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A Novel Approach to Party Strategy: The Impact of the Issue Diversity Dimension on Electoral Outcomes

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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Dr. Indriði H. Indriðason, Chairperson

I explore a developing dimension of party strategy, known as the issue diversity dimension, in three major sections across three different cases. First, I conceptualize and formalize a measure to measure the issue diversity dimension and its impact across mainstream and niche parties (chapter 2). I follow with a quantitative case study of the United Kingdom to determine the exact relationships between the issue diversity dimension and electoral success (chapter 3). Second, I conceptualize the potential impact of the issue diversity dimension on Japanese parties (chapter 4). I follow with a quantitative case study of how issue diversity impacts the electoral outcomes of Japanese parties (chapter 5). Third, I conceptualize the potential impact of the issue diversity dimension on the electoral success associated with radical right populist parties (chapter 6). I follow with a quantitative case study of radical right populist parties spanning several western European democracies to determine when they experience electoral success (chapter 7). Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the findings, implications, and directions for future research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Political parties are the centerpiece of the political system, as it is through these organizations that candidates campaign and compete at the local, state, national, and even supranational levels. Per Reiter (2006), research on parties in one of the most prestigious journals in the discipline, the *American Journal of Political Science*, goes back to a descriptively rich article written in 1911 by Dennis (1911) on British politics across 11 years. The research on party strategy goes back to as early as a case study on the American state of Michigan's direct primary system by Millspaugh (1916). Research on party strategy as we understand it *today* really began with a 1952 piece by Eldersveld (1952), which focused on independent voting in the American system and its implications on party strategy. Since then, party research has expanded to several different areas, become infinitely more technical and less descriptive than it used to be, and have expanded beyond the confines of the American system towards comparative studies of multiparty systems. This project continues the tradition with a focus on party strategy in Western Europe and Asia.

I refer to party strategy as how parties behave in elections in their efforts to get candidates elected to a political office, form and control the government, and/or impact policy. While this suggests party strategy takes a prominent role within the electoral process, and indeed it provides a (sometimes ambiguous) signaling process to citizens that help them determine parties stand, understanding party strategy as a behavior is easier said than done due to its multifaceted nature. This is in turn problematic because parties function as the central actors in the electoral process: they are the organizations campaigning in the hopes of forming government; that is, becoming the "party-in-government." They also provide potential candidates with funding as they travel and spread their message among potential supporters, serving as the heuristic shortcut voters use come election time in first-past-the-post and (typically, but not exclusively closed) list proportional representation systems, and ultimately controlling policy outcomes once they succeed in forging government either alone or with coalition partners—at least until they have to start all over again on the campaign trail as the next election approaches. Indeed, parties play a central role within the electoral process, but their strategies throughout this process are not easily disentangled.

One of the reasons that party strategy is a complex and often misunderstood process is because it is multidimensional. Party strategy means both the same thing and different things to different scholars. Most scholars will agree that party strategy is the party's behavior while trying to win electoral support, but how does a party *do* that? It is here where scholars may disagree or, in cases where they coalesce, completely agree that on a dimension of interest. For example, most scholars will agree that it is important to understand how parties distinguish themselves from their competitors (Cox 1990, Kitschelt

1994), or (sometimes purposefully) fail to do so (Rovny 2012, Somer-Topcu 2015). However, some scholars may care more about the ideological approaches to this dimension once the party is in office: what about how parties moderate through centrist (Abou-Chadi & Orlowski 2016, Downs 1957) or extremist policy positions (Ezrow et al. 2014, Wagner 2012*a*)? Some scholars prefer to focus less on the party itself and instead focus on the party leadership(Passarelli 2015, Rahat & Kenig 2018, Webb et al. 2012). There are several approaches to party strategy, but it is not possible to focus on every one in one project.

The purpose of this project is to focus on the Issue Diversity dimension of party strategy, which suggests investigating party behavior based on the size of the policy platform they adopt rather than the content. In other words, how many issues does a party adopt? Once we have this information, we can determine whether they adopt a "comprehensive" policy platform with a large number of issues, a "restrictive" policy platform with a small number of issues, or some variation in between through a continuous scale. I then apply the niche and mainstream party literature (see Meguid 2005, 2008) to develop the meaning behind adopting these various policy platforms to determine what benefits either approach provides parties.

I initially conceived of this project as a means of delving deeper into the methodology behind party strategy, but it ultimately became something larger, albeit something greater than the sum of its parts. In the chapters that follow I take a multifaceted perspective to testing the utility and ultimately the usefulness of the issue diversity concept and its measure.

I first set up the issue diversity dimension and operationalize a novel approach to measuring this based on the party literature (chapter 2). My goal here is to set up and conceptually answer the question: What can the size of a party's policy platform tell us about different types of parties and how they succeed? This question is significant given the recent spread of niche parties within the literature. Typically considered small, regional, and sometimes "radical" parties with small sets of issues, the niche party arose as late as the 1960's and gained popularity in Western Europe. As they have gained popularity among voters in recent years, they have been contrasted with traditional parties—those that are mainstream.

While the dichotomy between mainstream and niche parties has now been explored across several studies (for example, see Bischof 2017, Meguid 2005, 2008, Meyer & Miller 2015, Meyer & Wagner 2013, Wagner 2012*a*), I set out to integrate the literature on niche parties into the party strategy literature through the issue diversity dimension. I suggest that traditionally mainstream parties represent the types of parties that adopt larger policy platforms—or comprehensive policy platforms—while those parties we understand as niche adopt smaller policy platforms—or restrictive policy platforms. I generate three hypotheses of interest in this chapter. First, a general hypothesis regarding parties: when parties move away from their average issue diversity position, they suffer electorally. Second, and focusing on mainstream parties: when mainstream parties move away from the average mainstream party issue diversity position, they suffer electorally. Finally, and focusing on niche parties: when niche parties move towards from the average mainstream issue diversity position, they should gain electoral support.

I follow this conceptual chapter with a quantitative case study using the United Kingdom's electoral system to test my hypotheses (chapter 3). Specifically, I use the Manifesto Project Dataset (MARPOR) (see Krause et al. 2021) to investigate all parties in the United Kingdom between 1945 and 2019, generating a novel quantitative measure of issue diversity as my measure of party strategy. Having established issue diversity scores as a continuous range from restrictive to comprehensive policy platforms, I analyze the data after classifying as mainstream or niche using time-series fixed effects regressions. While the findings from this section are mixed, they provide potential insights into future research on mainstream and niche parties.

