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Extremism, expressive voting, and identity politics

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Abstract:

Previous work on Expressive Voting has focused on the desire of voters to express what they are *for* and thus who they *are*. But, often also as important, is the desire of voters to express what they are *against*, and who they *are not*. In this paper we extend the standard formulation of Expressive Voting to account for this possibility and show that this leads to a parsimonious description of identity politics, here understood to be the politics of group division. Our formulation suggests a simple parameterisation of the importance of identity politics, and using data for the UK we provide empirical evidence of the desire to *boo* and furthermore that the implied importance of identity politics first shrunk following the end of the Cold War and has since risen again in the wake of the 2008 Financial Crisis. We then study the implications of this recent shift towards identity politics, by building a model of multiparty political competition with endogenous turnout. Calibration of this model suggests that it is better able to explain the separate and distinct nature of UK party platforms while also identifying an empirically realistic pattern of intra-party platform heterogeneity.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Expressive Voting, Polarization

JEL-Codes: D72

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1   Introduction

The theory of *Expressive Voting* (Brennan and Lomasky, 1993, Hamlin and Jennings, 2011) suggests that voters care not only about the outcomes of elections but also about expressing their opinions, beliefs, or conscience. As discussed by Hamlin and Jennings (2019), the domain of expressive motivations is 'large and nuanced' in a similar manner to conventional instrumental concerns. Thus, voters may want to express what they are, and they may want to express what they are not.[1] This paper argues empirically and theoretically that the well-documented increase in political polarization in many western democracies and the growing importance of identity politics may be more easily understood from this perspective. At its broadest, Identity Politics may be thought of as voting on the basis of differences, such as race, gender, or class, rather than party allegiance. In this view, related to that argued for by Hillman (2010), a voter's identity as a liberal or a conservative has a substantive importance beyond their their allegiance to any one party.

Related to the increase in political polarization has been, across countries and political systems, the emergence of electorally-successful populist and anti-establishment politicians. While, the specifics naturally vary, the politics of many countries have witnessed the following:

1. increased political polarization

2. populism and anti-establishmentism

3. involvement by movements of both the political right and left.

There are many competing explanations for each of these trends individually and for them as a set. Some appeal to pocketbook voting explanations and the effects of austerity (Fetzer, 2019) for the UK, Autor et al. (2016) for the US, and Dal Bó et al. (2018) for Sweden. Others emphasise the limited explanatory power of the internet and social networks (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017, Boxell et al., 2017). Similarly, in

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[1]The origins of the idea of Expressive Voting are commonly attributed to Buchanan (1954) and particularly Tullock (1971). Fiorina (1976) provides the first formal treatment. This paper's point of departure is Hamlin and Jennings (2011) which provided a key treatment. See, Hamlin and Jennings (2019) for an updated exposition.

the UK at least, there was a limited role of migration (Becker et al., 2017) although xenophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment predict support for the far-right EDL.

This paper posits that one key element in understanding all these changes is the relative importance of identity politics, the politics of difference, versus the traditional party politics. This explanation requires neither changes in voter preferences nor pocketbook concerns, but instead changes over time whether voters are more likely to vote to express their preference or to express what they are not. Put another way, differences in whether voters' political behaviour is driven by *cheering* what they are *for* or *booing* what they are *against*. We begin by providing empirical evidence that *booing* is an important motivation, and at recent elections more important than *cheering*. We then develop a model of political competition that incorporates these two competing motivations with which to rationalise the recent trends identified above. We then estimate this model numerically, showing that it is able to rationalise the existence of heterogeneous but distinct parties. Counterfactual simulation suggests that in the absence of the *booing* motive we would observe lower levels of political polarization.

Brennan and Lomasky (1993), Schuessler (2000), Hamlin and Jennings (2011) argue for an expressive theory of political behaviour. In this view voters decide whether and how to vote depending both on the outcome that will occur if their vote were decisive and also based on their return from expressing their opinion, conscience, or beliefs. This departure from the standard view in rational choice where voters have preferences only over outcomes is reminiscent of the large literature on the, by now, well documented preferences for fairness identified by Fehr and Schmidt (1999), Dawes et al. (2007), Tricomi et al. (2010). Similarly, agents are now presumed to have preferences beyond their economic self-interest. Notably, while in a market setting there are reasons to believe that these other preferences may be normally a comparatively small aspect of behaviour as the opportunity cost may be expected to be high. In the case of elections where voting is private and unlikely to affect outcomes, opportunity costs will be smaller.[2]

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[2]Wiese and Jong-A-Pin (2017) provide laboratory evidence for Expressive Voting. Schnellenbach and Schubert (2015) provide a survey of behavioural political economy.

