

“Competing on the Issues: How experience in government and economic conditions influence the scope of parties’ policy message”

Parties campaign on a range of topics to attract diverse support. Little research, however, looks at why parties narrow or expand the scope of their campaign or shift attention across issues. Focusing only on a single dimension or topic may lead scholars to miss-estimate the magnitude of the effect of parties’ experiences in government or economic context. I propose that electoral conditions influence the scope of parties’ manifestos. I test hypotheses using a measure of issue diversity: the Effective Number of Manifesto Issues (ENMI). Based on analysis of 1662 manifestos in 24 OECD countries from 1951 to 2010, the results support the theory. Government parties have higher ENMI. Opposition parties and governments expecting a reward for the economy limit their issue appeals. Tests of the underlying mechanism using data on issue dimensions and policy data provide additional support. These findings have important implications for the study of election strategy and democratic accountability.

Key words: Issue competition, election campaigns, party politics, issue diversity.

Statements of party preferences and issue priorities form a central component of electoral campaigns. Parties use multiple strategies to sculpt their policy messages. Parties shift the location of their preferences (Adams and Somer-Topçu 2009) and seek to influence the issues that dominate the agenda by emphasizing certain issues, such as unemployment, education, or the environment (Petrocik 1996; Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Green and Hobolt 2008; Green 2011; Hellwig 2012). Parties try to develop ‘ownership’ over issues by convincing voters that they are competent organizations in government (e.g. Green and Jennings 2011a; Wagner and Meyer 2014). Likewise, they respond to electoral losses by acting as entrepreneurs and addressing issues on alternative political dimensions (de Vries and Hobolt 2012).

Despite our knowledge of competition on specific issues, we know little about why parties choose to compete on a large range of issues or focus their policy message to a smaller number. Little research investigates the factors that influence the scope of parties’ campaigns. When do parties increase or decrease their attention on a range of issues? A comprehensive theory must account for the composition of parties’ campaign messages in addition to the specific topics and the ideological dimensions parties address.

Most issue competition theories do not directly explain the diversity of issues in party manifestos. Take for example, the 1997 elections in France. Faced with a snap election and a mediocre economy, the two coalition parties created a joint election manifesto that was a shift from their previous policy statements (“A Tough Time for an

Election" 1997); although the combined manifesto for the *Rassemblement pour le* *Republique* (RPR) and the *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF) moved their policy statements closer toward the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), it also decreased the range of issues addressed in the RPR's manifesto, but increased the range for the UDF. The total number of issues in their 1997 platform remained quite high and included discussion of the government's priority for policy on issues the government addressed such as foreign policy and the European Community.¹ The largest opposition parties, the PS and the *Parti Communiste* (PCF), moderated their proposals and drastically reduced the scope of their manifestos.² The results overwhelmingly benefited the PS at the expense of the governing parties.³

To explain these results, I propose an aggregate approach to studying issue salience. The theory focuses on the scope of attention across issues in election campaigns. I argue that issue diversity reflects a tradeoff between selectively emphasizing salient issues on which a party is favored versus defending their wider record in office (for a similar argument, see Vavrek 2009).⁴ Government parties reinforce, defend and respond to criticisms of their recent policy record on a broad range of issues. Opposition parties act less restrained by recent policy experiences. However, a strong economy allows governing parties to focus their policy message on a smaller number of issues such as their historical competencies.

Like studies of issue competition (Petrocik 1996; Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Green and Hobolt 2008; Green 2011), I expect that parties use issues in their campaigns

to attract votes and that the demands placed on parties influence their policy messages (e.g. Somer-Topçu 2009; Vavrek 2009; Green 2011; Spoon 2011). Attention to issues reflects a balance of historical competencies and recent government experiences. Parties narrow their attention to emphasize policy competencies when they are confident in their ability to control their message; when they are in the opposition or when they expect to be rewarded for the economy in government. Government parties lacking confidence regarding their economic record, such as the RPR and UDF in 1997, increase the scope of their message to a broader number of issues.

I examine the hypotheses using a measure of issue diversity in parties' manifestos: the Effective Number of Manifesto Issues (ENMI). Like measures used to study government policy (Jennings et al. 2011), ENMI measures the mathematical diversity of issues in parties' campaigns.⁵ ENMI allows researchers to study concepts such as issue entrepreneurship and selective emphasis from a more general, aggregate perspective that avoids making strong claims about the specific issues parties address. This perspective encourages a comprehensive approach to the study of election priorities. Using data on 1662 manifestos from political parties in 24 OECD democracies from 1951 to 2010, I show that incumbent status and economic conditions predict parties' ENMI. Through a series of additional analyses, I also demonstrate evidence to support the underlying mechanism. I find evidence that governing parties focus on economic and welfare state policies more when the economy performs well. I also show evidence for the underlying mechanism by predicting the specific issues governing

parties address as well as governments' policy records from the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP). The results from these analyses lend support to the theory of issue scope.

To my knowledge, this is the first comparative study that examines the issue diversity in elections.⁶ The scope of parties' campaign messages is important to study for both theoretical and empirical reasons. As Ezrow (2007) notes, this approach allows researchers to expand the study of representation beyond its traditional focus on the location of preferences or issue emergence. Studying the distribution of attention on issues also likely holds implications for traditional theories of party election campaigns.⁷ For example, position taking on a new issue dimension will be less prominent if that issue is only one of a large number of topics in a party's campaign message. Empirically, issue diversity changes substantially between and within parties over time; the scope of parties' platforms therefore, provides a new means of testing theories of party behavior.

A focus on the scope of campaigns facilitates integration of theories of election strategy and public policy outcomes. The current omission is striking as scholars of political communication, public policy, and government behavior increasingly consider the role of issue salience and diversity for a range of outcomes (e.g. Bäck et al. 2011; Jennings et al. 2011; Falcó-Gimeno 2012; Greene and Jensen 2014; Meyer and Wagner 2013; Boydstun et al. 2014; Wagner and Meyer 2014). The findings provide a broad explanation for party behavior and suggest potential strategies for electoral victory.

Scope, Competence and the Economy

Studies of issue entrepreneurship, uptake and salience advance our knowledge of issue competition. While this research explains major components of issue competition, parties' issue attention can be studied in a more general framework. For example, by studying only broad issue dimensions researchers cannot explain changes across the range of topics or issues parties include in their campaigns.⁸ By focusing on the distribution, rather than a single or limited set of issues, a theory focused on aggregate diversity both complements and informs theories of issue attention, ownership and uptake. A general theory will explain how parties integrate multiple strategies simultaneously. Treating tactics as independent may lead researchers to miss contexts in which parties add or remove issues within the dominant issue dimension or add multiple issues on many possible dimensions.⁹ Why do parties expand or concentrate the scope of their attention on a large or small number of issues?