Having examined the impact of issue diversity in the United Kingdom, I then shift gears towards a case study of Japan (chapter 4). I set out to answer the following question in this conceptual chapter: What impacts do party strategies have on electoral outcomes in Japan? This serves as a contrasting case to the United Kingdom given the state of electoral competition in Japan; that is, one party—the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)—has predominantly won a majority, or in minor cases established a coalition as the largest legislative party, to form the ruling government party. I conceptualize Japan's electoral system as one with a unique feature: systemic homogeneity, or the existence of strong incumbent effects and parties that avoid substantially changing their policy platforms in an effort to stay in power. I thus establish two hypotheses. First, an increase in a party's distance from their average issue diversity dimension position should decrease electoral success. Second, an increase in a party's distance on the issue diversity dimension between elections should decrease electoral success.

Following the conceptual chapter on Japan, I present a quantitative case study on Japan's electoral system to test these hypotheses (chapter 5). I once again use MARPOR as my primary data source and test my hypotheses using all parties in Japan between 1960 to 2014. I generate two unique forms of the issue diversity score variable: a measure of absolute distance between a party's issue diversity score and average issue diversity score over time, and an absolute difference between an issue diversity score in an election at time *t* and time *t-1*. Using time series fixed effects regression, I once again find mixed results, but the findings also suggest there may be more to Japan's party system and voter stability within this electoral system than scholars have previously believed. I finish by discussing these implications on future research.

I then pivot gears one last time to a third conceptual study, with a focus not on a single country case, but rather the case of Radical Right Populist (RRP) parties in Western Europe (chapter 6). In this chapter, I focus on RRP parties due to their prevalence across election systems in recent years and their frequent, unique association with niche parties. Specifically, they do not compete like traditional mainstream parties, nor do they always have the same goals. In fact, in contrast to the Japan case, these parties compete in traditional democratic systems where any party can win—as opposed to a single party forming the government almost exclusively after every election. Given their unique motivations, I suggested that RRP parties thrive they behave more like mainstream parties during times of economic downturn, given they can then attract voters who have anti-immigration sentiment. This is especially the case during economic downturns as they can use their populism to sell voters on the idea that they can resolve society' s problems.

Based on this reasoning, I posited that RRP parties should see electoral gains if they adopt more comprehensive policy platforms.

I finish the RRP party case study with a quantitative investigation of these parties across 12 Western European countries (chapter 7). I use MARPOR to test my hypotheses using all RRP parties across Western Europe from 1956 to 2021. To test the impact of RRP party strategies on electoral success, I focused on using the raw issue diversity score measure, and again analyzed the data using time series fixed effects regression. I find positive results supporting my hypothesis but discuss the potential magnitude the effect actually has on RRP parties since some—but not all—would benefit from smaller electoral gains than others. I finish with a discussion of the implications of this study on potential electoral success among these parties in the future as well as directions for future research.

In the final chapter, I discuss both the conclusions of my studies and how informative the issue diversity dimension can be for party researchers. I discuss the implications of my findings and ultimately suggest directions for future research.

Through this project, I hope to demonstrate that the issue diversity dimension is a pivotal aspect of party strategy and can provide a novel explanation of the strategic process political parties adopt. However, this is by no means a comprehensive project. There are several approaches that are not touched upon in this study simply due to lack of time, space, and resources. However, by providing a simple and comparable means of capturing party strategy, I hope to provide researchers with an additional tool they can use to estimate party success, as well as a deeper understanding of the significance these political actors play across all democratic countries.

Chapter 2

Capturing the Issue Diversity Dimension of Party Strategy

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine a novel dimension of party strategy: the issue diversity dimension. As a multifaceted concept, "party strategy" and what that term means has varied greatly and led to the creation of excellent measures that capture the impact of specific issues (see Bischof 2017, Meyer & Miller 2015, Meyer & Wagner 2013, Wagner 2012*a*). However, the issue diversity dimension is very new in political science research. The earliest study serving as a precursor to issue diversity is a study by De Sio & Weber (2014) on how much a party emphasizes an issue. Since then, existing approaches to capturing the issue diversity dimension have focused on emphasizing specific issues and on government formation and competition between challenger and incumbent parties (for example, see

Greene 2020, Van Heck 2018). I posit that it is possible to understand party strategies through a novel measure of the uniform dimension of issue diversity. I argue for the creation of an issue diversity "score" that will allow researchers to place or position parties relative to each other on a meaningful one-dimensional issue diversity range. In doing this, I attempt to answer one important question: what can the size of a party's policy platform tell us about different types of parties and how they succeed?

Through my proposed approach, I hope to provide researchers with a new, comparable, and meaningful means of capturing how parties behave in electoral competition through the Issue Diversity dimension. In the sections that follow I do two things. First, I present the conceptualization of the issue diversity dimension as a party's behavior when choosing to adopt a restrictive (niche) policy platform or a comprehensive (mainstream) policy platform. I do this by adopting a minimalistic approach (Sartori 1976) to party strategies as understood within the literature, while building on the recent issue diversity literature (see Greene 2016, 2020, Hoerner & Hobolt 2020, Van Heck 2018). I then refine the concept as a means of determining whether a party is understood by voters as more 'niche' or 'mainstream' per those definitions established in Meguid (2005, 2008). I follow with a formal operationalization of the issue diversity dimension, which quantitatively captures manifesto issue counts in a manner as a "score" for comparing parties. I then discuss the constraints upon party behavior at both the voter and party levels. Second, I present a theory on party strategy and provide hypotheses for testing the measure against a common electoral outcome: vote share attainment. My hope is to provide researchers with novel insights into party competition.

2.2 Conceptualization

In this section, I focus on party behavior using the established 'niche' and 'mainstream' party classification and recent issue diversity literature. I do four things in this section. First, I present the traditional approach to party strategy within the existing literature. Second, I focus on one approach—issue diversity—and describe this concept in a minimalist manner per Sartori (1976). Third, I refine the issue diversity dimension using the niche party literature (Meguid 2005, 2008) and the growing literature on issue diversity (see Greene 2016, 2020, Hoerner & Hobolt 2020, Van Heck 2018). Finally, I provide a summary of the conceptualization of the issue diversity dimension.

2.2.1 Dimensions of party strategy: position-taking and ambiguity

Party strategy is a complex, multidimensional concept within the literature. While there are several factors that can help explain electoral performance in a multiparty system, including a party's performance in office (Powell & Whitten 1993, Rose & Mackie 1983) and party valence evaluations (Clark 2009, Clark & Leiter 2014), only party strategies directly capture party behavior. This suggests that, if we care about determining why parties behave in a certain manner, then we need to understand the mechanisms behind party behavior through party strategy. Some of the dimensions often associated with party strategy include a party's ability to clearly distinguish itself from competitors (Cox 1990, Kitschelt 1994), blur the differences between itself and other parties (Rovny 2012, Somer-Topcu 2015), moderate issues through centrist approaches to politics (Abou-Chadi & Orlowski 2016, Downs 1957), adopt extremist positions political positions on issues (Ezrow et al. 2014, Wagner

2012*a*), and focus on leadership rather than policy (Webb et al. 2012). While each of these dimensions are significant and each has its own merits, I focus initially on the policy position approach, or the instance in which a party chooses to adopt or not adopt a specific policy in a particular manner, to party strategy and the effect of these positions on party support (Adams et al. 2005, 2011, Bawn & Somer-Topcu 2012, Downs 1957, Ezrow 2005) in an attempt to understand the issue diversity dimension.