The analysis of Brennan and Lomasky (1993) focuses on the case of two parties and thus the distinction between *cheering* the party or group you support and *booing* the one you do not has limited empirical content.[3] In reality, however, three or more parties is contesting elections is the norm outside of the US and in this case the comparative desire of voters to *cheer* versus *boo* may imply different outcomes.[4]

This paper thus begins by analysing British data for general elections over the period 1922–2017 to establish some stylised facts about the relative importance of cheering and booing. We find that:

1. *booing* is comparatively important

2. that the relative importance of *cheering* and *booing* have changed over time

3. the importance of *booing* seems to be higher both before the post-Cold War consensus and after the 2008 Financial Crisis.

One further feature of the data is that turnout varies considerably over time. Figure 1 reports aggregate UK turnout rates for the last 95 years and we note firstly that turnout has varied considerably over time from a high of nearly 84% in 1950 to historic lows of just under 60% in 2001. Secondly, we note that turnout is relatively volatile with differences in turnout rates between elections of around 10% in several cases. Long-run changes in turnout rates will represent a combination of different non-consequentialist (Shayo and Harel, 2012) factors encompassing warm glow and civic duty explanations as well as changes in information acquisition Feddersen (2004), Feddersen and Sandroni (2006) and social preferences and information Myatt (2015) or the strategic protest voting Myatt (2017). To the extent that these explanations rest on fundamentals of voters preferences it is harder for them to explain short-run changes in turnout rates as normally we regard such fundamentals as, at most, slowly changing if not fixed. In general, there is every reason to believe that voters' behaviour

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[3]The idea of a voter expressing who they do and do not support has some parallels with approval voting, as reviewed by Weber (1995). There a voter has multiple votes with which to convey this information. Whereas, in a conventional single-vote election, and with expressive motivations, they must choose *how* they wish to express themselves.

[4]This expanded set of motivations has clear parallels with the models of context dependent voting introduced by Callander and Wilson (2008, 2006) in which the appeal of each choice at an election depends on the other available option.

will reflect both expressive and instrumental motivations. But, in this paper we will assume for clarity, and given that the elections we study are large, that there is little instrumental benefit from voting and thus that voters' behaviour reflects expressive motivations.
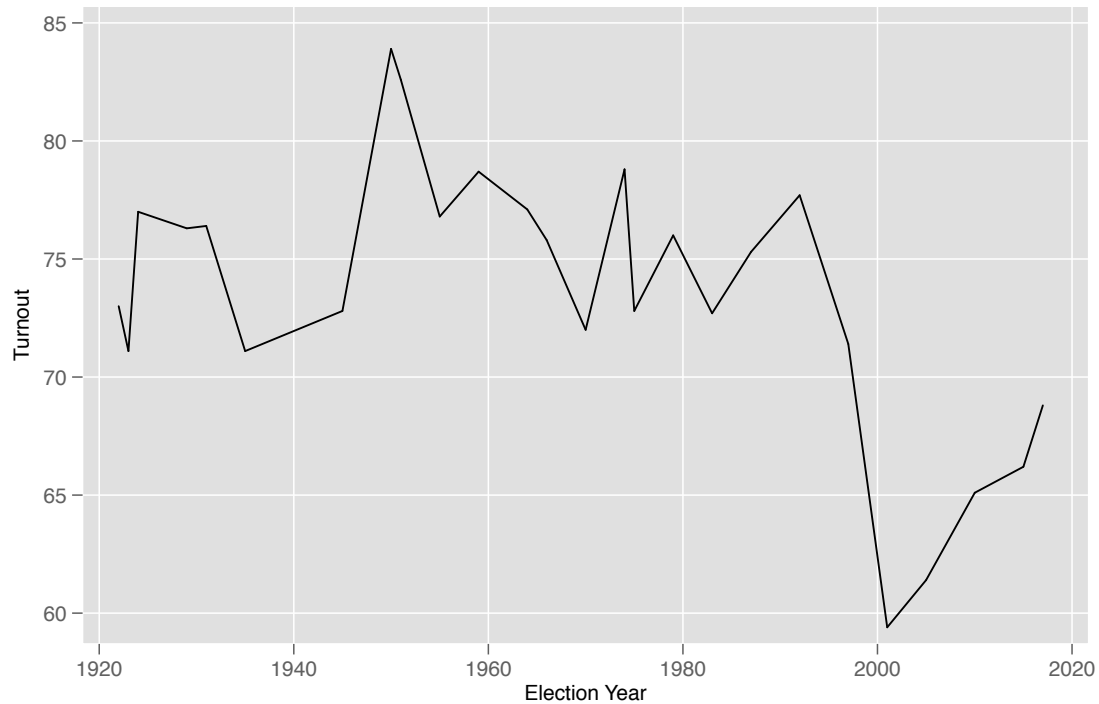

Figure 1: Turnout at British general elections 1922–2017

Source: House of Commons Library (Audickas and Cracknell, 2018). Data are for Great Britain only.