I answer these questions by considering the contexts that lead parties to increase or decrease the scope of issues in their manifestos. Following studies of party preferences (e.g. Adams 1999; Adams and Somer-Topçu 2009; Green 2011; Ceron 2012), I assume that parties use manifestos to attract voters and mobilize intra-party groups. As strategic documents, parties include issues based on the location of voters' preferences, party's electoral needs and policy reputation (see for example Green 2011). In the hypothetical case in which a single party chooses the salient topics in an election,

a party would only address issues that maximize its votes or the likelihood of controlling office. Parties would only diversify appeals if they expected an electoral payoff. This perspective fits well both with spatial modeling accounts that parties would only make appeals on which they were ideologically close to voters (Green 2011) and also with Kirchheimer's (1990) concept of the catch-all party; parties extend the breadth of their appeals to attract the greatest number of voters.¹⁰

The real world is more complex. Policy reputations confound campaign messages. Parties earn a reputation from experiences in government and the priorities of their historical electoral constituencies (Hibbs 1977; Budge and Farlie 1983; Green and Jennings 2011a and 2011b ; Egan 2013). Parties emphasize the issues in their electoral campaigns on which they develop long term positive associations or 'ownership' in the electorate (e.g. Egan 2013). However, parties' ownership is rarely complete and voters often disagree over party competence ratings (e.g. Bélanger and Meguid 2008). Voters' perceptions of competence closely relate to other important characteristics such as the location of parties' preferences (Wagner and Zeglovits 2014). However, competence ratings moderate the effect of the economy on incumbent electoral performance (e.g. Martinsson 2009; Bélanger and Gélinau 2010). These ratings in turn depend on economic conditions (Green and Jennings 2011a and 2011b) and perceived ideological proximity (Vegetti 2014). Overall, this research indicates that reputations from government participation moderate parties' strategies.

In government, parties must explain their recent policy record. Government policies often cover undesirable topics. Governing parties respond to opposition critiques and world events on a broad range of issues (Green-Pederson and Mortensen 2010; Bawn and Somer-Topçu 2012). For example, opposition parties often use roll call votes and parliamentary debates to highlight the government's behavior (e.g. Carey 2008; Kam 2009). Policy outputs, therefore, constrain parties' ability to selectively construct a campaign message.¹¹

Opposition parties face fewer constraints because they have few tools to implement policy (Green-Pederson and Mortensen 2010). Lacking influence may have an upside. Opposition parties are freed from the obligation to govern responsibly. These parties selectively propose policies on issues that they believe benefit them without recent policy outputs affecting their reputation.

I predict that parties focus on the issues they believe will attract the most votes in an election, but that government parties also sell, explain and defend their policy record. Incumbent parties that ignore their recent record would appear unresponsive and unaccountable to voters. Because governing parties develop policy on a broad range of issues (Green-Pederson and Mortensen 2010), I hypothesize that these parties distribute their attention to a larger number of issues, whereas opposition parties selectively address salient topics (such as the weak economy). Therefore, parties in the governing cabinet discuss a greater number of issues than their opposition counterparts. This logic is summarized in the first hypothesis;

H1) Government parties will have greater issue diversity in their manifestos than opposition parties.

Although policy reputations constrain governing parties, the quality of the policy output mediates their need to defend their record. The economy influences voters' perceptions of governing parties' competencies. Green and Jennings (2011a and 2011b) show that governing parties' reputations are buoyed on a range of issues under strong economic growth. Voters frequently penalize or reward governments for economic conditions (e. Martinsson 2009; Vavrek 2009; Bélanger and Gélinau 2010; Hellwig 2012). Like these studies, I assume that voter evaluations of the economy structure their perceptions of government and opposition parties. Given the prominence of economic voting and the dominance of the left-right dimension (Gabel and Huber 2000), I argue that the scope of parties' campaigns depend on current economic conditions. Under a strong economy, government parties focus attention on issues underlying the left-right economic dimension. Governing parties use a healthy economy as an opportunity to reinforce their policy reputation on the most salient political issues. A strong economy liberates incumbents from the mundane or unpopular details of their policy record. It allows them to exclusively emphasize the socio-economic policies such as welfare policy and individuals' quality of life.

However, governing parties seek to divert attention to other issues on which they enacted policy when the economy performs poorly.¹² Vavreck (2009), for example, shows that US presidential candidates avoid discussing the economy when they might be punished for its poor success. As a result, incumbent parties avoid highlighting weak or negative economic conditions (Vavreck 2009; Hellwig 2012). Instead, governing parties redirect attention to alternate issues. This is not to argue that parties abandon economic issues. A governing party with a weak economy will just as likely be punished for appearing unresponsive. Parties seek to redirect debates and expand the scope of issues to topics that better favor them. The following hypothesis links parties' participation in government and economic conditions to the scope of their campaigns.

H2) Government parties will have less issue diversity in their manifestos when the economy performs well, but have greater issue diversity when the economy performs poorly.

In summary, the theory of issue scope predicts that experiences in government and economic conditions influence parties' campaign messages. When they are in office, parties' campaigns include a broader range of issues to uphold their policy behaviors. However, they work to emphasize their reputation for competence by narrowing the manifesto to those issues when the economy is strong.

Data and Methods

Scholars use a number of measures to study issue competition, such as the percentage of the manifesto on an issue or dummy variables to indicate new issues (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Green and Jennings 2011a; de Vries and Hobolt 2012). However, there is no common measure of issue diversity.¹³ I propose a new dependent variable: ENMI. In particular, I test my theory using data on parties from 24 OECD countries from 1951-2010. The sample includes each party and election from advanced industrial democracies for which there are available data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) (Budge et al. 2001.; Klingemann et al. 2006 and Volkens et al. 2011), the Parliamentary and Government Composition Database (Döring and Manow 2010), and economic data from the OECD Statistical Database. The resulting sample of economic and electoral data includes 253 parties in 298 elections for 1662 party-election year observations.¹⁴

I operationalize the dependent variable, ENMI, using data from the CMP. Issue diversity is an important element of a campaign message. As a mathematical property, diversity measures the number of categories (such as issues) and the distribution of observations across those categories (such as the number of statements on each issue). A measure of issue diversity reflects the distribution of attention across those issues. Measures of entropy and diversity have increasingly been used in studies of policy agendas (see for example Jennings et al. 2011; Boydston et al. 2014)¹⁵ because a simple

count cannot distinguish between differences in emphasis across issues. Therefore, I use issue diversity as my dependent variable.

Additional complications arise because the CMP includes confrontational categories.¹⁶ Directly confrontational issues are those for which the CMP separately codes the statements that are positive and negative towards an issue, such as the categories “Military: Positive” and “Military: Negative.”¹⁷ To avoid over-counting diversity, I sum each of 14 the confrontational pairings identified by Lowe et al. (2011). These pairs measure the total percentage of the manifesto dedicated to each of the 14 issues they reflect, regardless of ideological direction.¹⁸ I expect that treating confrontational codes as distinct would over-predict diversity for parties that balance their positive and negative statements on these issues.¹⁹ Thus, the percentage of the manifesto dedicated to each issue reflects its salience, not a left-right position.

