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Knowing Your Audience:
Measuring and Understanding Party Messaging and Branding in Modern Europe

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

Knowing Your Audience:
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By Laura Maxwell

This dissertation explores the nature of party messaging strategy in Modern Europe. More specifically, it explicates a novel approach to quantifying and explaining the ways in which parties choose to cultivate a brand through the use of topic modeling on party manifestos to create unbiased, consistent estimates of party message consistency and specificity across sixteen democracies in Europe. Substantively, this project addresses the question: what are the incentives to create a brand? Many party systems in the new democracies of Post-Communist Europe are seemingly trapped in a volatile electoral environment with a large proportion of the parties failing to attract and maintain a partisan following from election to election. This project explores the incentive structures that exist to promote this behavior. And finally, as opposed to much of the existing literature on party branding, I approach this problem from the perspective of the consequences that it can have on the party system as a whole and its effect on government stability. Taking this approach highlights the constraints that branding places on parties and how that effects the nature of the coalitions formed to govern.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This book explores the nature of party messaging strategy in Modern Europe. More specifically, it explicates a novel approach to quantifying and explaining the ways in which parties choose to cultivate a brand. There have been a variety of approaches to conceptualizing and measuring party branding and party messaging in a variety of fields, from comparative ideology (Budge 2001) to work on the effect of coalition formation on the perception of party brands (Lupu 2011). None of these attempts at measuring branding have taken a general approach to truly operationalize branding based on a transportable conceptualization of branding that can be applied across time and space. This project makes an effort to fill this gap through the use of topic modeling on party manifestos to create unbiased, consistent estimates of party message consistency and specificity across sixteen democracies in Europe.

Substantively, the motivation behind this project recognizes that the fundamental link between the people and the government in a true democracy is representation through political parties. The role of these parties in representative democracies is

to represent the interests of a particular segment of the population by presenting and voting for legislation in their shared interest. Of course, this is assuming that the parties are of a sort of "ideal" type. In reality, we see a wide variety of party types, both in terms of representation and accountability. This variation introduces some interesting questions as to the role of parties in democracy, and what are the democratic outcomes of parties that do not function in the way that they are ideally supposed to. As we have seen from sustaining high levels of volatility in party competition in many new democracies, particularly in central and eastern europe, this variation in parties makes it appear that these differences are not innocuous to the functioning of democracy.

More explicitly, this project looks at the image that parties project of themselves through their party platforms. This image is often referred to as the party brand and is important when thinking about the informational role that parties play. We often think of parties as a way to reduce the information problem that may arise when individual citizens have to choose a candidate to vote for, or a party needs to create a government by picking compatible coalition partners. To effectively accomplish both of these tasks, the receivers of this message look to party brands in order to understand the nature of the partys policy preferences and how similar those are to ones own. In short, if effectively cultivated, the party brand can serve as a shortcut to both voters and politicians in order to make an accurate judgement of their political choices. However, if this party brand is not clear to the intended audience, it no longer serves as an informational tool that aids efficiency, but rather brings representative government closer to a party-less system that is much more prone to rampant volatility

and ineffective governance.

The most significant contribution of this project is the introduction of a coherent conceptualization of the party brand as well as the construction of a new measure of this concept that will allow for the testing of existing theories with observational data. Additionally, this project addresses the question: what are the incentives to create a brand? Many party systems in the new democracies of Post-Communist Europe are seemingly trapped in a volatile electoral environment with a large proportion of the parties failing to attract and maintain a partisan following from election to election. This project explores the incentive structures that exist to promote this behavior. And finally, as opposed to much of the existing literature on party branding, I approach this problem from the perspective of the consequences that it can have on the party system as a whole and its effect on government stability. Taking this approach highlights the constraints that branding places on parties and how that effects the nature of coalitions and thus the stability and representativeness of government.

Conceptualizing Branding

There has been some discussion of the concept of party branding in the literature that I will address below, but in this project I am conceptualizing the strength of a party's brand on two dimensions. The first dimension is consistency. In this case, consistency refers to inter-electoral consistency. This simply means that from election to election the contents of a party's platform remains relatively constant. The second component of party branding is the specificity of the brand. The content of the

platform must contain specific policy prescriptions to achieve the goals that the party sets forth. The more specific these policy goals are, the more specific the brand. However they do not want to be overly complicated such that the electorate will not remember or understand the content of the platform. Kitschelt (1999) discusses the importance of "bundling" policy positions in order to make them more digestible by the electorate because there are diminishing returns to making a more and more specific and complex party platform and campaign message.

It is important to note that this book is focusing only on one particular type of branding: programmatic branding. As noted above, this is when a party chooses to center its identity around the issue areas and policies that it puts forth in its platform and campaign messages. While this is certainly one common approach to branding, there are other means of branding one's party that does not center around a particular ideology or policy prescription. The most prominent alternate type of branding is centering around a strong leader, what some may call personalistic branding. This type of branding is definitely prevalent in autocratic or semi-autocratic regimes, as seen in the Nur Otan party, the party of long ruling Kazakhstan President, Nursultan Nazerbayev and has very little ideological platform, opting instead to revolve around Nazerbayev and general nationalism. While it is certainly plausible that this type of branding occurs in democratic settings as well, this project focuses on the programmatic type of branding rather than the personalist type of branding. I do recognize that these two types of branding are potentially substitutable rather than complementary, and in some cases not accounting for the personalist type of branding may introduce bias in empirical testing of some of the theories that this measure can be

used to test because it is an omitted variable.

There are several reasons why party branding is important in representative government. The first is related to the idea that voters form their beliefs about the world and what is important in politics on the basis of what political elites are telling them. This is often referred to as the idea of issue framing. Issue framing is the process of presenting a broad political issue in a particular light in order to persuade particular segments of the population to agree with the point of view the framer is supporting. The purpose of making such a frame is to act as a heuristic so that the framer's audience simply views the world in the same way as the framer so that each issue does not need to be individually discussed and agreed upon (Boudreau and MacKenzie 2014, Chong and Druckman 2007, Slothuus and De Vreese 2010). This is clearly an important aspect of branding because without a coherent party brand, it is challenging to create a frame that can serve the purpose of a heuristic for the voter.

Relatedly, Druckman (2001) discusses the limits there are on who can make these frames and whether or not they are credible, tying into the argument of salience and influence that Meguid (2005) brings up in her discussion of niche parties and issue ownership. Aside from framing, party branding is also important in terms of introducing stability into the party system and thus stability of representation over time. In many new democracies there is instability in partisanship (Birch 2001, Tavits 2008a) that is often associated with the inability for parties to make coherent brands and attract voters from election to election(Brader and Tucker 2007, Lupu and Riedl 2013).

The party brand has also been viewed as part of the value that a party can have

for the politicians that choose to align themselves with it. This value comes from the perceived reputation of the party (Hale 2005, Lupu and Riedl 2013). A brand-based reputation of a party can be either based on valence or ideology. Valence attributes are commonly thought to be competence, reliability and the ability to 'get things done' while in office (Ansolabehere and Snyder 2000, Green 2007), which are generally the non-ideological components of a party's brand. Taken together, these reputational features influence the attractiveness of a party to voters, politicians and interest groups alike (Hale 2005).

The incentives to create a specific and consistent party brand appear to be rational in just about any context. However, we see in many cases that parties abandon their platforms or simply do not provide clear policy recommendations in their manifestos(Lupu 2011, Tavits 2008b). This is particularly true in much of Central and Eastern Europe. Because of this, the question of why parties brand (or not) becomes much more interesting and important to the study of party competition. Aside from simply addressing the way that incentives instruct party branding strategy, this lack of successful branding may be a result not of a lack of effort by the parties, but rather a lack of reception to the brands by the electorate, making them observationally identical with the current measures available as proxies for party branding. A new measure should capture parties' strategic choices over message and enable us to examine trends in branding across a wide variety of party systems. Such a measure would allow us to examine the variation in branding and in party system development in both new and old democracies.

Defining the Party Brand

To make this idea of consistency more clear, we can turn to some of the findings from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to highlight some of the variety in party's consistency over time. Through the CMPs efforts to produce systematic and empirically comparable data about the content of the manifestos that parties put forth, we have seen the vast variation in the policy content of these manifestos. The CMP project puts forth 56 different issue areas that parties could have in any given election. This is an impressive feat that has opened the door to a lot of statistical analysis regarding party competition and elections. However, this measure only focuses on a snapshot of the partys platform.

We know from cases like the Romanian Democratic Party (PD) that there is often significant policy switching from election to election, the Democratic Party switched from a leftist, social democratic platform to a more centrist/conservative platform focused on economic liberalization and reform (Downs and Miller 2006). This sort of policy switching creates an inconsistent message to the electorate over time, weakening the brand and making it more difficult to gain the trust both voters and potential coalition partners (Lupu, 2013; Brader Tucker, 2007). On the other hand, parties like the Greens from Germany focus on issues of the economy, social programs and the environment year after year. This type of consistency in message leads to the formation of a stable brand.

The specificity or vagueness of a party's message can also vary widely across time and space, this is particularly evident upon examination of the platforms of

parties in the newer democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. While we certainly see examples of specificity in the platforms of parties like TOP09 who advocate for specific solutions and policies. In this case, TOP09 is fiscally conservative and firmly anti-corruption and as such they lay out quite a detailed plan to eliminate corruption and budget deficit by reducing state campaign finance significantly as well as culling the expansion of the pension system of the Czechia (TOP09, 2010). However, not all parties are so precise. For example, the platform of the Your Movement party (Twoj Ruch) in Poland, formally known as the Palikot Movement which gained 40 seats in the 2011 parliamentary election (the first election it participated in), has a quite vague liberal/progressive platform. The program is split into 5 segments: Trust, Progress, Work, Freedom and Equality (Twoj Ruch, 2014). These are not specific policy goals but rather idealistic goals that are hard to really disagree with, regardless of your political affiliation. This sort of manifesto is markedly different from the manifesto set forth by TOP09 and does not provide the electorate with concrete information about the type of policies it will enact while in office.

In order to make this distinction a bit more concrete, it is helpful to read some of the actual text of manifestos with varying degrees of vagueness and specificity. Below are two examples of discussions of economic policy aspects of the platform. The first is an example of a vague discussion of economic policy put forth in the 1991 manifesto of the Polish Party, Centre Alliance:

> "We are of the opinion that a major task before a new government is to animate Poland's economy. Therefore we need a radical transformation of budget, monetary and revenue policies. The budget should observe the deadlines in meeting the liabilities it has towards the citizens and com-

> panies (...) Excessive taxation of citizens and enterprises is a significant
> deterrent of the economic growth. We opt for moderate taxation which
> will stimulate savings and interest"

It is clear through this text that the policy prescriptions are rather absent and the proposed changes are rather non-controversial. Government budgetary accountability and moderate taxation are proposals that nearly every party would agree with, making the ability for the Centre Alliance to be distinguished from other parties in the system very challenging. In contrast, the 1994 platform of the Alliance of Free Democrats in Hungary gives much more specific policy prescriptions when it comes to economic policy.

> "Big investments overloading the budget shall be renounced, as e.g. the
> Project of Yarnburg-Thengize, the affair of the World Exhibition re-
> examined. Finances of the military services will be rapidly reduced. Pro-
> fessional state administration shall be rationalized, its working force re-
> duces thus cutting costs (...) Convertibility of the forint[Hungarian cur-
> rency] shall be realized step by step. Restrictions on the holding, exporting
> and importing of foreign exchange shall be repeated. This means also im-
> port liberation and all articles in demand will be found in shops selling
> against forint payment, and we shall buy abroad against forint payment.
> (...) We want to approximate the system of general turnover taxes to
> tat of the European Economic Community: a rate of about 10 percent
> not exceeding 20 percent would be applied maintaining zero rate for basic
> foods"

One feature of these segments that jumps out as a major difference is the length of the text devoted to each issue. The Alliance of Free Democrats put forth much more detailed, and thus longer statement about specific economic policies than the Centre Alliance. This suggests that the length of the text that is spent on a particular issue as a proportion of the total text is an indication of specificity. Additionally, the language used by the Alliance of Free Democrats is much more specific to economic

issues (e.g. import, exchange, cutting, forint, percent, rate, etc). The language used by the Centre Alliance is often associated with several different issue areas and policy orientations.

These two attributes contribute to distinction- the difference between party A and the rest of the parties which is made substantively clear through the explication of their platform. The components- specificity and consistency- combine to create a rough typology of party branding strategies. There are four broad types of parties based on both their level of consistency and specificity. The first is a party that is branding their party by constructing a party platform that is sufficiently specific to reasonably distinguish itself from other, ideologically dissimilar parties and this platform does not change over time and space. This is different from a party that still creates a specific platform that differentiates itself from other parties in the system, however the platform makes significant programmatic shifts from election to election making it lack in its ability to create a single brand that can be traced over time.

While both of those types of strategies feature parties that created distinct brands for themselves (whether or not they were consistent) the second two types of strategies fail to distinguish themselves. The indistinguishable type of party strategy is one that does not shift drastically on the its issue area focus over time (it *is* consistent), but puts forth a platform that is so vague and non-controversial that they do not invoke a clear idea about what they stand for in the minds of the voters. In this case, the voters have a hard time understanding where the "prototypical" partisan is going to be positioned (Lupu 2013), so they cannot be sure if they identify most closely with

that party. The final type of party is a rather opportunistic party who is simply trying to gain votes by appealing to whatever vague policy preference is salient at the time of the election [1] A party that uses this type of branding strategy would have a very hard time getting any loyal partisans through programmatic appeals and an even harder time keeping any that they got because they change their position from election to election.

Motivations to Cultivate a Brand

A party brand is constructed through the public messages that parties send out to the electorate and to other parties in the system. These messages can come from different sources and members of the party. In order to contribute to the brand, they must be either repeated over time or codified in a centralized document released by the party. Some examples of these documents are party manifestos, press releases and policy briefs. Campaign speeches given by the party leadership can also contribute to the formation of a brand, but in cases of highly programmatic parties competing under a list system, backbench politicians are unlikely to make speeches that will impact the brand of the party. However, in cases of sharp cleavages within a party, the emergence of two strong opposing voices can work to erode the specificity and

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[1]This brings up an important distinction between the party branding approach and the programmatism/clientelism literature. The primary difference between the two is a temporal component. The idea of issue switching and inconsistency across elections is not addressed in the programmatism literature. This means that they cannot speak to the "Flip Flopper" strategy of party branding because within an election a party might be programmatic in its appeals, but they are not consistent over time, making them ultimately not programmatic, but also not clientelistic. This distinction has interesting implications about party system development because it means that even if the institutional/socioeconomic components that encourage clientelism are absent, we might not see party system institutionalization because parties are not creating a strong base but its not because they are reliant on giving out goodies.

consistency of a brand. In these cases, it is likely that the documents released will also suffer in clarity and consistency. This project focuses on the content of party manifestos as the summary document of the party's messaging strategy in a particular election cycle.

There are two main ideas put forth about the utility of a party brand in the existing literature. The first is that it is used for differentiation among parties in the same system. This builds on social identity theory of partisanship (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2004, Greene 2004, Lupu 2013) as well as marketing literature about product differentiation (Grimaldi 2003). In terms of social identity theory, the concept of differentiation is important regarding how a voter is able to match her own political and ideological identity with the identity of a "prototypical" partisan of a given party (Huddy 2001). When parties are distinct and there is not much variation in the latent ideological positioning of the candidates and messages sent out in the party, it will be easy for a voter to identify the prototypical partisan that they are most similar to.

However, when parties aren't distinguishing themselves programmatically from one another, it becomes much more difficult for the voter to locate the position of the prototypical partisan. This makes it unlikely that they can use ideology to tie themselves to a particular party. While I am certainly focused on the behavior of parties in this project, sophistication and engagement of the electorate is important because ultimately the purpose of party branding is to send a message. While other parties are indeed receiving this message (which is important for coalition building) the voters are the ones that need to receive this message, understand it and understand their identity's relationship to the identity of the party.

The second proposed utility of a specific and consistent brand in the literature is to understand its relationship to the ease of mobilization and party organization (Smyth 2006, Tavits 2013). This element is about consistency of the party brand. This brings in the idea of a long-term strategic goal rather than a short-term election based goal. If a party maintains the same issue area focus from election to election they will be able to create a reputation in the electorate regarding their particular policy agenda. This is often called a heuristic, or cognitive shortcut because it denotes that simply mentioning the name of the party gives members of the electorate a feeling of how they would respond to particular policy situations. In short, it gives the party label meaning in its own right (Smyth 2006). This independent party label weight makes mobilization much easier and is thus beneficial to electoral success because it is easier to mobilize supporters and activate demobilized members of the electorate.

Aside from simply looking at the idea of mobilization via a party brand in terms of the electorate, a consistent party brand has implications for internal party organizational structure, in that there will be much more centralized control of the party message, which Tavits (2013) finds important for disincentivizing the cultivation of the personal vote and thus making programmatic linkage strategies much more likely. The creation of a systematic measurement of these concepts will assist in addressing these questions and countless further applications.

Applications of Party Branding Measures

Constructing new measures that capture the degree to which parties across Europe are consistent in their message over time and specific about the issues that they focus on opens up the possibility to address many existing and novel research questions. This book addresses two large research questions that relate to the interplay between party branding and conditions of uncertainty. On the one hand, parties react to conditions of uncertainty in the electorate and the party system when making choices of how they will construct their brand. In other words, there exist incentives to cultivate a particular type of brand. Furthermore, in the period of government formation directly following an election, party branding and uncertainty are again intertwined because the branding strategy parties pursued in the election constructs the information environment in the post-election bargaining arena.

The first line of research examines the incentives that exist for a party to create a stable brand around policies and issues, or to achieve its goals in some other way. In order to do this, it is important to think about the strategic considerations parties must make in order to maximize its likelihood of reaching its goals given a certain degree of uncertainty in the pre-electoral environment. There are three types of incentives to consider: the sophistication and engagement of the electorate, the size and age of the party, and the stability of the party system.

In addition, party branding can be integral to the process of forming coalition governments. To start, the process of government formation requires a variety of information about the parties in the party system. The majority of the literature

focuses on the legislative size of parties and the ideological similarity between parties as driving forces in coalition formation, but few have fully explored the importance of the quality and completeness of information in the latter strategic consideration. Economic theory and bargaining literature tells us that incomplete information and informational asymmetries can lead to suboptimal bargaining outcomes due to problems with credible signalling (Martin & Vanberg 2004, Miller 2005). Because of this, it is important to fully understand how these information and credibility problems impact the duration of the bargaining process as well as the composition of the government. Using novel measures of party branding, this paper intends to understand the relationship between government formation and composition and the information parties provide through their messaging before the election.

Here, I argue that there is a clear gap in the government formation literature when it comes to accounting for uncertainty and informational asymmetries in the bargaining process. While these are often discussed, they are rarely accounted for empirically and when they are, the operationalizations do not fully capture the degree and variation of uncertainty across parties within the same government and across government formation contexts in the same country. Incorporating party-specific and party-system specific measures of policy-related and reputational uncertainty is crucial to capturing the role that these forms of complexity influence the government formation process and lead to suboptimal or unexpected outcomes, like delayed formation or ideologically diffuse coalitions.

Organization of the Book

In order to position this project in the appropriate literature, the second chapter will provide a thorough examination of the existing literature on party branding and messaging as well as highlight the shortcomings of these existing approaches for the empirical questions this project proposes. This review of the literature will motivate the need for a new approach to modelling and measuring messaging strategies. In addition, this theory chapter will motivate the two applications that come in chapters four and five. These applications explore the incentives and challenges to constructing a stable party brand in the campaign period as well as the impact those decisions have on the government formation period. Through this discussion of the literature and the new approach to measuring party branding, a series of testable expectations will be presented that will be empirically examined throughout the course of the book.

A critical contribution of this project is the introduction of a measurement strategy that captures a party's messaging consistency and specificity, thus the third chapter will explicate the process by which these measures are constructed. The most technical chapter of the project, here the use of Latent Dirichlet Allocation models to construct topic models is described with Manifesto texts used as the source material. Then, the validation of the output of these models is approached from a variety of sources such as Mechanical Turk validation tasks and qualitative face validity checks. The chapter concludes with the construction and description of the measures of consistency and specificity, as conceptualized in this introductory chapter.

Once the measurement model has been thoroughly explained and characterized,

the measures of specificity and consistency will be used in two empirical applications. Chapter four will address the first set of expectations. The focus of this chapter is on the incentives that are put in place to induce or dissuade the cultivation of a consistent and specific party brand. These incentives come from from three sources. The electorate, in the form of their sophistication and engagement, the party themselves, in terms of their size and goals, and the party system and electoral context, in terms of the level of electoral volatility that occurs from election to election.

Following this discussion of the incentives that influence the strategic branding decisions of parties, chapter five addresses the impact that party branding strategies on the formation of a government in the aftermath of an election. This inquiry has two branches. The first concerns the party-level concern of the impact of a party's pre-electoral branding strategy on the propensity of inclusion in a governing coalition. The second branch brings us to the party-system level, with an evaluation of the impact of party branding strategies on the nature and duration of government formation bargaining periods.

Once the contributions of this project have been fully explicated through the substantive chapters, chapter six will review the contributions and findings of each of the chapters in the form of a concluding chapter. This conclusion will also explore the additional use cases of the data and measures constructed in this project, as well as examine the potential to expand this project over time and space to better understand the nature of party branding in more varied political contexts.

Chapter 2

The Incentives and Consequences

of Branding Strategies

Party branding highlights the programmatic mechanisms by which a party forms and maintains linkages with their electorate as well as how they interact with potential coalition partners. Multiparty representative government relies on these linkages and relationships to function as it should: responsive to the will of the public and with an appropriate degree of efficiency. The most clear contribution of party branding to the functioning of a democratic state is through the creation of clear party identities that the electorate can assign particular ideological placement and issue area specialization. The party brand as a heuristic provides the electorate with a shortcut to understanding which party in the system best represents their policy positions. Without a stable and consistent party brand, it is nearly impossible to create programmatic linkages with the electorate from election to election.

Aside from cultivating and maintaining linkages, party brands effect the ease of

mobilization of an electorate (Smyth 2006, Tavits 2013). This element relates most to the consistency of the party brand, it is a strategy that pays out over time rather than a short-term election based goal. The maintenance of a consistent ideological identity over time leads to the creation of a reputation in the electorate and among other parties in the system regarding their particular policy agenda. Importantly here, we refer to two audiences- the electorate and the other parties in the party system. On the one hand, the audience costs from the electorate give parties incentives to pursue a particular branding strategy, and on the other hand, the audience costs from the other members of the party system influence the nature of the government formation process and who gets into government.

However, the electoral process is plagued with uncertainty which plays an important role in both the cultivation of brands and their immediate consequences for the government formation period. In both the pre-electoral and post-electoral environment, different elements of uncertainty contribute to a party's decision-making processes. The role of high levels of party-system electoral volatility in the pre-electoral period is an element of uncertainty that influences party strategy because future interactions become less valuable (Bo 2005, Strøm & Lupia 2006). In the post-election environment, the branding choices made prior to the election influence the information environment, potentially introducing uncertainty about the optimal governing coalition. These informational deficits shape the expected utility of different branding and coalition formation decisions, and are thus critical to consider throughout this chapter.

In referring to the election as the central event here, it is clear that immediately

prior to the election the electorate is the most important audience, and immediately after the election the parties of the party system are the most important audience. Since what I measure is the pre-electoral strategy of the party, the incentives portion occurs prior to the election, and thus the electorate is the most important audience to address and consider. The consequences of this branding strategy are then felt during the government formation phase.

In situations of higher volatility, this clear division is particularly true. Because the make-up of the post-election parliamentary seat distribution is so unclear prior to the election, the maximization of electorate support is the most logical strategy. So, it is possible that volatility plays a role in the importance of these electorate features because in cases of low volatility, where the make-up of the post-election government is less unknown the desire to be included in government may influence the branding choices of the party. Because of this, it is important to assess the strength of this incentive so that it can be taken into account when examining the impact of branding on the inclusion in government to address potential endogeneity concerns.

The consequences of a branding strategy are felt not only at the party level through the propensity to be included in government, but also at the system level through the ease of the government formation process. By examining the nature of bargaining under a variety of information environments, the role of uncertainty in terms of policy positions and party cohesion can be understood by looking at the branding strategies of the parties involved. This provides a more nuanced look at the information environment of the government formation process than has previously been possible.

This chapter will lay out the incentives to cultivate a brand as well as the expected

consequences of that branding strategy on the post-election environment. First, the incentive structures that come from the electorate, the characteristics of the party and the degree of uncertainty in the party system will be discussed in terms of the established findings associated with party behavior and strategy. The addition of branding strategy to the existing literature produces expectations about the impact that these features have on the consistency and specificity of a party's message that will be unpacked and explored. Following this discussion, the focus will shift to the impact that these branding choices have at the party-level and at the party system level with regard to the degree of uncertainty that they introduce to the post-election environment. Regarding the party-level, the propensity to be included in government based on the branding strategy pursued in the pre-electoral environment will be explored. Finally, I discuss the nature of the particular form of uncertainty that branding inconsistency and vagueness introduces into the government formation process. This results in expectations about the relationship between party-system level branding and the duration of the government bargaining process.

Incentives for Branding Strategy

The variety that exists in the branding strategies of parties is quite substantial. On one end of the spectrum is the stable and specific brand. This party maintains focus on similar issue areas from election to election and provides the public with particular policy prescriptions for these issue areas. Additionally, this party has a high degree of party cohesion that is not unified by an allegiance to a specific party

leader, but rather to the ideological positions of the party and the advancement of the party agenda. On the other end of the spectrum is the party that has a vague and inconsistent party brand. This is a party that shifts focus each election to and from different issue areas, and provides policy prescriptions that are vague and hard to place ideologically, perhaps in an attempt to garner favor with different audiences and avoid the constraints that come with specificity. The vagueness of this party's positions may lead to fractionalization on their ideological positions, making them less disciplined in their legislative voting behavior. While some of these differences between stable and unstable party brands are based on party-specific goals and features, the environments in which parties develop can influence the brand that they choose to cultivates and are able to maintain.

This brings forth a few important questions that have yet to be answered in the literature related to party branding and its influence on party competition. The first addresses the incentives to create a brand around policies and issues, or not. In order to do this, it is important to think about the strategic considerations parties must make in order to maximize its likelihood of achieving its goals. There are three types of incentives to consider, the most important of which comes from the electorate because ultimately they are the audience that can vote for the party to enter office. The nature of the electorate influences the way that parties decide to brand and the degree to which they do so in terms of political engagement (Aldrich 1995, Carpini 1996), ideological leaning (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, Tavits and Letki 2014), and political sophistication (Arnold 2012, Rapeli 2016).

The second incentive to consider is in terms of the party's characteristics. Size

of the party and their goals can influence the degree to which a branding strategy is or is not appropriate for them. Finally, the party system and electoral environment can greatly impact the decision to brand. A situation in which there is a high degree of electoral volatility from election to election influences the degree to which future elections are valued by these parties. This affects the value they place on consistency over time, making stable branding more or less appealing depending on the prevalence of volatility in the system. Additionally, volatility plays a role in whether or not the party considers the post-election government formation environment when determining its branding strategy during the campaign period.

Characteristics of the Electorate

A party's brand is crafted for consumption by the electorate and the other parties in the system. Because of this, the party's goal of garnering support (both short term and long lasting) is only achievable through the positive reception of their message and their reputation. Characteristics of the electorate impact how the message and brand that they create can translate into popular support in a given election; the most direct way to achieve the three different goals of parties: votes, office and policy (Strøm 1990). The characteristics that most directly affect this are the electorate's degree of political engagement and the aggregate political sophistication. Broadly, the presence of these characteristics in the electorate induce complementary strategic branding incentives. The following section will unpack these relationships.

One existing approach to understanding the link between party branding and

the electorate has been to examine partisanship through the use survey experiments. These experiments capture the way that particular types of information impact the strength of the party brand from the perception of the voter as well as how a party brand can influence partisanship ties. The first study to use experiments in order to get at this question of partisanship and party perceptions is done in Russia by Brader and Tucker (2007). In this experiment, the authors conduct a survey experiment on Russian voters in which they test a theory of partisanship which posits that partisanship is a result of the belief of shared views, a psychological proclivity to a particular party and the clarity of the party's message. By providing a treatment group with information about party platforms, the authors look at the differential effect of this information on voters with a variety of levels of political sophistication.