At this point it useful to briefly rehearse the key features of UK political history over the last century. Figures 2 and 3 plot the vote shares and number of seats in the UK Parliament over the same 95 year period as Figure 1. The blue and red lines depict the two largest parties, the Conservative and Labour parties. Our interest is in the fluctuating importance of the gold line which plots the varying success of what was initially the Liberal Party and is now the Liberal Democrat party, and the purple line which plots the fortunes of 'other' parties, most importantly United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) (in terms of votes but not seats) in recent years, as well as the green line plotting the importance of the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties. The detail has been extensively documented and analysed by historians and political scientists, for example Sked and Cook (1979), but our interest is in the macroscopic
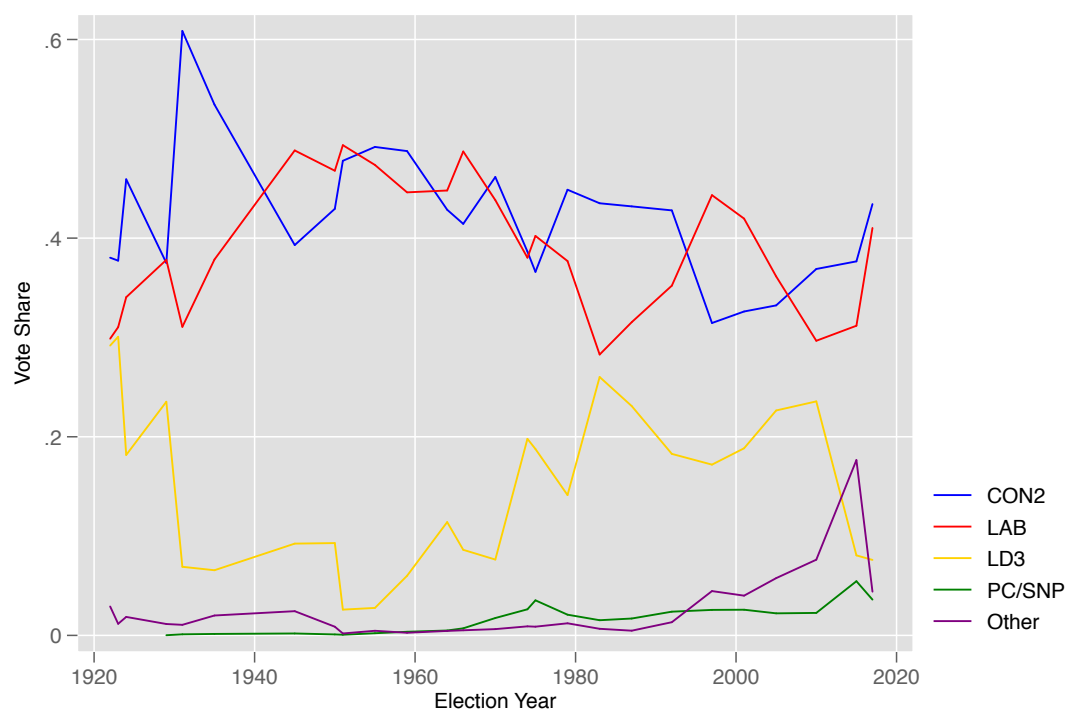
Figure 2: Party vote shares at British general elections 1922–2017

Source: House of Commons Library (Audickas and Cracknell, 2018). Data are for Great Britain only.

story that following the *'Strange Death of Liberal England'* Dangerfield ([1935] 2017) prior to 1918, the period 1922–1945 saw the Labour party usurp the Liberals as the main opposition. The Cold War period then saw a stable, Duvergian, two party duopoly with almost all seats until the beginning of the 1980s when key members of the Labour party split to form a separate, more centrist party, and in time joined with the remainders of the Liberal party to form the Liberal Democrats. Also relevant is the growth in the Nationalist parties, and crucially from the late 1990s onwards, the populist anti-EU UKIP. Thus, the UK has become, contra Duverger, a multiparty democracy with coalition government in 2010 and minority government in 2017.

One important feature of this change has been the fragmentation in the simpler identities of the two party period prior to the 1980s. During this period identity was dominated by class and geography, with Labour dominating the working-class, industrial, urban vote, and the Conservative party the middle-class and rural vote.[5] In