When parties adopt a position based on the existing policy space, citizens respond based on how they perceive parties. Specifically, Adams et al. (2011) suggests that citizens adjust their Left-Right positions and their partisan loyalties in response to a party's policy image, or how they are perceived after adopting a policy. However, party positions often change to varying degrees due to the party's pursuit of different policy goals (Alesina & Cukierman 1990, Aragones & Neeman 2000, Eichorst & Lin 2019, Han 2020, Jensen & Lee 2017, Meirowitz 2005, Rovny 2012). While it is strategic to blur the lines between parties, blurring positions does nevertheless lead to problems. Specifically, as party goals shift, so too do party positions on issues shift. This often occurs simultaneously among parties rather than sequentially, and so dynamically shifting positions can make it difficult to understand what a party's position actually is on any specific issue. In fact, there are circumstances in which parties opt to frequently appeal to different voter groups with diverse policy preferences, purposefully providing them with vague information in their efforts to expand electoral support (Campbell 1983, Dahlberg 2009, Tomz & Van Houweling 2009). As a party's policy image becomes blurred, so too does it become easier to purposefully promote a sense of obscurity among voters.

This is problematic because obscuring positions makes it difficult to know exactly what a party's position is on an issue. As a product of efforts by politicians to improve their electoral performance, this functions almost like a balancing act, where the party tries to move left and right on a balance in an effort to stay on long enough to get elected while voters try to discern exactly what is going on. The capacity to balance lies in the amount of information parties present prospective voters, and issues arise when that information contradicts—for both voters and for researchers. If the ambiguity problem creates a problem for voters who want to understand where a party stands on an issue, as well as a problem for researchers who want to determine when a party is adopting an ambiguous position, then is there a solution? I suggest the Issue Diversity dimension can help resolve this problem given it gives us a means of comparing parties when they adopt a large number of issues.

2.2.2 Conceptualizing the issue diversity dimension

To conceptualize the issue diversity dimension, I first start with guidance from Sartori (1976), which suggests adopting a minimalist approach to simplify party strategy can lead to a meaningful technique for comparing policies between parties. According to Sartori (1976, 61), a minimal approach refers to a situation, "when all the properties or characteristics of an entity that are not indispensable for its identification are set forth as variable, hypothetical properties—not as definitional properties." Adopting this approach provides a means of accounting for the necessary traits associated with the issue diversity dimension.

Starting with party positioning then, I consider party behavior within the literature. Examining party behavior in depth, notice that parties can choose to formally

adopt or reject an issue position on a policy internally (Downs 1957, Goot 2004, Grofman 2004, Meguid 2005, 2008). While not seemingly complicated, this does suggest the policy sphere is completely open for a party to adopt or reject *any* policy on *any*issue—which leads back to the ambiguity problem. In fact, Lehrer & Lin (2018) suggests ambiguity may exist when parties propose concrete but conflicting policies. Adopting multiple and sometimes conflicting strategies yields an ambiguous signaling process as parties attempt to expand their potential supporters while minimizing the potential loss of supporters (Rovny 2012, Somer-Topcu 2015). If this is the case, then a comparable conceptualization of party strategy ranges from difficult to complex due to the diversity within the policy sphere. In other words, how can we compare two policies that are completely different? How can we compare three or more policies? Are economic policies more important than social policies? Should an economic policy change be weighted more than a policy change focused on climate change? These questions effectively lead to value judgements at best, or ad-hoc considerations and assumptions at worst.

Perhaps more problematic is the danger associated with obscure positioning. Specifically, the level of clarity associated with party stances helps citizens form expectations based on party behavior that are used to hold said parties accountable (American Political Science Association 1950, Powell 2000). If it is difficult to determine what a party is doing—if anything—then it becomes difficult to hold them accountable, which is a significant problem in a democratic system due to the role of accountability in the electoral process (see Hellwig & Samuels 2008, March & Olsen 1995, Przeworski et al. 1999, for more on accountability and its significance within the democratic process).

Given the problem of ambiguity arises from parties choosing a variety of approaches to policy in efforts to obscure their positions, I disentangle the assumption that this dimension of party strategy should necessarily focus on any specific policy associations without completely abandoning the policy sphere. I thus pull back from focusing on any one specific policy position, or even group of policy positions. The alternative to an approach where the focus is on a pre-established variety of policy choices, without abandoning the policy sphere entirely, is one in which the focus is on the *size* of the policy platform rather than the *content* of the policies chosen. Focusing on policy platform size suggests examining how many issues parties adopt in their manifestos and how they change over time. Although using manifestos has been documented as useful when examining the internal workings of political parties (see Budge et al. 1987, Budge & Hofferbert 1996, Budge 2003, Klemmensen et al. 2007, Laver et al. 2003, for some discussions on how party manifestos can be used in research), most studies that adopt the use of manifestos focus on issue ownership and salience.

Research has suggested that issue ownership and issue salience are important considerations for parties when making the decision to adopt or reject an issue. When a party "owns" an issue, voters perceive that party as the "expert" party on said issue (Bélanger & Meguid 2008). However, owning an issue does not necessarily preclude another party from adopting a position on that issue. Moreover, while emphasizing an issue with which a party has historically associated yields benefits since longstanding voters like to see this occur (Budge & Farlie 1983), it does not suggest that the party owns the issue—only that it has historically associated with a position on said issue. In fact, issue ownership is rarely

a concrete, solidified process (Bélanger & Gélineau 2010). Voter perceptions of party competence are in fact complex: they are often determined by a multitude of factors, such as partisan identification and ideological proximity (Vegetti 2014).

If the issue diversity dimension of party strategy is predominantly focused on how many issues a party adopts, of which some are issues parties own and some are not, this begs the question of how to capture issue diversity. Existing studies have focused on an entropy-oriented approach: the Effective Number of Manifesto Issues (ENMI). Introduced by Greene (2016), the ENMI approach involves building issue categories based on opposing pairs of issues across 42 categories in party manifestos. Although this captures the relative attention parties place on specific issues, I advocate for an approach that focuses on the size of a party's policy platform. Approaching issue diversity this way can provide a simple and direct comparison across parties and elections. Some parties may, for example, adopt five policies on the environment, such as pro-climate taxes or anti-fracking, while another may adopt only one policy on the same issue. The party in the former case has likely considered the environment more than the latter, and likely cares more about that topic. When parties adopt multiple issues, this approach can provide voters with an idea of how many policies a party cares for relative to other parties.