More recently, Noam Lupu followed up on this study by moving it to Argentina and taking a slightly different approach to the follow up questions asked (2013). He used a similar treatment as the Brader and Tucker experiment by providing the treatment group with information about the platforms of the parties or alternatively, information about the alliances the parties have formed and any party switching activities that may have occurred. He then asked both the control and the treatment groups about the strength of partisan ties. His findings suggest that receiving the information about party platforms increases partisan strength while getting information about the alliances formed by the parties can weaken partisan ties.

While this approach is interesting, it is important to take this process out of the laboratory setting and look at the actual messages that are being sent by parties. In this case, the experiments are designed to understand the impact of information on

political opinions. While this approach helps us to understand what pieces and types of information impact voters' views of parties, it fails to incorporate the realities of information gathering in the political landscape. For the research questions at hand in this project, this approach to measuring party branding can not assess the variation in electorate awareness and attentiveness that has been established to be critical to the question of the electorate's capacity to act rationally (Carpini 1996, Zaller 1992).

Another shortcoming of this work for the purposes of this project is the lack of attention it pays to the strategy of the party in the process of branding. In much of this work, the authors admit to taking the process of branding as an exogenous feature of their theories (Lupu 2013). While this makes paying attention to the impact it has on voters much more tractable, it misses out on examining some interesting questions about the motivations to brand, and why some parties choose not to. In this project, the parties' strategic considerations when choosing to create a brand are the central focus, which has been lacking in the literature.

Therefore, it is important to not only understand how party choice in an election is influenced by branding, but also to unpack to way that the nature of mass political engagement and political sophistication affects the decision of a party to brand in a particular way. Based on the findings of the studies by Lupu (2013) and Brader and Tucker (2007) it becomes clear that testing the effect of a mass political sophistication on the branding strategies would add to the conversation regarding the directionality of the relationship that they are claiming. Since they are randomly assigning branding strategies to parties, their studies cannot speak to the way that the features of the audience affect they type of brand they received. Based on existing findings, it is

reasonable to expect that a party's belief that the electorate is sophisticated will lead to more specificity in their party's message.

Political sophistication and engagement influence the benefits of different branding strategies through the way that an electorate receives and reacts to different types of political messaging. Sophistication in the electorate influences the role of specificity to a party's branding strategy because a sophisticated audience demands that a party's message map more closely to a real issue and policy prescriptions, while engagement is likely to incentivize consistency of issue focus. As the concept of political sophistication is a contentious one beginning in the 1960s (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960, Converse 1964) and continuing well into the late 20th and early 21st century (Carpini 1996, Gordon and Segura 1997, Highton 2009, Luskin 1990) it is important to define what I mean by sophistication, and then discuss how sophistication, along with political engagement, influence a party's branding strategy. The following section discusses these concepts and outlines the mechanisms by which an electorate can influence the branding strategy of a party.

The concept of political sophistication is introduced in the in 1960s by American behavioralists, Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) and Converse (1964) as a means to understand attitudes and belief systems in the American electorate. Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) define political sophistication in terms of the ability for a citizen to take in new information about an issue and construct an attitude about it that is consistent with the rest of their beliefs. Survey responses were used to classify respondents into "levels of conceptualization" based on their ability to justify their political attitudes based on ideological, or partisan messages.

While this early conceptualization is strongly linked to partisanship, Converse (1964) focuses more on ideology.[1] Converse's concept of "belief system contraints" proposes that more politically sophisticated citizens will be more constrained in their beliefs on particular issues because they are aware of existing ideological structures that prescribe an overarching view of the political world(i.e. liberalism or conservatism). Both of these studies find that higher levels of educational achievement are positively correlated with political sophistication.

These foundational conceptualizations of political sophistication have remained important throughout studies of individual political behavior, as Luskin (1987, 1990) points out with the use of issue congruence and ideology as the indicators of sophistication. Zaller's seminal work continues this conceptualization of sophistication in terms of the ability of a citizen to organize and sort political information (1992). However, his approach relies more on awareness of knowledge of political processes than on beliefs. He posits that the more attention paid to politics and the more it is retained, the more aware and sophisticated a citizen is because political decisions are made based on updating beliefs via new information.

Over the years, many scholars have found links between political sophistication and other important features of the electorate. It has been noted that higher degree of political sophistication have a positive impact on voter turnout (Neuman 1986) and message reception (Zaller 1992). The latter is particularly important to the understanding of how an electorate influences the branding of a party. If, as Zaller

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[1]Arguably, in the American context, ideology and partisanship are strongly correlated because of the two party system that aligns with the ideological poles.

finds in the American electorate, sophistication makes it easier for an audience to receive and process a message, the level of sophistication surely impacts the messaging strategy of a party. More specifically, the more sophisticated an electorate is, the more clear and specific an existing party must be in order to maintain support. Messages that are not distinguishable from other parties or do not fit coherently into a belief system will have a negative impact on the perceptions of the party.

These foundational works on political sophistication remain important to understanding the capacity of voters to make decisions, but many scholars have found that it is not necessary to be highly sophisticated in order to make rational decisions. Popkin (1994) introduces this idea as low information rationality. The argument here is that even citizens with low levels of political sophistication can make decisions that are rational based on their political and economic beliefs. This is done through the use of heuristics. Heuristics are important for low information people to make decisions by relying on established cognitive shortcuts, like party identification or particular policy positions central to a party's campaign. The use of these heuristics and shortcuts allows low-information voters to appear rational and sophisticated, but have the potential to be manipulated or misled with too much reliance on political elites (Lau and Redlawsk 2001).

One important feature of these arguments is that while you can make rational decisions with low information, you must be given proper heuristics and be able to attribute particular qualities to certain political elite in order to do so. As critics of the low information rationality theory discuss, (Lau and Redlawsk 2001) come back at this, though and say that ok- they can make decisions, but these decisions are not

equivalent to rational thought. The work is being done for them by political elites, so it is really just attribution, not "low information rationality". Because of this, for low information rationality to be innocuous, a stable party brand must be established by a credible political party for proper use as a heuristic. This makes parties without a stable brand unable to capitalize on low-information voters' support. Therefore, we are unlikely to expect a strong relationship between consistency and sophistication because consistency would be valuable to the electorate, regardless of their level of sophistication.

Political engagement of an electorate is the degree to which the public actively interacts with the political process both outwardly and inwardly. There are three aspects of political engagement to consider: interest, discussion, and participation (Solt, 2008). The first is the inward component of political engagement and the second two capture the outward features. Political engagement is important to representative government because it is one of the mechanisms of vertical accountability that places constraints on the government. A disengaged electorate will not hold as much power over their elected government as one that is aware of and involved in the processes of policy-making and governing. As such, the level of political engagement in an electorate is provides information to political parties about how their messages will be received by the public.

Unlike political sophistication, political engagement does have implications for the incentives to create a consistent brand because the electorate is more aware of and involved in the political activities around them (Carpini 1996, Zaller 1992), more able to process the information being presented to them during a campaign and fit it into

their existing political framework, and more likely to turn out to vote consistently over time (Neuman 1986). Because of this, as engagement among the electorate increases, more value is placed on the consistency of a party's brand. This provides an incentive for parties to deliver this consistency in order to achieve their immediate goal of vote-maximization.

Both sophistication and engagement in the electorate are likely to influence the importance of the specificity to a party's branding strategy. The primary reason for this is that an electorate's sophistication and engagement, and more specifically the sophistication and engagement of the party's target audience, constrains a party's future actions. It enhances the requirement that a party's message map more closely to a real policy issue and specific policy prescriptions based on that issue area (Rapeli 2016, Visser, Holbrook and Krosnick 2007). It stands to reason that this increased demand on the parties by sophisticated voters causes a strategic vote-getting party to provide more specific programmes to their electorate.

This leads to the following two hypotheses about the role of the electorate in a party's branding strategy:

H1a: Higher levels of political sophistication and engagement lead to more specificity in the party branding.

H1b:Higher levels political engagement leads to more consistency in party branding.

It is well-established that these concepts of political engagement and political sophistication are intrinsically linked (Hillygus 2005). Beginning with Converse (1964), behavioralists have noted the high correlation between these two concepts at the individual level. However, this does not prevent these two features of the electorate

from providing distinct incentives to a political party's messaging strategies.

Characteristics of the Party

Aside from broad goals of gaining support and votes that originate from the electorate, it is important to consider party-level features that create incentives (or disincentives) to cultivate a stable brand. In some cases these will interact with systemic features in interesting theoretical ways. First is the size of the party. Smaller parties are more likely to value the future less because competing in the next election is less certain, thus smaller parties will be likely to brand less specifically, and depending on their age, less consistently. Meyer and Wagner (2013) find that poor performance, resulting in a small parliamentary presence will lead to the most inconsistency in party message, because they will attempt to change their strategy from being seen as a mainstream party (with a broader issue area focus) to a niche party (a party with a narrow issue area focus) or vice verse. This is particularly likely if the small party is in the opposition (Meyer and Wagner 2013).

Additionally, small parties in party systems that are not dominated by one or two very large parties are motivated by the potential to become a "kingmaker" (Abedi and Siaroff 2014). The most prevalent case of the kingmaker was the Free Democrats (FDP) in Germany, which is the small party that can be courted by either of the two larger parties to form a coalition that would often result in a minimal winning coalition. The power of the kingmaker is very much debated, and it is often more likely that rather than the small party getting to pick which large party to join in

government with, it is the large party/ies that have to power to choose among many small parties in the system in order to form a majority coalition. This has shown up in Germany as we are seeing the Green party and FDP vie for this position in more recent elections (Lees 2012) and has often been the case in Israel (Ottolenghi 2001). Therefore, smaller parties in a bipolar party environment are likely to become more vague in their policy positions in order to maintain the possibility of gaining a seat at the table of government.

However, this pressure is likely to compete with the idea that niche parties are often quite small, but are the most likely to create a stable brand because they are by definition a party centered around a very focused agenda about one issue area. In particular, it is often the raised awareness of the niche issue that they represent that is the goal in running for office, and not the capture of a large proportion of the parliamentary seat share (Meguid 2005). This strategic consideration must be considered when testing the size hypothesis by marking those parties classified as niche parties, as defined in Meyer and Miller (2015) and Adams, Clark, Ezrow and Glasgow (2006) as parties that emphasize policy areas neglected by their rivals.[2] The following hypothesis follows from this line of reasoning:

H2:Smaller parties, based on vote-share in the previous election, will be branded with less specificity; being classified as a niche party attenuates this effect

The individual party characteristics discussed in this section are important to consider in this project because size and policy goals have major effects on the ability

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[2]While small party size is not a requirement of being classified as a niche party, in the sample used in this project, there are 42 niche parties with an average vote share of 5.7%. The largest niche party in our sample is the Green Party in Austria, which received 11% of the vote in 2006.

for a party to pursue a consistant strategy over time, affecting their brand. Additionally, these party-level features will be able to account for more variation within party systems than system-level variables. Through the design of the original dataset containing the dependent variables for all hypotheses of this project, party-level indicators are what drive the understanding of strategic variation in branding strategies within the same party system.

Electoral Volatility and Branding

Branding is done in the name of achieving the goals of the party. In almost all existing literature on party strategy, both during campaigns and while in office, the assumptions regarding party preferences have been laid out as a combination of three things: policy seeking behavior, office seeking behavior and vote-maximization. While these are compelling goals and motivating factors, it leaves out an important component of party motivation in elections which is to survive not only in the current election but in elections to come. The concept of party branding inherently incorporates the reputation of a party which cumulates over time (Butler and Powell 2014, Lupu 2011). In order to address this sort of motivation it is important to highlight an aspect of party strategy that goes beyond a single election and addresses the overall character of the party and the way that the electorate perceives the party.

Addressing volatility is critical the nature of party competition and party strategy, particularly in places where government turnover between elections is high. But there is significant disagreement over what volatility is and how to measure it. Since the

late 1970s and early 1980s political scientists have looked to the work of Pedersen (1979) and the well known Pedersen index to describe electoral volatility. Pedersen conceptualizes volatility as the summation of each party's change in vote share from an election at time $t-1$ to an election at time t, all divided by two to account for the idea that any change in one party must be picked up by another party. The result is a measure in which the maximum amount of volatility is 100. The equation is as follows:

$$V = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |p_{it} - p_{it-1}|}{2} \tag{2.1}$$

This equation includes all parties who have earned at least one seat in the legislature at time t. Substantively, this measure of volatility seems to capture the concept of volatility quite well in that it looks at vote share variation from election to election.

While this measure of volatility has been used for decades to analyze the impact of electoral volatility, Powell and Tucker (2013) have made strides to evaluate volatility in a more precise and specific way. They split it up into two separate elements: Type A and Type B. Type A volatility accounts for the extra-systemic volatility, meaning the swings in vote share that are accounted for by the entry of new parties into the system and their "stealing" votes away from existing parties. This is rather prevalent in new democracies, although has been decreasing over time, particularly in the CEE states. However, it still has the power to shake up the system and bring new coalition governments to power. For example, in the 2010 Czech parliamentary election, two new rightist parties, TOP09 and Public Affairs entered the race and got a combined

seat share of 65 seats out of the 200 parliamentary seats available. This allowed the government to shift hands into a centre-right regime after years of being governed by the Czech Social Democrats (CSSD) in a centre-left government. This sort of extra-systemic volatility is used to address concerns about volatility of the party system in general, which can lead to problems with representativeness and electorate capacity to distinguish among parties when they are coming and going so rapidly (Bielasiak 2002, Kitschelt 1999, Mair 2008).

Figure 2.1: Type A volatility: 1990-2012
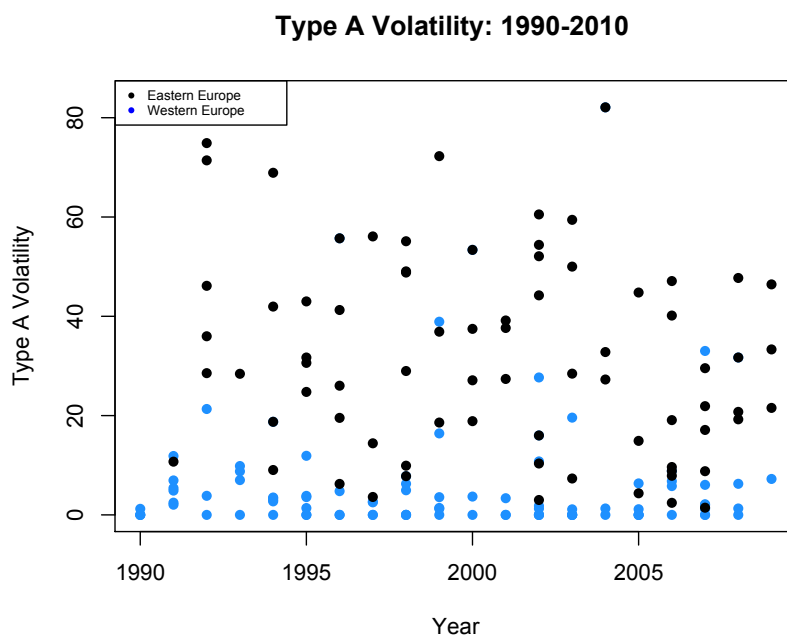
While it is now clear what we mean by extra-systemic volatility, how does it fit into the story of strategic brand formation? The general expectation is that there would be fewer strong brands formed when volatility increases because uncertainty would emerge in the pre-electoral period that prevents parties from being able to agree on a split of the spoils before the election takes place. This uncertainty can

stem from both sorts of electoral volatility. Extra-systemic volatility comes into the equation when we think about the repeated interaction between parties as well as with the electorate, allowing for parties to become more inconsistant from election to election. This stems from the uncertainty that is produced. Parties (and voters) become more concerned with being successful in the current election cycle than what may happen in the future because the shadow of the future is not long.

In the past, it has been posited that elites simply form new parties if they want to alter their ideological focus and gain new votes (Tavits 2008). Without a stable brand and reputation to constrain them, the creation of a new party is unnecessary to garner electoral support. Therefore, parties that have not created a specific, consistent brand in the past are likely to benefit from their inconsistent branding strategy. However, an increase of extra-systemic volatility in party systems that consist of strongly branded parties will not allow these parties to gain success through stablizing their branding strategy.

Volatility is often thought to dissipate as part of the process of democratic con-solidation(Schedler 1998), but in fact, it is very much still prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is important to address its impact on party system instability. Lane and Ersson (2007) take a principal-agent approach to the problem of volatility in new democracies and find that both principal preference switching in the electorate (Type B volatility) and agent switching at the elite level (Type A volatility) which leads to delays in party system institutionalization and thus delays in democratic consolidation. While Tavits (2008a) makes the claim that party sys-tem instability is the result of erratic elites rather than voters shifting positions from

election to election, her tests of this theory are based on the Pedersen index which aggregates these two distinct types of volatility. The persistence of extra-systemic volatility in new democracies around the world makes it necessary to consider its influence on the pre-election messaging and branding strategies of parties.

Importantly, extra-systemic volatility in the party system loosens the constraints of parties to act on the messages that they send prior to the election because they may not be held accountable for any reneging on these messages that may occur. However, intra-systemic volatility will also have an effect on branding in terms of how specific their platform is. Intra-systemic volatility introduces greater uncertainty as to the ideologic composition of government due to higher levels of uncertainty surrounding the seat share of existing parties and coalitions. Thus, these platforms are likely to become more about hedging a party's bets to enter government than convey their party's platform.

Several theories about platform ambiguity in the American primary context have discussed the need strategic logic of providing ambiguous policy positions(Aragones and Neeman 2000, Meirowitz 2005). Meirowitz (2005) notes that highly uncertain electoral environments will induce candidates to delay or even fail to select policy platforms because it may lead to certain electoral failure, while remaining ambiguous allows electoral success to remain viable. In the context of parliamentary elections, this ambiguity enables parties to remain viable candidates for inclusion in government, and thus an attractive strategy for all but extreme or niche parties when the outcome of the election is highly uncertain.

Volatility creates a commitment problem that reduces the benefits of creating a

stable brand. The logic for this argument is that if a party believes that they won't be interacting with the same parties in the future- when creating a government, then they will be less concerned with their reputation. Building upon the vast literature regarding party goals consisting primarily of seeking votes, office or policy (Harmel and Janda 1994, Meguid 2005, Meyer and Wagner 2013, Müller 2000, Strøm 1990), the maximization of votes often leads to gaining office and achieving policy goals, making these goals intrinsically linked. The way to acquire the most influence is to translate the votes received in the election into government portfolios. This means that under conditions of uncertainty, they may be more likely to a) be more vague when it comes to the policy positions they hold so as to have more latitude when attempting to join a coalition; or b) change policy focus from previous elections in order to meet the goal of that party. This line of reasoning suggests the following hypothesis:

H3: Increases in extra-systemic electoral volatility decrease the specificity and the consistency over time of party's messages, aside from niche parties

The caveat in this hypothesis is based on the idea that if the party is exclusively or nearly exclusively policy-seeking it will not be as affected by this strategic incentive because it benefits from remaining steadfast in its policy agenda, rather than simply by gaining office. This means that it is willing to forgo a portfolio in order to maintain its political agenda in hopes that in future elections they will be included in government. Examples of this type of party would be a small niche party that is focused on introducing a new policy to the mainstream platforms, even if that means that they themselves become irrelevent by doing so (Meguid 2005, Meyer and Wagner

2013). This type of party is quite rare, but it stands to reason that high levels of volatility would not effect their commitment to their policy goals.

While volatility is expected to have less of an impact on parties that are primarily concerned with achieving policy goals, the impact that it has on office-seeking behavior is likely to be more pronounced. It is important to unpack exactly the mechanism that is at play here. Office-seeking parties are more likely to be impacted by the level of uncertainty in the electoral arena. The amount of information available about the election outcomes impacts the weight placed on strategies to achieve government coalition inclusion since there are likely countless potential coalition configurations (Martin and Vanberg 2003). In situations of higher volatility, very little weight is likely to be placed on the consideration of other parties in the party system as an audience to their branding strategy. Because the make-up of the post-election parliamentary seat distribution is so unclear prior to the election, the maximization of electorate support is the most logical strategy. So, it is possible that volatility plays a role in the importance of these post-election party-system features because in cases of low volatility, where the make-up of the post-election government is more clear, the desire to be included in government may influence the branding strategy of a party.

More specifically, it is well established that vote-seeking parties achieve their goals by garnering favor with the electorate in order to gain votes through increased electoral support, while office seeking parties must also be concerned with how their actions in the campaign period will impact their propensity to be included in government coalitions. This matters when they know who their potential coalition partners might have to be. Specifically, this increases the incentives for parties to be consistent

in order to show that they are predictable coalition partners and specific to signal that their ideal points on a range of policies. However, in cases of high electoral volatility the most ideal strategy for getting into office is securing as many votes as possible. It is important to acknowledge this potential incentive because it has the potential of introducing endogeneity in the post-election environment.

When attempting to understand the role that branding has on a party's propensity to be included in government, it is crucial to understand the situations in which the potential inclusion of government had an effect on the branding strategy that a party pursued. Based on the nature of electoral volatility and the uncertainty surrounding election outcomes, it is safe to say that government inclusion plays a role in the decision to brand, conditional on low levels of electoral volatility. Examining this relationship will help to understand the true mechanism here; whether the impact of electoral system volatility comes from the shadow of the future in terms of the next election, or in terms of the immediate post-election government formation environment.

Consequences of Branding Strategies

Government coalition formation is a critical stage in the democratic representation process as it translates election results into ruling government type and composition. This government can take many different forms and can function in many different ways that results in varying outcomes in terms of quality and stability. As you can see from the distribution of types of government for the sample of governments

which this project covers in Figure 2.2, the modal type is the multi-party majority

government, visible by the high frequency of minimal winning coalitions (MWC)

and surplus coalitions. Because of this, it is important to understand the existing

literature on the politics of multiparty government formation as a foundation for

understanding the features of the party system that have been found to influence

it and where there may be shortcomings in these explanations. It is particularly

important to understand how uncertainty plays a role in these processes and how it

is accounted for in these studies.

Figure 2.2: Types of Government
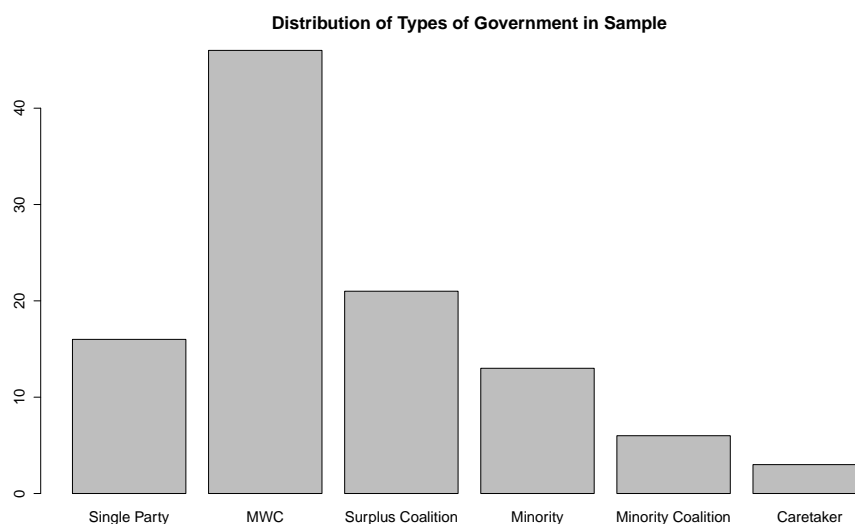
In a multiparty system the primary goals of forming a coalition are to reduce

transaction costs and minimize the ideological compromises parties in government

must make in order to come to consensus. This suggests that there are several pieces

of information that must be made available to all parties about each of the potential

governing parties. Most notably, the ideological position of each party on a number

of policy areas, the coherence of each party in terms of party discipline and the size

of the party in parliament. While the last feature is observed with certainty, the other two are unlikely to be fully revealed, leading to informational asymmetries and uncertainty in the bargaining space. Nevertheless, the literature relies heavily on the existence of this information as common to all. In the following section, these theories will be reviewed with an emphasis on their reliance on the informational assumptions that they make. Upon displaying how branding has consequences for the uncertainty in the post-election bargaining environment, a series of expectations about the influence of branding strategies on government inclusion and formation will be set forth.

Party Branding and Uncertainty

Clearly, there is no dearth of theoretical and empirical accounts of government formation and composition, but it is now important to build on this and set forth the specific ways party branding impacts the formation and composition of governments. Looking at this will allow for the assessment of the impact of party branding on larger aspects of democracy, like effectiveness and representativeness. In order to do this, I will need to utilize a measure of party branding, restricting the sample to parliamentary democracies, as well as construct a system-level measure of party branding which which enables the determination of whether the nature of the party system as a whole has an effect on the quality of governance, or if it is only the degree of branding of the governing parties that influences government effectiveness.

Vagueness in party brands will create a less distinct party system, making govern-

ment formation more challenging because it is less clear which parties will actually pursue similar policies. Consistency at the party system level is also important because a system in which many of the parties are inconsistent in policy positions over time will likely be less trustworthy of one another. The way to create this measure is to take the individual party branding scores of all of the parties that make it into the legislature in a given year and construct a weighted average based on the number of seats that party has in the legislature. By approaching this question at the party-system level, I will be able to get at questions of party competition and cooperation in the post-election environment.

The connection that this has to branding is that it will impact the possible coalitions that form and how obvious the ideological connections are. In general, the primary determinants of government coalition formation is ideological proximity and to a lesser extent, maintaining the optimal size of the coalition (the minimal winning coalition)(Strom, Budge and Laver 1994). This makes it important for parties to be able to distinguish themselves from each other for two reasons. This first is that the amount of distinction in the party system will make it more or less easy to form a government in the first place because the prototypical member is more obvious and thus determining which parties are close enough to one another to form a functional government is made easier. The second reason that this is important in government formation is that a more branded, distinct party is more likely to have greater party cohesion when it comes to voting, which is an attractive feature of a party. Since the primary function of creating a government coalition is to reduce transaction costs when attempting to create a winning coalition on a vote, having a relatively coherent

and loyal party membership in the parliament is an attractive feature for a coalition partner.

Consistency of issue importance

It has been shown that there are increases in the government bargaining duration due to the increase in asymmetric information present in the post-election environment (Diermeier and Van Roozendaal 1998). While Martin and Vanberg (2003) find that ideology and party-system features like number of parties decrease the bargaining duration, they do not incorporate measures of uncertainty, like issue area inconsistency into the equation. Given that information deficits have been shown to increase bargaining duration, and the allocation of portfolios is based on perceived issue importance and ideology, it becomes clear that levels of message inconsistency should influence the bargaining game and thus the duration of the government formation process.

But what specific types of information deficits lead to longer bargaining periods, and how can party-level inconsistency effect the chance of a party being included in government? While Martin and Vanberg (2003) and Diermeier and Van Roozendaal (1998) focus primarily on the complexity of coalition formation in terms of the number of iterations of coalition membership, Golder (2010) and more recently, Ecker and Meyer (2015) have pointed to the uncertainty of party positions as a driver of the delays in terms of maximizing the ideological utility of the member-parties of the coalition. Here, I argue that consistency of issue importance delays the bargaining game by introducing uncertainty into the ideological position of parties and the

stability that particular parties bring to the projected durability of a government.

Specificity of Party Brand

The principal-agent problem highlighted by Martin and Vanberg (2004) becomes very important when considering the role of specificity in the government formation process. The formateur is likely to prefer to appoint more specific, but potentially more ideologically dissimilar parties to ministerial positions. This suggests that there is an interactive effect between vagueness and ideological congruence with the formateur that may be predictive of likelihood of portfolio distribution. The expectation is that a very specific, ideologically congruent party is most likely to get appointed portfolios while a vague, ideologically dissimilar party is the least likely to be assigned a portfolio in government. It is also a reasonable expectation that governments that are forming in a system in which system-wide vagueness is high will take longer to form than when parties are more specific.