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[5]See Shayo (2009) for a discussion of the role of national identity in the political economy of western democracies.
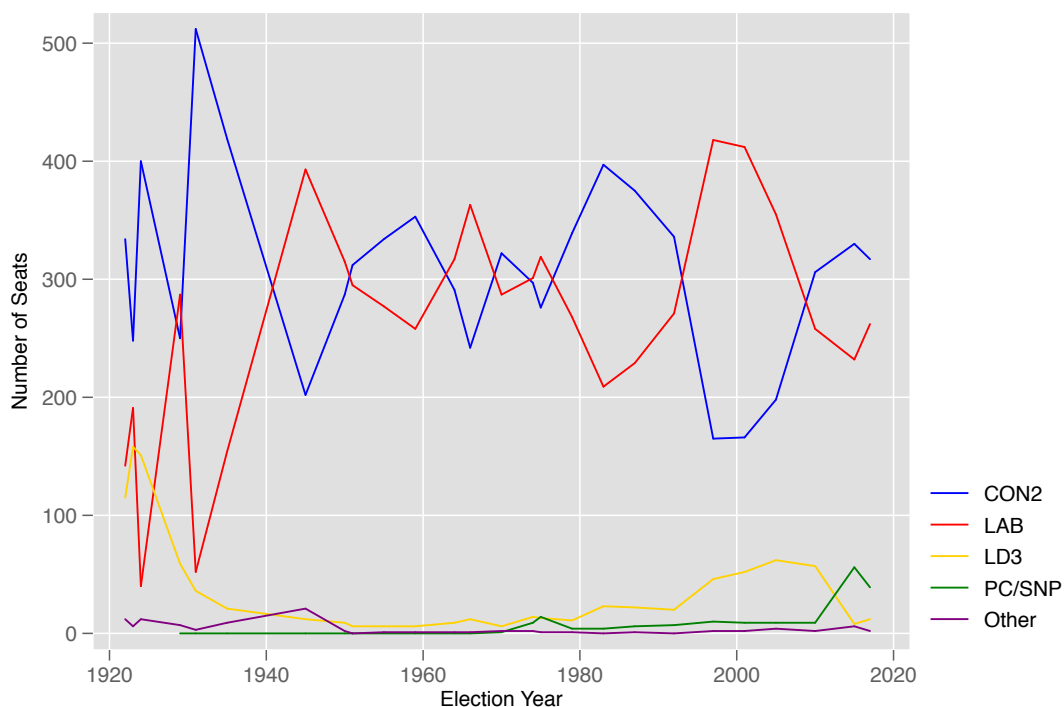
Figure 3: Party seats at British general elections 1922–2017

Source: House of Commons Library (Audickas and Cracknell, 2018). Data are for Great Britain only.

this setting, identity politics were simple, you were what you were not, and there was a clear alignment between political affiliation, social identity, and economic interest. That is, if you were a Labour supporter then that described your political identity completely, there was no dimension in which you were closer to the conservative party. The situation is now considerably more complicated. Labour has in recent years suffered the collapse of its traditional heartlands, and the Conservative party similarly no longer attracts the votes of the young educated, and affluent in the same way. Fetzer (2019), Becker et al. (2017).

Instead, as elsewhere (de Vries and van Kersbergen, 2007), political identity has become more complicated. As well as the more obvious political cleavages such as the European Union, Migration, and the traditional size and composition of government there are now more subtle issues that animate many voters. The rights of women, minority racial and ethnic groups, and LGBTQ+ people, are now key, and polarizing, issues for many people but about which the major political parties do not profess any substantial disagreement. So too, in many narratives, are the concerns of the

'left behind' those affected either by austerity Fetzer (2019) or by deindustrialisation and globalisation Autor et al. (2016). The success of Donald Trump in Rust Belt communities that previously voted Democrat is mirrored by the support in the equivalent British communities for Brexit, and UKIP.

A substantial literature in Economics and Political Science has focused on polarization in US politics Boxell et al. (2017), and a more recent one on the UK Peterson and Spirling (2018), but, while clearly related, identity politics is distinct from extremism. We take identity politics to describe the set of disagreements based on individual identity not outcomes. So, in this sense, a voter might be regarded as having extremist views about policy because they want to live in a society very different to the majority. Whereas, they would be regarded as being driven by identity politics if they were concerned about outcomes of their group rather than themselves. Thus, affluent members of a minority may support policies that in fact disadvantage them in direct terms, but which in general benefit members of their group. This is in contrast to conventional party politics in which, mostly, supporters of a political party are presumed to have a common interest.[6] Identity politics means that I need not be personally affected by an issue to be motivated by it. Hence, for example, the popularity of campaigns to alter laws in other jurisdictions that disadvantage coreligionists or LGBTQ+ people. Identity politics can also often transcend and coexist with party politics.

A second difference is more statistical in nature, which is that the overlapping nature of identity (in the jargon this is inter-sectionality) and thus identity politics means that a single extremist position is not well defined in the same way it can be for party politics. We might both share Identity A, and Identity C, but if we do not share Identity B, then we can have perfectly opposed views on the subset of issues for which B is dominant. These divides can be hard for conventional political parties to sustain. For example, both the Conservative and Labour parties did extremely poorly by historical standards in the 2019 European Elections, an election defined by the Identity issue of Brexit. In practice this means that the we should expect identity

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[6]Note, that, for example, this definition of party politics need not rule out champagne socialists, etc., but does suggest that they will not comprise the mass of a socialist party's support.

politics to be associated with more parties. This will be particularly likely to be true if voting is expressive in nature – the emotional and psychic importance of identity politics compared to conventional party political issues may increase the returns to both *cheering* and *booing*.

Note, viewed from the perspective of identity or expressive behaviour it is the decision to vote that is key. Individuals are not strategic in this view, and so the outcome of an election hinges on which groups can be motivated to vote.

The next section introduces the British Election Survey data we use, how we measure expressive voting and our empirical strategy. Section 3 presents the results of this analysis. Section 4 briefly concludes.