While reducing party strategy to focusing on the size of the policy platform rather than content simplifies comparability, it is unclear what this approach captures beyond the raw number of issues adopted when trying to interpret the concept. However, integrating the literature on niche parties provides a meaningful understanding of what this approach entails as I suggest it does not only tell us how many policies a party adopts. Instead,

I suggest that this dimension of party strategy can inform us about how parties behave during elections as well as the impact that behavior can have on electoral outcomes.

2.2.3 Refining issue diversity through nicheness

Using the niche party literature to provide meaning to analyzing the full scope of policy issues, I suggest that the issue diversity dimension captures a party's behavior when choosing to adopt a restrictive policy platform (niche approach with less issue variation) or a more comprehensive policy platform (mainstream approach with more issue variation). To reach this point, I start with examining the niche party literature.

The niche party classification for parties is a recent development for identifying new political parties that emerged in the 1960's and gained popularity among several countries, although especially in Western Europe. While often conceptualized as small and sometimes regional parties that present limited sets of issues falling outside traditional class cleavages and partisan alignments (Meguid 2005, 2008), the literature has recently approached nicheness as a categorization based on party behavior with a focus on where parties stand on issues (Bischof 2017, Meyer & Miller 2015, Meyer & Wagner 2013, Wagner 2012*a*). These niche parties often focus on issues not commonplace in politics, such as the environment and immigration, which changes the political environment for existing mainstream parties—or those parties that are considered larger in size, typically obtain large shares of votes, and win office by focusing on traditional issues such as the economy. With the advent of niche parties across political systems, we have seen mainstream parties adapt by changing their campaign platforms in various manners (see Meyer & Wagner 2013).

The literature has addressed several problems with niche party and mainstream party classification that demands attention. The first issue is dichotomous classification: niche parties were originally conceptualized as a new type of party and unique from mainstream parties. While a useful distinction given the need for a proper classification of these parties, a purely dichotomous classification suggests no gray area exists: a party is either niche or mainstream. Where does a niche party begin, and where does it end? How far does a mainstream party have to move away from their established policy agenda to be considered a niche party? Questions like these have suggested the dichotomous classification is a heavily restrictive perspective (see Bischof 2017, Meyer & Miller 2015). This is a lesson I adhere to, as the goal is flexibility across a spectrum rather than a strict dichotomous distinction.

The second, much larger issue with existing approaches to understanding niche parties is the lack of focus on the party itself relative to their characteristics. In other words, approaches to niche parties currently focus less on the party and more on their small size, whether they compete at the regional or national level, or on their electoral success (or lack thereof). These approaches are problematic as party size is relative and difficult to operationalize beyond a party's share of the votes in an election (see Birch 2008, De Swaan 1973, Rose & Urwin 1970, De Swaan 1973, West & Spoon 2013). It is also important to note that not all niche parties focus on regional elections (see Bischof 2017, Wagner 2012*a*), which suggests tier-level differences are not useful for understanding size of the policy space. Finally, neither niche party influence on mainstream parties across the policy space nor their focus on non-traditional issues provide explicit signals on when a party becomes more niche

or more mainstream. Is a niche party no longer properly a niche party if they gain one-thousand supporters? What if they begin competing at the national level? If they focus on one economic issue, are they simply less niche? To what degree does this vary? Current approaches have trouble answering these questions. Given these difficulties, I incorporate the niche party concept into the issue diversity dimension of party strategy to synthesize these concepts, resolve some of these questions, and provide a meaningful and comparative approach to understanding party strategy. I do this by treating nicheness as a behavior based on policy platforms.

By treating nicheness as a behavior based on the variation in size of the policy platform rather than simply size of electoral outcomes, I establish a meaningful and comparative two-way relationship that can be used to estimate electoral outcomes. Specifically, I establish a scenario where those parties adopting restrictive or narrow issue policy platforms are more niche than those with a more comprehensive or wider issue policy platform. I treat the size of the adopted policy platform as one dimension of strategy available to parties in the presence of other parties, which coincides with existing logic wherein larger parties are more likely to try to appeal to as many voters as possible while smaller parties are more likely to appeal to less voters due to their focus on less issues (Meguid 2005, 2008, Meyer & Miller 2015, Wagner 2012*a*).

2.2.4 Operationalization

Given these definitional properties, I now provide a formal operationalization of the issue diversity dimension measure. To start, I operationalize each issue i within the space of issues S in a party manifesto as follows: if a party discusses i in their manifesto,

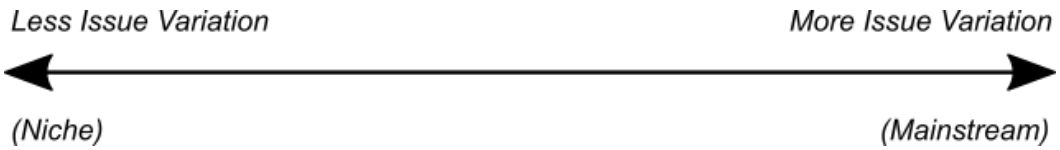
then I allocate a value of 1 to a distribution of issues D_i, whereas not discussing i in their manifesto results in an allocation value of 0 for D_i. As this applies to every i within S, taking the sum of D_i and then dividing by the total issues of space S and multiplying by 100 provides the issue diversity dimension score IS:

$$IS = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{S}(D_i)}{S} \times 100 \tag{2.1}$$

The resulting measure ranges from an absolute level of low issue coverage (or high nicheness) at 0 to a level of high issue coverage (or high mainstreamness) at 100. Parties with identical manifestos across different countries receive similar scores, varying only when they adopt a different number of issues at any point in time. The result is a measure ranging from low issue coverage at 0 to high issue coverage at 100. Scaling to between 0 and 100 provide the benefit of realistic interpretations when estimating regressions.

I present this graphically in Figure 2.1. Note that this model adopts a spectrum not unlike the traditional left-right political spectrum, but with a focus on the size of the policy platform a party adopts rather than the content. More niche-oriented parties should adopt restrictive policy platforms (less issue coverage), while the more mainstream-oriented parties should adopt comprehensive policy platforms (more issue coverage). The result is a spectrum where parties typically considered niche or mainstream vary in the number of issues they adopt, which is an improvement relative to a traditionally dichotomous categorization. Where parties fall along this spectrum is significant to determining their positions relative to other parties, although these positions are not absent of voter-level and party-level considerations.