This brings up the possibility that there will be a tradeoff between congruence and specificity, so what are some conditions or features of the party (system) that would lead one to believe that? First, the nature of the formateur's brand is important to consider here. Vague parties that get a lot of votes will be less concerned about pairing with other vague parties because the will see it as an opportunity to make agreements and compromises on different policies because none of the parties will have made an investment in a brand that can be harmed by a wide range of policy choices. A vague principal might be comfortable with either type of party because their membership is likely to be more ideologically broad, but a specific principal

would not want to do this because they have invested in a brand and would not want their support to erode because of a coalition partner that has wildly different policy goals than themselves.

This suggests that highly specific formateurs will prefer partners that are near congruent and specific. If these parties do not exist in the system, further information will have to be gathered about the parties because vague parties will be hard to distinguish from one another, making it a longer formation process. Similarly, continuity will play a role in the nature of the government formation process. According to work done by Lupu in Argentina, partisan ties can be eroded when the party weakens its brand through policy-switching, creating coalitions with ideological dissimilar parties or internal inconsistencies in policy preference (2013), so parties are concerned with ideological connectedness of coalition partners for reputational reasons.

A need to maintain their reputation based on their coalition partners suggests that a party system with higher levels of vagueness and thus less ideological distinction between parties will tend to have a longer bargaining period because of the reputational costs of picking a poorly-aligned coalition partner.

Government Inclusion and Formation

The study of the government formation and dissolution processes in parliamentary democracies is an important literature throughout comparative politics, from game theoretic models of the bargaining space to case studies of the lack of party cohesion that can lead to government collapse. In the following section, these theories

will be discussed as they relate to the importance of information and commitment mechanisms to the politics of government coalitions.

Government coalition formation is arguably the most important stage in the democratic representation process as it translates election results into ruling government type and composition. This government can take many different forms and can function in many different ways that results in varying outcomes in terms of quality. As you can see from the distribution of types of government for the sample of governments which this project covers, the modal type is the multi-party majority government, visible by the high frequency of minimal winning coalitions (MWC) and surplus coalitions. Because of this, it is important to understand the existing literature on the politics of multiparty government formation as a foundation for understanding the features of the party system that have been found to influence it and where there may be shortcomings in these explanations. It is particularly important to understand how uncertainty plays a role in these processes and how it is accounted for in these studies.

In a multiparty system the primary goals of a coalition formation are to reduce transaction costs and minimize the ideological compromises parties in government must make in order to come to consensus. This suggests that there are several pieces of information that must be made available to all parties about each of the potential governing parties. Most notably, the ideological position of each party on a number of policy areas, the coherence of each party in terms of party discipline and the size of the party in parliament. While the last feature is observed with certainty, the other two are unlikely to be fully revealed, leading to informational asymmetries and

uncertainty in the bargaining space. Nevertheless, the literature relies heavily on the existence of this information as common to all. In the following section, these theories will be reviewed with an emphasis on their reliance on the informational assumptions that they make.

Government Inclusion

The most prevalent and long-standing theories regarding party inclusion in government relate to the ideological congruence of coalition members (Axelrod 1970, De Swaan and Rapoport 1973, Riker 1962) and the parliamentary seat-share of the party (Browne, Frendreis and Gleiber 1986, Gamson 1961, Schofield and Laver 1985). Ideological congruence with the formateur is a strong, established predictor of coalitional inclusion. The theoretical logic for this understanding of coalitions rests on the importance of policy goals to parties and their members (Strøm 1990). Minimizing policy losses in a coalition of parties with differing goals requires the formateur to join in coalition with the most ideologically similar parties.

The intuition behind each of these theories is that ideologically more compact coalitions will be more valuable because they involve fewer costs in terms of policy compromises and transaction costs for passing legislation than do more diverse ones. These models have been expanded based on party goals (Bäck 2003, Strøm 1990) and applied to different settings (Klingemann, Hofferbert, Budge, Keman, Bergman, Petry and Strom 1994, Savage 2014, Warwick 1994), but the importance of ideology to forming governing coalitions has remained central to the study of government formation. It is evident however that these studies assume that party ideological position is

well defined and public information prior to the formation of the government, which may or may not be the case based on the information that parties provide throughout their campaign, through the language of their manifesto.

All of this literature on the importance of ideology assumes that there is a clear understanding of the party's ideal point either in a left-right ideological space or on specific issues. I argue through this chapter that uncertainty of this ideal point must be taken into account when understanding the nature of the bargaining environment. In order for parties to successfully use governing coalitions to reduce transaction costs and enact policy near their ideal point, the quality of the information that they have on other parties is crucial to understanding the complexity and uncertainty of the coalition building process.

Along these lines, there have been challenges to these canonical claims that call into question some of the assumptions that underly these theoretical and empirical findings. The first is that the party is a unified actor (Bäck, Debus and Müller 2016, Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov 2009, Ceron 2014). This assumption is critical to many of the formal models regarding coalition formation (Austen-Smith and Banks 1988, Black 1948, Downs 1957). However, it is well understood in the empirical literature that parties are not unified actors, and the degree to which they fractionalize varies across parties and across time. This party unity assumption allows for party ideal points to be constructed, which are used to understand the ideological proximity of parties to one another. When this assumption is violated, the party ideal points become fuzzy and more diffuse, making the coalitional "connectedness" argument harder to discern, empirically. It has been shown in recent literature that a lack of party

unity does impact parliamentary behavior and thus plays a role in the consideration of coalition partners. This highlights that the influence of uncertainty in coalitional cohesion while in government may come into play when choosing a coalition partner. After all, the primary purpose of creating a coalition with a majority in parliament is to reduce transaction costs when writing and passing laws.

Challenging the importance of size on influence and bargaining power brought forth by Gamson (1961) and continued by Carroll and Cox (2007) is a growing literature on the influence of past performance and *changes* in seat share rather than simply looking at the static seat share in a particular election. Döring and Hellström (2013) find that in the newer democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, inclusion in government is based primarily on gains or losses in a particular election. This suggests that Gamson's law may be based on an empirical phenomenon specific to Western Europe. Mattila and Raunio (2004) go even further to expose that electoral gains and losses are a better predictor of government inclusion than parliamentary seat share, even in Western European countries that experience higher levels of electoral volatility.

In addition to changes in seat share over time, participation and defection in past coalitions also comes into the equation when considering coalition partners. Parties that defected from a coalition or caused an internal coalition dispute that resulted in cabinet dissolution are less likely to be involved in subsequent coalitions (Tavits 2008*c*). Clearly, there is punishment for being seen as an unreliable coalition partner, as this poses a risk to the durability of the governing coalition. Because of these two findings, it is clear that reputation matters in the bargaining game, and while seat

share is seen as a mandate from the electorate, swift increases in the seat share of a small party act as a threat to the larger parties and perhaps a desire to co-opt their popularity to prevent its continued growth.

The literature on government inclusion skirts around the issues of uncertainty, while considering the influence of reputation. The work that has been done on government formation and bargaining has more consistently addressed the influence of uncertainty and reputation as important factors when considering coalition partners. Whether that is internal consistency leading to uncertainty in unified voting, age of the party leading to concerns of experience and reputation or changes to electoral success that can influence likelihood of government inclusion, it is clear that information matters when it comes to forming a government. This information can come from experience with the party or from party messaging, but in both cases varying levels of informational uncertainty are sure to influence governmental inclusion and can be understood through a party's branding strategy prior to the election.

Bargaining Duration

There have been countless accounts of the bargaining game that occurs during the government formation process. While some of these games and empirical investigations are concerned with the duration of the bargaining period, others are more concerned with the portfolio allocation process and result of the formation game. Because of the role that branding plays in the degree of uncertainty in the bargaining space, it is a key component to the determination of the duration of government

formation that has been omitted from the empirical analyses of the complexity and uncertainty of the bargaining space (Diermeier and Van Roozendaal 1998, Martin and Vanberg 2004). As the plot below indicates, there is a lot a variation when it comes to the duration of the government formation process, and the determinants are worth investigation.

Figure 2.3: Government Formation Bargaining Duration
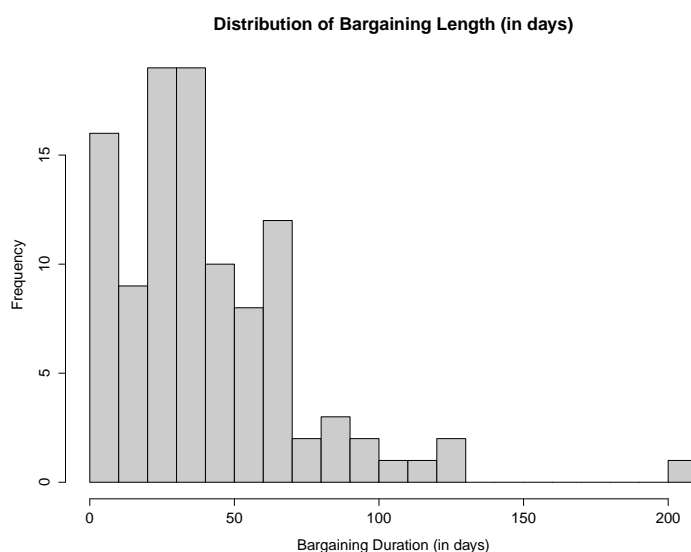
The early line of thought regarding the importance of ideological connectedness of coalitions brings forth the principal agent problem that formateurs face when they must form a coalition government with delegated ministries to various parties. The problem is primarily an adverse selection problem in which parties will make an agreement to pursue particular policies in return for a ministerial portfolio, but once they have the portfolio they will pursue their own, true interests (Martin and Vanberg 2004). This leads to problems with coalition formation and trust in agents. Martin and Vanberg (2004) focus primarily on the impact of the delegation, while I am more interested in the delegation decision itself. More specifically, the role of a party's

"vagueness" on the likelihood of a formateur to assign a member of the party to a ministerial post. Based on the logic of principal-agent delegation, the principal wants to choose the agent that is most similar to itself on the dimension on which they are delegating (Miller 2005). This means that, much like the voter trying to choose which party to vote for, the party leader wants to pick the "prototypical partisan" that looks most like themselves. The more unclear the platform and message of the party, the harder it is to discern where exactly the party lands in a particular issue area, making the bargaining period longer.

In addition to theoretical works on the duration of the government formation process, many empirical studies have focused on understanding what makes the government formation bargaining process longer or shorter. Diermeier and Van Roozendaal (1998) examine this question in Western European democracies of the post-war era. This study finds that the most important predictors of the duration of a government formation process is the timing of the formation and whether or not the previous cabinet was defeated. Both of these situations increase the bargaining length due to the increase in asymmetric information present in these situations (Diermeier and Van Roozendaal 1998). In an attempt to draw out this asymmetric information idea that is based on uncertainty regarding the ideological bargaining space, Martin and Vanberg (2003) build on this study to include the role of party-level features such as ideology and party-system features like number of parties to explain government formation duration. They find that ideological proximity does speed up bargaining processes as well as having fewer parties bargaining in the space.

Given this, it is very important to further examine the nature of this information

asymmetry regarding coalition partnerships and ideology and how a party's branding strategy may add or detract from this information asymmetry. The measure of party branding I propose here will be able to address this question in a way that has not yet been attempted in the literature.

In the existing literature on the duration of government bargaining periods, the focus is primarily on the influence of the complexity of the party system and the uncertainty of the ideal points of each party. Martin and Vanberg (2003) posit that the complexity of the party system, in terms of the number of parties and their relative size alters the potential majority coalition permutations, making the outcome much less clear. They find support for this argument. Golder (2010) challenges this finding, proposing that it is the uncertainty in the ideological position and salience of parties that accounts for the duration of bargaining periods, noting that bargaining rounds that do not fall immediately after an election are much shorter. The mechanism by which these bargaining periods are reduced is the decrease in uncertainty of parties' ideological position and minimum acceptable ministerial posts (Golder 2010).

Central to all of these theories and empirical analyses is the degree of uncertainty and complexity of the bargaining environment. However, while complexity is relatively well defined, the measurement and conceptualization of uncertainty is lacking. Simply looking at whether the bargaining is occurring directly following an election or not (Ceron 2014, Golder 2010) does not allow for variation in uncertainty within these two types of bargaining processes and it also does not directly capture the mechanism by which the duration is reduced. This is problematic because we see that there is indeed variation in observed bargaining duration. Because of this, it is important to

explore other forms of uncertainty and how they interact with the previously analyzed forms of uncertainty and complexity. The following section will put forth a theory regarding the role of ideological uncertainty in the government formation process.

Expectations

Based on the theories of government inclusion and selection presented here, party-level inconsistency plays a role in being selected into government only when the inconsistent party is ideologically similar to the formateur. This interaction is based on the central tenet that one of the goals of a party in office is to enact policies that are as close to one's ideal point as possible (Martin and Stevenson 2001, Savage 2014, Strøm 1990, Warwick 1994). Therefore, when a party is sufficiently ideologically dissimilar to the formateur, inconsistency is not the relevant feature of elimination from consideration, rather ideological incongruence eliminates the party from coalition membership. Thus, in order to isolate the impact of party-level inconsistency on government inclusion, it is necessary to take into account the simultaneous role of ideological incongruence that may be driving the formateur's decision to exclude a particular party, regardless of the consistency of that message.

Because of the principal-agent problem highlighted above, the formateur is likely to prefer to appoint more specific, but potentially more ideologically dissimilar parties to ministerial positions. This suggests that there is an interactive effect between vagueness and ideological congruence with the formateur that may be predictive of likelihood of portfolio distribution. The expectation is that a very specific, ideologi-

cally congruent party is most likely to get appointed portfolios while a vague, ideologically dissimilar party is the least likely to be assigned a portfolio in government, setting forth the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4a: All else equal, parties that are more vague and less consistent in their messaging are less likely to be included in a government coalition.

This hypothesis assumes that all formateurs have identical preferences over their ideal coalition partners. However, given that the formateur may need to prioritize *either* ideological congruence *or* a party with a stable and specific brand, different formateurs may approach this decision differently. So, what are some conditions or features of the party system that would lead to these differences? First, the nature of the formateur's brand is important to consider here. Vague parties with significant electoral support will be less concerned about pairing with other vague parties because the will see it as an opportunity to make agreements and compromises on different policies because none of the parties will have made an investment in a brand that can be harmed by a wide range of policy choices. A vague formateur might be comfortable with either type of party because their membership is likely to be more ideologically broad, but a specific formateur would not want to do this because they have invested in a brand and would not want their support to erode because of a coalition partner that has wildly different policy goals than themselves. The following hypothesis follows from this argument:

Hypothesis 4b: Formateurs are more likely to choose coalition partners

that more similar to themselves in terms of specificity.

This suggests that highly specific formateurs will prefer partners that are near congruent and specific, since ideological congruency is one of the primary goals of government formation. If parties with these characteristics do not exist in the system, further information will have to be gathered about the parties because vague parties will be hard to distinguish from one another, making it a longer formation process. Similarly, continuity will play a role in the nature of the government formation process. According to work done by Lupu in Argentina, partisan ties can be eroded when the party weakens its brand through policy-switching, creating coalitions with ideological dissimilar parties or internal inconsistencies in policy preference (2013), so parties are concerned with ideological connectedness of coalition partners for reputational reasons.

When it comes to the length of the coalition formation process, increases in asymmetric information present in the post-election environment are associated with increases in the government bargaining duration (Ceron 2014, Diermeier and Van Roozendaal 1998, Golder 2010). While Martin and Vanberg (2003) find that ideology and party-system features like number of parties decrease the bargaining duration, they do not incorporate measures of uncertainty, like issue area inconsistency into the equation. Given that information deficits have been shown to increase bargaining duration, and the allocation of portfolios is based on perceived issue importance and ideology, it becomes clear that levels of message inconsistency should influence the bargaining game and thus the duration of the government formation

process.

But what specific types of information deficits lead to longer bargaining periods, and how can party-level inconsistency effect the chance of a party being included in government? While Martin and Vanberg (2003) and Diermeier and Van Roozendaal (1998) focus primarily on the complexity of coalition formation in terms of the number of iterations of coalition membership, Golder (2010) pointed to the uncertainty of party position as a driver of the delays. Here, I argue that consistency of issue importance delays the bargaining game by introducing uncertainty into the ideological position of parties and the stability that particular parties bring to the projected durability of a government.

A need to maintain their reputation based on their coalition partners suggests that a party system with higher levels of vagueness and thus less ideological distinction between parties will tend to have a longer bargaining period because of the reputational costs of picking a poorly-aligned coalition partner. This suggests the following pair of hypotheses regarding the duration of the bargaining period:

> *Hypothesis 5a: All else equal, higher overall levels of specificity in a party system is negatively related to the length of time government formation takes.*

> *Hypothesis 5b: More messaging inconsistency in the party system overall will lead to a longer formation period.*

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter it has become clear that among other things, uncertainty plays a central role in both the choice of branding strategies and the immediate consequences of such strategies. In terms of the incentives that lead to particular branding strategies, the role of high levels of electoral volatility is an element of uncertainty that is expected to induce lower levels of specificity and consistency because the reputational costs are not known and the shadow of the future looms less large. In the post-election environment, it is the branding choices themselves that influence the environment of uncertainty. In cases where the party system contains many vague and inconsistent actors, the task of forming a government becomes more difficult since there is less information about the ideological position and cohesiveness of particular parties. These expectations build on existing work and it is important to thoroughly test them with appropriate measures and methods.

The task of the next chapter is to lay out the method by which the focal concepts of party message specificity and consistency are detected and constructed. This will create a novel dataset that systematically categorizes and measures these concepts based on party manifestos from election to election. In the subsequent chapters of this book, the use of this dataset will allow for the analysis of the expectations regarding party branding put forth in this chapter for sixteen European democracies from 1975 to 2014.

Chapter 3

Measuring Party Branding with Manifestos

Using the conceptualization of the party brand as comprised of the specificity and consistency of a party's message allows for a clear means of operationalization through the analysis of party manifestos. In order to understand the messages that are sent by parties to the relevant audiences, it is important to use text that is composed for that intention. While parties certainly prepare a wide variety of written and verbal text that communicates this, the manifesto is the document prepared that represents the party as a whole most directly (Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, Budge, McDonald et al. 2006). This singular document is prepared in order to convey the policy program the party intends to pursue if given the mandate to do so. While there is some variation in terms of who is actually composing this document- be it a top-down mandate or a more grassroots effort (Däubler 2012) it is widely accepted as the (Budge 2001, Powell 2000). Because of this, party manifestos are the documents on which this

measurement of party branding is to be based.

In this chapter, the entire process of creating this measure will be fully explained and explored. This will begin with the explanation of the concept of the LDA method of topic modeling as well as why this method is most appropriate for the creation of the measure of party branding that has been proposed here. Next, there will be a thorough discussion of the gathering of the manifestos as well as the process of preparing the documents to be fed into the model in R. This includes a justification and explanation of non-trivial modeling choices that must be made. Next, an overview of the computational implementation of this model using R will allow the reader to understand how this process could be replicated on this or another corpus. This will be followed by a brief description of the output and how the topics are named and clustered so that they are substantively interpretable. Once the output is explored, a discussion of the process and outcome of validating the topics through a mechanical turk process. Finally, the chapter will close with the creation of the measures of party branding to be used in the empirical chapters of this project.

Existing Approaches to Measurement

While much of the recent literature has relied on experiments to measure elements of branding, there has been some attempts at creating a measure of branding using observational data. Winther Nielsen and Vinæs Larsen (2014) approach branding in a similar way to Lupu (2011, 2013) and Brader and Tucker (2007) in that there is a strong emphasis on the electorate when constructing the measure and determining

whether or not the brand is strong. In their study, they look at Danish political parties and determine the strength of a brand by conducting representative association analysis on a sample of the electorate. In this type of analysis the respondents are asked to associate freely about a party for two minutes and then the words or phrases are compiled to create a measure of the strength of the brand based on the similarity across respondents' associations. This is an interesting way to measure ideology, and very important when trying to understand the influence of branding on identity formation, but not particularly helpful in understanding the branding process as seen from the point of view of the party. Such a measure does not yet exist, leaving these questions unanswered. This project intends to fill that gap by creating a measure of ideological branding that is message-based rather than based on the interpretation and reception of the brand by the electorate.

There are certainly questions within the political science literature on parties that motivate this project, but there is also much that can be learned from other fields and applied to the questions surrounding party branding. For example, the idea of party branding has an interesting parallel to the marketing literature on corporate branding strategies. While there are certainly differences between consumer products and elected government positions, there are certainly lessons to be taken from the attributes of a successful and lasting corporate brand. In much of the marketing literature, the value of a brand is known as "Brand Equity" (Aaker 2009, Clifton, Simmons et al. 2003) and has many different features that contribute to this equity. Aaker (2009) points to five important features of a brand: 1) Brand Loyalty, 2) Brand Awareness, 3) Perceived Quality, 4) Brand Associations, and 5) Other Proprietary

Assets. He argues that all of these features contribute to reduced costs of marketing, differentiation in the market, reducing information costs to the consumer, and creating "positive feelings" in the consumer. All of these things are important to the success of a brand because they contribute both to the initial purchasing of the brand/product, but also the maintenance of loyal consumers that help reduce marketing costs aimed at attracting new consumers.

Clearly, this marketing literature has fairly strong links to party branding. In this analogy, the corporations are the parties and the consumers are the voters. The voters have to choose among a group of parties in the party system (the market) and based on the strength of their brand and the salience and quality of their message (their product) they will receive more or less votes(market share). Of the five features that Aaker (2009) points to, Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality and Brand Associations have the most applicability to this analogy. These are also in line with the theories that political psychologists have suggested regarding the formation of partisanship and ideology (Druckman 2001, Ray 2003). However, once again, these studies focus downstream at the voters, and ignore the parties that are actually producing the brand that can then be used by voters to aid in establishing their identity (Huddy 2001). By looking at corporate branding strategies, this void can be filled and the profile of a successful brand can be understood more wholly and a measure produced that takes into account the efforts made by the party.

The Method: Latent Dirichlet Allocation

Since the early 2000s, political science has been adopting the methods produced by computer scientists in order to expedite and systematize the analysis and coding of political texts. Manifestos have been at the center of this discussion, particularly because of criticisms of the lack of error estimates in the CMP data, which was coded by human experts(Benoit and Laver 2007, Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov 2009). By estimating with automated processes, measures of confidence in each of the policy components are generated just by doing the analysis. So, because of this criticism, and the efficiency that these techniques bring to the table, there has been an ongoing attempt to harness this method for use on political texts, with one of the earliest packages, wordscores, used to examine British and Irish manifestos to get policy locations (Laver, Benoit and Garry 2003). This did not come without criticism, however. Budge and Pennings (2007) point out that with this method, the selection of reference texts (texts by which the dictionary is created) may drive the results too much, producing bias. While Benoit and Laver push back against this claim, there have been improvements to this method, led by McCallum (2002), who has put forth an `R` package called `Mallet` which utilizes a relatively simple method to analyze large volumes of unlabeled text.

Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) is a generative probabilistic model of a corpus. The basic idea is that documents are represented as compositional mixtures over latent topics, where each topic is characterized by a distribution over words. To clarify some concepts here, the corpus is the entire collection of documents over which the model

is specified and documents are the components of the corpus which are assigned topic distributions based on the words within them. In this particular case, the corpus is all of the manifestos for all of the years and all of the parties in a given country and the documents are paragraphs within these manifestos. Topic models use algorithms in order to discover the main themes or topics that constitute a large and formally unstructured collection of documents, called the corpus (Blei 2012, Quinn, Monroe, Colaresi, Crespin and Radev 2010). Topic modeling algorithms can be applied to very large collections of documents, which make it extremely useful for understanding the topics in political party manifestos, since the average length of a party manifesto is 20,000 words, and this project analyzes several hundred of these lengthy documents.

Since each topic in the model is constructed without the use of human guidance and interpretation, it is important to define what a topic is, in the context of this class of models. The formal definition of a topic in an LDA model is a distribution over a fixed vocabulary, where the vocabulary is every word that is in the corpus, save the stop words [1]. It is assumed that there is a two-step data generating process for each document that reflects the existence of these latent topics. First, a random distribution over topics is chosen for each document. Then, for each word in the document a topic is randomly chosen from the distribution over these topics. Finally, a word from the corresponding distribution over the vocabulary is chosen. This is continued until there is convergence on the topic composition and distribution through an iterative process.

This statistical model reflects the intuition that documents exhibit multiple topics

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[1]For a further discussion on stop words, see below

and can be classified as a mixture of several topics. This is called a mixed membership model, where each document contains all of the topics in different proportions. Mixed membership and a shared set of topics for all documents in the corpus distinguishes the latent Dirichlet allocation model from other topic models and allows us to gain leverage over the focus and specificity of each paragraph within a manifesto, which would not be possible without an understanding of this mixture.

The goal of topic modeling is to automatically discover the latent topics from a collection of observed documents. The documents themselves are observed, while the topic structure is not observed. This presents a problem for the researcher that this class of model can help solve- how do we use the observed documents to infer the hidden structure of topics in the corpus. This process is sort of backwards to common text-analysis in which a set of topics is defined and each sentence or paragraph is assigned to a topic, but is part of a widely used class of latent variable models which are particularly common in bayesian analysis. As for how this is accomplished, we make assumptions about the generative process to define a joint probability distribution over both the observed documents- in this case the policy areas that are being discussed over thousands of pages of text. This joint distribution can then be used to construct and compute the conditional (or posterior) distribution of the topics which can give us a way to quantify and understand what these parties are talking about and how clear their messages are.

Because of the assumptions and structure of the model as well as the importance of the documents to discovering the topics, LDA models require that the researcher do a bit of data management prior to running the model. This simply means that each

document must be treated as one observation with identification variables attached to the actual text such as year, country and party name. This allows one to organize the results of the model and assign each document's parameters to a party-year. Once this is done, the model can be run and output is produced in the form of "topics." A "topic" is a cluster of words that frequently occur together. Using contextual clues and repeated sampling, topic models connect words with similar meanings. In terms of the actual output, a "key" is produced that consists of the top "k" words for each topic (where k is a number chosen by the researcher). This output can be useful for checking that the model is creating interpretable topics. In addition, this file reports the Dirichlet hyperparameter of each topic which will act as the weight of each topic in a given document, since the parameter represents the proportion of the document assigned to each topic. By examining the keywords in each cluster we can discern the policy area that each cluster represents.

Gathering and Pre-Processing the Manifestos

The corpi that will be used in this analysis of party communication and messaging are the collections of party manifestos from the Comparative Manifestos Project. Since party branding has two major components- consistency and specificity- it is logical to make use of the manifestos that parties release in order to construct a measure of both of these aspects of the party's message. Manifestos are the statements released to the electorate and media by parties explicating the policy positions that the party will pursue once in office, as well as the general mission statement of the

party (Budge 2001). These manifestos are quite important in public discourse and public understanding of the messages of each of the parties running for office. The media- particularly print media- uses these documents in order to compare the stances of different parties throughout the campaign season and provide this sort of "compare and contrast" information on the parties, a practice that may seem somewhat unusual in America (Tavits 2013). The manifestos have been collected over the years by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), a project that has both collected the original texts as well as produced a particular way to commodify these words into usable, analyzable data. This consistent production and collection of manifestos makes them available for every election cycle and not biased in the way that expert surveys of parties' ideologies can be.

The use of manifestos to represent the messages sent to the electorate about the parties' ideological positions may seem like a stretch because access to these documents may appear to be restricted to elites. It is important to note that there is significant evidence that the media uses and prints manifestos or portions of manifestos in print media. There is a significant period of time in which the manifestos are actually procured from newspapers. This is primarily in the earlier observations in the data- the 1950s-1970s in Western Europe- in which party leaders would submit a platform to the largest national newspaper in order to get the word out to the electorate what their ideological positions were. So, certainly for that period of time manifestos are an appropriate document to use when trying to understand the information given to the public. More recently, Däubler (2012) has found through interviews in Ireland, that in that context, manifestos are used to address voters, as

tools for intra-party coordination, sending signals to interest groups, and aiding in the government formation process.

Additional information about the similarity of the content of manifestos to the other messages that are sent during a given campaign can be seen in the case of Austria from in the elections of 2002 and 2006. A group of researchers in the Austrian National Election Survey (AUTNES) collected all of the press releases issued by the candidate parties during the election cycle and coded them based on content (Dolezal, Ennser-Jedenastik, Müller and Winkler 2016, Müller, Eder and Jenny 2012). While ideally this would be done for every country in the sample, comparing these two means of communication in a single country over two elections provides evidence of the validity of the use of manifesto data as an operationalization of party messaging. The expectation here is that the distribution of issue areas covered by the press releases crafted by a given party will be similar to the distribution of cluster issue shares for that party based on the measure put forth in this chapter.