2 Data and empirical strategy

This section begins by introducing the data we work with and some further details of the British political context before introducing our key variables, and our empirical strategy.

Data and context

We study the role of identity politics in the United Kingdom. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the UK has seen dramatic political change since 2008, most notably with the "Brexit" referendum. But, more generally, with the rise of first UKIP and subsequently the Brexit party, as well as the dramatic shift leftwards of the Labour party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Secondly, there are few comparable datasets to the British Election Study (BES) (Fieldhouse, E. and J. Green. and G. Evans. and H. Schmitt and C. van der Eijk and J. Mellon and C. Prosser, 2017, Fieldhouse et al., 2016) which has conducted detailed individual level surveys of voters' views, beliefs, and voting behaviour since the early 1980s. Moreover, the UK has strong party discipline, one elected chamber and no separation of powers, which combine to eliminate many of the complications inherent in the analysis of other nations' democracies. This means that it is relatively straightforward to develop a tractable model with which to do our numerical analysis.

The dependent variable we focus on is *Turnout*, which as the name suggests records whether or not a citizen voted. A key feature of the BES data is that for recent elections it records individuals' actual voting behaviour rather than their stated intention or behaviour. This eliminates an important source of potential measurement error, which complicates inference with other datasets.

Each voter i has a preference over the political spectrum $i \in R$ where we use i to denote both identity of a given voter and their location in the political spectrum. Our key independent variables are each individual's perception of the distance between their ideal point, i, and that of each political party. The BES contains survey questions that ask each individual where they place themselves on a left–right scale, and where they locate each party. Thus, we can compute the distance between each individual and each party as perceived by that individual and without having to use estimated national party platforms either estimated from data (Volkens et al., 2018) or based on expert's views (e.g. the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015, Polk et al., 2017)). This is an important advantage not only because it obviates the need for assumptions about how each individual (or at least the average individual) perceives ideological space in comparison to those implicit in the measurement of party positions. But, also because it means that we can abstract from concerns about political sophistication or knowledge. It doesn't matter in our analysis if individual i believes (counterfactually) that the Conservative party are a hard-left party and the Liberal Democrats extremely right-wing. Similarly, we do not need individual j to perceive the difference between 3 and 5 on a 10-point scale in the same way. All we require is that respondents are on average truthful about their perceptions, something that the long-running nature and careful design of the survey reassures of.

Thus, given the set of all parties contesting an election, $\mathcal{P}$, we define NP as the position of party $p \in \mathcal{P}$ that individual i perceives as closest:

$$\mathrm{NP}_i = \underset{p \in \mathcal{P}}{\arg\min}\{|i - p_i|\}. \tag{1}$$

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Similarly, the position of its second nearest party, NP2 is defined as:

$$\mathbf{NP2}_i = \underset{p \in \mathcal{P} - NP_i}{\arg\min} \{|i - p_i|\}. \tag{2}$$

And so on for the third and forth nearest parties, etc. The BES also contains demographic information and given well-known income, education, and age differences in turnout rates we include these in our vector of controls X_i. Specifically, we include dummy variables coding whether or not the respondent is a graduate and whether they are a woman. We also include a quadratic in the respondent's age and potentially allow this to be different for men and women. Finally, we control for income.

Empirical strategy

Our benchmark specification is the following linear probability model:

$$Turnout_i = \beta|\mathbf{NP}_i - i| + \gamma|\mathbf{NP2}_i - i| + \psi X_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{3}$$

where the parameters of interest are β and γ. β will capture *cheering*, voting expressively for a party that is perceived to represent my views and beliefs. *Booing* is measured by γ – voting to express dislike or distaste for a party that we perceive as less well aligned with our beliefs. We thus expect that β should be negative, and γ positive. The more important *cheering* is, the greater in magnitude β will be, and similarly γ will be larger if *booing* is more important. Given they are measured on the same scale the relative magnitudes of the two will allow us to understand the relative importance of the two motivations.

While, using the distance to the nearest party to capture *cheering* is a straightforward choice, capturing *booing* is more subtle. Voters may be motivated to vote by the distances to all or several of the more distant parties. For example, a right of centre voter, who is closest to the Conservative Party, may be motivated not only by their desire to *boo* the Labour Party but also the Liberal Democrats. Alternatively, a left of centre voter may be primarily motivated by their desire to *boo* the most distant party, say UKIP. For this reason it is appealing to include the distances to the third

and fourth most distant parties in Equation 3 as well as $|\mathrm{NP2}_i - i|$. However, this is difficult in practice for two reasons. Firstly, since the distances $|\mathrm{NP2}_i - i|$, $|\mathrm{NP3}_i - i|$, $|\mathrm{NP4}_i - i|$, etc., are highly correlated with each other including them all will lead to a multicollinearity problem. Secondly, the number of parties standing varied from constituency to constituency and not every respondent provided an answer about the location of every party, meaning that including $|\mathrm{NP3}_i - i|$ and $|\mathrm{NP4}_i - i|$ will limit the sample, in a non-random way. Below, we show that our results are robust to alternative choices to additionally including distances to more distant parties. Given this finding, we focus on the specification in Equation 3 in the interests of empirical parsimony and theoretical tractability.