I use the percentage of the manifesto dedicated to each issue to measure the ENMI. Based on the original 56 categories, the maximum number of issues is 42, after summing the 14 issues.²⁰ I then use a function of diversity commonly used in physics, economics, and political communication; this measure relates to the function frequently used to estimate the effective number of parties (ENP). Like Jennings et al. (2011) and Boydston et al. (2014), I use Shannon’s H entropy index to estimate the uncertainty that a text references a category (Shannon 1948). I then transform Shannon’s H into a measure of diversity: ENMI (see Jost 2006).²¹ Shannon’s H more accurately represents the true distribution of topics or issue categories in a document than the traditional

measure of party diversity; the Herfindahl index on which the ENP measure is derived, disproportionately weights the largest categories, whereas Shannon's H is a true measure of entropy (see Jost 2006; Jennings et al 2011; Boydston et al. 2014). Therefore, the Herfindahl based index may under predict issue diversity when there is a particularly large category.²² The following shows the formula for ENMI where m_i is the percentage of statements in the manifesto on an issue, i .

$$\text{Shannon's } H = - \sum_{i=1}^{42} m_i \ln(m_i)$$

$$\text{Effective Number of Manifesto Issues} = \exp(\text{Shannon's } H)$$

$$2 = \exp(-((.5_1) \ln(.5_1)) + ((.5_2) \ln(.5_2)) \dots + ((0_{49}) \ln(0_{49})))$$

The third equation illustrates a manifesto that contains two statements on separate issues. This leads to an ENMI of 2. Higher values indicate less focus on a specific issue and distribution of attention across a greater number of issues. If the hypothetical party added a third sentence on a new issue, ENMI increases to 3. The party's relative focus on each of the first two issues drops from 50% of its manifesto to 33.33% as the party's message broadens to include the new issue. Parties that increase their ENMI decrease their relative attention to any specific issue already included in the party's manifesto as they expand their attention to additional issues.²³

On average, parties have an ENMI of 16.6. In the sample, the French Gaullist Party in 1962 has the maximum observed ENMI of 31.46.²⁴ In 1999, the ultra-orthodox

religious Israeli Shas party had the smallest ENMI of 1.7.²⁵ I present these descriptive statistics in the Appendix.

<<<Figure 1 about here>>>

Figure 1 shows ENMI by party family type.²⁶ ENMI characterizes a number of important trends. As Przeworski and Sprague (1986) would expect, ENMI increases for socialist parties over time. Likewise, niche parties include fewer issues. Parties classified by the CMP as green emphasize 15.1 and nationalist parties 15.2 issues on average, compared to 17.3, 17.1, 16.4 and 16.9 issues for parties categorized as socialist, liberal, conservative and Christian democratic. These small differences illustrate Meyer and Wagner's (2013) argument that the primary difference between niche and mainstream parties is the types of issues they address. ENMI generally increased over time for most parties. This trend is consistent with Kirchheimer's (1990) catch-all party theory in which parties reached out to wider voter groups over the course of the twentieth century.

I test hypotheses using a multivariate model predicting ENMI. I operationalize the independent variables using sources on government composition and economic conditions. I measure government composition using the Parliamentary and Government Composition Database (Döring and Manow 2010) and use a dummy variable to measure whether the party was in the last non-caretaker cabinet prior to the current election.²⁷ I then include an interaction between this incumbency variable and the percent GDP growth in the year of the election as measured by the OECD.^{28 29}

Control variables also account for alternate explanations from issue entrepreneur and institutional logics.³⁰

I control for a number of traditional arguments related to issue salience and elections. In particular, de Vries and Hobolt (2012) show that electoral losers and ideologically extreme parties on the primary issue dimension are more likely to include new issues on non-dominant dimensions. From their perspective, more ideologically extreme parties will be more likely to act as issue entrepreneurs. I roughly approximate this argument by constructing a measure of each party's absolute distance from the average left-right party position in the country using Lowe et al.'s (2011) logged version of the RILE scale (de Vries and Hobolt 2012).³¹ This measure represents the party's absolute distance from the mean preferences in an election and not the location of its preferences.

Like studies of party change, I control for parties' previous electoral success (Sommer-Topcu 2009). I include the absolute change in the percentage vote each party received in the previous election and a dummy variable to indicate whether a party lost control of government or exited the cabinet following the last election. The average number of issues parties included in the last election tests whether parties respond to the issues in their competitors' platforms (Sigelman and Buell 2004).

To account for the potential that large catch-all parties act differently than smaller parties, I measure the percentage of vote parties received in the last election. I expect that larger parties have more diverse platforms. A dummy variable for niche

parties indicates whether the party is a member of a traditionally niche party family (green, nationalist, or regional party) as coded by the CMP. I include a number of controls for the effect of political institutions as dichotomous variables; institutions, such as state structure, and election rules, likely influence parties' organizational strategies and the need to appeal to multiple political groups or focus their attention on a limited number of issues. Dummy variables account for federal institutions³² (Filippov et al. 2004) and majoritarian elections (Farrell 2001). I expect that the presence of each of these institutions will increase parties' ENMI in those countries.

I examine the hypotheses using a multilevel model to account for the hierarchical data structure. Given my interest in party level data, I include random intercepts at the election and country levels to address unmeasured factors at these levels.³³ I then present additional evidence in support for the underlying issue competence story.

Analysis

I argue that context influences the scope of parties' manifestos. Table 1 presents the results from the primary analysis in a simple model and one that includes a number of control variables.

<<<Table 1 about Here>>>

I predict that parties' government status and the economy influence parties' ENMI. The results in Table 1 support the hypotheses. The coefficients for *incumbent parties* and the interaction with *GDP Growth* in both models are statistically significant and in the predicted directions. Consistent with first hypothesis, the positive and significant constitutive term for *incumbent parties* indicates that government parties include a larger diversity of issues in their manifestos than opposition parties. In general, government parties have a higher ENMI than opposition parties.³⁴

As predicted by H2, the coefficients for the interaction of *incumbent parties* and *GDP growth* in both models are negative and statistically significant at the 90% level in the simple model, but increases to the 95% level once controls are included. Incumbent parties have a larger ENMI, but governing parties decrease their ENMI under stronger economic growth. These results are broadly consistent with the theory; incumbent parties emphasize their reputation when they command a strong economy.

<<<Figure 2 about here>>>

Figure 2 presents the marginal effects of *government incumbency* and % *GDP Growth*. At low levels of *GDP Growth*, government parties clearly have a higher ENMI than opposition parties.³⁵ Under high levels of GDP growth (greater than 5%) government parties' ENMI decreases to levels comparable to opposition parties. Figure 2 illustrates that the incumbency effect is statistically significant for lower values of

GDP growth, but ENMI for incumbent and opposition parties converges at extremely high levels of economic growth.

Overall, the results in Table 1 and Figure 2 are consistent with the theory. Governments include a higher ENMI when the economy is weak or shrinking, but reinforce their reputation when the economy is a strong positive influence, by narrowing their ENMI. Strong economic growth presumably frees the government to focus only on the issues it wants to emphasize.

The control variables included in Table 1 also suggest that ENMI is a useful measure to study traditional theories of party strategy and issue competition. The coefficients suggest support for theories of election strategy emphasizing previous electoral volatility (Sommer-Topçu 2009), party size (Wagner and Meyer 2014), electoral losers (de Vries and Hobolt 2012), and issue competition (Sigelman and Buell 2004). Parties with fewer votes and that *changed their vote in the last election* increased their ENMI. The effect is relatively small (as Harmel and Janda 1994 might predict).³⁶ Parties that *lost control of office* in the last election also have higher ENMI. A party that lost control of government in the last election increases its ENMI by 1.1, a 7% increase relative to the mean. This result is consistent with a perspective in which electoral losers increase ENMI by acting as issue entrepreneurs (de Vries and Hobolt 2012). There is also evidence that parties respond to the issues in their competitors' election campaigns (e.g. Meguid 2008; Green-Pederson and Mortensen 2010 and Spoon et al. 2014). The positive coefficient for *average competitor ENMI* indicates that parties respond to

competitors' ENMI. This result supports Sigelman and Buell's (2004) finding of a large overlap in the issues in election campaigns in the United States.