Figure 2.1: The Issue Diversity Dimension of Party Strategy Visualized



2.2.5 Applying the party literature to issue diversity

Given the adoption of restrictive vs comprehensive approaches in the conceptualization of the issue diversity dimension, it should be the case that those parties on the higher end of the spectrum (i.e., higher issue diversity scores) will predominantly (but not exclusively) represent traditional mainstream parties, which are also typically (but not always) electorally successful. Similarly, those parties on the lower end of the spectrum (i.e., lower issue diversity scores) should predominantly (but not exclusively) represent traditionally niche parties, which are typically (but not always) less electorally successful. However, whether parties maintain static policy platforms will vary upon whether they feel doing so will yield positive outcomes. This means parties will consider their previous, existing, and potentially future positions and how they line up given voters' retrospective considerations.

The number of issues a party adopts is thus important because issue diversity functions as one of the signals voters use when making their decision to support a party or candidate in elections. In fact, research has suggested that mainstream-oriented and niche-oriented parties have different incentives when making decisions (Adams et al. 2006). While mainstream parties typically respond to voter preferences in an effort to get elected to office (Adams et al. 2004, Stimson et al. 1995), niche-oriented parties are not expected to do this (Adams et al. 2006). Instead, Ezrow et al. (2011) suggests niche-oriented parties should respond to shifts in their own partisan constituency. Due to differences in incentives, Meguid

(2005, 2008) suggest that niche-oriented parties are successful when mainstream parties adopt strategies that benefit niche parties. Tromborg (2015) expanded on this model in a study focusing on the proximity of parties, suggesting niche-oriented parties do moderate their policy positions strategically, responding to the perceived proximity of parties on their main policy dimension.

Having integrated the mainstream and niche party literature into the issue diversity concept, the literature on these parties can provide us with guidance on what to expect when applying the measure. Per Downs (1957), electorally successful parties attempt to minimize the distance between themselves and voters. If this is the case, then we should expect parties that adopt a large number of issues (i.e., parties with high issue diversity scores) would want to ensure they do not adopt too many issues if they believe voters adopt fewer issues. Adopting too many issues can potentially isolate voters by making it seem the party is doing too much by obscuring their behavior. However, as suggested in Meguid (2005) and Meguid (2008), there are variations in electoral success between both mainstream and niche parties.

However, the literature also suggests that parties in multiparty systems benefit electorally when moderating their positions (Abou-Chadi & Orlowski 2016, Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009*a*, Ezrow 2005), while other studies suggest parties attempt to maximize their votes by adopting non-centrist positions (Adams 1999*b*, Adams & Merrill III 1999). We may thus also see a see a similar occurrence in the case of issue adoption, although much less focused on content and much more focused on the size of the policy platform. If we consider that parties moderate the policy platform, then we may see parties adopt fewer

issues (i.e., a form of moderation) to distinguish themselves from competing parties that may look similar to voters. In other words, if a competing party adopts a similar policy platform, there may be an incentive to change one's own platform to stand out.

In addition to moderation, Rovny (2012) and Somer-Topcu (2015) suggest parties may choose to blur some issues or use a "broad appeal strategy" to appease voters. In other words, they may adopt more issues for the sake of bringing in more voters with diverse interests (i.e., appeal broadly). Appealing broadly can be problematic, however, because the literature suggests parties function as brands that provide voters with a shortcut at the polls (Aldrich et al. 1995, Cox 1997, Downs 1957, Lupu 2013).

As a brand is reputational, it is based on how parties behave during elections (i.e., how they campaign and what they campaign on), as well as how voters perceive of said parties (i.e., the policy image they give off). How many issues a party adopts should thus impact their party brand, which would be problematic if we imagine all parties in an election adopting the same number of issues. Under such a scenario, voters may perceive the parties in question doing too much, which can make it difficult for voters to distinguish between parties come election time. Indeed, studies have suggested that a party's ability to distinguish itself from its competitors is important for its electoral success (Cox 1990, Kitschelt 1994), although especially if the party cares about policy (Wittman 1973) as is typically the case for niche-oriented parties. Through an effort to preserve or improve on their party brand, which makes it easier for voters to identify with and vote for them at election time, parties will adopt a comprehensive approach to some extent, while opting for a restrictive approach to some extent. The minimum and maximum points at which a

comprehensive or restrictive policy platform becomes electorally beneficial will depend on each election in question.

2.3 Expectations

As the issue diversity dimension places parties on a unidimensional space from low issue diversity scores (restrictive policy platforms) to high issue diversity scores (comprehensive policy platforms), I consider when parties will do one versus the other. This is an important because voters, in their support for parties, have typical ideas of how the world works and how things "should" work in their everyday lives in addition to their self-interest in choosing the best party or candidate in their view when faced with decision-making. In other words, voters are rational and use heuristics dependent upon party behavior, such as the party brand, to make decisions. As the literature has suggested parties are utility maximizers and thus adopt popular issues within the issue space (Adams 1999*a*), although they could also opt for issues outside the typical popular issue space (Hobolt & De Vries 2015), we may expect them to adopt larger or lower numbers of issues if they believe doing so will provide them with more utility. This is significant because all voters have issues that, to them, are the "most important issue" (Bélanger & Meguid 2008). Issue salience is an important consideration during an election as not all parties adopt issues that all voters find salient, while all voters have issues they find salient.

Parties that "own" issues are more likely to obtain support from voters to whom that issue is salient based on congruence calculations between the voter and the party per Carmines & Stimson (1980). Although voters, and especially sophisticated voters,

may develop a party loyalty if the party is consistent over time, it is important to note that increasingly fewer people have been voting on the basis of party as electoral volatility increases between general elections (Dalton et al. 2000, Wattenberg 2009). This may suggest that, as parties adopt issues, their issue ownership is becoming blurred. If this is the case, then adopting more comprehensive policy platforms (i.e., increasing issue diversity), should yield an increased likelihood of touching upon salient issues for more voters. So long as these parties do not adopt too many issues, they should be able to keep their supporters happy by adopting issues they find salient. When they adopt too many issues, however, they can potentially lose support. I provide a formalization of how this works in the next section starting with voters and how they make decisions before delving into how parties react to voters.