We use the supplied BES survey weights to ensure that our results are representative of the those eligible to vote as a whole and allow for arbitrary heteroskedasticity in ε_i.

3 Empirical results

Table 1 reports estimates of Equation 3 using the 2015 face-to-face cross-section BES (Fieldhouse et al., 2016). Looking across all of the specifications, the first thing we note is that both β and γ are of the expected sign. Secondly, we can see that while β is slightly smaller in magnitude than γ and not imprecisely estimated. This is consistent with an interpretation that *booing* is a more important motivation than *cheering*. We will see that this is a consistent finding. Interestingly, the estimate γ (and to a lesser extent β) is consistent in magnitude suggesting that the second nearest party being 1 point further away on a 10 point scale is associated with a 2.5% increase in the probability of turnout. This is a substantial effect given the average turnout rates plotted in Figure 1.

The first column reports results excluding the demographic controls and, for the whole sample, comparing with Column 2 we see that while including demographics improves the explanatory power of the regression it only reduces γ slightly. Columns 3 and 4 report results for survey respondents whose reported turnout was successfully validated against the electoral record. We see that now, perhaps due to

the elimination of measurement error, γ is a little larger in magnitude in both columns, as is β although it remains imprecise.

Columns 5 and 6 report the same specification as Column 4, but now additionally including $|\text{NP3}_i - i|$, $|\text{NP4}_i - i|$. We see that the point estimates of $|\text{NP2}_i - i|$ are similar to before, albeit slightly smaller, and less precisely estimated. The estimated coefficient of $|\text{NP3}_i - i|$ in Column 5 is similarly sized, but more precisely estimated. Looking at Column 6 the estimate of $|\text{NP4}_i - i|$ is of a similar magnitude and is again significant, but now the coefficients of $|\text{NP2}_i - i|$ and $|\text{NP3}_i - i|$ are both a little smaller and less precise. The overall conclusion seems consistent however, in every specification *booing* seems more important than *cheering*. Column 7 seeks to address the issue of multicollinearity by replacing $|\text{NP2}_i - i|$, $|\text{NP3}_i - i|$, and $|\text{NP4}_i - i|$ with their sum. While, the coefficient is smaller as expected, it is precisely estimated, significant at the 1% level. The extent to which this reflects the improved sample size, or the reduction in multicollinearity is unclear, but we interpret it as further evidence of the importance of *booing* as a motivation.

Table 2 report analogous specifications to the first four columns of Table 1, except additionally including $|\text{NP} - \text{NP2}|$, the distance between the two nearest parties. We find no evidence that this matters: the estimated coefficient is consistently very close to zero and we can rule out large effects. This is important because it suggests that our results are not being driven by a range of other potential mechanisms. For example, it suggests that it is not the intensity of political competition that matters, if the parties being close together were associated with higher turnout this might be a reasonable inference. Similarly, it also suggests that our results are not being driven by there being some asymmetry between the two nearest parties both being to the left or to the right of a voter as opposed to either side as this would be associated with the parties being further apart, other things being equal, and hence a positive coefficient.

The advantage of the face-to-face survey is that using professional interviewers should minimize measurement error. One disadvantage is that in the BES the available sample size is comparatively small, and each respondent is only interviewed once. Thus, we now turn to the BES Internet Panel Study which includes the results of over 100,000 online surveys (Fieldhouse, E. and J. Green. and G. Evans. and H.

Schmitt and C. van der Eijk and J. Mellon and C. Prosser, 2017) . One advantage of these data is that a sub-panel of respondents are interviewed multiple times thus allowing us to include respondent fixed effects and analyse how individuals' intention to vote varies as their perceptions of the platforms of parties and their own ideal point evolve throughout the election campaign.

The results are reported in Table 3. Looking across Columns 2–5 we see again the same pattern, γ is consistently positively and statistically significant. Now though, the estimates of β are much less consistent with positive, albeit imprecise, estimates in Columns 2 and 3. In our preferred specification in Column 5 it is negative and statistically significant in line with our expectation.

Column 6–10 report the fixed-effect estimates. Now, we find no significant effect although the estimates are of the correct sign. Splitting the sample we find a precise estimate for men, but none for women. We find no effect when split by age. This is perhaps to be expected. The literature shows that people update their beliefs about the platforms of parties slowly, even reluctantly, Tilley and Wlezien (2008) so the variation we identify in β and γ may be largely noise.