The relative location of parties' preferences also matter. The coefficient for *ideological distance* is negative. Ideologically extreme parties have a lower ENMI than more central parties, although the coefficient is not statistically different from zero. Issue entrepreneurs may substitute older issues with the new ones rather than tacking them on to their previous platforms. The coefficient for *niche parties* is negative, but never reaches statistical significance.³⁷

The institutional controls perform mostly as expected. Institutions that increase the likelihood of intra-party divisions, such as federalism or majoritarian elections increase parties' ENMI. Despite the small degrees of freedom at the country level, the coefficient for *federalism* is positive and statistically significant. Federal institutions increase parties' ENMI by .8 or nearly 5% relative to the mean ENMI. Likewise, the coefficient for *majoritarian* institutions is positive, but not quite statistically different from zero. These initial results suggest an effect of institutions on parties' ENMI.

Unpacking the Mechanism I: ENMI and Issue Emphasis

The evidence for the hypotheses is consistent with the theory. However, the results in Table 1 leave the degree to which change in ENMI reflects the underlying mechanism unclear. I predict that parties select their messages to reinforce and build

perceptions of competence. To test this mechanism, I undertake two analyses. I first focus the analysis on economic conditions and parties' treatment of issues in their manifestos. This test demonstrates that economic conditions change the substance of government parties' campaigns. I also present evidence on government policy from the CAP on a sample of single party governments in Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom. These results show that governing parties are bound to the breadth of their policy records unless the economy is doing well. Combined, the evidence is consistent with the broader theoretical approach and indicates strong support for the underlying mechanism.

<<<Figure 3 About Here>>>

The theory predicts that government parties decrease their ENMI as they focus attention on socio-economic issues under a growing economy. While the results show that parties' ENMI decreases in this context, the aggregated evidence cannot indicate the type of issues. Figure 3 presents the predicted bivariate relationship between positive economic growth and the "Economy" and the "Welfare and Quality of Life" issue dimensions classified by the CMP. If parties favor socio-economic issues, these dimensions will be positively correlated with ENMI. Consistent with the logic behind H2, Figure 3 demonstrates that both dimensions positively correlate with GDP growth for incumbent parties. The other five dimensions negatively correlate with GDP growth, indicating that the decrease in government party's ENMI is linked to the increased attention on socio-economic issues.

<<<TABLE 2 About HERE>>>

As a more rigorous examination, I predict the percentage of the parties' manifestos dedicated to the two economic dimensions in the CMP in Table 2 using the same predictors as in the analysis of ENMI. I separately predict each dimension in the first two models and then combine the dimensions in Model 5. I use a Tobit model with random effects to account for the censoring of the dependent variable at zero and one in Table 2. Like the relationships presented in Figure 3, these tests provide evidence consistent with the theory.

If positive economic conditions lead government parties to emphasize issues related to socio-economic success, then the coefficients for the interaction of government incumbency and change in economic growth will be reversed relative to those predicting ENMI. Consistent with this perspective, the coefficients are in the expected direction across models and statistically significant at conventional levels for the results for both the Welfare dimension and the combined dimensions.

Unsurprising given the dimension's content,³⁸ the results in Table 2 are strongest for the Welfare dimension. The Economic dimension references the ideal organization of the economy and prescriptions for an ailing economy.³⁹ The Welfare dimension includes discussion of the beneficiaries of economic growth through references to social services and social justice. The results show that a positive change in economic growth increases the percentage of parties' manifestos dedicated to discussions of the Welfare

state. Overall, this evidence demonstrates that economic growth leads parties to emphasize their economic competence.⁴⁰

Unpacking the Mechanism II: Policy Success and ENMI

As a final test of the underlying mechanism, I combine this evidence with data from the CAP from three parliamentary democracies with strong, single-party, parliamentary governments: Canada (10 elections), Spain (5 elections) and the United Kingdom (13 elections).⁴¹ I have argued that economic conditions lead government parties to emphasize a limited subset of important topics or to draw attention to their broader policy agenda when the economy is weaker. From this perspective, incumbents draw greater attention to their broader policy records under weaker economic growth. Incumbents benefitting from stronger economic conditions will reduce the emphasis on their recent policy records. Stated differently, I predict that economic conditions moderate the relationship between their past policy records and their current manifestos.

<<<TABLE 3 About HERE>>>

In Table 3, I present evidence consistent with this perspective. I predict the incumbent party's ENMI in each country using the effective number of policy issues (ENPI) based on primary legislation in the years since the last election. If this

perspective is correct, then ENPI will correlate more weakly with parties' ENMI when the economy is stronger, but correlate stronger under a weak economy.

The results in Table 3 show support for the mechanism, despite the small sample. In particular, as the theory predicts, the ENPI is positively correlated with the ENMI, although the coefficient is not statistically significant. However, the interaction of ENPI and GDP growth is negative and statistically significant at the .1 level. As economic growth strengthens, predicted levels of ENMI decrease.⁴²

<<<Figure 4 About Here>>>

Figure 4 shows the effect of GDP growth for high and low levels of ENPI.⁴³ For both high and low levels of ENPI, the link between ENPI and ENMI is most direct for governments with weak economic growth. On the one hand, economic growth leads to increased ENMI for governments with low levels of ENPI. On the other hand, economic growth decreases ENMI when governments have higher ENPI. The clearest effect is for governments with high ENPI. At the highest levels of policy diversity, an increase in GDP growth of one percent leads to a decrease in parties' ENMI of approximately 1 issue or a 4% decrease from the mean number of issues in the subsample. Overall, this evidence is consistent with a story in which incumbent parties under a weak economy focus closely on their policy records, but are freed from their policy records under robust economic growth.

Discussion

In this study, I propose a theory on the scope of parties' manifestos. I predict that the diversity of issues in parties' platforms reflects their electoral context. Opposition parties address the issues they think will best serve them in the electorate whereas governing parties emphasize a larger number to reflect the policies they enacted in office. A positive economy allows governing parties the liberty to emphasize only their most rewarding achievements.

I test hypotheses from the theory using a measure of issue diversity, ENMI. Based on 1662 observations from 24 OECD countries over a 60 year period, I find that the electoral context determines parties' ENMI. Government parties distribute their attention to a greater number of issues than opposition parties, but this difference dissolves under robust economic growth. I also find evidence consistent with the broader story through two analyses aimed at pinpointing the connection between government policy records and issue emphasis in parties' election campaigns. In the first test, I find positive economic growth leads governing parties to focus primarily on topics related to welfare expansion and quality of life issues. Like Green (2011), this evidence suggests that a narrow appeal to issues important to parties' constituencies is likely dependent on those issues' broader electoral appeal. Using a paired down data set from the CAP, I show through a second analysis that the diversity of governments' policy records in office are more closely related to their manifestos when the economy is weak. When the economy is stronger the connection between incumbent parties' past legislative agendas and their manifestos reverses.