2.3.1 Formalizing party behavior based on voter preferences

To understand how parties decide how many issues they adopt, we need to understand the voter side of the equation. Like parties, voters have preferences that impact their decision-making. However, electoral decisions among voters are not simply based on contemporaneous perceptions of parties. Indeed, one of the important facets associated with elections is accountability and voting retrospectively. When voters consider how well a party has kept its promises on the campaign trail, they do not do so absent of previous behavior (Fiorina 1981); they consider the party's actions based on what a party has promised on the campaign trail. In fact, Key (1966)'s rational-choice model suggests voting retrospectively reduces the moral hazard associated with electing representatives. Through the re-election of high-performing politicians, and by throwing out of office those who fail

to represent citizen preferences through bad performance, voters are able to incentivize "good" behavior among all politicians that do get elected (see Barro 1973, Ferejohn 1986, for early formalizations of this process). The reasons why politicians may be kept in or kicked out of office vary but do include the ability to maintain peace and a stable economic period (Healy & Malhotra 2013, Kiewiet & Rivers 1984), while promises made during campaigns that reflect or at least are representative of citizen preferences (Downs 1957, Plescia & Kritzinger 2017). It is such that Downs (1957, pp. 38-39) suggests voters cast their votes with the intention of choosing the candidate or party they believe will provide them with the highest future potential in government since they understand parties cannot do everything. Retrospective voting is important because voters will remember and consider how much parties change over time and whether those changes are favorable. If changes are not favorable, parties adopting said changes would risk being punished by losing supporters at best (Dassonneville et al. 2015*a*, Zelle 1995), or being kicked out of office at worst (Lewis-Beck et al. 1991, Rapeli 2016).

This suggests that voters ask the following question at election time: if the party were in power, what would it achieve? Answering this question leads voters to examining a party's policy platforms, while also suggesting the answer depends on voters and their interests. This reasoning suggests voters have a particular level of knowledge, sophistication, and interest in politics to make decisions since voting is not always a clear-cut process. Carmines & Stimson (1980, p. 82) suggest that voters have to meet two conditions when voting: (1) they assess their own preferences, and (2) they calculate how close party and candidate preferences are to their own. Voters do this to determine their congruence with the

parties competing in an election. However, Rabinowitz & Macdonald (1989) suggest these conditions are difficult to address since voters—at best—know which side of a debate they stand on. Moreover, Adams (1999*a*) suggests parties have a dominant strategy in elections: to adopt the most popular platform since doing so will maximize vote utility among the electorate. As politics does not occur in a vacuum, this dominant strategy suggests parties may often adopt identical policies. This is only further complicated by parties at times adopting issues that may not necessarily fit the utility maximization approach in Adams (1999*a*). Specifically, while some parties want to associate themselves with winning issues, not all parties experience electoral success. It is such that those parties experiencing less favorable electoral outcomes will promote either previously ignored issues or those that can destabilize the existing status quo in the hope of attracting favorable electoral outcomes (Hobolt & De Vries 2015). If some parties adopt identical policies, while others try to shake up the status quo, voters may have difficulties deciding who to support.

If we assume that voters have different preferences, then we can imagine a situation where we have two types of voters. The first type of voter, V_M may care about multiple different types of issues, such as the economy, education, the environment, and tax reform, and thus wants to support a party that adopts those issues in their policy platform to varying degrees. The second type of voter is one that holds strong preferences towards a narrow set of issues, such as immigration for example, without much interest in other issues. As a result, this second type of voter, V_N may want to support a party that predominantly focuses on their issue of interest. In these scenarios, we may assume that a more mainstream-oriented party (MP) that adopts a comprehensive policy platform is more likely to fit the

interests of V_M, while a more niche-oriented party (NP) that adopts a restrictive policy platform is more likely to fit the interests of V_N.

If we assume that a MP wants to attract more V_M voters, then we may assume that the MP will attempt to adopt several issues so that V_M decides the MP represents their salient issue preferences. However, if we assume that an NP is also running in the same election as the MP, then the NP has two choices: they can run as a traditional NP with the intention of rallying support from mostly V_Ns and thus not necessarily winning a legislative seat, or they can run as a new party with a focus on some issues but willing to adopt more. This latter approach would attract both V_N and V_M voters, which could lead to more electoral success as the NP policy platform adopts more issues these voters may find salient. The approach a NP adopts will determine how much support they can gain, as well as how they fare against an MP.

Table 2.1 models this by comparing a MP and NP in party competition. We first notice that both types of parties benefit most when they both adopt comprehensive policy platforms. This conforms with the literature, which suggests that NPs can benefit from MPs adopting issues NPs care about. Indeed, the MP would want to attract both V_M and V_N voters to maximize their chances of getting elected. In fact, the literature on niche parties suggests an MP can legitimize an issue adopting a similar issue content-wise as a NP, which in turn increases issue salience (Meguid 2005, p. 349). However, I suggest a similar effect is possible when focusing on the size of the policy platform, as the NP can force that similarity by adopting a more comprehensive policy platform. They can do this because, as typically non-government parties, they are less constrained by their track record and can

be more innovative than their non-niche counterparts (Klingemann et al. 1994, Meyer & Wagner 2013, Rose & Mackie 1983). In other words, niche parties have the freedom to do more with less political constraints from supporters. This benefits their intended audience as voters like V_N would be attracted to the NP, but voters like V_M may like the issues V_N adopts as well should they adopt more since more issues in their policy platform increases the likelihood of adopting V_N and V_M's salient issues.

Table 2.1: Benefits of Comprehensive vs Restrictive Strategies, MP vs NP

		NP	
		Comprehensive	*Restrictive*
MP	*Comprehensive*	(5, 4)	(5, 0)
	Restrictive	(4, 3)	(3, 2)

MPs, on the other hand, may benefit from adopting a comprehensive policy platform here so long as they can distinguish themselves from other competitors (Cox 1990, Kitschelt 1994) by doing so. However, when MPs cannot do this, they would adopt more restrictive comprehensive policy platforms whenever a NP adopts a comprehensive one. In this scenario, the MP would benefit slightly less by adopting less possibly salient issues (Bélanger & Meguid 2008), which may hurt their likelihood of attracting voters like V_M, while the NP would benefit slightly less—although better than they would have if they adopted a purely restrictive policy platform because they are now attracting some V_M-like voters. The reasoning here is that the MP behaving more like a NP by adopting less issues leads to adopting less salient issues and thus attracting less V_M voters than competitors.

So far, we have assumed that a NP would adopt a comprehensive strategy if they can attract some V_M voters; but what if they did not care as much about winning office

to enact policy change but wanted to push for policy change through the existing system? In this scenario, the NP would adopt a restrictive strategy, while the MP has two options. The MP could adopt a comprehensive strategy to attract V_M voters almost exclusively, or a restrictive strategy to attract more V_N voters in addition to V_M voters. The decision here depends on which group of voters would help it stand out more in competition. Typically, the comprehensive strategy would attract more voters insofar as contagion effects do not exist; that is, if a party that is similar to the other party is not being perceived poorly (Williams & Whitten 2015). When contagion effects do exist, a less popular but similar MP party may hurt the initial MP's prospects of attracting V_M voters. We can see this in Table 2.2, which provides a comparison of two MP parties: MP_1 and MP_2.