Below, you will see 2 figures. The first contains 5 sets of two stacked bar plots which show the cluster distribution of manifestos and topic distribution of programmatic press releases for each party in the 2002 election cycle and the second set of barplots are from the 2006 election. The manifesto proportions are based on the topic model put forth in this chapter. The AUTNES coding schema does not perfectly align with the coding scheme presented here, with a more nuanced topic-coding scheme, requiring the aggregation of a few of the topic areas in order to create comparable categories.[2] However, looking at the distribution of the most common issue areas

[2]In order to make these topics more comparable, The manifesto clusters "public goods" and

gives a good sense of the party's press release content. Based on the assumption that manifestos are representative of party messaging during the campaign period in terms of issue area content and focus, one would expect that these figures would show a similar distribution of issue areas covered between the topic model of the manifesto and the press releases.

Indeed, when comparing the distribution between each country's press releases and their manifesto content, we see quite a few similarities. First, in 2002, OVP, Grune and SPO have quite comparable content distributions between their manifesto and the press releases they issued prior to the election. In all three cases, the parties tended to discuss the economy more in their press releases than in their manifestos, and instead focus more on social justice issues in their manifestos, perhaps reflecting that manifestos are by nature less pragmatic than press releases. But, as reflected in the distribution of the Grune's manifesto and press releases, for example, they speak often about education, geriatric care, gender equality and renewable energy in their press releases just as their manifesto focuses on social justice, the environment and public goods.

The parties with the biggest inconsistencies between their manifestos and their press releases in 2002 are LF and FPO, two of the smaller and more electorally volatile parties in the system. For FPO, this is a notably mismanaged electoral cycle, as the party was going through a leadership change, and this mismanagement resulted in a sharp decline in electoral success (Müller and Fallend 2004). For LF, we see large

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"social programs" were combined, since these categories "welfare state" and "education" in the AUTNES dataset capture both of these concepts. Additionally, the "Elections" category from the manifesto model was removed when calculating the percentages, since this category does not reflect "programmatic" discourse, as this class of press releases is limited to.

Figure 3.1: Austria manifesto and press release topic distribution by party (2002)
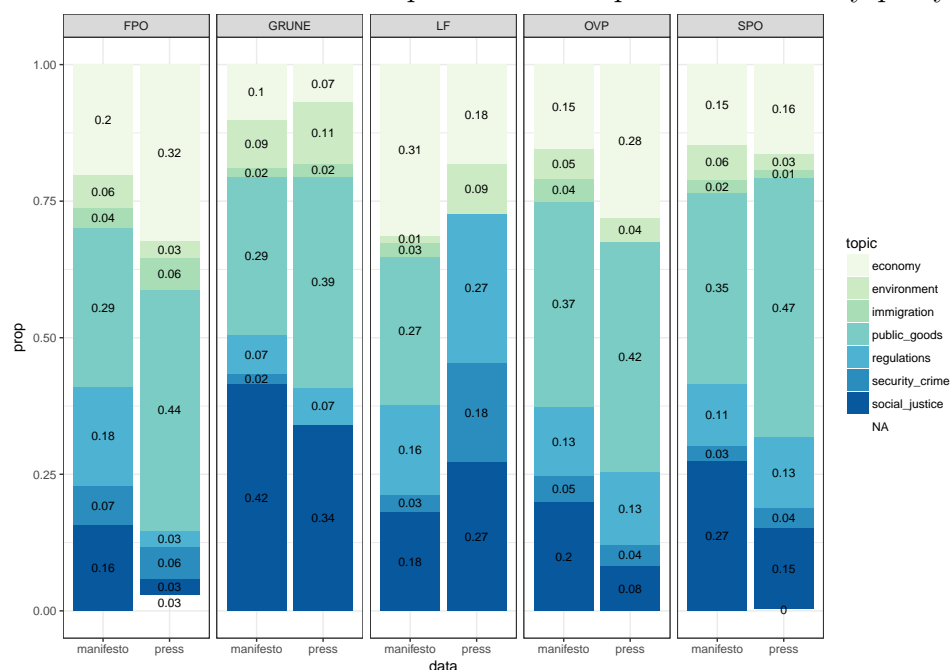
differences in almost every category here, although it is to be noted that the number

of press releases issued by LF was quite small, 52, compared to an average of 508

among the other 4 parties, making these estimates more subject to the influence of

random noise.

In 2006 we see a similar story, as evidenced by Figure 3.2, where all parties' topic

distributions for their manifestos and press releases align rather well. Notably, SPO

and Grune spend considerably more time on discussing public goods in their press

releases than in their manifestos. This is likely driven by a debate over pensions and

the welfare state during the run-up to the election (Luther 2008).

One notable difference between the press releases and the manifestos that is not

captured in these plots is that investigation into scandals and political culture are

more common in press releases than they are in manifestos. These are classified

Figure 3.2: Austria manifesto and press release topic distribution by party (2006)
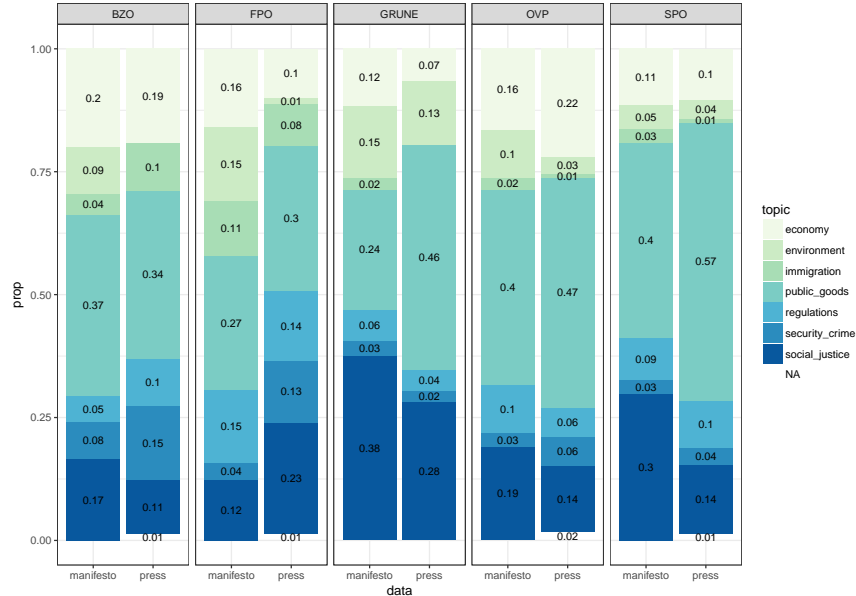
as "leadership" press released by the team at AUTNES. While this creates a slight incomparability, it is understandable that press releases that come out over the course of the election would address political scandals that are revealed throughout the campaign, while manifestos are issued at the beginning of the campaign and are likely to address less of these issues. Aside from this, it is clear that parties are issuing press releases that align with their top manifesto topics. These press releases serve as further evidence that the content of manifestos match well to other forms of campaign messaging.

Document Retrieval and Cleaning

In order to retrieve party manifestos, I scraped the comparative manifesto website which has compiled the source material for every party-election year in their database in either `.pdf` or `.txt` format. I want to look at at least the last 3-4 election cycles,

but ideally all elections going back to the first democratic elections to track changes in trends over time.[3] I look at all parties that launched wide-scale national campaigns, as the CMP has done. In order to create a consistency measure for the party, parties have to compete in at least 2 (preferably consecutive) elections. Of course, I will have to deal with mergers and changes in party name. Because a merger or a change in party name is a signal to attempt to rebrand (Bélanger and Godbout 2010), these parties will be considered distinct parties and not used to construct consistency scores. Those parties that do not compete in multiple elections will still be included in the sample because it is possible to create a specificity score for parties that compete in only one election. That will be done particularly because of the massive amounts of volatility seen in many countries in the sample.

To maintain consistency, it is necessary to conduct all of the analysis in the same language. This requires that I do translation on most of the documents because they are presented in the primary language of the country (or region, in the case of Spain and Ireland). I used the Microsoft translation API and the R package `translateR` to complete this translation of these manifestos in their respective languages. While machine translation has improved quite a bit due to increased investment into the technology by major technology innovators such as Microsoft and Google, it is still not as good as human translation. However, due to the uses of the translated text for this project, machine translation is acceptable. The shortcomings of machine translation are generally improper tense, reordering of words and missing conjunctions(Akbari 2014). Since LDA is a bag-of-words model, the algorithm is not concerned with the

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[3]See Appendix A for the full sample of party-election observations.

order of words and the and proper conjugation is not important to understanding the topic of a given paragraph(Grimmer and Stewart 2013). Because of this, I feel confident that the choice to translate has not compromised the analysis of this text and has made it easier to compare policy discussions and focus across countries and even within countries for cases with regional dialects and languages.

In order to construct a topic model, one must define the corpus as well as each paragraph. This requires many choices to be made about the structure and formatting of the manifestos and how they will be modelled. First, one must define the corpus for each model. The corpus is simply the collection of paragraphs over which the model parameters will be estimated. In this context there are a variety of ways that the documents could be cut up into different corpi. The first is that all paragraphs from all party-country-years could be included in one corpus and the parameters would be estimated over the universe of documents so that the topics are created with respect to all manifestos at once. One problem with this approach is that the language used to discuss different topics is often very country-specific, so attempting to extract meaningful topics from the universe of manifestos at once will likely lead too poor fitting topics for every country. Additionally, since some countries in the sample have been democratic for longer, the model would be biased to fit the discourse in their parties' manifestos simply because they are more plentiful in the sample. Because of this, the corpus I use in each model must be smaller, and country-specific.

In terms of defining paragraphs, there are several approaches that have been taken: modeling individual sentences, modeling collections of sentences, and modeling entire documents. In a topic model of presidential State of the Union addresses, each

sentence is treated as a separate paragraph for the specification of the model (Foulds, Kumar and Getoor 2015). This results in topic distribution parameters produced for each sentence of each speech. In the case of speeches due to their comparatively short length and conversational structure, this is logical, but with an average length of over 8000 words per manifesto, this would result in overparameterization of the model. Additionally, there are often cases in which parties present lists as a way to discuss their policy intentions. Making each one of these items its own "paragraph" would not provide sufficient information about its topic, because the model is based on the composition of paragraphs, so there must be sufficient length in order to construct meaningful topics.

The final step of the pre-processing phase is to create a list of "stopwords" which are used to help eliminate words that are not useful in discovering topics. This list contains words that are likely to appear very frequently but do not have thematic value and will thus lead to greater difficulty when attempting to group words commonly associated with one another. Some words that are often included in stopwords lists are "the", "is", "and", and so on. When the list of stop words is submitted into the program, all of these words are eliminated, leaving only the non-stopwords to be included in the vocabulary from which the topics are discovered.

At this point, it is time to convert millions of words into a useful and parsimonious measure that can be used in quantitative empirical tests of the relevant theories. Much like content analysis that has been employed for decades in the social sciences, methods for automating the process of content analysis using machine learning will speed up the process and make it possible to analyze and categorize party brand-

ing strategies through the information that they project out to the public in their manifestos.

Implementation of the Model using R

Aside from specifying the topic number, there are several other components of the model that must be specified in order to construct a model that provides consistent and efficient parameter estimates. As a bayesian model, LDA uses markov chain monte carlo (MCMC) simulation in order to discover the joint posterior distribution of the model. This type of simulation requires that you specify the number of iterations of the simulation and the burn-in length. The burn-in is the number of MCMC simulated iterations will be removed from the analysis when the process is complete and not contribute to the final estimates. This is particularly necessary because the priors are uninformative so the first chunk of iterations may not be accurately estimating the joint distribution [4]. Additionally, since we assume an asymmetric dirichlet prior distribution, the hyperparameters (α and β) of this distribution are optimized every 20 iterations after an initial burn-in. Wallach, Mimno and McCallum (2009) and Mimno, Wallach, Talley, Leenders and McCallum (2011) show that hyperparameter optimization leads to much more efficient and stable results than assuming a symmetric prior distribution of the words, which does not accurately reflect the data generating process, as words are rarely distributed normally.

The LDA model utilizes no information about the subjects and the paragraphs are not labeled with any topics or keywords. Thus, interpretable topics come to be

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[4]for more information about MCMC and burn-ins see Gill 2009

through the computation of the latent structure that is believed to have generated the observed manifestos. So, the idea that these models create coherent and meaningful topics is based on the crucial component of human interpretation. The fact that these look like topics has to do with the underlying statistical structure of observed language and how it interacts with the specific properties and assumptions assumptions of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (Blei 2012).

The output of the LDA model is related to the assumed structure of the data. For every party manifesto in a given country, there are paragraphs. Each paragraph will is distributed over a mixture of a finite number K of topics chosen by the researcher. In this case K = 25. This means that the output is a matrix of topic proportions per document, with documents as the row value and topics as the column value. For each manifesto there is a matrix whose number of rows is equal to the number of paragraphs in that document and whose number of columns is the number of topics plus metadata regarding the party, year and length of the document. Our goal is to use the information in this matrix to make inferences about the topic membership of manifestos from this disaggregated information about paragraph topic membership.

This structure allows for the calculation of weighted topic proportions by manifesto. The weighting in this case is the proportion of the document that each paragraph consumes, simply calculated as the number of words in that document as a proportion of the total number of words in that document. That proportion is then multiplied by the entire row of topic-proportions for the given paragraph. This process is repeated for each paragraph. Once all paragraphs have been properly weighted, the columns are summed by manifesto in order to determine the total proportions

of each topic for the entire manifesto. The outcome of this process is a measure of topic-proportions for each party-year's manifesto that takes into account paragraph length.

The unit of analysis for this model is the party-issue-election. For example, when looking at the Green Party in Germany, one observation would be the proportion of paragraphs that are primarily focused on environmental issues in 2009. While this may seem like an extremely localized unit of analysis, approaching the project this way allows for more precision in estimates. This is because it will allow me to assess consistency within each issue area rather than in the aggregate. These party-issue-elections can then be aggregated up to a party-level score for each election by using weights produced by the model. This party-level measure will be more useful in the applications of this concept in this dissertation. However, having these issue scores also opens doors for other interesting issue emergence and/or disappearance as well as being a more flexible means of measuring ideology in an issue-space context.

In this model, each country has its own set of 25 topics that emerge from the corpus. However, there are common themes that emerge from the topics, and oftentimes there are groups of tightly related topics within countries and between countries. This leads to the formation of topic *clusters*. Clusters are simply broader topic headings which multiple LDA-produced topics can have membership to. These clusters are the same for every country, and will thus be populated differently depending on the importance of that issue for that particular country. In some cases, the Nationalism cluster may not contain any topics, while in the case of France (seen below) it contains two topics. Overall there are 12 clusters, and the topics are placed into the

clusters through hand-coding by the researcher and one additional coder, to attempt to reduce human error and bias. The next section will go into greater detail regarding the naming and application of these clusters.

Naming and Clustering the Topics

When implementing a topic model approach, it is important to remember that while the machine can discover topics with unbiased accuracy, it can not interpret those topics. This is where expert judgement and classification plays an important role. In the following paragraphs, the topic labeling and clustering process will be discussed so as to ensure transparency of the process.

As a scholar of party messaging and strategy, I looked at the ten most frequent words in each topic for each country and assigned them names based on these words. Ultimately, the naming of these topics is necessary for the interpretation of these models. Assigning meaning to these computer-generated topics allows for the substantive examination of these manifestos. However, it is important to note that each country has its own unique set of topics. This makes comparison of topic composition across countries difficult. Because of this, it is necessary to create a list of common topic clusters that are consistent across time and place.

It is the clusters that are actually of the most importance when it comes to creating measures and comparing parties across time and between countries. Table 3.1 displays a good example of the sub-topics within each cluster. Here, the cluster, "Economy" is constructed of the 3 topics labeled "Taxes", "Economic Policy" and

"Labor." In this example, while the focus of economic policy may shift from taxes to jobs to trade policy over time, these parties are still spending the majority of the manifesto discussing economic policy. This is what is important when determining how consistent parties are in their issue-based identity.

Table 3.1: Clusters, Topics and their most common words (France)

Clusters	Topics					
Economy	**Taxes**	tax	increase	income	reduce	financial
	Economic Policy	policy	political	role	economic	country
	Labor	social	work	minimum	employees	working
Environment	**Agriculture**	energy	agriculture	production	products	agricultural
	Pollution	water	pollution	protection	transport	environment
Social Programs	**Healthcare**	health	care	medical	hospital	system
	Housing	housing	public	social	land	areas
	Jobs	employment	jobs	economy	create	work
Public Goods	**R&D**	public	research	companies	private	industrial
	Education	education	school	training	young	students
	Future Action	policy	measures	action	proposals	part
Social Justice	**Rights**	social	source	society	freedom	life
	Gender Equality	public	state	service	women	equal
	Culture	support	cultural	creation	through	develop
European Union	**EU**	european	europe	countries	france	international
Immigration	**Immigrant rights**	family	children	french	immigration	rights
Public Safety	**Crime**	against	fight	police	prevention	discrimination
	Legal Process	law	justice	ensure	court	independence
Nationalism	**French Identity**	french	his	france	without	country
	Nationalism	national	french	france	front	culture
Foreign Policy	**Security**	defense	nuclear	military	france	security
The Election	**Political environ.**	power	political	state	end	problems
	Party System	socialist	party	right	communist	government
	France today	french	france	million	today	situation
Decentralization	**Local Gov't**	local	national	state	citizens	control

Most importantly however, the clusters serve the purpose of creating comparability across party systems in different countries. By using the same 12 topic clusters, we are better able to compare parties from different countries in terms of what they are discussing in their manifestos. It is important to note that the topics that compose the clusters will vary slightly from country to country, given unique political environments in each country. Continuing the example above, if we were to look at the topics that go into the "Economy" cluster in Poland, we would see a topic about the privatization of companies, but not a topic broadly on economic and trade policy

Figure 3.3: Aggregated Cluster Distrbution by Country
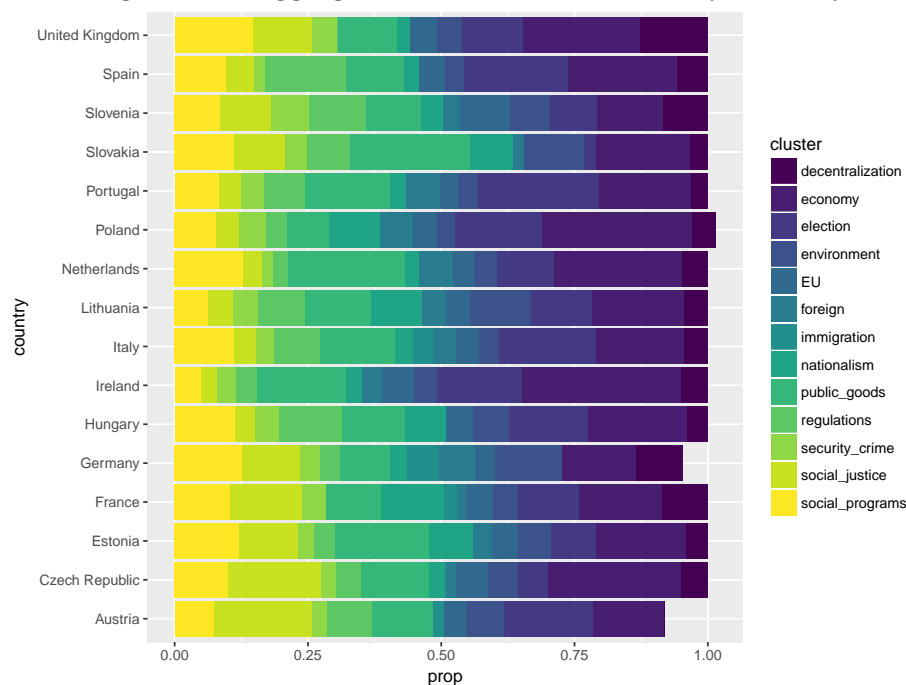
as we see in France. However, understanding the similarities and differences in the topic cluster composition of left leaning parties in Poland and France may help us to understand differences in electoral and perhaps even policy outcomes. Figure 3.3 displays the variation in cluster composition for countries. This plot pools all years and parties, but it shows that there is variety in what issues are important in different countries. Notably, social programs and economic policy are commonly important across contexts, while immigration rights and the environment vary between countries. This figure obscures a lot of the variation between parties and election cycles. In the two figures below, France is taken as an example to show the variation in topic distribution between parties.

In Figures 3.4 and 3.5 you will see descriptives of the variety of topic distribution in France between individual parties. It is clear that there are differences in topic

Figure 3.4: Front National Topic Distribution

Topic Distribution (FN)
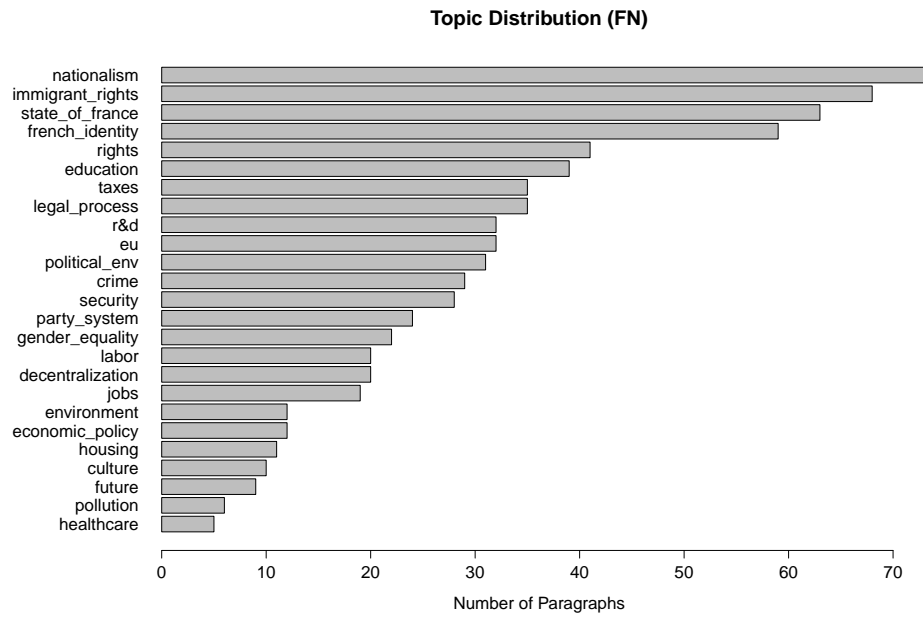
Figure 3.5: Verts Topic Distribution

Topic Distribution (Verts)
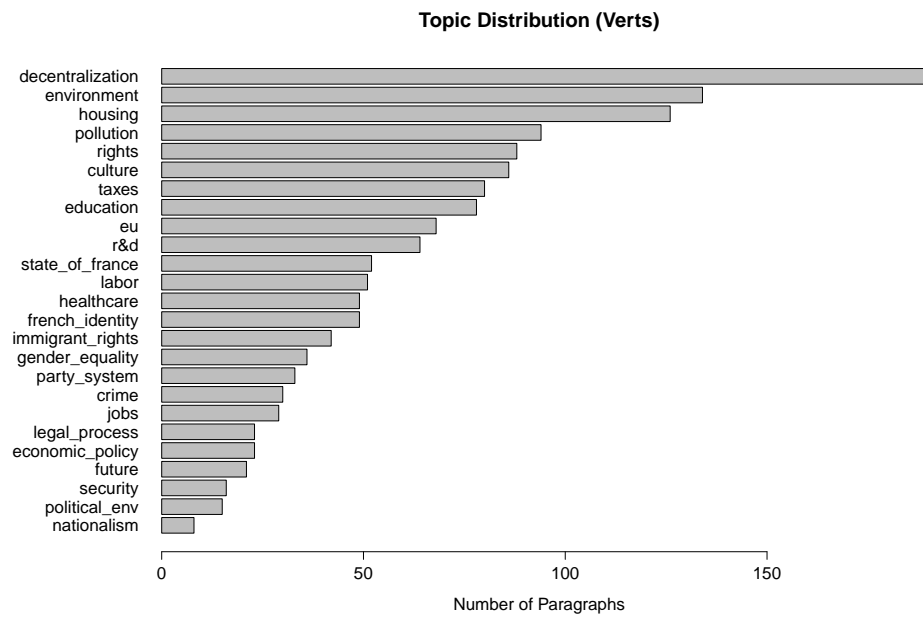
composition across parties. These differences are important in understanding that the model is capturing topics that distinguish between parties. Notably, we can see that the Front National focuses much more of their text on the Nationalism topic, while the Verts (Green party) are much more focused on environmental issues.

Due to the vast nature of the data produced by this model, it is easiest to look deeply into one case when attempting to provide validity for the measure. However, we can also look across countries to see if there is consistency in the topics created across countries. The following two tables provide the top 6 words for two topic clusters across all countries in the sample. The first table displays the top words in the Environmental topics across all countries. As expected, words such as "environmental", "energy", and "protection" are common across cases. It is interesting to look at the slight diversity across countries because it shows that places like Poland and Czechia discuss the environment more in terms of development and energy, while places like Hungary and Spain use words promoting conservation when discussing the environment. It is this inter-country variation that justifies the construction of separate topic models for each country.

Table 3.2: Top words in Environment topics across countries

	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3	Word 4	Word 5	Word 6
Czechia	energy	environmental	waste	nuclear	electricity	sources
Austria	environmental	protection	agriculture	agricultural	environment	farmers
Germany	environmental	economic	policy	development	economy	ecological
France	energy	agriculture	products	production	water	food
Ireland	food	agriculture	farmers	farming	farm	agricultural
Spain	energy	water	environmental	environment	natural	resources
Poland	energy	environmental	construction	infrastructure	gas	protection
UK	energy	food	environment	policy	sustainable	waste
Estonia	environment	environmental	transport	natural	nature	public
Hungary	protection	environmental	management	water	environment	natural
Italy	areas	environmental	environment	protection	south	development
Lithuania	rural	support	agricultural	land	development	environmental
Slovakia	protection	management	areas	water	nature	reform
Slovenia	development	environment	areas	cultural	regional	resources
Portugal	development	areas	environment	environmental	national	quality

Just as with the environmental topic, the table below displays the top words in the Social Programs topic cluster across all countries in the sample. The Social Programs cluster is a bit more varied in content than the Environmental cluster, but countries generally produce topics that focus on "health", "pensioners", "unemployment" and "services." This vocabulary clearly invokes a discussion of social programs; the general safety net that a government provides.

Table 3.3: Top words in Social Programs topics across countries

	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3	Word 4	Word 5	Word 6
Czechia	health	care	insurance	medical	system	services
Austria	pension	insurance	social	system	pensions	age
Germany	work	employment	labor	market	working	unemployment
Ireland	employment	work	jobs	unemployment	training	job
Spain	health	care	system	services	prevention	public
Poland	health	care	medical	services	system	access
UK	benefit	pension	benefits	state	pensioners	help
Estonia	children	family	families	euros	support	home
Hungary	support	work	children	help	job	get
Italy	health	care	life	human	risk	prevention
Lithuania	health	care	services	system	medical	treatment
Slovakia	principle	pension	system	social	basis	income
Slovenia	health	system	care	services	public	control
Portugal	social	work	security	employment	workers	income

While looking at all of these examples of the output of the model allows us to give some face validity to the model, it is important to put it through more rigorous validity checks before using it as the primary data source for this project. The following section provides this through the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk workers.

Validating the Model

The output of the topic model must be validated before it can be used for empirical analysis of questions regarding party strategy and message over time. Specifically, the validity of the topics that are being created by the model must be assessed. In this case, validity means that the topic of interpretable by humans and that the words

that are being put together have a coherent theme. To perform this validation process I will have to rely on human comprehension, and will therefore deploy a Mechanical turk strategy outlined below.

Based on a significant amount of skepticism of the automated scaling of political texts, I will validate my findings by conducting a series of robustness checks as well use humans to do validity checks on a every topic in each country in the sample in order to ensure that the topics that are created by the topic modeling technique are coherent and interpretable. The method used to validate is called word intrusion, introduced by Chang, Gerrish, Wang, Boyd-Graber and Blei (2009) for application using Mechanical turk. In this task, the respondent is presented with six randomly ordered words, five of which are the five most frequently occurring words in a given topic and one that is from the vocabulary but very rarely occurring in the topic. The task of the user is to find the word which is out of place or does not belong with the others, i.e., the intruder. If the topic is coherent, then this intruder should be easily identified, but if it is not then the respondent will randomly choose a response. For each topic, I have 6-8 responses, so if respondents are picking word intruders randomly it becomes clear, and that topic is determined not coherent or interpretable, or at least highlighted for further review.