These results help explain the behavior of the parties in the French 1997 election. The governing parties distributed their attention to a large total number of issues to defend their record in government. Freed from previous experiences in government five years prior, the opposition parties focused their platforms on a smaller number of issues.

The choice of issues signals the party's expectations for future electoral success. Governing parties with fewer issues in their manifestos signal confidence in their performance on those issues. As the issue ownership perspective indicates (Petrocik 1996; Egan 2013), parties focus attention on the issues that benefit them in the electorate, but only when conditions indicate that they will be viewed as competent. Government parties can then limit their appeals to those issues and expect that voters' competency ratings will spill over to other policy areas. Consistent with recent work on candidate and parties' issue appeals (e.g. Vavrik 2009 and Hellwig 2012), I find that government parties' appeals depend both on their economic context and their past policy agenda.

The results also indicate that government parties which increase issue diversity signal decreased confidence in their record. A weak economy causes government parties to seek to distract voters from the economy. Like US Presidents (Vavrik 2009), governing parties avoid emphasizing poor economic performance. During a weak economy, parties emphasize their competence in government on a wider range of topics. By increasing the range of issues discussed, parties offer a greater diversity of choices to voters and provide the context for less salient issues to enter into the political

dialogue. Experience in government may also have the side effect of causing issue focused or niche parties to expand their appeal as they defend their policy records (Meyer and Wagner 2013). From Schattschneider's (1960) perspective, this increased choice likely promotes improved participation and democratic accountability.

The theory and findings offer a comprehensive framework to study the issues parties discuss in their election campaigns. These findings are only preliminary. Importantly, the primary independent variables leave substantial variation to be explained. The statistically significant effects for the random effects coefficients also imply numerous unexplained institutional and temporal components. Furthermore, the analyses of the causal mechanism only focus on a small number of issues and link to policy for a much smaller subsample of cases. More comprehensive analyses await further evidence focused on parties' internal decision-making process.

Finally, the evidence presented cannot demonstrate that the electoral scope has an electoral effect; under what conditions do parties benefit from increasing or decreasing the number of issues in their manifestos? The scope of issues in parties' manifestos respond to the political and institutional context in a country, but this may have little impact on parties' electoral success. The results indicate that the effect of parties' campaign tactics is complex and conditional on parties' experiences in government.

Table 1. Multi-Level Analysis of ENMI.

| | (1) Simple | (2) Full |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| Incumbent Party | 1.623*** (0.359) | 1.336*** (0.401) |
| Incumbent Party X % GDP Growth | -0.136+ (0.080) | -0.171* (0.084) |
| %GDP Growth | -0.120 (0.101) | 0.000 (0.070) |
| Percent Vote _{t-1} | | 0.041*** (0.010) |
| ΔPercent Vote _{t-1} | | 0.052+ (0.027) |
| Lost control of government _{t-1} | | 1.123** (0.351) |
| Ideological Distance | | -0.317 (0.302) |
| Mean Country ENMI _{t-1} | | 0.558*** (0.039) |
| Niche Party | | -0.158 (0.269) |
| Majoritarian Elections | | 0.385 (0.455) |
| Federalism | | 0.632+ (0.379) |
| Constant | 16.966*** (0.405) | 6.133*** (0.661) |
| <i>Random Effects</i> | | |
| sd(Election) | 0.580 (4.312) | 0.000 (0.001) |
| sd(Country) | 4.121*** (0.635) | 2.261*** (0.375) |
| sd(Residual) | 3.924*** (0.097) | 4.069*** (0.239) |
| χ^2 | 27.122 | 441.564 |
| Log-Likelihood | -4918.427 | -4835.480 |
| Observations | 1662 | 1662 |

Note: The dependent variable is the Effective Number of Issues. Robust standard errors from a mixed effects OLS random intercept model are reported in parentheses. The results include a dummy variable to account for extreme values of GDP growth. All significance tests are two tailed: + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2. Random Effect Tobit Analysis of Parties' Core Issue Domains.

| | Model 3 "Economic" | Model 4 "Welfare" | Model 5 Combined |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Incumbent Party | 0.005 (0.010) | -0.001 (0.009) | 0.001 (0.012) |
| Incumbent Party X % GDP Growth | 0.001 (0.002) | 0.004* (0.002) | 0.005+ (0.002) |
| %GDP Growth | -0.002 (0.001) | -0.001 (0.001) | -0.002 (0.001) |
| Percent Vote _{t-1} | 0.001*** (0.000) | -0.000 (0.000) | 0.001** (0.000) |
| Δ Percent Vote _{t-1} | -0.001 (0.001) | -0.002** (0.001) | -0.002** (0.001) |
| Lost control of government _{t-1} | 0.008 (0.009) | 0.018* (0.009) | 0.024* (0.011) |
| Ideological Distance | 0.011 (0.008) | 0.008 (0.008) | 0.020* (0.009) |
| Mean Country EN _{t-1} | -0.000 (0.001) | 0.003*** (0.001) | 0.002* (0.001) |
| Niche Party | -0.025* (0.012) | 0.034* (0.014) | 0.009 (0.017) |
| Majoritarian Elections | 0.009 (0.014) | -0.040** (0.015) | -0.030 (0.019) |
| Federalism | 0.010 (0.012) | -0.036** (0.014) | -0.026 (0.017) |
| Constant | 0.216*** (0.017) | 0.194*** (0.017) | 0.414*** (0.021) |
| <i>Random Effect</i> | | | |
| Party | 0.070*** (0.005) | 0.086*** (0.005) | 0.105*** (0.007) |
| χ^2 | 36.528 | 54.949 | 42.421 |
| Log-Likelihood | 1267.737 | 1343.192 | 1016.694 |
| Observations | 1662 | 1662 | 1662 |

Note: The dependent variable is the percent of the party's manifesto dedicated to the "Economic" domain in Model 3, "Welfare and Quality of Life" domain in Model 4 and the sum of those categories in Model 5. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. The results include a dummy variable to account for extreme values of GDP growth. All significance tests are two tailed: + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p <$

0.001.

Table 3. OLS analysis of ENMI from ENPI.

| | Model 6 |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| ENPI | 0.670 (0.569) |
| GDP Growth | 0.183+ (0.106) |
| ENPI X GDP Growth | -0.280+ (0.163) |
| Constant | 0.058 (0.367) |
| Root Mean Squared Error | 0.087 |
| Log-Likelihood | 32.170 |
| Observations | 28 |

Note: The dependent variable is the Effective Number of Manifesto Issues and the main independent variable, ENPI, is the Effective Number of Policy Issues addressed by parliament since the last election. Model 6 presents OLS estimates with fixed effects for the country year. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. All significance tests are two tailed: + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Figure 1.