We argued above that the decline of the two party system was related to the emergence of identity politics and the decline of party politics. We now test this argument by re-estimating Equation 3 for previous waves of the BES so that we can assess the stability of β and γ over time. Results are reported for 2015–1983 in Table 4. Some caution is necessary in interpreting these results given the substantial time-span and changes in survey techniques over the period. In particular, the results for 2015 are validated against the electoral-register whereas earlier surveys are not. Notwithstanding this caveat the results are clear. There has been a consistent increase in γ over the period while β, albeit normally inconsistent, has steadily increased. Both of these trends are consistent with an increased role for identity politics. Looking more carefully at the coefficients we can see that as well as being small in magnitude the estimates of γ for 1983–1992 are of the wrong sign, while β is still negative consistent with more traditional party politics explanation in which one is more likely to vote, given idiosyncratic factors, if there are two parties close to one's ideal point rather than one. Again, the estimates are very small and relatively imprecise, and so we

need to be careful not to over-interpret the results, but nevertheless suggestive.

Fetzer (2019) argues that those areas most affected by austerity following the Financial Crisis are those most likely to support Brexit. We might expect the desire to *boo*, will be most strong amongst those least fortunate. To address this we ask a related question, does the desire to *boo* vary by with deprivation quintile? The BES data contains a variable categorising the precise area the respondent lives in by multiple-deprivation index quintile.[7] The results are reported in Table 5. Deprivation is ordered from 1, most deprived, to 5, least deprived. We see that indeed, as might be expected, *booing* is most important for the most deprived, less important for those in quintiles 2 and 3, and unimportant for the least deprived 40%. *Cheering*, seems to be concentrated on those in quintiles 2 and 3. It's unclear why β is insignificant in quintile 1, but this would be consistent with defining oneself in terms of what one is *against* almost to the complete exclusion of what one is *for*. The lack of any measured effect for the more affluent may reflect a number of non-exclusive possibilities. Firstly, it could be that the more affluent are more likely to engage in other forms of expressive political behaviour such as protest or campaigning. Secondly, it could be that the more affluent are less motivated by identity politics, but this is not obviously true. Third, it could be that their perceived cost of voting against their economic interest is higher.

In sum, we have found evidence consistent with the hypothesis that voters are motivated to vote by their desire to *boo* parties they dislike and to a lesser extent *cheer* parties they like. The rest of the paper introduces a model which captures these two motivations and takes it to the data to assess how well its predictions and actual election outcomes cohere.

4 Conclusion

This paper has sought to explain the occasional emergence of successful extremists and populists. Much of journalistic and academic commentary of these events talks of voters *rejecting* the establishment / status-quo / mainstream politicians. Often extremists' success is predicated on an extremely loyal and enthusiastic base who

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[7]This is done on the basis of Census data at the Lower Super Output Area Level which are a fine grained geographic construct, each containing around 1,500 people.

turnout in high numbers and who reject moves by parties or candidates towards the political mainstream. The support for such candidates, often in the face of economic self-interest, is often described as being a consequence of identity politics. Here we operationalise identity politics as being closely related to an expressive motivation to *boo* candidates one does not support. That is to express one's difference.

Taking this argument to the data, we find evidence that the distance between a voter's ideal point and the platform of the second closest party is a key driver of turnout decisions in British elections, and more important than the distance to the nearest party. Moreover, it argues that this phenomenon can be well understood in the context of Expressive Voting motivations. That is, voters want to make clear who they 'like' or identify with *and* who they do not. We then construct a simple model that incorporates these preferences and show how if voters want to 'reject' mainstream politicians extremist politicians can be successful in equilibrium. Calibration of the model to UK data shows that this simple framework is better able to explain the emergence of distinct and separate party platforms, as well as within party heterogeneity than a conventional Downsian model. It also suggests that one consequence of voter polarization will be the loss of centrist candidates and increases in intra-party platform heterogeneity.

While this paper has provided empirical evidence for the importance of *booing* it has had relatively little to say about how the utility from *booing* will depend on the the distances to the second nearest party versus more distant parties. Similarly, it would be worthwhile to understand why the relative utility of *booing* and *cheering* has changed over time.

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		Turnout					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
$|NP_i - i|$	−0.013	−0.013	−0.022	−0.021	−0.030	−0.023	−0.013
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.014)
$|NP2_i - i|$	0.024**	0.018*	0.029***	0.026**	0.020	0.014	
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.014)	
Age		0.000		−0.003			−0.003
		(0.004)		(0.004)			(0.004)
Age^2		0.004		0.005			0.005
		(0.004)		(0.004)			(0.004)
Income		0.010***		0.005**			0.005**
		(0.002)		(0.003)			(0.003)
Woman		0.028		0.043*			0.046*
		(0.022)		(0.024)			(0.024)
Graduate		0.065**		0.079***			0.071***
		(0.026)		(0.026)			(0.026)
$|NP3_i - i|$					0.019**	0.011	
					(0.008)	(0.010)	
$|NP4_i - i|$						0.016*	
						(0.009)	
$\sum_{q \in \{NP2_i, NP3_i, NP4_i\}} |q - i|$							0.010***
							(0.003)
Constant	0.818***	0.576***	0.849***	0.734***	0.818***	0.787***	0.698***
	(0.021)	(0.114)	(0.024)	(0.120)	(0.027)	(0.035)	(0.119)
Validated turnout	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,237	1,237	827	827	786	699	839
R^2	0.006	0.063	0.012	0.042	0.021	0.029	0.048

Table 1: The 2015 Election: in person survey

Notes: The dependent variable is the decision to vote. $|NP_i - i|$ is the ideological distance to political party nearest a given voter. $|NP2_i - i|$ is the distance to the second nearest party. Columns 3–7 report the decision to vote validated against the electoral roll.