My use of humans to validate the interpretability of the topics that the model produces for each country does so through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Mechanical Turk (MTurk) is a crowdsourcing marketplace that allows researchers, marketers, translators, etc. to enlist the assistance of humans to perform rather simple tasks that artificial intelligence is not able to do. This is useful for my project because

identifying whether or not a group of words fit well into a topic that a computer has created based on an algorithm is something that non-experts can do quite easily. By recruiting workers to do this task, I will be able to validate the topics that my model produces without introducing confirmation bias that may occur if I were to judge the validity of my own project.

Over the course of my MTurk validation procedure, I employed 84 workers for 2800 tasks with an average of 33.3 tasks per worker. The results of the MTurk validation exercise are grouped by country-topic and I calculate a score for each topic based on how much consensus the 6-8 responders have in correctly picking out the word that does not match with the others. Specifically, the score is the count of the correct response divided by the total number of responses (n) for that topic. The result of this is a score between $\frac{1}{n}$ and 1 where 1 is complete agreement amongst the respondents and $\frac{1}{n}$ is complete disagreement, meaning that every respondent gave a different word as the one that does not belong in the group.

Overall, about 31.3% of the topics had complete consensus on the word that does not belong, with 75.3% of topics having only one competing response and few dissents. Below you will see the distribution of consensus scores by country.

Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the topics with the least consensus tended to fall into two clusters- the 'regulations' cluster and the 'elections' cluster. Since the 'elections' cluster often contains words that are parts of party names, like "Socialist" and acronyms like "CDU" (a common acronym for the Christian Democratic Union of Germany), a non-expert like those recruited for this coding exercise would not pick up on the contextual meaning of these words. This makes it more

Table 3.4: Accurate Consensus Scores by Country

Country	median	mean	sd	n
Czechia	0.83	0.77	0.20	25
Estonia	0.83	0.79	0.23	25
France	0.83	0.74	0.18	25
Germany	0.83	0.83	0.19	25
Hungary	0.83	0.77	0.22	25
Ireland	0.83	0.76	0.23	25
Italy	0.83	0.75	0.20	25
Lithuania	0.67	0.69	0.20	25
Poland	0.83	0.84	0.17	25
Portugal	0.67	0.65	0.15	25
Slovakia	0.50	0.59	0.21	25
Slovenia	0.67	0.75	0.21	25
United Kingdom	0.67	0.69	0.20	25

challenging to identify the word that does not fit in with the others.

In terms of the challenges that workers had with the regulations cluster, the content of this topic is also less clearly policy oriented. The regulations cluster contains words like "law", "measures", "implementation", "necessary" and "program". Without context, it may be hard to imagine how these words group together, but given the context of a political party manifesto, these words can be grouped into a coherent topic- namely, regulation. Given these results, I can be quite confident that the topics produced by the model, particularly the more policy-related topics, are meaningful and interpretable by humans and thus can be appropriately mapped into topic clusters as I have defined them.

Creating the Measures

Two measures are constructed based on the output of this model: the specificity of the discussion of each topic in a given party's manifesto each year and the consistency

over time. In the following section the creation of the measures based on the output of the model and some preliminary descriptive statistics will be presented.

The output of the model is rather straightforward, but takes some time to determine the patterns in topic variation across time and across parties. After the model has been run and converged on a set of topics based on the number of topics I have specified, each topic is displayed by showing the words that are in each cluster in descending order, from most frequent to least frequent within the cluster. This gives the researcher a signal of how to characterize that topic and assign it a category- which in this case will be a policy area. Each document is then given a number between zero and one for each topic, which represents the proportion of the document that contains words from that particular topic. These numbers are similar in concept to the weights that the CMP project assigns to each topic. Using the distribution of weights within and between elections, measures of the manifesto's specificity/focus and consistency over time are constructed.

Specificity

From the data that is produced from the LDA model, there are a few pieces of information that are useful in order to create a measure of specificity. Primarily, the relative proportions of topics within paragraphs will be leveraged to determine how focused the party is on discussing particular issues in a coherent way. Conceptually, this measure is the average proportion of a paragraph dedicated to its particular dominant topic, aggregated up to the manifesto level. This means that there will be topic-specific focus scores which can also be aggregated to create a manifesto focus

score at the party-year level.

Practically, the process of creating this measure is as follows. Each paragraph is labeled with the topic that has the largest proportion, as well as the numeric value of this topic's proportion. Additionally, it will be labeled with the cluster that that topic belongs to and the proportion of the paragraph that constitutes that cluster. Then, manifesto-level averages will be calculated based on each paragraph with that dominant topic and cluster. These scores show us the average degree of focus that each topic has based on the topic-dominated paragraphs in that manifesto. The aggregated specificity score allows us to examine the overall degree to which a party uses distinct language when discussing a particular issue area. Below is a table detailing the summary statistics of the specificity score by country. As you can see there is wide variation both within and across the countries in this study, leading to the need for further examination into what drives the degree of specificity that a party puts forth with its electoral programme.

In addition to looking at the aggregate specificity measure across all policy clusters, it is also useful to focus on a few "core" issue areas that are commonly seen as the most important and salient policy areas to voters as was done above with the consistency measure. Because of the importance of the economy, national security and welfare programs, the clusters in the topic models presented here that contribute to the "core specificity" measure are Economy, Social Programs, Public Goods and Foreign Relations. By averaging the specificity score for each observation, the core specificity measure is constructed.

Figure 3.6 above display the distribution for each country of the Specificity and

Figure 3.6: Overall Specificity and Core Specificity by Country
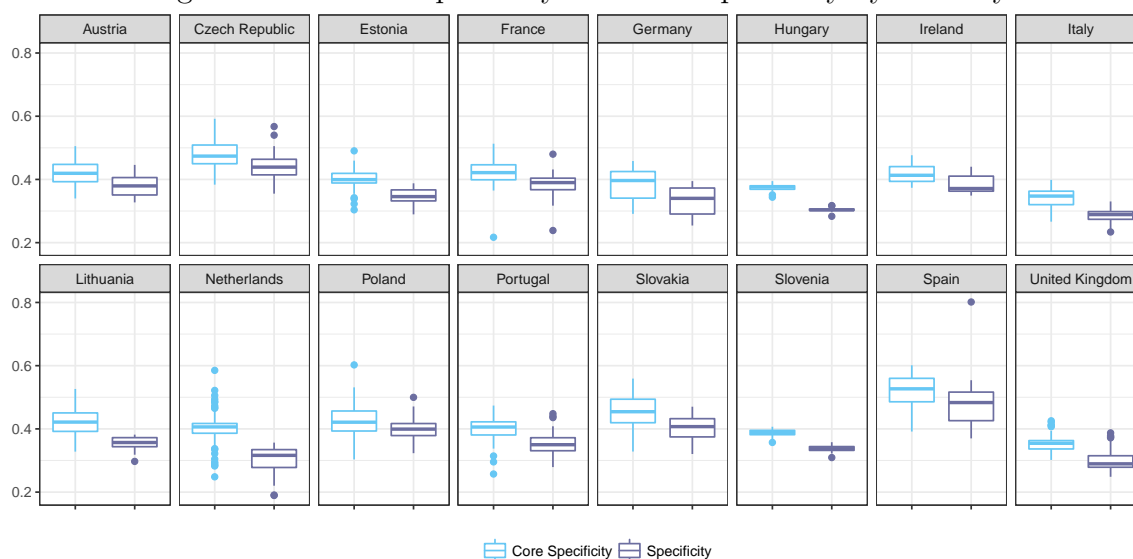
Core Specificity measures. In comparing the two, in every case the mean core speci-
ficity is higher for each country. While this is in the aggregate across time and space,
it validates the idea that parties are more concerned about specifically outlining the
policy prescriptions of the issue areas more salient to voters, given the very consistent
0.05-0.06 proportion increase in means for all countries in the sample between overall
specificity and core specificity.

Diving even deeper into this data, it is interesting to look at the specific paragraphs
in the manifestos that are given the highest and lowest specificity scores. While we
are generally aggregating the specificity scores to the party-year level, the specificity
scores are attributed at the paragraph level. The paragraph-level scores range from
about 0.17 to 0.85 out of a possible 0-1 range. Looking at these portions of text will
help to give meaning to these scores as well as serve as a bit of face validity to the
measurement approach.

First, we will look at two cases from the low end of the specificity spectrum. Here, the expectation is that a low score translates into a paragraph that is not focused on a particular issue area or that the language used to discuss a particular issue is not specific to that issue area and is thus quite vague. The first case to examine is from Democratic Party (sometimes referred to as the Alliance of Democrats) in the 1991 Polish national election. This paragraph received a specificity score of 0.21, and the Democratic Party received a specificity score of 0.38 for this particular election.

> We are of the opinion, that every young man on the verge of adult life should have real prospects of finding employment and a place to live. This is what the government should guarantee by introducing various legal and economic measures, i.e., by lowering personal income tax for school graduates during their first year of employment.

While this paragraph is discussing one topic, youth unemployment, it does not utilize language that is specific to a discussion of jobs and employment. By using vague language such as "various legal and economic measures" the LDA model is not able to assign this paragraph to the social programs and employment topic, but rather spreads out the topic membership to economic, education and research, tax policy and social programs. This paragraph exemplifies a party message which is not all that specific both to the LDA process as well as to the voter.

Another example of a particularly vague paragraph comes from the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI) from the United Kingdom in the 2010 election. This paragraph received a specificity score of 0.24, and the overall specificity score of APNI in 2010 is 0.305, which is in the bottom quintile of the sample for specificity.

> Alliance favours a re-balanced economy, in which a primacy of market

solutions is balanced by both government and public concern for social justice. The role of government, especially with the onset of a knowledge-driven economy, should be to create the right incentives and conditions to encourage a dynamic and high-growth, sustainable, economy.

Here, we clearly see that the APNI party is attempting to outline an economic plan, but the propositions vary widely in focus and scope. This paragraph mentions the "market", "social justice", being "knowledge-driven", "growth" and "sustainability". These words all can be placed squarely into different topics, and mentioning them all at once does not send a clear message for how economic growth will be achieved. While these sorts of paragraphs are often introduction paragraphs to a section on economic growth, and the later paragraphs are more focused, if a party only outlines plans vaguely and does not provide a paragraph for each of these ideas, they will be classified as more vague in their policy positions.

Turning to the high end of the spectrum provides examples of highly specific paragraphs that focus on one issue area and give specific policy proposals using language that is specific to that issue area. In contrast to the examples above, we expect that paragraphs with high scores on the specificity score will provide a clear discussion of the topic at hand. For example, this paragraph from the Austrian BZO party in 2006 received a 0.87, placing it in the top one percent of all paragraphs in the Austrian corpus in terms of specificity.

Reduce taxes: Tax reform with the introduction of
- Fair Tax
- Business Tax
- 100 percent deductibility of travel expenses from home to Workplace
- Second stage of the administrative reform.
- Reduce non-wage labor costs.
- Deletion of the inheritance tax.

Here it is clear that the BZO is outlining a tax plan that has specific components that can be accomplished through direct policies and legislation. Obviously, in this case the repetitive use of the word "tax" is assisting in placing this paragraph into a single issue area topic, but the other words like "business" "wage" and "expenses" are also highly specific to a discussion of tax policy and perhaps more broadly, domestic economic policy. These list-type paragraphs often receive high scores because they eliminate words that are superfluous to the policy proposal, allowing the model to place the paragraph more clearly into one topic.

Aside from list-based paragraphs, there are a few examples of manifesto prose that score very highly on the specificity score. The following example is from the Democratic and Social Center party (CDS) during the 1986 Spanish National Election. This paragraph received a specificity score of 0.83, placing it in the top two percent of all the paragraphs is the Spanish corpus in terms of specificity.

> In higher education, specializations have diversified professional character. Training programs will be established to introduce young professionals and appropriate financial support partnerships between universities and private employers. Programs that allow workers to simultaneously do their jobs and higher education through remote education and courses designed as flexible curricula will be developed. In higher education, effort and quality of work during a previously accredited diploma will be preeminent in access to higher education positions, in order to guarantee the level and quality of teaching.

This paragraph clearly discusses the values that the CDS holds in terms of higher education reforms and policy, lending itself to be placed squarely into the education, research and development topic produced by the model. Interestingly, this paragraph also displays some of the challenges associated with looking back to translated text for

validation. Since the model is a "bag of words" model, the grammar of the translation is not important, just the association and frequency of words. So, while this paragraph clearly demonstrates an explication of a higher education policy proposal, the final sentence is a bit hard to follow in the translated version.

There are many other ways that this specificity measure can be broken apart and analyzed, but that is better suited for discussion in the particular application of this measure to a theoretical question that requires alternate aggregation techniques. By leaving this measure disaggregated at the party-cluster-year level, the researcher is able to aggregate in whatever fashion is appropriate for the research question being addressed.

Consistency

Before I get into the specifics about the technical construction of the measures, I am going to explain some of the variety that exists in manifestos so as to paint a picture of the measure I intend to create. Through the CMP's efforts to produce systematic and empirically comparable data about the content of the manifestos that parties put forth, we have seen the vast variation in the policy content of these manifestos. The CMP project puts forth 56 different issue areas that parties could have in any given election. This is an impressive feat that has opened the door to a lot of statistical analysis regarding party competition and elections. However, this measure only focuses on a snapshot of the party's platform. We know from cases like the Front National (FN) in France that there is often significant change in policy focus from election to election. The FN switched from focusing on economic,

neoliberal policies as a means to promote nationalism, to a platform that promoted law and order as a means to promote nationalism. This sort of policy focus switching creates an inconsistent message to the electorate over time, weakening the brand and making it more difficult to gain the trust both voters and potential coalition partners (Brader and Tucker 2007, Lupu 2013).

The measure of party consistency is a measure across time within each party-issue area that assesses changes in the weights of particular issues. By aggregating these issue-consistency measures by party, a consistency measure is produced for each party. This process is conducted for each topic individually as well as by using the topic clusters to reduce some noise created by temporal changes in sub-policy topic focus.

The nature of this measure, requires that a party participates in more than one election in order to be able to calculate a change in the issue focus. Because of this, countries with high levels of extra-systemic volatility[5] will have less parties eligible for consistency measures due to the quick entry and exit of parties from the party system. Below you will see a table with the summary statistics of the measure as well as the coverage of the consistency measures by country for all parties and all years. It is clear that Eastern European countries such as Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czechia by far have the worst coverage. While this is far from ideal, as time moves forward, these measures can continue to be captured and countries whose party systems have stabilized will see increased coverage.

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[5]Extra-systemic volatility is a concept introduced as "Type-A volatility" in Powell and Tucker (2013) and is defined as the proportion of seats won in a parliamentary election that did not participate in the previous election.

In addition to looking at individual policy area measures, it is also useful to focus on a few "core" issue areas that are commonly seen as the most important and salient policy areas to voters, both partisans and unattached voters alike. Based on research by Klingemann, Hofferbert, Budge, Keman, Bergman, Petry and Strom (1994) and Laver and Hunt (1992) among many others, electorates in advanced democracies are concerned with their own economic well being as well as the economic well being of the nation, national security and public assistance programs. Because of this, the clusters in the topic models presented here that contribute to the "core consistency" measure are Economy, Social Programs, Public Goods and Foreign Relations. By averaging the absolute values of the consistency score for each observation, the core consistency measure is constructed. In the table above it becomes clear that in most countries, parties (in the aggregate) are less consistent in their policy focus of the core issue areas as seen by higher scores. This trend raises questions regarding the nature of this increase in inconsistency.

In interpreting the Figure 3.7 above, it is important to note that as values approach zero that indicates high levels of consistency, and as they approach 1 they indicate high levels of inconsistency. These numbers are quite small, as they are calculated as the change in a value that must be between 0 and 1, so what is important is the variation and in this figure, it is clear that there is variation, even when aggregated across all policy areas. The measure is also available at the cluster-level so that if a researcher were to be interested in the consistency of economic policy or environmental policy over time, as a matter of issue ownership (Meguid 2005), that can easily be captured with this measure. It is interesting to note that unlike specificity, while there

Figure 3.7: Overall Consistency and Core Consistency by Country
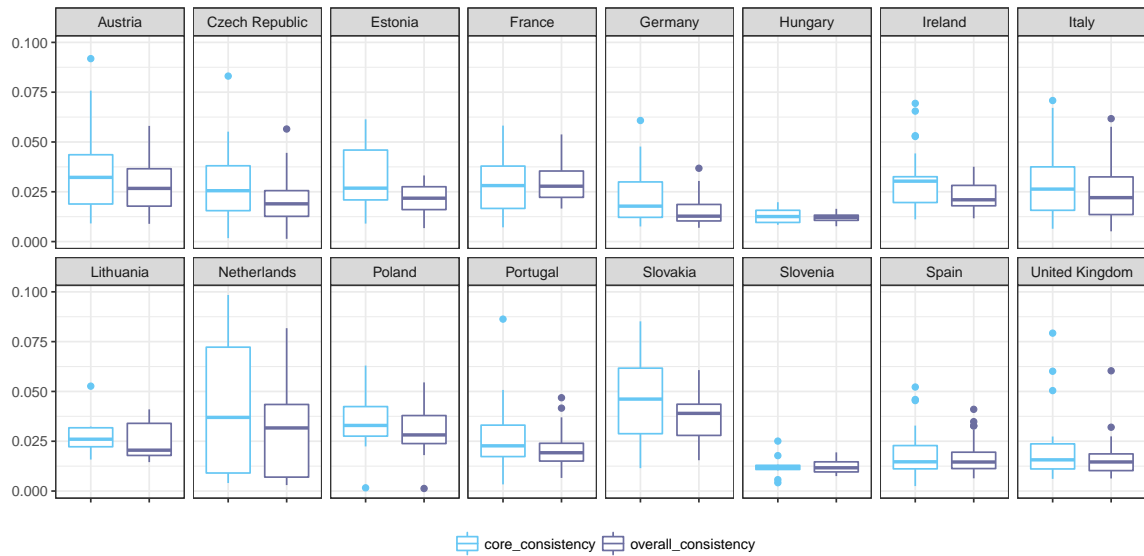
is variation in this measure between countries, there are not significant differences between core consistency and overall consistency, suggesting that when a country is more inconsistent it changes its focus on all areas, and not just the more peripheral.

Diving even deeper into this data as done above in the specificity measurement section, it is interesting to look at the specific cases of party-years that are given the highest and lowest consistency scores. Providing context to these cases will allow us to understand the measure a bit more, as well as provide some validation for the use of these measures to operationalize message consistency.

First, we will look at two cases from that are found to be highly inconsistent. Here, the expectation is that a high score translates into a party which has shifted more of its focus from a certain set of issues to a different set of issues based on the topic model. The first case to examine is (CiU) party in the 2011 Spanish election. This is a moderate party for catalan autonomy that up until this point had not been arguing

for Catalan independence, but rather further autonomy from the central government. After the European financial crisis of 2008 and a series of local referenda unanimously calling for catalan independence, the CiU shifted their platform slightly to appease the more clearly separatist ERC party. Because of this, we see more nationalism, more economic content and more discussion and criticism of the other parties in the system than seen in the previous election.

The second most inconsistent party in the dataset is the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO) during the 1994 Austrian election. In opposition since the 1990 election, the FPO had become increasingly vocal about their anti-immigration stance prompting several MPs to leave the party (Meret 2010). Jörg Haider, the leader of the FPO began to blame immigration for an increase in crime and unemployment rates throughout Austria (Union 1996). In our data, we see that immigration receives greater proportion of the manifesto's focus as well as economic issues.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, there are parties that remain highly consistent from year to year. These parties are ones that score low on this measure, indicating that they spend roughly the same amount of time discussing issue areas from year to yea, rather than vascilating wildly, as seen in the previous two cases.

The most consistent party in our sample is the Polish Peasant's Party (sometimes referred to as the Polish People's Party or PSL) from 1997 to 2001. The PSL received a consistency score of 0.003, which means that the average absolute change in the percentage of each topic area in the manifesto from 1997 to 2001 was 0.3 percent. At this time, the PSL was a centrist agrarian party that advocated economic protectionism, a strong welfare state and social conservatism. Its base lies primarily in rural

areas and because of the economic concerns in Poland in the late 1990s, its message of economic protectionism was attractive to its rural base, since they had been viewed as left behind in the transition to democracy (Szczerbiak 2001, Union 2002). Because of this, it is no surprise that the PSL remains quite consistent in their message and focus between these elections.

Also, looking at the green and ecological parties from all of the countries in the sample, they consistently fall on the more consistent side of the parties in the party system in any given year. For example, Les Verts in France consistently fall in the top quarter of the party system in terms of consistency scores and the Greens 90 party in Germany is always among the most consistent from year to year. This, along with the example of the Regional party from the Basque region above follows with the literature about niche or single-issue parties. If a party is focused on a particular issue rather than being a broad-based party, they are more likely to be dominated by a particular issue area or two and stick with those issues as their main focus from election to election, leaving less room for meaningful shifts in manifesto content.

Conclusion

This measurement model exists to begin to fill a hole in the literature on party competition and party signaling that has been spoken to in a few different literatures but not truly addressed until now. Party branding has become a topic of conversation in the party campaigning literature in the past few years, and has generally leaned towards the partisan and identity literature through its questions and empirical strategies.

However, party branding is about more than simply helping or harming the electorate's political identity: it is about party strategy and incentive structures. This approach ties party branding back into the larger literature about party competition and behavior in their own right, not through the lens of the electorate.

Through this chapter I have provided a measure of party branding that can be used to test novel and existing hypotheses about brand creation and the signalling process. This speaks not only to the literature about party branding that already exists, but more broadly to both the party behavior literature as well as those who study ideological formation and partisanship. In doing this, a broad spectrum of lines of research become available about the true relationship between parties, their message, and their various audiences that I hope to pursue. In particular, the following two chapters will explore the incentives that exist in the pre-electoral environment for parties to brand in particular ways as well as the consequences that these choices have for the government formation process.

Chapter 4

Incentivizing Party Branding Strategies

Party brands are influential in the creation of a party base, the transfer of information about the party to the electorate and as a means to maintain party coherence and discipline. That is, in many cases a party brand, or the identity that a party puts forth through campaign and message, is a primary means of achieving the goals of the party. However, the direct strategic connection between the goals that a party has, the obstacles in the path of those goals, and the type of brand that a party chooses to pursue has not been examined. The question that this chapter addresses is why do parties choose a particular branding strategy and what conditions alter the incentives for parties to brand in particular ways? Here, I examine how the goals of the parties, the nature of the party system and the characteristics of the electorate interact to influence the type of brand that a party will choose to adopt.

Much of the literature assumes that there is a singular optimal strategy when it

comes to this type of branding- to always be specific and consistent about a parties message, barring a major shift in public opinion or external shock (Harmel and Janda 1994, Lupu 2011). However, not all parties follow this strategy, and in many cases they are successful in achieving their electoral goals. In fact, as displayed in Figure 1, there is virtually no correlation between consistency and specificity, and vote share. This chapter sets out to understand the conditions in which a vague and inconsistent messaging strategy can be preferred to a specific and consistent one in a multiparty, parliamentary setting. By looking at the different incentives from the electorate, the party system and the party itself, this paper will show that there is no singular optimal strategy from the perspective of the party attempting to achieve its goals. In parliamentary systems that rely on party reputation, rather than individual reputation, particular environments and party characteristics may induce messaging strategies that are less transparent.
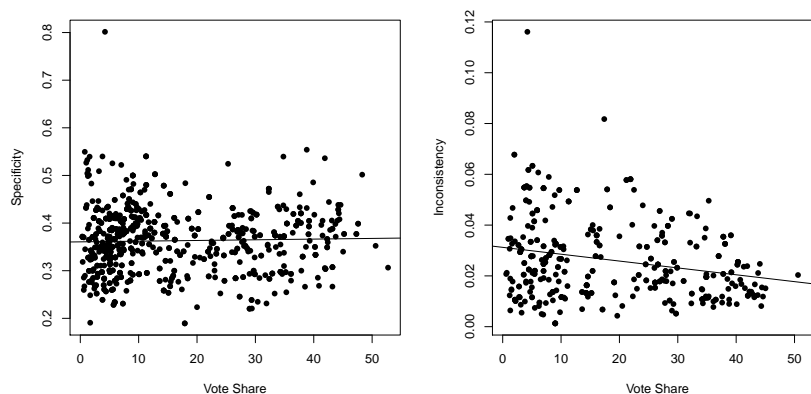
Figure 4.1: Relationship between the two components of branding and vote share

The chapter will be constructed as follows. First, a brief review of the expectations presented in chapter two regarding the role of the electorate and how mass-level

features, the features of the parties themselves, and party-system level features can get in the way of the effectiveness of a stable brand. The empirical strategy will then be explicated followed by a discussion of the findings as they relate to the proposed expectations.

Expectations

The incentives to create a clear and consistent party brand appear to be rational in just about any context. However, we see in many cases that parties abandon their platforms or simply do not provide clear policy recommendations in their manifestos (Lupu 2011, Tavits 2008*b*). Because of this, the question of why parties brand the way that they do becomes much more interesting and important to the study of party competition. Aside from simply addressing the way that incentives instruct party branding strategy, this lack of stable branding may be a result not of a lack of effort by the parties, but rather that the costs to create such a brand are not counterbalanced by sufficient benefits. Within the same party system, there are parties that differ both in how costly it is to construct and maintain a stable brand as well as in how beneficial that brand is to achieving the electoral goals of the party. The measures presented in the previous chapter captures parties' strategic choices over message and enables us to examine trends in branding across a wide variety of party systems.

The messages that parties send through their platforms and other pre-electoral messaging are strategically crafted to achieve a particular set of electoral goals. Given

that cultivating and maintaining a distinct brand is costly, both organizationally and in terms of constraining future coalitional arrangements, there are certain conditions under which the electoral environment may contain too much uncertainty to justify these costs. This electoral environment shapes the incentive structures that parties are responding to and thus information about the electorate, the party system and the parties themselves are necessary to consider when approaching the question of the source of variation in party branding strategies given the fundamental goals of parties are nearly universal.

There are three types of incentives to consider in understanding the strategic decisions of parties. The most important of these comes from the electorate because ultimately, they are the audience that can vote for the party to enter office and maintain relevance in the political arena. The nature of the electorate influences the way that parties decide to brand and the degree to which they do so in terms of political engagement (Aldrich 1995, Carpini 1996), ideological leaning (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, Tavits and Letki 2014), and cleavage structure (Evans 1999, Tavits 2005). The second incentive to consider is in terms of the party's characteristics. Size of the party and their goals can influence the degree to which a branding strategy is or is not appropriate for them. Finally, the party system and electoral environment can greatly impact the decision to brand. A situation in which there is a high degree of electoral volatility from election to election influences the degree to which future elections are valued by these parties. This affects the value they place on consistency over time, making stable branding more or less appealing depending on the prevalence of volatility in the system.

Role of the Electorate

Political engagement and sophistication in the electorate are important to understanding the strategic branding process through the influence they have on the reception of specific policy proposals and the constraints they place on a party's future actions. The more engaged an electorate is in the current political discourse and civic life, the more important specific, distinct policy proposals will be in making their vote choice. A less engaged polity is less likely to be able or willing to discern vague from more specific platforms because they are less aware of the nuances of policymaking. Additionally, sophistication in the electorate influences the importance of the specificity to a party's branding strategy. The primary reason for this is that an electorate's sophistication, and more specifically the sophistication of the party's target audience, constrains a party's future actions.

Because consistency appears to be important at all levels electorate sophistication for different reasons, a monotonic relationship is not expected to exist between sophistication and consistency. At very high levels, it is important to a sophisticated electorate that a party be consistent in focus across time, and at very low levels, consistency is important to appeal to low information voters that rely on a party brand heuristic that is often developed through consistent focus on particular issues. However, higher levels political engagement in the electorate are expected to have an influence on consistency due to These incentives produced by characteristics of the electorate lead to the following two hypotheses about the role of the electorate in a party's branding strategy:

H1a: Higher levels of political sophistication and engagement lead to more specificity in the party branding.

