	0.35	0.72	Automatic organ donor	Contribution hospital stay
<i>Mainstream</i>	0.62	0.08	0.42	0.83			

**Table A7: Additional models of distance between the issue positions of parties and their supporters.**

Model A1 employs a continuous measure of party issue attention profile (IAP).

Model A2 uses a less strict definition of party supporters (only those who have voted for the party at the previous elections).

Model A3 employs a dependent variable defined as the difference from the party position from the median (rather than the mean) supporters' position.

	<b>Model A1</b>	<b>Model A2</b>	<b>Model A3</b>
(Intercept)	1.80 (0.71) *	1.74 (0.61) **	1.58 (0.62) *
Saliency	0.76 (0.86)	0.79 (0.72)	0.76 (0.89)
Niche party (IAP)	0.16 (0.13)	1.64 (0.82) *	2.00 (0.92) *
<b>Saliency*Niche party (IAP)</b>	<b>-0.20 (0.15)</b>	<b>-2.02 (0.96) *</b>	<b>-2.46 (1.04) *</b>
Consensus (within-party)	-2.33 (0.40) ***	-2.18 (0.48) ***	-2.09 (0.59) ***
Adjusted R-squared	0.13	0.09	0.07

Notes: OLS regression. 300 observations (10 parties; 30 issues). Outcome variable: Distance between party position and the average position of its supporters. Standard errors clustered at the issue level.

Significance codes: \*\*\* 0.001 \*\* 0.01 \* 0.05 ` 0.10

**Table A8: Additional models of congruence between the issue positions of parties and their supporters**

Model A4 employs a continuous measure of party issue attention profile (IAP).

Model A5 uses a less strict definition of party supporters (only those who have voted for the party at the previous elections).

	<b>Model A4</b>	<b>Model A5</b>
(Intercept)	-1.19 (2.23)	-3.02 (2.78)
Saliency	-2.82 (2.38)	-2.60 (2.53)
Niche party (IAP)	-0.75(0.60)	-4.08 (5.41)
<b>Saliency*Niche party (IAP)</b>	<b>0.87 (0.69)</b>	<b>5.02 (6.29)</b>
Consensus (within-party)	4.42 (1.74) *	6.56 (2.42) **
Deviance	352.89	315.38

Notes: Logistic regression. 300 observations (10 parties; 30 issues). Outcome variable: congruence between the party position and the median position of its supporters. Standard errors clustered at the issue level.

Significance codes: \*\*\* 0.001 \*\* 0.01 \* 0.05 ` 0.10