Turnout

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$|\mathrm{NP}_i - i|$	−0.009	−0.005	−0.015	−0.011
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
$|\mathrm{NP2}_i - i|$	0.042***	0.029**	0.042***	0.035***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
$|NP - NP2|$	−0.006	0.001	−0.002	0.001
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Age		−0.001		−0.002
		(0.004)		(0.005)
Age^2		0.004		0.004
		(0.004)		(0.005)
Income		0.011***		0.006**
		(0.003)		(0.003)
Woman		0.036		0.035
		(0.024)		(0.027)
Graduate		0.081***		0.087***
		(0.028)		(0.029)
Constant	0.803***	0.582***	0.831***	0.716***
	(0.027)	(0.123)	(0.031)	(0.128)
Validated turnout	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	922	922	621	621
R^2	0.017	0.073	0.020	0.051

Table 2: The 2015 Election: In person survey

Notes: The dependent variable is the decision to vote. $|\mathrm{NP}_i - i|$ is the ideological distance to political party nearest a given voter. $|\mathrm{NP2}_i - i|$ is the distance to the second nearest party. $|NP - NP2|$ is the distance between these two nearest parties. Columns 3,4,7, and 8 report the decision to vote validated against the electoral roll.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
$\lvert NP_i - i \rvert$	10.343***	2.872	0.472	−1.731	−5.931**	−0.451	−3.319	3.347	−0.422	−0.401
	(1.682)	(2.165)	(2.176)	(2.597)	(2.980)	(3.998)	(4.198)	(7.559)	(9.370)	(4.416)
$\lvert NP2_i - i \rvert$		7.832***		4.973**	6.476**	3.353	8.179**	−3.005	−0.828	4.343
		(1.787)		(2.268)	(2.853)	(4.084)	(3.404)	(8.345)	(7.564)	(4.695)
Female					21.127*					
					(12.083)					
Age					−5.862					
					(3.737)					
Age^2					4.786					
					(3.195)					
Controls	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample	All	All	All	All	All	All	Men	Women	Young	Old
Observations	112800	111797	112800	111797	29120	29120	17271	11849	6667	22453
R2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

"The dependent variable is the decision to vote. $\lvert NP_i - i \rvert$ is the ideological distance to political party nearest a given voter. $\lvert NP2_i - i \rvert$ is the distance to the second nearest party. Columns 3,4, and 6–11 additionally include respondent fixed effects. Controls include survey date fixed effects, constituency fixed effects, marital status, housing type, region, income, past voting behaviour, household size, job type, hours worked and social class. All data are from the British Electoral Survey (2015). * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3: Perceived party proximity and the decision to turn out: 2015 election (Internet Survey)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$\lvert NP_i - i \rvert$	0.004	−0.000	−0.001	−0.011**	−0.001	−0.015*	−0.007	−0.027
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.018)
$\lvert NP2_i - i \rvert$	−0.002	−0.001**	−0.001*	0.005*	0.000	0.005	0.008***	0.022*
	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.013)
Election	1983	1987	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015
When	After	After	After A	After	After	After	After	After (Validated)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3284	3337	1528	2108	2370	2718	1022	834

The dependent variable is the decision to vote. $\lvert NP_i - i \rvert$ is the ideological distance to political party nearest a given voter. $\lvert NP2_i - i \rvert$ is the distance to the second nearest party. Controls include gender specific stochastic age trends, a university graduate dummy and income. (The 1983 survey has occupation fixed effects instead of income and gender specific quadratic age trends.) * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Robust standard errors in parentheses. All data are from the British Electoral Survey (various waves).

Table 4: Perceived party proximity and the decision to turn out: Multiple elections

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$|\mathrm{NP}_i - i|$	−0.009	−0.043**	−0.034*	−0.004	0.009
	(0.565)	(0.043)	(0.086)	(0.862)	(0.585)
$|\mathrm{NP2}_i - i|$	0.032***	0.020*	0.023***	−0.008	−0.006
	(0.005)	(0.095)	(0.008)	(0.577)	(0.653)
Election	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015
When	After (Validated)	After (Validated)	After (Validated)	After (Validated)	After (Validated)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quintile	1	2	3	4	5
Observations	91	177	173	206	187

The dependent variable is the (validated) decision to vote. $|\mathrm{NP}_i - i|$ is the ideological distance to political party nearest a given voter. $|\mathrm{NP2}_i - i|$ is the distance to the second nearest party. Quintiles are defined based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. All specifications also control for age, age squared, whether the respondent was a university graduate and income. All data are from the British Electoral Survey (2015). * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5: Social economic status, perceived party proximity and the decision to turn out