H1b:Higher levels of political engagement leads to more consistency in party branding.

Role of the Party

Aside from broad goals of gaining support and the costs of branding that originate from the electorate, party-level features can create incentives (or disincentives) to cultivate a stable brand. In some cases these will interact with some of systemic features in interesting theoretical ways. I posit that the size of the party is important in that smaller parties are more likely to value the future less because competing in the next election is less likely, thus smaller parties will be likely to brand less specifically, and depending on their age, less consistently. Additionally, smaller parties in a bipolar party environment are likely to become more vague in their policy positions in order to maintain the possibility of gaining a seat at the table of government.

However, this incentive is expected to compete with the policy goals of niche parties, which are often quite small in size, particularly in our sample in which the average vote share of a niche party is 5.7%. We expect that niche parties are most likely to create a stable brand because they are by definition centered around a very focused agenda about one issue area. Due to this, the following expectation follows:

H2: Smaller parties, based on vote-share in the previous election, will be branded with less specificity; being classified as a niche party attenuates this effect

Role of the Party System

Volatility introduces a commitment problem that reduces the expected benefits of creating a stable brand. If a party believes that they will not be interacting with the same parties in the future, they will be less concerned with their reputation when creating a government. Furthermore, when electoral outcomes are highly uncertain, the party is also concerned about receiving enough votes from the electorate to survive to the next election. Building upon the vast literature regarding party goals consisting primarily of seeking votes, office or policy (Harmel and Janda 1994, Meguid 2005, Meyer and Wagner 2013, Müller 2000, Strøm 1990), with a few exceptions, parties want to get votes so that the goals of office and policy are more easily attained. This means that under conditions of uncertainty, they are more likely to a) be more vague when it comes to the policy positions they hold so as to have more latitude when attempting to join a coalition; or b) change policy focus from previous elections in order to meet the goal of that party- votes. This line of reasoning suggests the following hypothesis:

H3: Increases in extra-systemic electoral volatility decrease the specificity and the consistency over time of party's messages, aside from niche parties

Empirical Analysis

The empirical analysis presented here is an observational, cross-national study using original data as well as data from common sources of election-level and government data. All linear regressions will be run as a Bayesian hierarchical regressions which

will group at the country level. This method will help us control for any country-level effects and with the small sample size, the Bayesian approach has proved to be more efficient and less biased in output than frequentist approaches to hierarchical modeling (Stegmueller 2013). The unit of analysis is the party-election year. Since hypotheses are conditional on all other variables held constant, all relevant independent variables will be included in the regressions to control for the individual effect that each independent variable has on the dependent variable.

The Data

Dependent variables

The first important dependent variable needed to test the hypotheses in this chapter is specificity. From the original data that is produced from the topic model outlined in chapter three of this project, there are a few pieces of information that are useful in order to create a measure of specificity. Primarily, the relative proportions of topics within paragraphs will be leveraged to determine how focused the party is on discussing particular issues in a coherent way. Conceptually, this measure is the average proportion of a paragraph dedicated to its particular dominant topic, aggregated up to the manifesto level. This means that there are topic-specific focus scores which are then aggregated to create a manifesto focus score at the party-election level, which is what is used in the analysis.

In addition to measuring specificity, the output of the topic model is used to create a score of topic consistency over time. The measure of party consistency

is a measure across time within each party-issue area that assesses changes in the weights of particular issues from election to election. By aggregating these issue-consistency measures by party, a consistency measure will be produced for each party. This process is conducted for each topic individually as well as by using the topic clusters to reduce some noise created by temporal changes in sub-policy topic focus. It is important to note that as values approach zero that indicates high levels of consistency, and as they approach 1 they indicate high levels of inconsistency.

While aggregate measures across all policy clusters are useful, it is also important to focus on a few "core" issue areas that are commonly seen as the most important and salient policy areas to voters. Because of the importance of the economy, national security and welfare programs to the electorate, the clusters in the topic models presented here that contribute to the "core specificity" measure are Economy, Social Programs, Public Goods and Foreign Relations. By averaging the specificity scores of these four issue areas for each observation, the core specificity measure is constructed.

Independent Variables

Through the discussion of the incentives that drive parties to pursue a particular strategy, there are a number of independent variables that must be conceptualized and measured in order to assess the expectations set forth. Specifically, there are electorate-level indicators such as engagement and sophistication, party-level indicators such as size and a niche-party indicator, and party-system-level indicators such as electoral volatility. Through careful examination and acquisition of existing data, these measures are used to test the hypotheses presented in this chapter.

Table 4.1: Variable Names and Sources

Variable	Short Name	Source	Coverage
Specificity	Spec.	Original Data	1975-2014
Core Specificity	Core Spec.	Original Data	1975-2014
Inconsistency	Inconst.	Original Data	1975-2014
Core Inconsistency	Core Inconst.	Original Data	1975-2014
Party System Specificity	Sys Spec.	Original Data	1975-2014
Party System Core Specificity	Sys Core Spec.	Original Data	1975-2014
Party System Inconsistency	Sys Inconst.	Original Data	1975-2014
Party System Core Inconsistency	Sys Core Inconst.	Original Data	1975-2014
Political Discussion in the Electorate	Pol. Discuss	Eurobarometer and European Election Studies	1977-2009[1]
Education Level of the Electorate	Education	Eurobarometer and European Election Studies	1977-2009[2]
Party Organization	Party Org.	V-Dem v.7 (Coppedge et al, 2017)	1900-2016
Civil Society Participation	Civic Eng.	V-Dem v.7 (Coppedge et al, 2017)	1900-2016
Niche Party Dummy	Niche	Eurobarometer Trend File	1970-2008[3]
Party Vote share	Vote share	Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems	1945-2014
Extra-Systemic Volatility	Volatility	Powell & Tucker (2013)	1945-2013
Election Turnout	Turnout	V-Dem v.7 (Coppedge et al, 2017)	1900-2016

First, the electorate-level indicators or engagement and sophistication must be operationalized based on the concepts developed through this project and in the extant literature. While basing all of the independent variables on surveys that can be aggregated to the party or party-family level would be ideal, the inconsistency of questions asked over time and the coverage of these studies varies widely based on

year and country, resulting in a large missing data problem for some of our variables of interest. Because of this, this study relies on the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem) dataset Coppedge, Gerring, Lindberg, Skaaning, Teorell, Altman, Bernhard, Fish, Glynn, Hicken, Knutsen, Krusell, Lührmann, Marquardt, McMann, Mechkova, Olin, Paxton, Pemstein, Pernes, Sanhueza Petrarca, von Römer, Saxer, Seim, Sigman, Staton, Stepanova and Wilson (2017) to bolster the Eurobarometer Trends dataset. V-Dem data has observations for all countries from 1900-2016 on over 350 indicators related to features of democracy. Using these data sources, measures of sophistication and engagement become clear.

Honing in on this idea that knowledge is central to political sophistication, Carpini (1996) set out to determine what Americans know about politics through survey work in the American political landscape. Their study introduces the 5 question political knowledge scale to determine the sophistication of a respondent- asks about their knowledge of the rules of the game, who is in politics and what government does. Here, political knowledge and political sophistication are seen as virtually interchangeable, which has led to the wide use of education as a proxy for political sophistication (Carmines and Stimson 1980, Gordon and Segura 1997, Luskin 1990). Building off of this body of work, in this cross-national study education will be used as a proxy for political sophistication. This is not because education *leads* to sophistication, but because of the high correlation found between the two features in existing work on the topic (Highton 2009).

In experimental settings, these demographic features are easily collected and analysed. Thus, there are challenges to moving this sort of research outside of the labora-

tory, but through the use of multiple large-scale cross-national surveys and datasets, a good sense of aggregate levels of sophistication and engagement can be measured. Political sophistication has been measured in the past through a collection of political knowledge questions (Carpini 1996) or respondent's accuracy of the ideological placement of political parties (Gordon and Segura 1997). However, in this cross-national context where political knowledge questions are rarely asked on surveys, and the premise of this project calls to question the clarity of political parties' positions on a variety of issues, these measurement strategies do not seem particularly useful.

The driving mechanism that political engagement plays to impact party branding strategies is through accountability because an attentive electorate is better equipped to punish parties at the polls for inconsistent or incoherent campaign messaging. The engagement of the electorate is measures with three different variables which capture the three components of engagement: interest, discussion and electoral participation. Indicators of civic engagement have been compiled by the Varieties of Democracy Project (Coppedge et al. 2017) are a good indicator of political interest at the electorate level. Specifically, the civil society participation index captures the degree to which "citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals"(Coppedge et al. 2017). While all of the countries in this study allow the freedom to pursue political activities, the variation in activity provides us with an understanding of the general levels of political and civil interest in the population. To capture electoral participation, the general election turnout variable from V-Dem is employed, capturing turnout as a proportion of the voting age population. Finally, the discussion feature of political engagement is measured by the political discussion indicator from the

Eurobarometer and EES data modules. sophistication is proxied by the electorate's level of education (Gordon and Segura 1997, Luskin 1990), which is also measured using the Eurobarometer and EES data modules.

In order to understand the impact of sophistication and engagement on a particular party's branding strategy, sophistication and engagement must be measured based on the intended audience of the party's message. The logic behind the use of "intended audiences" is that Far Right parties are not intending their message to be well-received by the Social Democrats, so it is not a proper operationalization of the concept of "electorate sophistication" and "electorate engagement" to use the aggregated measures of the entire electorate, but rather take a more disaggregated approach that allows for variation across parties in a given election year.

The ZEUS party family classification scheme implemented in Eurobarometer are used to create segmented levels of sophistication and political interest based on party family affiliation (Schmitt, Scholz, Leim and Moschner 2005). This allows for us to pool at the party-family level since it stands to reason that all Communist/Socialist parties are trying to reach the same audience, even if they have different specific partisan bases. When this is done, it is clear to see (as in figures 4.2 and 4.3) that in different party families the levels of political sophistication and engagement of their partisans are heterogenous, giving support to the claim that parties may base their strategies on the characteristics of their target voters. This is possible for the indicators from the European Election Studies, education and political discourse, allowing for engagement and sophistication to be tested in this way.

Finally, it is important to control for some of the relationships that have been

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Education Level by Party Family
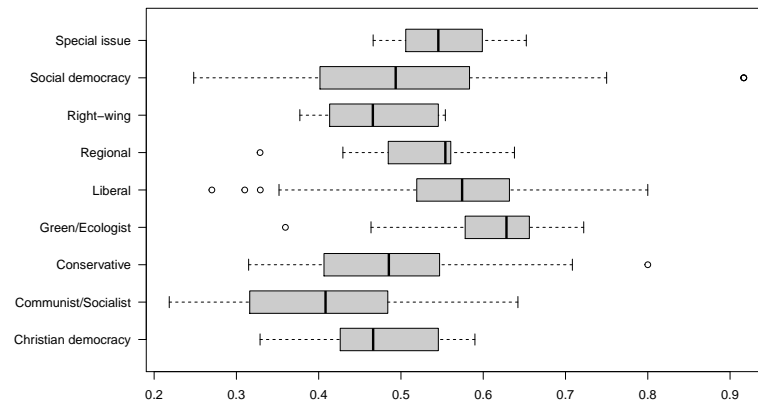
Figure 4.3: Distribution of Political Discussion Level by Party Family
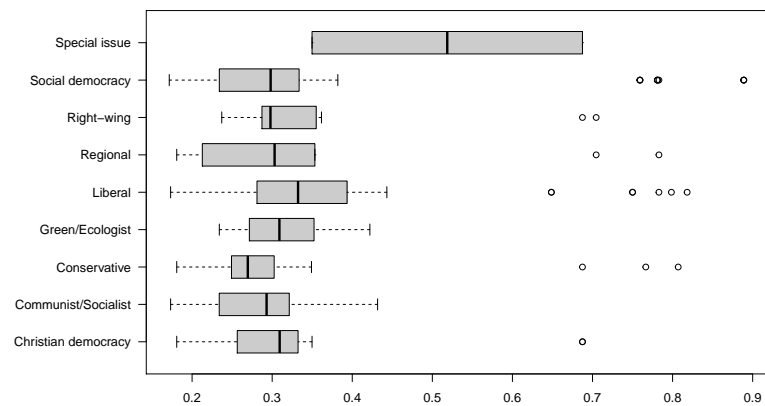
found to exist between the electorate and branding strategies. The degree of general party organization across the country is used to measure partisanship. Drawing from the V-Dem project, expert data is provided on the nature of party organizations in a given election year. This last indicator codes the proportion of political parties that are running for national-level office have permanent party organisations in the country. It is included in this model as an indicator of electorate partisanship because it is a signal of the degree to which the party organization has ties to the electorate, potentially influencing the usefulness of party branding to achieve the goals of the party. Since the relationship and directionality of this relationship is unclear based on the findings of Lupu (2013) and Brader & Tucker (2007), this variable is included to control for such a relationship, and not test for any particular directional association.

The next group of indicators are the party-level features that impact a party's incentives to pursue a particular branding strategy. The first feature is the size of the party. This indicator comes from the ParlGov dataset, put forth by Döring and Manow (2010a). This data contains all of the country-years in the data that forms the dependent variables, and provides the vote share and seat share for every party that receives either (1) at least one seat in parliament, or (2) at least 1% of the vote (Döring and Manow 2010b). From this, the lagged vote share can be used to estimate the size of the party going into the next election. A one election lag is used in order to capture the size of the party at the time of the strategic decision to brand in a particular way.

In addition to the size of the party, several of the hypotheses incorporate the caveat of the niche party as a unique type of party with unique goals (Adams, Clark,

Ezrow and Glasgow 2006, Meguid 2005). Because this is a larger sample than other studies on niche parties, both in geographic and temporal scope, the author has used the party family indicator in the ParlGov data to create an indicator of a niche party. Based on findings by Meyer and Miller (2015), there is a high correlation between party family and niche party, so niche parties are those who belong to either the "Green/Ecology" party or the "Special Issue" party family. This results in 42 niche party observations of 624 total observations.

Finally, the party-system level indicator of electoral volatility (Powell and Tucker 2013). The construction of this variable is discussed in detail in chapter two, but it is worth noting here that only the Type-A volatility will be used in the models specified in this chapter. The reason for this is that Type-A volatility represents the extra-systemic volatility, or the proportion of the popular vote which completely new parties receive in a given year. This type of volatility is believed to have more bearing on the uncertainty of the future existence of a party and levels of partisan loyalty in the party system. This type of volatility is believed to be more influential to a party's branding strategy as outlined above.

Findings

In order to test the hypotheses, the dependent variable of party branding can take 3 forms; overall specificity, core specificity, overall *in*consistency. Note that the consistency measure is referred to as inconsistency since low values of the variable indicate greater consistency and high values represent greater inconsistency. The models are

all Bayesian Hierarchical Gaussian regression models, grouped on country. The table displays the mean coefficient produced in the 10000 iteration Bayesian model, as well as the standard error in parentheses below. This standard error can be used to approximate a 95% credible interval to establish significant difference from zero. Variables with a star after the coefficient are significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level and the standard errors are printed below the coefficient estimates in parentheses.Each DV has two models, the first excluding the country-year-level variables of turnout and volatility, and the second including these variables in order to determine the robustness of the findings to alternate model specifications. The results of regression models with variables from all of the hypotheses explicated above are found in Table 4.2.

Electorate Features and Branding

The first two hypotheses discussed in this chapter suggest that higher levels of political sophistication and engagement of the electorate leads to more specificity and consistency. Here we find mixed support for the hypothesis that political engagement of the population will increase specificity of a party's message. The variables that are used to operationalize political engagement are political discussion, civic engagement and turnout. Political discussion has an interesting relationship with specificity here because it is negatively correlated with overall specificity, with a 95% credible interval of [-0.1023,-0.0639] in the more robust Model 2, while positively correlated with core specificity in both models 3 and 4 with a 95% credible interval of [0.0546, 0.0614] in model 4. This finding suggests a refinement to the theory presented in this project is needed when conceptualizing the mechanism that drives the difference between core

Table 4.2: Findings: Incentives to Cultivate A Party Brand

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Pol. Discuss	-0.0365*	-0.0821*	0.0035*	0.058*	0.0021*	-0.034*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.0002)	(0.002)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Education	0.0573*	0.0302*	-0.0196*	-0.0042*	0.0022*	-0.008*
	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.0021)	(0.002)	(0.0002)	(0.0000)
Civic Part.	0.1026*	-0.1622	0.1688*	0.153*	0.0387*	0.0318*
	(0.046)	(0.099)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Party Org.	0.0847*	-0.0184	0.0175*	0.0075*	-0.0102*	-0.004*
	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Niche party	-0.0001	0.0002	0.0078*	0.0005		
	(0.013)	(0.041)	(0.0008)	(0.0003)		
Vote share	-0.0003	0.0000	0.0002*	-0.0000		
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.0000)	(0.000)		
Volatility		-0.0000		-0.0007*		0.00005*
		(0.007)		(0.000)		(0.0000)
Turnout		-0.0019*		-0.001*		-0.0000
		(0.006)		(0.000)		(0.0000)
DV	Specificity	Specificity	Core Spec.	Core Spec.	Inconsistency	Inconsistency
N	624	624	624	624	387	387

specificity and overall specificity.[4]

Aside from the political discussion measure, political engagement is also opera-tionalized on the country-election year level with the civic engagement metric from V-Dem. In general, we see that civic engagement is positively correlated with both overall and core specificity. The only exception to this is in model 2, where the coefficient is negative, but in that case the credible interval covers 0, making it a statistically insignificant relationship. This positive relationship matches the expec-tation and the consistency of the coefficient between models 1, 3, and 4 provides

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[4]For a thorough discussion of the potential theoretical differences between overall and core speci-ficity, see the concluding chapter

some confidence in the robustness of the relationship of political engagement via civic participation and the specificity of party brands.

We also expect political engagement to impact the level of consistency that a party has from election to election. Based on the results of models 5 and 6, the only indicator of political engagement that exibits this relationship is Political discussion, and it only does so in model 6, which includes turnout and volatility. Civic participation, on the other hand is positively related to inconsistency, meaning that higher levels of engagement via participation in civic life is associated with more inconsistent party brands. This finding suggests a refinement to the theory presented in this project is needed when conceptualizing the mechanism that drives inconsistency. One possible explanation for this finding is that parties follow the will of a very engaged population, and are more likely to pander to the issues that they find important (Burstein 2003, Spoon and Klüver 2014).

Finally, in looking at our operationalization of electorate sophistication as the educational attainment of the voters in the party-family of the party in question, an interesting pattern emerges in regards to specificity. In models 1 and 2, in which the DV is overall specificity, the educational attainment variable has a positive and statistically significant relationship to specificity, which is what we expect. However, in models 3 and 4 where the DV is core specificity, the relationship flips and maintains its significance.

Similar to the finding discussed above with the political discussion measure, a difference between the relationships of these variables on core specificity versus overall specificity. Taking these two results together, we see that political discussion is

positively related to core specificity while education is negatively related. The opposite is true for overall specificity. Thinking more deeply about these two specificity measures, a potential explanation for this difference emerges. Political discussion represents the degree to which an electorate is engaging with those around them about the campaign and the political process. These discussions are likely surrounding the most salient issues to their day to day lives, or the "core" issues. Because of this, it would follow that the political engagement of a population would have a positive association with specificity of these core issues. This may not be the case in terms of political sophistication, because the ability to receive and evaluate messages is not limited to the core issue areas. While these unanticipated findings deserve further examination in future work, there appear to be conceptual differences between overall and core specificity that justify these results.

Party Features and Branding

Hypothesis 2 posits that size of the party matters, and thus smaller parties will brand with less specificity, unless they are classified as a niche party, and then they will cultivate a stable brand. This hypothesis examines the importance of party size in the strategic calculus to cultivate a brand. Stemming from the idea that often small parties can play a kingmaker role, a small party may choose to be intentionally vague in order to maintain future flexibility in the government formation stage. Because of this, it is expected that as party size increases, specificity will also increase, particularly on core issue areas. In the results shown, there is no significant effect of size on overall specificity, but there is a small, positive and statistically significant relation-

ship between size and core specificity when volatility and turnout are not included (model 3), but this relationship turns negative when they are included (model 4). Therefore, no conclusions can be made about the impact of size on the specificity of party message.

This hypothesis (H2) also contains a caveat that niche parties, no matter their size, will be excluded from this proposed relationship and be more specific overall as a result of their party goals of policy influence. Based on the models specified in this chapter, there is no support for this hypothesis in terms of overall specificity, but there is a small positive relationship between being a niche party and having increased core specificity in model 3. But, much like the size of the party, this relationship does not remain significant in the more robust model 4. Because of this, the empirical analysis of this chapter does not provide significant support to Hypothesis 2.

Volatility and Branding

The influence of electoral volatility on specificity of message is expected to be negative, based on the implications of hypothesis 3. Models 2 and 4, in which the DV is specificity and core specificity, respectively and extra-systemic volatility is included in the analysis show support for the hypothesis that increases in extra-systemic volatility (Type A volatility) will suppress the specificity of a party's message. Based on this model, there is a negative relationship between extra-systemic volatility and both overall specificity of message and core specificity of message, however this relationship is only statistically significant for core specificity. In model 4, with the DV of core specificity, the 95% credible interval of the volatility coefficient is [-0.0007, -0.0006].

While the coefficient on volatility is small, that is largely a product of the difference in order of magnitude of the independent and dependent variables. By looking at the impact that a change of one standard deviation of the volatility variable has on core specificity, the size of the substantive effect is better described. A one standard deviation change in extra-systemic volatility (18.15) is associated with a decrease of 0.013 in the core specificity variable, or about 1/4 of a standard deviation change. Moving from the minimum of extra-systemic volatility to the maximum, there is a 1.13 standard deviation decrease in core specificity. So, as the level of volatility increases, parties in that party system become more vague in their messaging, following the reasoning that the uncertainty introduced by volatility is related to the softening of policy positions by parties in the system.

The expectation is not only that volatility will be related to vagueness, but also consistency. Model 6 displays that there is a significantly positive relationship between extra-systemic volatility and the inconsistency of a parties message from election to election. This supports the hypothesis that the uncertainty caused by high levels of electoral volatility lead to a reduction in the incentive for a party to provide a consistent message. According to model 6, the coefficient estimate of extra-systemic electoral volatility has a credible interval of [0.00006,0.0001] making it significantly different from zero, and in support of Hypothesis 3. While this appears ot be a very small effect, it is important to note that the true range of inconsistency measures is from 0.0013 to 0.1161, and volatility is on a percent-change scale, ranging from 0 to 100. Approaching this effect based on reasonable change of the independent variable, this relationship results in a 0.0009 (or 0.06 standard deviation) increase in

inconsistency for a one-standard deviation change in electoral volatility.

While these are somewhat small relationships, it provides support for the argument that highly volatile systems increase the uncertainty of the party system environment and this uncertainty is associated with parties that are more likely to send inconsistent and vague messages to their electorate. Taken with all of the other findings here, it is clear that there are particular environments that tend to be associated with higher levels of inconsistency and vagueness. Namely, electorates with low political interest and sophistication and party systems with high levels of extra-systemic volatility are less conducive to the cultivation of a consistent and specific party brand. This provides support for the idea that creating a stable brand is costly, and when the electorate is not attentive or the party system is unstable, the costs will not produce the benefits they desire, lowering the incentive to do so.

Further examination of Electoral Volatility

As noted in the theory chapter, there are multiple ways in which the impact of electoral volatility could be influencing the strategic decision of a party to construct a more or less consistent and specific brand. The primary concern here is that there are important incentives to the branding strategy that come from the anticipated benefits that could come from the post-election government formation environment. This relationship is important to examine her in order to determine if there are endogeneity concerns to address when analyzing the impact of branding on government inclusion and portfolio allocation. This is of particular concern in this project, as this relationship is to be tested in the following chapter.

In situations of higher volatility, very little weight is likely to be placed on the branding of other parties in the party system. Because the make-up of the post-election parliamentary seat distribution is so unclear prior to the election, the maximization of electorate support is the most logical strategy. So, it is possible that volatility plays a role in the importance of these post-election party-system features because in cases of low volatility, where the make-up of the post-election government is more clear, the desire to be included in government may influence the branding choices of the party.

The expectation here is that parties will be concerned with how their actions in the campaign period will impact their propensity to be included in government coalitions. This is expected to matter most when potential coalition partners are all but pre-determined. Therefore, in cases of low electoral volatility, there are increased incentives for parties to be consistent to show that they are predictable coalition partners and specific to signal that their ideal points on a range of policies. However, in cases of high electoral volatility the most ideal strategy for getting into office is securing as many votes as possible.

To test this proposition, it is necessary to construct new indicators based on the average party-system level of specificity and consistency for a given country-election year. Since this will be used on the right-hand side of the equation, and the party-level version of this indicator will be on the left-hand side, it is necessary to make them as independent as possible. To do this, the indicators are constructed such that they capture the average specificity and consistency of the *other* parties in the party system, not including the party of interest. So, the result is a unique value for

Table 4.3: Alternative Specification: Incentives to Cultivate A Party Brand

	Overall Specificity	Core Specificity	Overall Inconsistency
Pol. Discuss	-0.193*	-0.294*	-0.110*
	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.025)
Education	-0.018	-0.044*	-0.043*
	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.008)
Turnout	-0.000	0.000	0.001
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.004)
Civic Eng.	0.647*	0.924*	-0.193*
	(0.120)	(0.209)	(0.056)
Party Org	0.052*	0.128*	0.044*
	(0.009)	(0.028)	(0.007)
Volatility	0.179*	-0.003	0.006
	(0.046)	(0.013)	(0.005)
Sys. Spec	0.028*		
	(0.007)		
Vol x Sys. Spec	-0.066*		
	(0.009)		
Sys. Core Spec		-0.748	
		(0.562)	
Vol x Sys. Core Spec		0.015	
		(0.028)	
Sys. Inconst			-0.136
			(0.090)
Volatility x Sys. Inconst			-0.136*
			(0.031)
Constant	-0.387*	-0.391	0.055
	(0.113)	(0.284)	(0.044)
N	624	624	387

each party-election year observation that summarizes the specificity or consistency of

the other parties in the party system. This variable is then interacted with electoral

volatility to test this possible confounding relationship.

Table 4.3 displays the results of these three models which highlight the interactive effect of each of the four dependent variables at the party-system level with volatility. The purpose of this alternate specification is to determine whether the nature of branding at the party system level has an impact on an individual party's decision to brand in a particular way, and if so, does the level of electoral volatility influence that impact?

In assessing the conditional role of system level branding based on the level of electoral volatility, the results of these regressions suggest that this relationship exists. As expected, we see that overall levels of specificity increase with higher levels of party-system specificity, but this effect is attenuated by the significantly negative interaction effect between volatility and system-level specificity. This supports the proposition that higher levels of specificity at the party level is associated with more specificity in all other parties of the party system when levels of electoral volatility are low. However, we see no support for this when using the core specificity measure.

These results suggest that the impact of electoral volatility may not be a direct effect, but rather an indicator that the party will or will not be impacted by the post-election expectations and the office-seeking goals of the party. While these findings are interesting, the mixed results between the different specifications of the DV introduces uncertainty about the true nature of this relationship.