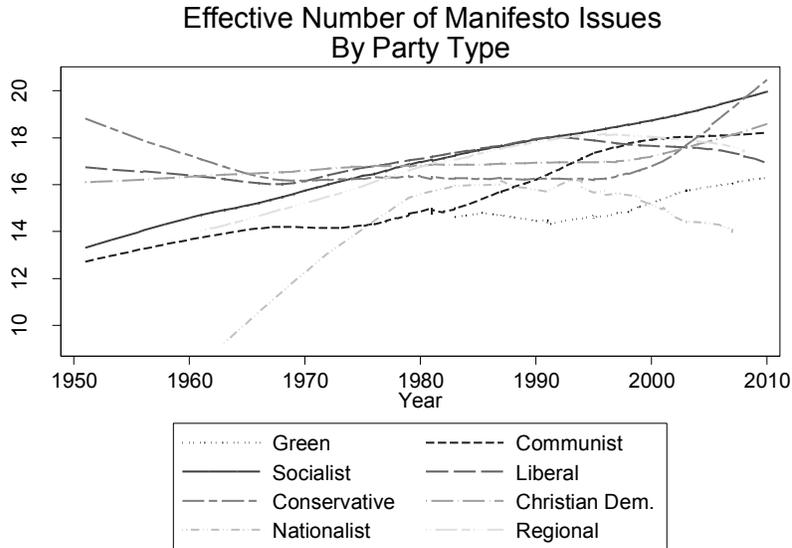


Figure 2. Marginal Effect of GDP Growth on ENMI with 90% Confidence Intervals.⁴⁴

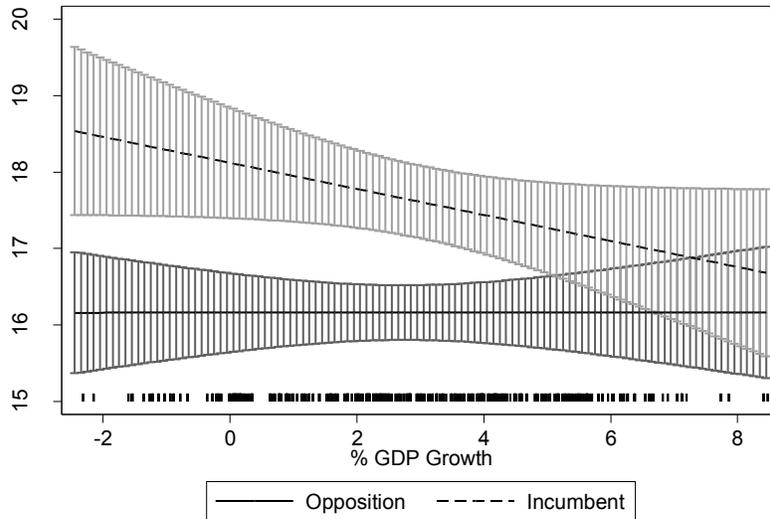


Figure 3. Effect of Economic Growth on Economic and Welfare Issue Dimensions.

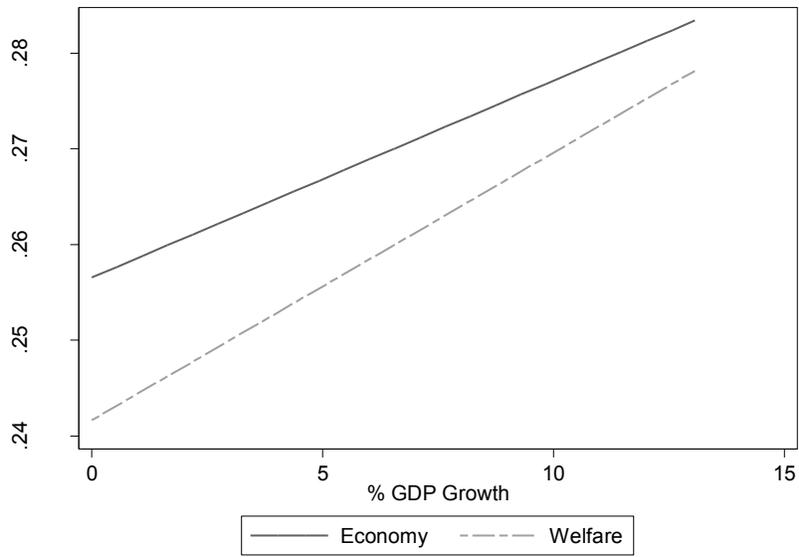
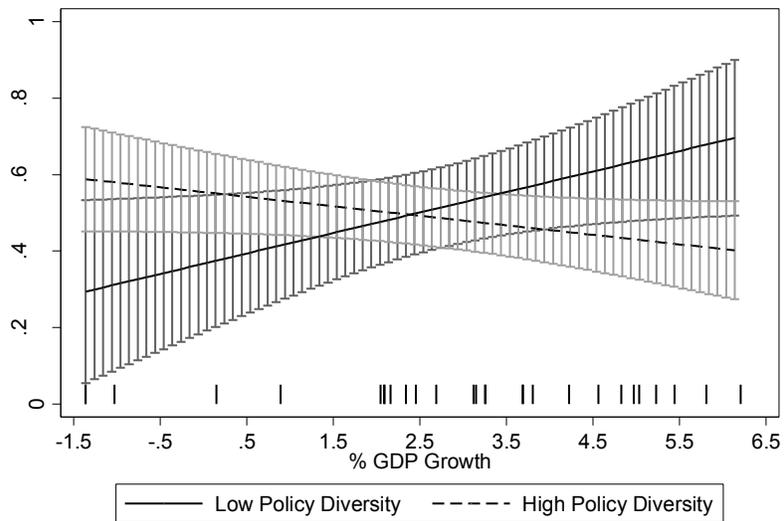


Figure 4. Effect of Economic Growth on ENPI to ENMI conversion.⁴⁵



Appendix

Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | Count |
|--|-------|-----------------------|----------|---------|-------|
| ENMI | 16.61 | 5.814 | 1.698 | 31.46 | 1662 |
| Incumbent Party | 0.304 | 0.460 | 0 | 1 | 1662 |
| %GDP Growth | 3.019 | 2.735 | -6.000 | 13.57 | 1662 |
| Percent Vote _{t-1} | 16.76 | 14.62 | 0 | 57.71 | 1662 |
| Δ Percent Vote _{t-1} | 3.404 | 4.929 | 0 | 57.56 | 1662 |
| Lost control of government _{t-1} | 0.110 | 0.312 | 0 | 1 | 1662 |
| Ideological Distance | 0.465 | 0.384 | 0.000178 | 2.314 | 1662 |
| Mean Country EN _{t-1} | 16.46 | 4.540 | 4.972 | 27.92 | 1662 |
| Niche Party | 0.285 | 0.451 | 0 | 1 | 1662 |
| Majoritarian Elections | 0.177 | 0.382 | 0 | 1 | 1662 |
| Federalism | 0.295 | 0.456 | 0 | 1 | 1662 |
| <i>N</i> | 1662 | | | | |

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Footnotes

¹ Although the 1997 manifesto no longer included statements from the RPR's 1993 platform on issues such as corruption, government authority, the free market and the national way of life, the total number of issues remained quite high. The joint manifesto included statements defending the governing parties' priorities on topics such as foreign special relationships, peace, and the European community; the UDF had not included statements on these issues in the last election.

² These parties removed statements on a wide range of issues such as government centralization, administrative efficiency, labor unions and constitutionalism (Klingemann et al. 2006).

³ I selected the French case as an illustration of the theory following the broad logic of a nested analysis (Lieberman 2005).

⁴ In terms of absolute length, parties' manifestos are theoretically unlimited, allowing parties to fully address as many issues as they like. By focusing on the relative attention given to each issue (the percentage), the inclusion of additional sentences to new issues mechanically reduces the percentage of statements to the topics already included in the platform. From a relative salience perspective, the inclusion of increasing diversity reduces the salience of a topic unless additional statements are added to increase that topic's salience as well.