If we now assume that MP_1 wants to attract more voters, like V_M, then MP_1 should attempt to adopt several issues so that V_M voters decides MP_1 represents their interests. However, we may also reason that MP_2 will try to adopt as many issues as possible to attract V_M voters as well. This results in both MP_1 and MP_2 adopting comprehensive policy platforms, which is a problem as we now encounter the following question: how can MP_1 distinguish themselves from a secondary MP, MP_2?

Table 2.2 suggests that whenever both MP_1 and MP_2 select comprehensive strategies they are each unable to achieve their most preferred outcomes since they both adopt a comprehensive policy platform. This is an ambiguous position likely to hurt MP support among V_M's but notice that both MP_1 and MP_2 are better off if the other adopts a restrictive policy platform. In each case, the MP choosing the comprehensive policy platform would benefit from the other choosing a restrictive platform due to the distinguishing im-

pact of this scenario (Cox 1990, Kitschelt 1994). Both MP_1 and MP_2 have an incentive to adopt a comprehensive policy platform to capture more V_M voters.

Table 2.2: Benefits of Comprehensive vs Restrictive Strategies, MP vs MP

		MP_2	
		Comprehensive	*Restrictive*
MP_1	*Comprehensive*	(1, 1)	(3, 2)
	Restrictive	(2, 3)	(1, 1)

However, this begs the question: why would either MP_1 or MP_2 ever adopt a restrictive platform knowing that the other may adopt a comprehensive one? This would depend on the circumstances since there may be a desire by an MP to distinguish itself from the other, although it could be the product of contagion effects. In both cases, the outcome would be similar: the parties would opt for polarized platforms. The final combination, when both MP_1 and MP_2 adopt a restrictive policy platform would likely occur when one MP has already adopted a restrictive policy platform, while the other chooses to pursue an ambiguity approach that places them in a similar space as the other MP (Rovny 2012, Somer-Topcu 2015).

The benefit here is that one MP can focus their policies on fewer issues, although the cost of doing so is that the other MP may notice this and switch to their preferred option—a comprehensive policy platform. Within the realm of MP vs MP competition, both prefer to distinguish themselves from the other MP—either to signal they are unique to V_M voters or to avoid contagion effects while trying to capture as many V_N voters as possible without isolating V_M voters. However, the best strategy is still to adopt a more comprehensive policy platform when the opposing MP adopts a more restrictive policy

platform. As before, an MP party should also want to consider distinguishing themselves from other MP parties that may be thinking similarly. MPs thus would want to adopt comprehensive, but not too comprehensive, policy platforms.

Indeed, if V_M voters notice two parties adopting a similar number of issues, they may perceive them similarly. If one of the two parties is not very popular, that can hurt the other party and isolate potential V_M voters, leading to negative electoral outcomes for the MP. Under these circumstances, the MP would benefit from adopting a less comprehensive policy platform to distinguish itself and attract V_N voters. In turn, the NP would lose out on some V_N voters, although mostly those with slightly more diverse issue preferences.

If contagion effects push the MP to adopting a more restrictive policy platform at the same time a NP adopts a restrictive policy platform, the impact should still benefit the MP given they are distinguishing themselves from the contagious parties and thus attracting V_N voters that may like more diverse issues. However, the NP should also benefit given the MP is now closer to the NP (Meguid 2005, 2008). In short, competition on the issue diversity dimension between MPs and NPs is such that a comprehensive policy approach is ultimately more favorable for the MP unless it is trying to distinguish itself from others or contagion effects exist. Whether it attracts V_M voters or V_N voters will depend on the combination of strategies adopted. For the NP, it is a matter of the party's interest in enacting a policy change through external parties (typically MPs) or directly through election to the legislature. The decision there will determine whether the NP tries to attract V_N voters or both V_N and V_M voters.

A similar relationship exists when NPs compete against NPs, as seen in Table 2.3. Here, we first notice that the best outcome for an NP is to adopt a comprehensive policy platform when other NPs adopt a restrictive policy platform. This is because we assume that parties are vote seeking: in fact, gaining votes is an instrumental desire for all parties wishing to either enter office or implement their policies (Strom 1990). However, NPs are a special type of party in that they can at times have narrow focus, and often small electoral gains. If the party is satisfied with existing electoral success among their typically V_N supporters through a restrictive policy platform, then there is no need to change their strategy. If they have no interest in office, they may adopt a restrictive policy platform since the primary goal here is to increase awareness and media attention while maintaining V_N voter support. Either NP_1 or NP_2 in Table 2.3 may even switch to adopting a more comprehensive policy platform temporarily to access those gains in awareness among V_M voters before switching back to a restrictive policy platform (Wagner 2012*b*) so long as they do not lose their V_N supporters.

On the other hand, an NP may benefit greatly from comprehensive policy platforms since they typically lack resources (Greene 2002, Meguid 2005). However, when two competing NPs simultaneously adopt comprehensive policy platform, they reach a worse in competition than if the other party had adopted a restrictive policy platform. The reasoning behind this phenomenon is in the nature of NPs; they may become more popular but can only make a significant electoral impact if they move beyond idealistic reasons for restrictive policies and move towards achieving positive electoral impacts. In other words, if the NP cannot attract V_M voters, then they will typically gain modest, if not meager,

vote numbers in elections. However, this is not at all the case when both adopt restrictive policy platforms. When they both adopt restrictive platforms, as each party can improve their electoral outcomes if only one adopts a comprehensive policy platform.

Table 2.3: Benefits of Comprehensive vs Restrictive Strategies, NP vs NP

		NP_2	
		Comprehensive	*Restrictive*
NP_1	*Comprehensive*	(2, 2)	(3, 2)
	Restrictive	(2, 3)	(1, 1)

This occurs for two reasons. First, the NP adopting the comprehensive policy platform can benefit from more MP-like positions and thus potentially adopt issues that V_M voters find salient. This is especially impactful if they can force the perspective that the MP is adopting an NP-like policy among V_M voters, which in turn yield benefits for said NP due to the adoption of similar issues. Second, those NPs with similar policy platforms will find themselves distinguishing themselves much more when the other NP adopts a comprehensive policy platform (Cox 1990, Kitschelt 1994). Unlike the situation under MP-to-MP competition, however, these scenarios suggest that NPs are more fluid than MPs (Meyer & Wagner 2013). This is often because NPs have fewer resources and receive less media attention than MPs (Greene 2002, Meguid 2005). That general flexibility allows them to focus on strategic combinations that best fit desired electoral outcomes, whether those outcomes are retaining their core V_N supporters or attracting V_M supporters from MPs. In other words, if interested in pursuing policy outcomes by getting elected to the legislature, then NPs could adopt a more comprehensive policy platform and be more successful than they would adopting a restrictive policy platform.