Figure 4.4: Marginal Effects of System-level Specificity on Party-level Specificity by Volatility
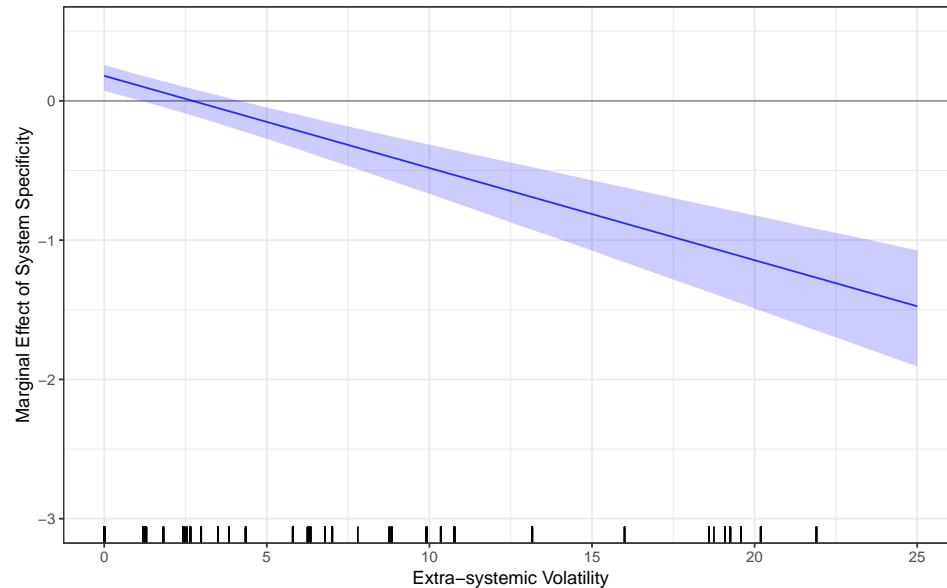
Conclusion

The goal of this chapter is two-fold. The first is to examine how party features such as size and goals interact with party system volatility and electorate engagement to produce incentives for parties within the same system to brand differently and for parties to alter branding strategies due to shifting incentives. The second is to apply the novel measures of party branding to a substantive research question.

Through empirical analysis, it has become clear that both dimensions of branding are influenced by some of the external branding incentives that were put forth in this chapter. While there were some mixed results, particularly regarding the branding incentives of small and niche parties, discernable incentives from the electorate to cultivate a particular type of party brand can account for the variety we see in branding strategies within countries. Most notably, we find that the several measures

of political sophistication and engagement of the electorate increases the likelihood that a party will be more specific in their messaging from year to year. In terms of party-system level features, higher levels of extra-systemic volatility is associated with the cultivation of more vague and inconsistent party brands.

Chapter 5

Consequences of Branding on Government

Formation a coalition government as the result of a multi-party election has a host of challenges, from the selection of coalition partners to the assignment of particular ministerial posts to certain parties. Central to many of the challenges that parties face in this environment is the degree of uncertainty that is present. This uncertainty can stem from a highly complex party system with innumerable coalition combinations, a lack of information about the cohesion of different partners to act as a reliable coalition partner, and incomplete information regarding the true ideological positions of parties in the system. The latter two information asymmetries are important components of uncertainty that impact the nature and outcomes of the government formation process. By examining the level of uncertainty that exists in the bargaining environment, the impact of party branding on government formation can be better understood.

While both components of branding can contribute varying degrees of information to the bargaining space both before and after the government has been formed, they do so through different mechanisms. Based on the existing literature, I assume that the goals of government coalition formation are to (1) maximize the ideological utility of each of the member parties that will result from the enactment of laws, (2) reduce transaction costs necessary to pass legislation through the legislature and (3) maintain a stable government until the next election.

Expectations

Bridging the existing literature on government formation dynamics, the nature of uncertainty in bargaining environments and the literature on party messaging and identity, this project presents a theory that suggests a set of hypotheses to be reviewed below. In brief, this theory posits that the duration of a government formation period is heavily influenced by the level of uncertainty in the party system leading up to and following the election. This level of uncertainty is heavily influenced by the information that parties present to the public and to other parties in the system about their political intentions, notably the specificity of the policy prescriptions provided in their pre-electoral rhetoric and how consistant that is with their previous platforms.

Inclusion in Coalition Government

It is important to address the principal-agent problem that formateurs face when they must form a coalition government and delegate ministerial posts to various parties.

This adverse selection problem, which can be amplified by increased uncertainty in the bargaining space, leads to problems with coalition formation and trust in the other parties. Specifically, the role of a party's "vagueness" on the desire for a formateur to assign a ministry to it due to the uncertainty that this attribute carries with it. Based on the logic of principal-agent delegation, the principal wants to choose the agent that is most similar to itself on the dimension on which they are delegating (Miller 2005). In situations of low information about the true policy positions of a particular party, determining who this "most similar" party is can be challenging.

So, much like the voter trying to choose which party to vote for, the formateur wants to pick the party that looks most like themselves. The more vague the platform and message of the party, the harder it is to discern where exactly the party stands on a particular issue area. This could lead to a preference to appoint more specific, but potentially more ideologically dissimilar parties to ministerial positions. This suggests that there is an interactive effect between vagueness and ideological congruence with the formateur that may be predictive of likelihood of appointments. The expectation is that a very specific, ideologically congruent party is most likely to get appointed portfolios while a vague, ideologically dissimilar party is the least likely to be assigned a portfolio in government.

> *Hypothesis 4a: All else equal, parties that are more vague and less consistent in their messaging are less likely to be included in a government coalition.*

This hypothesis introduces a potential trade-off for the formateur between choos-

ing an ideologically similar party and choosing a consistent and specific party. Given this, what are the features of the party or conditions of the party system that would make a formateur favor one over the other? It is first necessary to consider the nature of the formateur's brand. Vague parties that have garnered significant electoral support find that pairing with other vague parties is less costly and potentially use it is an opportunity to make agreements and compromises on different policies in order to gain favor in a reciprocity-based relationship. In this context, reciprocity and ideological fluidity is successful because none of the parties involved have made an investment in a reputation that can be negatively impacted by adopting a relatively wide range of policy choices, thus making bargaining over policy positions less costly vis-a-vis the electorate. This is more likely to occur in new democracies in which the party organizations are not completely developed or may remain less rigid. (Ishiyama 1999).

While a vague formateur may have less of a preference on these dimensions as to the type of party as a coalition partner, a specific principal has more to lose by pairing with a weakly branded party in coalition. The specific principal has invested in a stable brand and would not want their support to erode because of a coalition partner that has wildly different policy goals than themselves. According to Brader and Tucker (2007) and Lupu (2013), coalition partners are a source of information to the public about a party's brand, which can have major effects on strength of partisanship in the electorate. So when the formateur is more consistent, they will prefer to form government with parties that are both congruent and consistent so as to maintain their public reputation. This brings forth two related hypotheses to be

tested.

> *Hypothesis 4b: Formateurs are more likely to choose coalition partners*
>
> *that more similar to themselves in terms of specificity.*

Duration of Government Formation

The aspect of government formation that surrounds portfolio allocation is crucial, and often the most time consuming portion of the government bargaining process (Mitchell 1999). Because of this, it is important to understand how portfolio allocation is determined and what road blocks there may be that would lengthen the government formation period.

Increases in asymmetric information in the post-election bargaining environment are likely to lead to increases in the government bargaining duration due to the uncertainty and complexity it presents (Ceron 2014, Diermeier and Van Roozendaal 1998, Golder 2010). Previous studies have conceptualized this complexity by looking at ideology and party-system features like number of partiesMartin and Vanberg (2003), but measures of uncertainty and asymmetrical information are left out of the analysis. Given that bargaining duration increases under low information conditions, and the allocation of portfolios is based not on true ideological positions, but rather *perceived* ideology and issue importance, it is logical that inconsistency at the party-system level should influence the bargaining game and thus the duration of the government formation process.

> *Hypothesis 5a: All else equal, higher overall levels of specificity in a party*

system is negatively related to the length of time government formation

takes.

Aside from exclusively examining consistency in terms of within-party issue area consistency, party system consistency is expected to play an important role in government formation durations as well. Diermeier and Van Roozendaal (1998) and Martin and Vanberg (2003) find support for the idea that changes in the party composition of a party system will lead to party leaders being less certain which policy and ministerial proposals are acceptable to the other parties. It stands to reason that this bargaining delay due to uncertainty will also be augmented by the uncertainty that come from the issue-area inconsistency of parties. Thus, higher degrees of party-system level inconsistancy leads to an increase in government formation durations longer because of increased uncertainty about which portfolios should be assigned to who, and which parties truly are most ideologically and programmatically aligned.

Hypothesis 5b: More messaging inconsistency in the party system overall

will lead to a longer formation period.

In addition to this, much work has been done about the importance of party system institutionalization to the health and efficiency of a democracy. One of the primary reasons a stable party system is valuable to a democracy is that is reduces transaction costs between and within parties and provides more transparent and predictable representation (Kitschelt, Hawkins and Luna 2010, Mainwaring, Scully et al. 1995, Tavits 2008*a*).For these precise reasons, a stable party system with a limited number of new parties in any given election year will result in a reduction

of transaction costs when attempting to form a government. Therefore, this is an important variable to control for, along with the other variables of uncertainty and complexity presented in the previous literature. A full specification of the empirical strategy is outlined below.

Empirical Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses set forth here, there are a few measurement and model specification questions that must be addressed. First, for all questions concerning government formation duration, a party system score for branding is needed. This is constructed by aggregating the party-level branding component scores and weighting based on the success of the party in the election, as discussed above.

Data regarding government duration for these hazard models as well as government composition comes from Seki and Williams (2014), which is an update of Woldendorp, Keman and Budge (2000). The following section specifies the uses and transformations done to these data in order to properly operationalize the dependent and independent variables necessary to test the hypotheses set forth in this project.

The Data

The two dependent variables in this chapter are the length of the bargaining time for government formation and the inclusion of a party in that government. For the first set of hypotheses tested in this chapter, the dependent variable of interest is the inclusion of a party in a coalition government. Data on government composition

comes from the dataset put together by Seki and Williams (2014)

The Seki & Williams (2014) dataset allows for the construction of the government inclusion dependent variable. Government inclusion is conceptualized as a bivariate indicator based on whether or not a party was included in a particular government. By simply assigning all of the parties that are listed as coalition partners in the Seki & Williams (2014) data a '1' and all others a '0', the government inclusion variable is constructed. Since not all government formations directly follow elections due to votes of no-confidence by the legislature or the resignation of the prime minister (Laver, Benoit and Garry 2003), some of the coalition formation years do not correlate with an election year. In these cases, the party data and independent variables are drawn from the most recent elections.

For the bargaining duration dependent variable, the dataset put together by Seki and Williams (2014) provides government formation data for 50 democracies starting in 1943 to 2014 with varying coverage depending on the country's existence as a democracy. This covers all parliamentary democracies and years in my sample.

In the Seki & Williams data, they include indicators of the date of the election and the start date of the government's tenure, or the "date of investiture." This allows the researcher to calculate the number of days that the parties spent bargaining over the composition of the government. By subtracting the election date from the date of investiture using the `Date` format in `R`, the result is the bargaining duration in days. Below you can see the distribution of this variable by country to get a sense of the variation in this process. This will serve as the dependent variable in the cox proportional hazard models regarding government formation processes.

Figure 5.1: Government formation bargaining duration by country
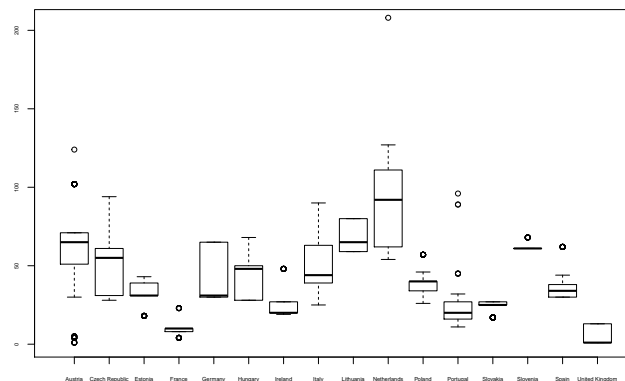
The barplot in figure 5.2 highlights the variation in the frequency of inclusion in government by party type. While this is aggregating across time and place, this new inclusion indicator helps to understand which parties are more or less often in government in Europe. From this, we see that Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals are most frequently governing, while Regional, Right-wing and Communist parties are rarely governing the Democracies of Europe over the past 40 years. The very low frequency of communist parties in government confirms the findings of Druckman and Roberts (2007) regarding the government inclusion of Communist Successor parties. Additionally, the "government inclusion" indicator is critical to the evaluation of the role of vagueness and inconsistency on the likelihood of government inclusion.

Independent Variables

The first set of primary independent variables needed to test the hypotheses in this chapter are specificity and consistency. From the original data that is produced from

Figure 5.2: Inclusion in governing coalitions by party family

Frequency of Government Inclusion by Party Family
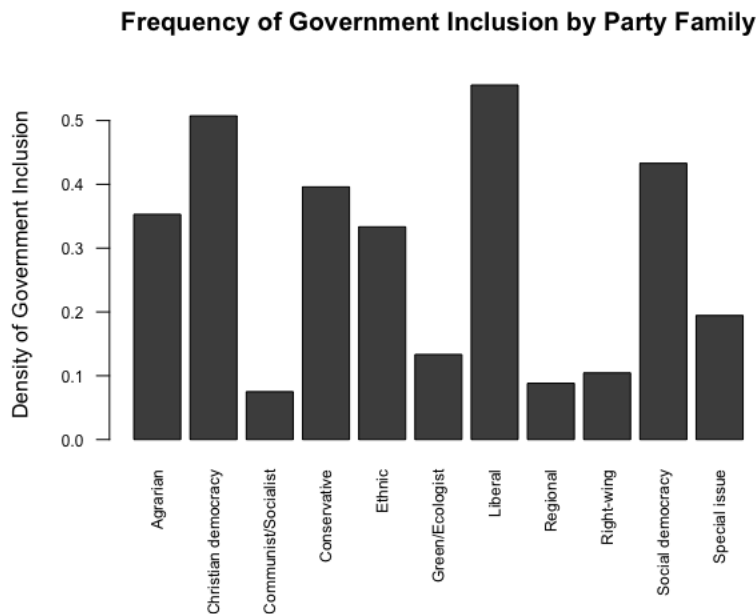
the topic model outlined in the third chapter of this book, the four variables or specificity, core specificity, inconsistency and core inconsistency represent the operationalization of party branding strategies.

A few additional independent variables are needed in order to test the hypotheses set forth in this chapter. The first is the ideological range of the party system. This measure derives from the ParlGov dataset on party features, which provides a "left_right" score for each party based on four measures of the left-right ideological dimension (Döring and Manow 2010a). The party system score is created by subtracting the minimum value from the maximum value in the system. This process is repeated using only the parties in government to get a score of ideological range within the governing coalition.

Since the theory and expectations of government inclusion presented here rely on

Table 5.1: Variable Names and Sources

Variable	Short Name	Source	Coverage
Specificity	Spec.	Original Data	1975-2014
Core Specificity	Core Spec.	Original Data	1975-2014
Inconsistency	Inconst.	Original Data	1975-2014
Core Inconsistency	Core Inconst.	Original Data	1975-2014
Niche Party Dummy	Niche	Eurobarometer Trend File	1970-2008[1]
Extra-Systemic Volatility	Volatility	Powell & Tucker (2013)	1945-2013
Election Turnout	Turnout	V-Dem v.7 (Coppedge et al, 2017)	1900-2016
Left-Right distance from Formateur	L-R dist from PM	Parlgov	1900-2016
Parliamentary Seat Share	Parl Seat Share	Parlgov	1900-2016
Inclusion in Government	Inclusion (DV)	Seki & Williams (2014)	1900-2016
Formateur Specificity	PM Spec	Original Data/ ParlGov	1975-2014
Difference between Party and Formateur Specificity	PM Spec Diff	Original Data/ ParlGov	1975-2014
Government Formation Duration	Duration	Seki & Williams (2014)	1945-2014
Left-Right position	Left-Right	Parlgov	1900-2016
Left-Right Range of the party System	left-right range	Parlgov	1900-2016
Number of New Parties in the System	New Parties	Original Data	1975-2014
Number of Effective Parties in the System	Num. Parties	Parlgov	1900-2016
Indicator of Initial Bargaining Period after election	Post-Election	Parlgov	1900-2016

understanding the relationship between the formateur and the potential coalition partner, it is important to identify the formateur and remove that party from the analysis, as well as use the observations to construct a few of the independent variables. The formateur is identified in this case by using the Parlgov dataset on cabinet

composition. This dataset contains a dummy variable for whether or not the party held the prime minister position following the formation of government. This party is noted as the formateur. Using this variable, the ideological (L-R) position of the formateur is determined. In addition to ideology scores, it is necessary to include a election-level measure of the specificity measure of the party of the formateur in a given election. Testing hypothesis H4b, regarding the value a formateur places on specificity of coalition partners based on their own degree of platform specificity, requires this measure.

Additionally, to test party-level ideological similarity and similarity in terms of message specificity to the formateur, variables called "L-R PM dist" and "PM spec diff" are calculated. These are the absolute distance between the scores of the party of the prime minister and each individual party in the system, yielding a score for each party which grows larger as the party is more dissimilar from the party of the prime minister. To control for some of the variation across countries and years, this measure is normalized by dividing by the largest value in that year resulting in a variable bounded between 0 and 1.

Since party-system and the government coalitions as a whole are important to understanding government formation dynamics, I have created a few additional consistency and specificity measures using both the overall and core measures at the party-election year level. The first is an aggregated average of the specificity scores for all of the parties in the system. This measure is a weighted mean of specificity based on party size, which will be useful when attempting to understand the role of specificity on government formation duration.

Finally, the number of new parties in the system is calculated by counting the number of parties in a country that did not have a consistency score in the dataset in a given year. This only occurs when parties did not previously exist in the party system, so it accurately tallies of the number of new parties in the party system.

Government Inclusion

To understand the role of branding on the inclusion of a party in government, a bayesian hierarchical logit model will be implemented in order to understand the impact on specificity, vagueness, size and ideological features on the inclusion in government. A logit link function is appropriate in this case due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (Long and Freese 2006). A hierarchical structure is important here in order to account for inter-country differences that are not captured by the independent variables in the model The bayesian approach is most appropriate for the small sample of only 14 parliamentary democracies to group by (Stegmueller 2013).

Drawing on the hypotheses presented here and the evidence from chapter four which suggests that there is endogeneity between the strategy taken to cultivate a brand and the objective to enter coalition with particular parties after the election takes place, the analysis is conducted on two different samples. The first sample contains all election-years of 16 European countries from 1975-2014. The second sample is constructed based on the volatility measure. Since it is plausible that in cases of low volatility the desire to be in government, or the office-seeking goals,

would influence the branding strategy in the pre-electoral environment, including branding measures on the right-hand side of the equation would violate assumptions of independence. Therefore, the models are additionally run on this second sample which only include election with sufficiently high extra-systemic volatility. Based on the findings in chapter four, this cutoff point is extra-systemic volatility $\geq 5\%$. It is at this point that volatility attenuates the marginal effect of the specificity of the party system as a whole on the specificity of the party. The following section examines and interprets the findings of the bayesian hierarchical models that test these theories.

Considering inclusion as a dichotomous variable, the results of three model specifications are shown in table 5.2. The inclusion indicator is a dichotomous variable in which 1 indicates the party was included in government in that particular coalitional arrangement and 0 otherwise. Thus, a binomial linear regression with a logistic link function is the basis of analysis. All of the models presented here are hierarchical in nature, to include country-level fixed effects. The inclusion of country-level effects accounts for variation between countries that is not captured in the independent variables. A Bayesian framework is employed in all of the models below, as the relatively small sample size and number of groupings (14 countries with parliamentary systems) is most efficiently handled with MCMC, as Stegmueller (2013) finds in his comparison of frequentist and bayesian multilevel modelling.

Six models are specified to test the hypotheses above as well as provide robustness checks with the inclusion of different control variables that are relavent to government inclusion- ideological distance from the formateur and parliamentary seat share of the party. The first 2 models test Hypothesis 4a with the focus on understanding the role

of specificity and consistency in the likelihood of government inclusion. The second two models explicitly test hypothesis 4b by incorporating the relative specificity of the formateur as a predictor of government inclusion. While each specification tests a particular hypothesis, all of the models can give insight into the impact of specificity and consistency to the inclusion of a party in a coalition government.

Government Inclusion: Findings

Based on the arguments laid out above, the results in Table 5.2 (below) indicate mixed support for the three hypotheses set forth. In nearly all cases, the ideological distance from the formateur's party has a negative effect on inclusion, which is almost universally expected of coalitions in the government formation literature. The basic hypothesis that specificity and consistency are important to a party's inclusion in government (H2a) is not very well supported, but some interesting findings in regards to consistency warrant more discussion below. The hypotheses that modify this general statement that consistency and specificity matter by incorporating the specificity of the formateur and the niche party classification, respectively, fare much better in terms of finding statistically significant support in the models presented. The following sections detail these findings for each hypothesis individually.

Branding and Inclusion

Models 1 and 2 in table 5.2 serve as the base models that test the hypothesis that more vague and less consistent parties are less likely to be included in a government coalition, however all of the models included in this section evaluate the validity of

Table 5.2: Bayesian Hierarchical Logit Results. DV: Inclusion in Government

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Specificity	-1.061	-8.386*	-4.334*	21.42*	0.244	0.777
	(0.717)	(2.154)	(0.813)	(5.189)	(1.054)	(3.627)
Core Specificity	-0.278	5.651*	1.299	2.025	-1.453	-7.254
	(0.679)	(1.914)	(0.714)	(2.336)	(1.166)	(4.323)
Inconst.	-1.543	-0.126			-6.421*	1.178
	(0.845)	(8.485)			(0.991)	(9.844)
Core Inconst.	-7.994*	-16.967*			-4.881*	-0.664
	(2.469)	(7.436)			(2.15)	(11.473)
PM dist	-0.009	-0.83*	0.074	-0.392*	-0.153*	0.405*
	(0.024)	(0.264)	(0.045)	(0.107)	(0.039)	(0.091)
Seat Share	1.09*	-1.888	-0.2	0.392	0.966*	-0.708
	(0.096)	(1.416)	(0.153)	(0.418)	(0.244)	(1.154)
PM Spec			6.435*	-27.077*		
			(0.49)	(4.429)		
PM Spec Diff			24.891*	-74.188*		
			(2.153)	(16.537)		
PM Spec Diff*PM Spec			-75.978*	205.276*		
			(5.15)	(34.649)		
Niche					-0.789	-9.244
					(0.574)	(1.783)
Niche * Spec					1.865	26.03
					(1.309)	(5.508)
Constant	0.319	2.206	-1.487	1.81	0.753	2.821
	(0.13)	(0.965)	(0.135)	(0.706)	(0.197)	(0.926)
Sample	All	High Volatility	All	High Volatility	All	High Volatility
N	387	173	387	173	387	173

this statement. In both the full sample and the high volatility subsample specificity has a negative association with inclusion in coalition government. However, this is only significant in the subsample model.

While these results are somewhat counter to expectations, this simply means that specificity is not positively related to government inclusion on its own. In Hypothesis 4b, specificity is examined in relation to the specificity of the formateur with results

that are more in line with expectations. The interpretation of this is simply that on its own, specificity of a party's message does not make it a more attractive coalition partner.

Conversely, when looking only at the 'core' issue areas, this relationship reverses for the high volatility sample in model 2. When a party becomes more specific on these issues, they are *more* likely to be included in government coalitions. Once again, this relationship is somewhat tenuous as this is the only statistically significant relationship found between core specificity and government inclusion. Regardless, this finding suggests that which issue areas a party is specific about is more important than overall specificity. While this certainly demands further examination, it is plausible that the core issue areas are the areas in which parties are expected to align when forming a coalition, and more information about the party's position and cohesion is desired in those areas because they are the most common areas for legislation.

Consistency, on the other hand produces interesting results in models 1 and 2. Since the measure of consistency produced with the measurement model in chapter three is most consistent when the value is 0, the measure is best understood as inconsistency. Based on Model 1, which examines the entire sample, as core inconsistency increases, a party becomes statistically significantly less likely to be included in a government coalition. Overall consistency shares this directionality, but the coefficient is not significantly distinguishable from zero. This falls in line with the hypothesis that consistency in party messaging is associated with inclusion in government. This relationship holds when testing the hypothesis on the subsample of volatile elections. This robustness to alternate specifications suggests that the relationship is not

due to an incentive structure that can induce consistency party branding based on office-seeking intentions.

Clearly, there is much more to examine than the direct relationship between specificity and consistency and government inclusion. The next two hypotheses incorporate interaction effects to understand conditional relationships between specificity and government inclusion. The findings in the first two models suggest that this conditionality is crucial to understanding how formateurs function differently under different information environments.

Formateur Similarity and Inclusion

In order to test the hypothesis that formateurs are more likely to choose coalition partners more similar to them in terms of specificity, we must use an interaction effect to attempt to understand the relationship between parties' relative levels of specificity and their likelihood of joining in coalition with one another, all else equal. Based on the results of Models 3 and 4 in table 5.2, there is a clear difference between the results of the model by sample. In the full sample model (model 3), the difference between the formateur's level of specificity and a given party's level of specificity has a positive effect on inclusion, conditional on the formateur's level of specificity being 0, due to the inclusion of the interaction term. Substantively, this means that a formateur that is completely vague is more likely to include parties in government that are not similarly vague. In the model using only the volatile subsample, we see the opposite relationship between the similarity of formateur specificity and government inclusion.

Looking at the extreme case is not very substantively interesting, and instead examining the marginal effects of this interaction term are more compelling. As seen in the marginal effects plots below, the interaction between formateur specificity and the difference between he formateur specificity and the party's specificity in the full sample (Figure 5.3) has a significantly negative effect. Because of this, it can be interpreted that as the formateur's specificity increases, a deviation from the specificity by the potential coalition partner becomes more and more unattractive to the formateur, thus the probability of inclusion in government continues to decrease. However, we see the opposite relationship Figure 5.4, displaying the relationship based on the volatile subsample.

Figure 5.3: Marginal Effect of Formateur Specificity Difference on Government Inclusion - Full Sample
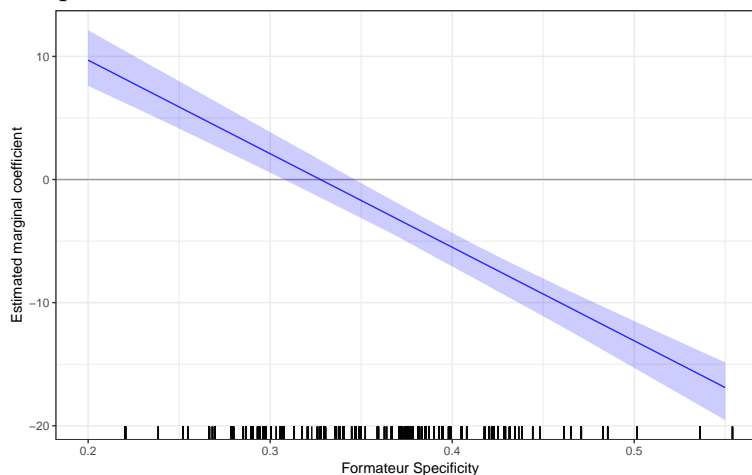
Based on the results, it is important to examine the different mechanisms that may vary between the two samples. In the full sample, vague formateurs are less concerned about the level of specificity of their coalition partners than formateurs that have been highly specific in their messaging in the campaign period choose

Figure 5.4: Marginal Effect of Formateur Specificity Difference on Government Inclusion - Volatile Sub-Sample
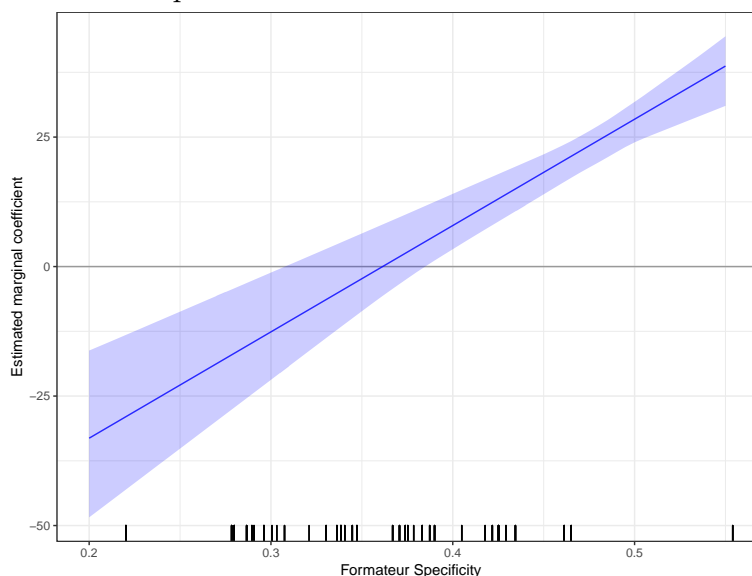
coalition partners that are also highly specific in their messaging. Because of the significantly negative coefficient of the interaction term, as formateurs become more specific and their potential coalition partners become less similar to them in terms of specificity, they become less likely to enter into government together. This provides partial support to the hypothesis presented here, however these results are not robust to the volatile subsample specification. These conflicting results suggest that for this particular relationship, the sample is picking up on an endogenous relationship. In the pre-electoral environment, if a party knows who the likely formateur is, they will attempt to match their specificity in order to be a more appealing coalition partner.