⁵ Following Jennings et al. (2011), I define issue diversity as the distribution of attention across the total range of topics. Issue diversity indicates the total number of issues and relative weight a party gives to each issue. Diversity is an aggregate characteristic that refers to the overall concentration of parties' policy message on a single or wide range of issues.

⁶ Nyblade (2004) considers the use of a similar indicator to measure dimensionality. Stoll (2011) uses multiple approaches to predict the number of legislative parties in a country. Both Nyblade and Stoll use dimensionality as an independent variable.

⁷ The scope of issues in parties' platforms also likely holds implications for the votes parties receive in an election (the Pearson Correlation Coefficient for percent votes and ENMI is .2). For a fuller discussion of this relationship see Greene (2014).

⁸ The number of issues and the number of dimensions have a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient of .766. Although the two measures clearly relate, parties may choose to add or remove issues within or across issue dimensions. See the Online Appendix for additional discussion of the relationship between dimensions and diversity.

⁹ Following Lipset and Rokkan's approach (1967), studies of entrepreneurship treat issues at the level of the issue dimension. For example, Carmines and Stimson study "policy debates... [that] move from the limited 'policy' environment to the larger stage of partisan politics..." (1986, 902). Individual topics, such as unemployment or inflation, fit within issue dimensions so long as they complement or break with disagreements between political elites (Carmines and Stimson 1986; de Vries and Hobolt 2012).

I define an issue as a topic below the level of the ideological dimension. Building on Budge's (1993) approach, I define an issue as "a point or topic emphasized by" a party for the purpose of "defining party support among electors" or "moving support between the parties"

(43). An ideological dimension is a broader category consisting of a group of issues or topics on which parties or the public concurrently disagree. Broader divisions like those discussed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), are the way in which actors organize groups of issues into a broader framework. This paper focuses on the diversity or scope of topics. This approach allows the analysis to focus on the changes in attention given to issues within and orthogonal to the dominant cleavages.

¹⁰ Issue diversity may also play a key role in distinguishing between ‘niche’ and catch-all parties (e.g. Meyer and Wagner’ 2013).

¹¹ See Nadeau et al. (2010) for an example of how incumbents may be able to instead selectively reframe the debate to benefit the party when their preferences are relatively close to the voters’ on that issue.

¹² A similar logic underlies popular media reports which describe parties’ efforts to discuss the economy. Take for example James Carville’s often repeated quote “[It’s] The Economy, Stupid!” which was intended as a reminder for Bill Clinton to remind voters of the poorly performing economy in 1992.

¹³ For a similar measure for the dimensionality of parties’ platforms see Nyblade (2004) and Stoll (2011), and for political communication and policy agendas see Jennings et al. (2011) and Boydston et al. (2014).

¹⁴ The start date is determined by the availability of economic data. I also limit the sample to parties with multiple time series observations because lagged variables require parties to have competed in multiple consecutive elections. The sample includes parties from Australia (1961-2007), Austria (1962-2002), Belgium (1961-2003), Canada (1962-2006), Denmark (1964-2007), Finland (1962-2003), France (1951-2007), Germany (1972-2009), Greece (1977-2000), Iceland (1963-2003), Ireland (1973-2007), Israel (1961-1999), Italy (1963-2006), Japan (1963-2003), Luxembourg (1964-1999), the Netherlands (1963-2003), New Zealand (1972-2008), Norway (1961-2001), Portugal (1976-2009), Spain (1979-2008), Sweden (1952-2010), Switzerland (1983-2003), the United Kingdom (1964-2010), and the United States (1964-2008).

¹⁵ The often used measure for the effective number of parties from Laakso and Taagepera is a diversity index derived from a measure of entropy, the Herfindahl index (Jost 2006).

¹⁶ As noted by Lowe et al. (2011), there are number of issues without naturally opposing positional categories. For example, comments about the environment, positive or negative, are included under one category. Previous analyses seek to pair valence issues with alternate categories that may reflect a similar dynamic, such as pro-growth business to counter environmental policy (Meguid 2008).

¹⁷ For example, the exact coding for the military separates statements into two categories. “Military: Positive: Need to maintain or increase military expenditure; modernising armed forces and improvement in military strength; rearmament and self-defence; need to keep military treaty obligations; need to secure adequate manpower in the military.” And “Military: Negative Favourable mentions of decreasing military expenditures; disarmament; “evils of war”; promises to reduce conscription, otherwise as 104, but negative.”

¹⁸ Like Lowe et al. (2011) I consider the 14 confrontational codes in the CMP to include the follow categories: 1) “Foreign Special Relationships: positive” and “Foreign Special

Relationships: negative”; 2) “Military: positive” and “Military: negative”; 3) “Internationalism: positive” and “Internationalism: negative”; 4) “European Community: positive” and “European Community: negative”; 5) “Constitutionalism: positive” and “Constitutionalism: negative”; 6) “Decentralisation” and “Centralisation”; 7) “Protectionism: Positive” and “Protectionism: negative”; 8) “Welfare State Expansion” and “Welfare State Limitation”; 9) “Education Expansion” and “Education Limitation”; 10) “National Way of Life: positive” and “National Way of Life: negative”; 11) “Traditional Morality: positive” and “Traditional Morality: negative”; 12) “Multiculturalism: positive” and “Multiculturalism: negative”; 13) “Labour Groups: positive” and “Labour Groups: negative”; and lastly 14) “Keynesian Demand Management: Positive” and “Economic Orthodoxy: Positive”.

¹⁹ Alternate methods might be to measure the number of issue dimensions (like Stoll 2011) or to use a predefined set of “important” categories (such as Bäck et al. 2011). Other criticisms focus on the proliferation of economic codes in the CMP. Robustness checks following these alternate approaches and also using the effective number of non-economic issues leads to similar results and are reported in the Online Appendix, although the coefficients and the key independent variables do not always reach standard levels of significance.

²⁰ Numerous studies indicate problems with the CMP coding scheme. I account for these issues in a number of ways. For details regarding these changes, see the Online Appendix.

²¹ Like analyses of policy diversity and entropy, I replace $\ln(0)$ as equal to zero (Jennings et al. 2011).

²² Laakso and Taagepera’s ENP measure, the Herfindahl index, is also a transformation of a measure of entropy. Both measure diversity and are easy to compute. The difference is that Shannon’s index weighs all categories equally, whereas the Herfindahl index disproportionately favors the most common categories. The measures highly correlate with a coefficient of .975 and lead to substantively similar results.

²³ For additional information on the tradeoff between adding new issues and issue diversity, see the Online Appendix.

²⁴ The Gaullist party in 1962 (*Union pour la Nouvelle République*) discussed a wide range of goals for the newly established French Fifth Republic. Out of 374 coded sentence arguments, the Gaullist party discussed 40 issue categories, dedicating over 5% of the manifesto to only two topics: “Democracy” and “Political Authority” (5.6% and 5.3% respectively).

²⁵ The Shas party in 1999 included approximately 78% of its manifesto on “Traditional Morality” and 22% on “Peace”.