Niche Parties and Inclusion

To control for the idea that niche parties must be specific in order to receive a ministerial post, models 5 and 6 include an interaction term between the niche party

indicator and the specificity variable. As shown in table 5.2, the individual effects of both specifity and the niche party indicator are negative and significant in the volatile subsample. This means that among highly volatile party systems, a niche party that is completely vague (a specificity score of 0) is significantly less likely to be granted a ministerial post in government than one that is specific, all else equal. In the full sample model, this relationship is not significantly different from zero for both the coefficient on the niche dummy as well as the interaction terms between specificity and the niche party dummy.

Figure 5.5: Marginal Effect of Specificity on Government Inclusion in Niche Parties
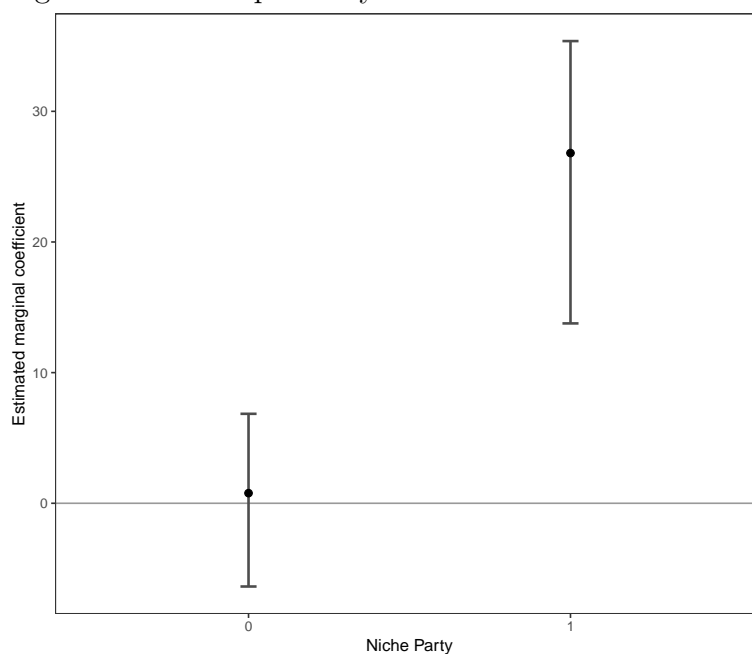
The interaction coefficient between niche party and the specificity score is significantly positive and when properly combined (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013) it is clear from the figure 5.5 that when a niche party produces a positive association between specificity and the inclusion in government, while not being a niche party (niche = 0) renders this relationship statistically insignificant. This suggests that in

more volatile settings, the specificity of a niche party plays a bigger role in its eventual appointment to a ministerial post than it plays for broader based parties, supporting the hypothesis presented in this chapter.

Government Formation

In order to test the hypotheses about government formation outlined above, it is important to select the proper statistical methods and specify the dependent and independent variables in a way that reflects the proposed data generating process of the hypotheses. In terms of the class of models to use for duration data, Cox proportional hazard models are the common approach among those studying government formation duration (Martin and Vanberg 2003). The dependent variable is thus the number of days until a "failure" occurs. In the case of government formation, a "failure" is when a government is formed. The following two sections will outline the empirical findings of these models.

Results from the different specifications of the Cox Proportional Hazards model with government formation duration as the dependent variable are displayed in Table 3. Two models were specified to address the different hypotheses presented in this chapter. Both models presented here include stratification by country. Specifying a model in this way is akin to incorporating fixed effects in a regression model. When there is a categorical, unordered covariate, stratification allows for controlling for differences between the units (Fox 2002). In this case, country is the strata used, so differences between countries not accounted for in the model specification will be

controlled for, a common practice in comparative politics.

Interpretation of Cox proportional hazards coefficients is that a negative coefficient indicates that the increases in the independent variable is related to a longer time to failure (lower risk), while a positive coefficient indicates that increases in the independent variable is related to shorter time to failure (higher risk). In this context, the "failure" language of the survival model language is a bit counter-intuitive because a failure is the formation of a government. When interpreting the variables below, it is important to remember that negative coefficients suggest that the independent variable is related to longer formation periods and positive coefficients are related to shorter formation periods.

Government Formation: Findings

In model 1, an interaction effect is included between specificity and ideological range. This interaction is to control for the potential relationship between specificity, ideological range and the duration of the government formation process based on the findings of King, Alt, Burns and Laver (2008). The expectation is that an increase in party-level specificity will always decrease government formation duration, but the higher levels of ideological spread can interact with that to decrease formation durations even when specificity levels are low. Additionally, additional forms of uncertainty are controlled for by the inclusion of the number of parties in the party system as well as a dummy to indicate that the government was formed immediately after an election.

In model 2, an interaction effect is included between specificity and the post-election government formation dummy. The interaction is meant to control for the potential attenuating effect that aggregated party system specificity would have on Golder's finding that government formation periods after an election are a more uncertain and low-information environment. Thus, by adding an interaction between the two in model 2, it is possible for us to examine the differential impact of party-system specificity in post-election government formation and in mid-term government formation processes. In all of the following regression tables, variables with a star after the coefficient are significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level and the standard errors are printed below the coefficient estimates in parentheses.

These models suggest that there is an independent effect of party-system specificity on the bargaining duration of a government formation period. When controlling for other hypothesized sources of uncertainty in the bargaining environment, these results hold and in some cases attenuate the impact of other sources of uncertainty such as the timing of the government formation. However, there is no support for the hypothesis that message inconsistency in the party system leads to longer bargaining duration. While these are the general trends, the following is an in-depth discussion of the findings for each hypothesis.

Given the results of these models, considering the type of specificity suggests there are mixed results to the hypothesis that message specificity will lead to shorter bargaining duration. Based on the results of both models 1 and 2, core specificity decreases the bargaining period, while overall specificity significantly increases the bargaining period. This contradictory finding is interesting, and suggests that the

Table 5.3: Cox Proportional Hazard models: Government Formation Duration

	Model 1	Model 2
Specificity	-26.8556*	-23.9621*
	(11.7783)	(11.7430)
L-R Range	-0.8863	-0.1156
	(0.6701)	(0.1069)
Core Specificity	17.0027*	19.3312*
	(8.2371)	(8.3203)
Consistency	59.4401	47.9908
	(48.4705)	(46.6061)
Core Consistency	-12.1910	-8.6742
	(31.5230)	(30.9910)
New Parties	0.2197*	0.2438*
	(0.1074)	(0.1056)
Num. Parties	-0.4061	-0.3707
	(0.2310)	(0.2330)
Post-election	-1.7854*	-4.4776
	(0.4658)	(3.3671)
Spec*L-R	2.2573	
	(1.9420)	
Spec*Post-elec		7.3303
		(9.0761)
N	387	387

aggregated measures of party-system specificity and party-system core specificity represent distinct concepts. The logic of the hypothesis suggests that the mechanism by which messaging specificity will lead to a shorter bargaining period is through the reduction of uncertainty about the positions of parties on important policy areas that are pertinent to governing. It stands to reason that the core issue areas of economy, social programs, public goods and foreign relations would be central to the bargaining process. So, the core specificity finding is logical. While it is curious that the

specificity coefficient is in the opposite of the expected direction, it is not significantly different from zero, and thus no conclusion about its relation to bargaining duration can be made.

The expectation that more new parties will lead to a longer formation period suggests that the coefficient on the count of new parties variable will be positive, because that would indicate that an increase in the number of new parties in the party system would reduce the hazard of government formation occurring. In both specifications, the coefficient on the number of new parties in the system is positive and statistically significant from zero, which supports this hypothesis. Interestingly, the coefficients on the number or parties in the party system are not statistically significant. This suggests that the uncertainty of new parties in the party system introduces into the bargaining arena is more important to understanding the degree of complexity present, adding a wrinkle to the findings that Martin and Vanberg (2003) put forth.

Based on the logic presented by Laver and Schofield (1998) as well as King, Alt, Burns and Laver (2008), party systems with more ideologically distinct parties have shorter bargaining periods because the potential ideologically connected coalitions are more clear and the ideological dissimilar parties are similarly clear. Based on the results of models 1 and 3, which include this interaction, overall specificity and ideological range on their own both increase the duration of the bargaining period as they increase, but the interaction term attenuates those effects because it is positive, meaning it increases the likelihood of a shorter government formation period.

Substantively, this can be interpreted that as ideological range and specificity

together increase more and more above their mean, the combined effect that they have on the government formation duration is to shorten it, all else equal. The finding that the independent effects of ideological range and specificity are to increase the government formation period goes against the underlying theory this hypothesis is based on (King, Alt, Burns and Laver 2008, Laver and Schofield 1998). This suggests that the original claims regarding the impact of ideological range on government formation periods are actually tempered by the clarity of those ideological positions, and only when both are at high levels do they serve to decrease the government formation negotiation period.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to understand how branding and party messaging strategies can impact the government formation process and composition. By including variables from existing models of government formation and composition as well as novel measures of party and party-system level specificity and consistency, new hypotheses were able to be tested to provide new insights into these critical democratic processes of government formation and composition. Through empirical analysis, it has become clear that the branding dimension of core specificity has a consistent impact on both the efficiency of the government formation process as well as inclusion in government, particularly parties classified as niche parties.

These findings add to the growing understanding of the role of uncertainty and low information in goverment formation environments. Along with the existing findings

that the number of parties in a system and the timing of the bargaining period in relation to an election, this chapter can add the importance of party branding strategies to that body of literature. Specifically, party systems with more parties that are spesific about the core issue areas that governments must address are associated with shorter bargaining durations.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

My intention through this project has been to use the idea of party branding in order to examine the strategies parties pursue in order to achieve all of their goals, not simply as a seemingly exogenous signal given to the electorate to help them form a political identity. Through the development and explication of a novel measurement strategy using the Comparative Manifesto Project manifesto corpus collection, a cross-national measure of party branding has been constructed for public use. In addition, these measures have been applied to critical questions in the party competition literature about the motivations to develop a party brand through messaging strategies and the impact of such brands on the government formation process. While these contributions and findings have added to the conversation on programmatic branding and linkages, they also open the door to much further research on the topic.

Contributions and Findings

The largest contribution to the field of comparative political parties and elections that this project makes is the production of a coherent conceptualization of the party brand as well as a new dataset of the components of this concept for 16 countries in Europe from 1975-2014. Furthermore, this paper has outlined a strategy for constructing these measures using open-source data and tools that others can use to craft measures for their own research using manifesto corpi. This new dataset allows us to test existing theories related to party branding with observational data and thus expand the scope of some these theories over time and space. In this book, these measures are used in an aggregated fashion, looking at party-level measures of specificity and consistency, but the output of the measurement model produces issue-specific measures as well.

The availability of issue-specific consistency and specificity measures for 624 party-election year observations is a yet untapped contribution of this project. Using the disaggregated measure to look at specific issue areas that we might expect to be more or less changeable over time can refine some of the hypotheses tested in this project. Additionally, by focusing on certain issue areas, we can understand the nature of branding in different types of parties that we see such as anti-establishment parties, nationalist parties, or even look at niche parties more closely. Finally, the contribution of this disaggregated branding dataset can lead to an analysis of specific ministerial appointments based on issue-specific measures of specificity and consistency, similar to Bäck et al (2016) and others.

Even at the aggregated level, these new measures that capture the degree to which parties across Europe are consistent in their message over time and specific about the issues that they focus on have proven to be useful in understanding how conditions of uncertainty and informational deficits in many facets of party competition. From how they alter the incentives to cultivate a stable brand to the challenges that arise from informational asymmetries in during coalition formation, a variety of insights have been gleaned from this new dataset.

Based on the results of chapter four, the discussion of the motivations to cultivate a particular branding strategy have enriched the scholarship on branding. By clarifying how the electorate and the volatility of the party system have influence in the strategic decisions that parties make, there is a greater understanding in the motivation to construct inconsistent and vague brands. Previously, this was seen as a failure to brand, rather than a decision to be strategically vague or inconsistent.

The electorate's influence on parties' branding strategies were shown to matter on different components of branding. Sophistication of the electorate is associated with higher levels of overall specificity. This suggests that the ability for the electorate to receive and evaluate political information in a sophisticated manner is important to constraining parties to be more clear in their political intentions.

Political engagement on the other hand provided some mixed results. When operationalized as civic participation, there is a positive relationship between political engagement and both overall and core specificity. This follows the expectation that a more engaged electorate will demand more specific platforms from their parties. However, when operationalized as political discussion, engagement was associated

with greater core specificity, but not overall specificity. At first glance, this seems odd, but as discussed in chapter four, the measure of political discussion invokes a focus on issue salience, making this relationship between core specificity and political discussion more understandable.

Building on the theme of uncertainty that runs through this volume, extra-systemic electoral volatility plays an important role in the incentives to craft a specific brand. Based on the findings in chapter four, there is a negative relationship between extra-systemic volatility and core specificity of message. This relationship indicates that the existence of uncertainty in the pre-electoral environment is associated with the perception that cultivating a specific and distinct party brand does not aid in achieving a party's goals.

In addition to these novel findings on the incentives to cultivate a brand, this measure has allowed us to be more specific about the nature of the bargaining environment and how it impacts the ways in which we can understand the speed of government formation and the propensity for different types of parties to be included in the governing coalition.

By including both the specificity and consistency measures presented here as well as variables from existing models of government formation and duration, new hypotheses were tested to provide new insights into these critical democratic processes of government formation and stability.

The role that party branding plays in the likelihood of being included in government is less pronounced than initially thought. Yet, the findings in chapter five still uncover that as core inconsistency increases, a party becomes significantly less

likely to be included in a government coalition. This falls in line with the expectation that message consistency is associated with a higher proclivity to be included in government. This relationship holds when testing the hypothesis on the subsample of volatile elections. Additionally, there was rather strong support in the subsample of volatile elections that niche parties are almost exclusively included in government when they are specific in their messaging.

When analyzing the impact of party system branding levels on the duration of government formation in chapter five, along with finding support for several existing hypotheses, an independent effect of party-system core specificity on the bargaining duration of a government formation period was detected. This finding supports the expectation that more specificity in the party system will enhance the distinction between parties, thus reducing the amount of uncertainty in the bargaining space. This reduction in uncertainty is key to a more swift government formation process.

From the empirical findings in chapters four and five, the concepts of specificity and core specificity as presented here has been called into question by the conflicting results that emerged. This conflict occurred both in terms of the incentives that are associated with these outcomes and in terms of the relationship they have with government inclusion. At the outset of this project, core specificity was assumed to be a sub-component of specificity more broadly that would detect if the party was specific about the issues that are usually most important to the voters, even if they remained vague about more peripheral issues. Put simply, the assumption was that this type of "core" specificity would be perhaps more indicative of the relevant concept of specificity, since vagueness in peripheral issues may simply be noise. However, the

conflicting results in their relationship to political engagement and sophistication, as well as suggest that this assumption was incorrect.

One possible explanation is that *all* parties are able to discuss the core issues with specific language, but the issue areas that are somewhat more peripheral or are less consistently central to the debate are harder for parties to commit to. These issues are also those that a less engaged base will be less focused on when making a choice about who to vote for in an election. If a party is trying to attract low information voters they will focus on the core topics and be specific about them. But, those that are more specific about all of the issues are the ones that are more firmly in this "well-branded" camp.

The potential differential functioning of specificity depending on the context opens up for the opportunity for further theoretical development and hypothesis testing about how specificity on different issue areas may change in their importance depending on the audience with which that party is concerned.

Future Avenues for Research

Because one of the novel features of this project is the construction of a new dataset, the possibilities for future research are innumerable. Here, several of the possible future avenues for research based on the findings and contributions are considered. From the incorporation of personalistic party branding to the extension of this measurement strategy to other regions, there is no shortage of research agendas on the nature of party competition in multi-party democracies.

The first question that is begging to be addressed is how does the programmatic branding that has been explored here compare to personalistic branding. Here, I define personalistic branding as a situation in which a party's identity is strongly rooted in the leader of the party. Are these substitutable means of branding, or can they be complimentary? If they are both rational to pursue and can be successful in the right conditions, in what ways might they be differentially impact democratic outcomes?

Additionally, the role of party-level characteristics is important to delve into further. Including measures of patronage and personalism would add an interesting element to the understanding of policy-based branding strategies. The measure that is put forth in this project can speak to the idea that personalist and programatic politics are always at odds. In fact, it may be the case that highly personalist parties are extremely specific in their policy preferences, but the motivations for doing so are not to achieve their goal of getting into office, but rather to achieve ideological goals. This, along with countless other questions about party competition and messaging can be addressed with the measure of specificity and consistency that this paper implements.

Looking further into this question of personalistic versus programmatic party branding, there are two different characteristics of parties related to effectiveness of the brand that must be accounted for. The first is the institutionalization of the party. The second is the actual brand that is put forth. In order for the brand to be successful in the long term, institutionalization is crucial. There is likely some overlap in the incentives to create an institutionalized party and a programmatic

brand, so the conceptualization is important in understanding the distinct role that each component plays. So, why are some parties branding on policy or investing in a long term strategy of a "democratic" internal party structure, while others choose a personalistic branding strategy that is likely to not result in the stability that Aldrich (and others) claim is the reason parties are used to begin with? Understanding these differential motivations can uncover the mechanisms behind some important trends in the rise of the more personalistic parties in the West, such as Orban's Fidesz.

Building on this connection to personalistic parties comes the transportability of this analysis to other regions of the world. While there are some obvious limitations, such as data availability, it is also important to consider conceptual limitations like the nature of programmatic competition in other parts of the world. Cases such as Latin America, which has fairly good data availability but programmatic nature of party system is often not present. This may indicate that the manifesto is not as important of a document as it is in the West, diminishing the usefulness and conceptual clarity of this measurement process. In Sub-Saharan Africa data is not as available for the entire region, but it would be interesting to see how different countries and different parties use these documents in a way that is similar or different to the West, even if it were a subset of cases with manifestos available.

Given the rise of populist parties throughout Europe, extending this analysis to capture elections that occurred after 2014 in Europe would be quite intersting. Doing this would allow one to understand how the growth of populism has impacted branding strategies in party systems and whether or not these findings hold in these settings. Based on some of the governments that have formed and the new parties

that have emerged, the incentives to cultivate a specific brand based on economic and social issues seems to be waning and the rise of divisive language and fear-based strategies may be taking its place for certain segments of the population.

Finally, a party brand is constructed through the public messages that parties send out to the electorate and to other parties in the system. The clearest way that parties can send messages to the electorate about their characteristics prior to an election is through campaigning. Political campaigns can have several different facets that all contribute to the spreading of the main messages of the parties. It would be an interesting line of research to extend this analysis of the messages that are being sent to the public to a more diverse set of campaign materials. Since the brand is essentially the identity of the party, what they say about themselves through other types of campaign activity prior to an election may create a more complete and nuanced picture of a party's brand.

Speeches and platforms that outline a specific policy agenda are most closely associated with programmatic branding. Additionally, the name of the party can also serve as a cue as to the nature of the brand. The accuracy of the name of the party in relation to its policy stances can send a signal about whether or not the party is focused on a coherent program or not. Similarly, if the name of the party has no ideological significance it can signal a weaker programmatic brand, or simply not be useful to promoting the brand of a party at all (Hartmann 1936). The official symbol of the party and the "mood" of their website can also play a role in the creation and maintenance of a brand using emotions. If the symbol displays the country or ethnic group's flag or traditional colors, it might invoke feelings of pride

and patriotism. Or a party official website filled with articles and videos discussing all of the threats to the country, both internal and external, will foster feelings of fear and anxiousness (Marcus 2000). Pairing these features of a parties identity with the features of consistency and specificity open up a rich research agenda on the nature and evolution of parties' brands.

Appendix A

Sample of Party-Years

Below all of the parties included in the sample and the elections that they are included in are listed by country. Parties that have an asterix (*) next to their name are classified as niche parties in the analysis conducted in chapters four and five.

Table A.1: Sample of Party-Election Years

Country	Party	Observations	Election Years
Austria	BZO	2	2006, 2008
	Dinkhauser	1	2008
	FPO	8	1983, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2006
	GRUNE*	8	1986, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008
	LF	5	1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2008
	Martin	1	2008
	OVP	9	1983, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008
	SPO	9	1983, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008

Czech Republic	Coalition	1	2002
	CSL	1	1990
	CSSD	6	1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2010
	DZL	2	1996, 1998
	HZSD	1	1992
	KDS	1	1992
	KDU CSL	5	1996, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2010
	KSC	1	1990
	KSCM	1	1992
	KSCM DL	6	1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2010
	LSU	1	1992
	ODA	2	1992, 1996
	ODS	7	1992, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2010
	SNK	1	2006
	SPR RSC	2	1992, 1998
	TOP09	2	2009, 2010
	US	2	1998, 2006
	VV	1	2010
	Zelenych	3	2006, 2009, 2010
Estonia	EK	5	1992, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011
	EME*	2	1999, 2011
	ER	2	1995, 1999
	ERahvaliit	1	2003
	EReform	3	2003, 2007, 2011
	ERohelised	1	2011
	ERS	1	1992
	EUR*	1	1999
	IRL	1	2011
	Isamaaliit	3	1992, 1999, 2003
	Keskerakond	1	1995
	KK	1	1992
	Koonderakond	1	1995
	MKE*	1	1995
	Moodukad	5	1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011

	Parempoolsed	1	1995
	PopularFront	1	1992
	SK	1	1992
	Socialist	1	1992
France	Communist	7	1981, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2006
	FN	3	1986, 1993, 1997
	Gaullists	3	1981, 1986, 1988
	GenEco*	2	1997, 2007
	MNR	1	2002
	PoleRep	1	2002
	RPR	2	1981, 1986
	RPR UDF	2	1993, 2002
	Socialist	7	1981, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2007, 2012
	UDF	2	1993, 2002
	UMP	2	2002, 2007
	Verts*	5	1993, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012
Germany	90GREENS*	6	1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009
	CDUCSU	4	1998, 2002, 2005, 2009
	DVU	1	1998
	FDP	5	1990, 1994, 1998, 2005, 2009
	LINKE	1	2009
	LINKEPDS	1	2005
	NPD	2	2005, 2009
	PDS	4	1990, 1994, 1998, 2002
	Pirate	1	2009
	REP	1	2005
	SPD	6	1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009
Hungary	FiDeSz-MPSz-KDNP	1	2014
	LMP	2	2010, 2014
	MSzP	3	2006, 2010, 2014

	DK	1	2014
	MSzDP	3	1994, 2006, 2010
	E14-PM	1	2014
	FiDeSz	2	2006, 2010
	SzDSz	1	2002
	MDF	2	2002, 2006
	KNDP	1	1998
	Jobbik	2	2010, 2014
	FKgP	1	2002
Ireland	DLP	2	1992, 1997
	FF	6	1982, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002
	FG	6	1982, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002
	Green*	4	1987, 1989, 1997, 2002
	PD	5	1987, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002
	PLO	5	1982, 1987, 1989, 1997, 2002
	SF	2	1997, 2002
	WP	2	1987, 1989
Italy	CCD	2	1996, 2001
	CdL	1	2006
	Destra	1	2008
	DP	1	1983
	DS	4	1983, 1987, 1992, 1994
	Forza	3	1994, 1996, 2001
	IdV	2	2001, 2008
	MCS	1	2013
	MDI DN	1	1996
	MSI DN	4	1983, 1987, 1992, 1994
	Nord	2	1994, 1996
	Panella	1	1996
	Patto	1	1994
	PD	2	2008, 2013
	PdL	2	2008, 2013
	PLI	3	1983, 1987, 1992
	PPI	5	1983, 1987, 1992, 1994, 1996

	PRC	4	1992, 1994, 1996, 2001
	PRI	3	1983, 1987, 1992
	PSDI	3	1983, 1987, 1992
	PSI	3	1983, 1987, 1992
	Rete*	1	1994
	SA	1	2008
	SC	1	2013
	UDC	2	2008, 2013
	Union	1	2006
	Verdi*	4	1987, 1992, 1994, 1996
Lithuania	UdL	1	2004
	UTT	1	2004
	Labour + Youth	1	2008
	LSDP	2	2008, 2012
	LiCS	2	2004, 2008
	DP	2	2004, 2012
	LRLS	2	2008, 2012
	PTT	2	2008, 2012
	TS	1	2004
	TS-LKD	2	2008, 2012
	TPP	1	2008
	VNDS	2	2004, 2012
	LLS	1	2012
	DK	1	2012
Netherlands	GL*	8	1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012
	SP	6	1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012
	PPR	3	1977, 1982, 1986
	PvdA	10	1982, 1986, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012
	D66	9	1986, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012

	VVD	10	1982, 1986, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012
	CDA	9	1982, 1986, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2012
	CU	4	2002, 2006, 2010, 2012
	GPV	2	1994, 1998
	RPF	1	1994
	Centre Democrats	1	1994
	LPF	1	2003
	PVV	3	2006, 2010, 2012
	PvdD	3	2006, 2010, 2012
	SGP	6	1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2012
	50PLUS	1	2012
	AOV	1	1994
	Unie 55+	1	1994
Poland	AWS	1	1997
	BBWR	1	1993
	German minority	1	2001
	KdR	1	1991
	KLD	1	1991
	KNP	1	2011
	KPN	2	1991, 1993
	LabourUnion	1	1997
	LiD	1	2007
	LPR	2	2001, 2005
	PD	1	1991
	peasant	1	1991
	Peasant Alliance	1	1991
	PiS	4	2001, 2005, 2007, 2011
	PJN	1	2011
	PO	3	2001, 2007, 2011
	POC	1	1991
	PPPP*	1	1991
	PSCD	1	1991

	PSL	6	1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011
	PUS	1	1991
	ROP	1	1997
	RP	1	2011
	SDL	1	1993
	SLD	1	2001
	SLD UP	4	1991, 1997, 2005, 2011
	Solidarity	1	1991
	SP	1	1991
	SPD	1	2005
	SRP	1	2001
	TSKN	1	1997
	UD	1	1993
	Unia	1	1993
	UP	1	1993
	UPR	1	1991
	UW	1	1997
	WAK	1	1991
Portugal	PEV*	2	2005, 2011
	BE	2	1999, 2011
	PCP	12	1975, 1976, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2011
	MDP	2	1975, 1985
	PS	11	1975, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2011
	PSD	7	1985, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2011
	ID	1	1987
	CDS-PP	1	2011
Slovakia	Bridge	2	2010, 2012
	HZDS	2	2006, 2010
	KDH	3	2006, 2010, 2012
	OKS	1	2010
	OLaNO	1	2012
	SaS	2	2010, 2012

	SDKU-DS	3	2006, 2010, 2012
	Smer	3	2006, 2010, 2012
	SMK-MKP	1	2006
	SNS	3	2006, 2010, 2012
Slovenia	SD	1	2011
	SDS	3	2004, 2008, 2011
	PS	1	2011
	LDS	3	2004, 2008, 2011
	Zares	2	2008, 2011
	SKD	1	2011
	SLS	3	2004, 2008, 2011
	Nsi	3	2004, 2008, 2011
	SNS	3	2004, 2008, 2011
	DeSUS*	3	2004, 2008, 2011
Spain	BNG	1	2011
	CC	2	2000, 2008
	CDS	4	1982, 1986, 1989, 1993
	CiU	3	2004, 2008, 2011
	ERC	1	2011
	IU	8	1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011
	PNV	9	1982, 1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011
	PP	8	1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011
	PSOE	9	1982, 1986, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011
	UCD	1	1982
	UPyD	2	2008, 2011
United Kingdom	APNI	1	2010
	Conservative	7	1983, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010
	DUP	2	1997, 2010
	Green	2	2005, 2010

Labour	7	1983, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010
LibDem	4	1997, 2001, 2005, 2010
Liberal	3	1983, 1987, 1992
PlaidCymru	2	1997, 2010
SDLP	1	2010
SinnFein	3	1997, 2001, 2010
SNP	4	1997, 2001, 2005, 2010
UKIP*	2	1997, 2005
UUP	2	1997, 2001

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