²⁶ In Figure 1, ENMI is smoothed using Lowess.

²⁷ For the only non-parliamentary country in the sample, the United States, I treat the party of the president as the incumbent government.

²⁸ To account for a small number of extreme values of GDP growth that may be driving the results of the analysis, I include a dummy variable to account for GDP outliers in the 99 percentile of growth. The results are robust to its exclusion in all models, although the interaction of incumbent parties and economic growth just barely drops below the 95% significance level (p-value = .051) in Model 2.

²⁹ To allow for the disposition effect observed by Kappe's (2013) study of economic voting, I separate GDP growth into two variables as a robustness check; one variable that only includes positive values and one that only includes negative values. The results are consistent with those presented and suggest a stronger effect from positive economic growth.

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of the controls see the Online Appendix.

³¹ For more information on the RILE debate, see Lowe et al. (2011). The results are nearly identical to those using the CMP's traditional left-right scale.

³² I treat Spain as a federal country because of the high level of autonomy granted to each region.

³³ I reran the analysis using a random effects Tobit model and OLS with clustered standard errors for the election, a lagged dependent variable and fixed effects for the country level. The results are largely similar to the reported results, although none of the institutional variables are statistically significant using fixed effects with OLS. A Fisher type test for the full sample and for each country shows evidence consistent with the perspective that panels are stationary in the large majority of countries. Robustness checks using a Vector Autoregressive Error Correction Model with panel corrected standard errors and treating for panel level specific AR1 autocorrelation indicate a short term effect of incumbency and a long term effect of GDP Growth for incumbents.

³⁴ Qualitative evidence from government party platforms also supports the logic behind H1. For example, the French *Parti Socialiste* prior to the 1993 election dedicated the first half page (approximately 25% of the words) of their manifesto to briefly touching on a large range of topics as a defense of the party's policy successes in office. These topics included foreign trade, inflation, household income, equality of sexes, retirement age, paid sick leave, the minimum wage, industry, television and radio communication, cultural programming, education, youth employment, decentralization, the death penalty, the police force, poverty, corruption, the European Community, and human rights. Their platform was quite diverse including an ENMI of 24.5, 1.3 standard deviations above the mean value. The combined RPR, UDF manifesto also included numerous references to their policy activities in 1997 when the economy was mildly positive. Their 1997 platform began with a short paragraph discussing their success at stabilizing the economy. They only discuss a small number of economy related topics in this paragraph: mentioning positive economic growth and unemployment levels directly.

³⁵ Wald tests of the joint significance of the coefficients for government incumbency and its interaction with GDP growth are jointly significant at the 99.9% level. The coefficients for GDP growth and its interaction with government incumbency are jointly significant at 90% level. All three coefficients are jointly different from zero at the 99% level.

³⁶ For every percentage change in vote between elections, a party increases ENMI by .05, a .03 percent increase relative the mean value. These results hold when either controlling or excluding those extreme values of electoral volatility two standard deviations above the mean value.

³⁷ The lack of support for this variable may indicate that small parties consider different election strategies than larger mainstream parties (Spoon 2011). Including a control variable for green, nationalist, ethnic and communist parties has no substantive impact on the results; the

coefficient is negative, but never statistically different from zero. As an alternate test, I also reran the analysis with an interaction between ideological distance and the lagged percentage vote. The interaction is positive, but not quite statistically significant at the .1 confidence level. The constitutive term for ideological distance is negative and not significant. The constitutive term for the percentage vote is still positive and significant. In an analysis that excludes the lagged percentage vote, ideological disagreement is also negative and not significant. While there is likely a relationship between party size, preferences and issue diversity, more conclusive results await future analysis.

³⁸ The Welfare Dimension includes mentions of Welfare Expansion (504) or Limitation (505) and Social Justice (503) as well as some less directly related issues (Education, Culture and Environment). Although at face value social justice might not immediately relate, but it includes topics on the “Concept of equality; ... need for fair distribution of resources; removal of class barriers...” (p. 8, Appendix 3, CMP). Overall, these topics relate more closely to the practical administration of the economy and perceptions of competence rather than its ideal organization.

³⁹ While the Economic dimension includes a number of topics parties might use to address their competencies, it mostly includes discussion of prescriptions for an ailing economy as well as more esoteric topics. Topics in the Economic dimension largely relate to the theoretical organization of the economy and less to immediate economic experiences. This dimension includes Free enterprise (401), Economic incentives (402), market regulation (403), economic planning (404), corporatism (405), protectionism (406 and 407), economic goals (408), Keynesian demand management (409), productivity (410), technology and infrastructure (411), controlled economy (412), nationalization (413), economic orthodoxy (414), Marxist analysis (415), anti-growth economy (416).

⁴⁰ Analysis of the other issue domains reveals that a tradeoff occurs between foreign policy versus welfare dimensions. When the economy is strong, incumbents emphasize their core economic policies, but they draw greater attention to topics in the first domain, “External Relations,” when the economy is weaker.

⁴¹ I combined data from Canadian (1972-2004), Spanish (1986-2008) and the UK (1964-2010) Agenda Projects from each group’s publically available online data. For each country, I construct a measure of the Effective Number of Policy Issues (ENPI) between elections by summing the total number of policies based one each of the CAP’s 21 major topics codes. Estimates in Table 3 are from an OLS model predicting the ENMI using fixed effects for the party and year. These cases provide a clean, but difficult test of the theory. Governments in each of these countries tend to contain only a single party and have few additional institutional bodies that confuse the clarity of responsibility for government policy. Therefore, the link between governments’ policy agendas and their election campaigns should be strongest in these strong parliamentary democracies. Future analyses linking governments’ policy agendas to election campaigns will require additional focus on the role of coalition governance and accountability.

The data for each country comes from the following sources:

Canada - <http://www.snsoroka.com/data.html>, (Accessed April 25, 2014). From Soroka and Wlezien (2009).

Spain - <http://www.ub.edu/spanishpolicyagendas/datasetinstruments/>, (Accessed April 25, 2014). From Chaqués-Bonafont et al. (2014).

UK <http://policyagendasuk.wordpress.com/datasets/>, (Accessed April 25, 2014). From John et al. (2014).

⁴² The coefficients for GDP growth and the interaction with ENPI are jointly significant at the .1 level based on a Wald test.

⁴³ The two predicted marginal effects graphs in Figure 4 are for governments at the highest (.74) and lowest (.46) values of ENPI in the sample. The negative effect of GDP growth is barely significant at the .1 level and only at the highest levels of ENPI, policy diversity.

⁴⁴ Figure 2 shows the marginal effect of GDP growth on opposition and incumbent government ENMI with 95 percent confidence intervals based on the results in Model 2, Table 1. The marginal effect for GDP growth is significant at the 90% level for incumbent parties. The solid line with dark confidence intervals is the marginal effect for the opposition and dashed line with light grey confidence intervals is for government parties. Dashes at the bottom illustrate observed distribution of GDP growth from two standard deviations below to two deviations above mean growth.

⁴⁵ Figure 4 shows the marginal effect of GDP growth on government ENMI with 90 percent confidence intervals based on the results in Model 6, Table 3. The marginal effect for GDP growth is significant at the 90% level for governments which addressed policy on a diverse set of issues. Dashes at the bottom illustrate observed distribution of GDP growth.