However, one reason why NPs may opt for restrictive policy platforms is that they simply prefer to create awareness for the issue and not necessarily advance the issue directly. In fact, Wagner (2012*b*) suggests NPs may sometimes even adopt a more comprehensive policy platform to simply generate media coverage on a generally ignored topic before returning to a previous position. NPs may also move towards more restrictive policy platforms if they feel they typically cannot compete with an MP. Indeed, while a NP can improve their own popularity and spread awareness of issues they care about, attracting voters from MPs is no easy feat. If they care about entering the legislature, the comprehensive policy platform can help NPs get there, but it may not take them all the way.

NP vs NP competition is more complicated yet fluid, suggesting that these parties are generally better off adopting a comprehensive policy platform if they are interested in maximizing their votes by attracting both V_M and V_N voters. This will typically depend on the party's preferences. If they are uninterested in entering the legislature, we are more likely to see them adopt restrictive policy platforms to keep their V_N supporters happy. It is an electorally unfavorable approach in this scenario, but the idealistically preferred option. In a similar vein as in the MP-specific case, should the NP want to win additional support in an election, then they would need to distinguish themselves from other NPs. If most NPs are adopting restrictive policy platforms, then the NP that wants to win legislative seats should stand to gain from distinguishing themselves through a (not too) comprehensive policy platform, but comprehensive enough to attract V_M voters.

A problem remains, however: what happens when parties—MP or NP—adopt the same number of issues? For simplicity purposes, we can imagine a party adopting 9 types

of issues out of a total 10 types of issues available, each with multiple different positions on content. We can also imagine a second party adopting 9 types of issues out of the 10 types of issues available but adopting different content or positions on these issues. We may assume they both choose opposite content positions from each other. In these cases, it may become simple for voters to simply pick a party to support based on the content of the party stances. However, in both cases the parties attempt to capture most of the issue space. The decision to do this can make these parties seem more spread out and thus less focused.

Introducing a third party to the equation best presents how this is problematic: we can assume a third party that adopts 7 types of issues, possibly with mixed content positions on those issues. This third party may be perceived as more of an expert on their issues, regardless of their stances are on the issues in question, because they adopt less issues in a manner that helps distinguish them from the two other parties. This demonstrates that an implicit assumption relating to issue ownership exists within this formalization of issue diversity: parties want to be seen as experts on their issues, and so the distance between themselves and competitors is an important consideration. MPs should thus want to adopt comprehensive policy platforms to capture the salience associated with as many voters as possible, including most V_M voters but possibly some V_N voters, but not too comprehensive while distinguishing themselves as "experts" that own issues rather than "catch-all" parties adopting "garbage can" platforms. On the other end of the spectrum, NPs should want to adopt restrictive policy platforms, but not too restrictive so they can attract V_N voters and potential V_M voters should they adopt enough salient issues to do so. If they care about

winning office, then they may even adopt more comprehensive policy platforms to attract more V_M voters. Together, this reasoning yields the three hypotheses of interest.

H1: When parties generally adopt more issues relative to the average party, all else equal, they will experience positive electoral support.

While this may hold generally when we include all parties in competition, the reasoning I presented suggests we may see different outcomes when we look at each type of party separately. We should see that MPs that adopt more issues than the average MP should experience negative electoral support, while NPs that adopt more issues relative to the average MP should experience positive electoral support.

H2: If MP parties adopt more issues relative to the average MP party, all else equal, they will experience negative electoral support.

H3: If NP parties adopt more issues relative to the average MP party, all else equal, they will experience positive electoral support.

To test these hypotheses, I examine the United Kingdom (UK) due to its popularity among the comparative literature in an effort to ensure consistency and demonstrate the dynamic nature of the measure. In other words, a party considered traditionally niche should be classified as such in some elections but could change their position in a different election. Such a change, if substantial, should then impact other parties—ideally the more traditional mainstream parties—and possibly force them to change their issue diversity positions.

2.4 Summary

To summarize, I presented a novel approach to capturing a specific dimension of party strategy: the issue diversity dimension. This dimension captures the number of issues parties adopt on a scale from 0 to 100, with traditionally niche-oriented parties typically adopting lower issue diversity scores while traditionally mainstream-oriented parties adopt higher issue diversity scores. I posited that competition between an MP and an NP favors comprehensive policy approaches, although this will depend on the party and its priorities. For the MP, they can maximize their success if they adopt a comprehensive policy platform over a restrictive policy platform, but within limits as too comprehensive a policy platform could hurt their ability to demonstrate expertise among voters. For the NP, if they care about enacting policy change directly, then they are too better off with a comprehensive policy platform, but likewise not too comprehensive a policy platform should they want to distinguish themselves from both MPs and NPs. In the next section I test my hypotheses using the United Kingdom as a case study.

Chapter 3

Testing the Issue Diversity Dimension of Party Strategy: The UK General Elections

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I test my hypotheses using the United Kingdom (UK) as a case due to its popularity among the comparative literature. I first examine the parties by issue diversity scores visually to determine if the proper patterns in the data hold. I follow with time series fixed effect regressions to determine whether party movement away from their average issue diversity scores negatively impact their electoral success, and whether this varies between traditionally mainstream and niche parties. I then present a discussion of the results.

3.2 Data

I generated the issue diversity dimension score measure using the Manifesto Project (MARPOR) (Krause et al. 2021). I use the MARPOR dataset because it is the best dataset for studying the internal dynamics of party systems due to its wide amount of party manifesto information (Somer-Topcu 2009). Using MARPOR provides the opportunity to build a measure that is comparable given each party's issues are coded into distinct categories based on their manifestos. After subsetting the data to focus on the UK as the primary case for analyses, I examined the number of parties included in the dataset over elections. The dataset includes 96 observations across 12 unique parties from 1945 to 2019. Table 3.1 shows the default distribution of parties by election. According to Table 3.1, the number of parties remains static from election period 1 in 1945 to period 11 in 1979. The number of parties then vary, increasing from 1983 to 2001 before falling back to 3 in 2005 and 2010. They then increase again in 2015. From here, the number of parties remains relatively stable through 2019. While this may seem strange at first, it is the product of coding; that is, the MARPOR dataset only contains parties that earn at least one seat in the national assembly, although there are exceptions without much clarity beyond this explanation.

This is problematic as it creates a selection issue; that is, MARPOR only includes cases of parties that have obtained one seat (with some exceptions). This is a significant limitation in the data, as they could lead to biased results through omitted parties may otherwise have an impact on the results. This means the results may be skewed and thus the models are less accurate than the real world. That is, it is not possible to capture

realistic party competition in the real world without data on all parties. While there is not much I can do about such a limitation, it is an important limitation and necessitates acknowledgement.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Parties by Election in the UK

Election	Election Date	Parties
1	July 5, 1945	3
2	February 23, 1950	3
3	October 25, 1951	3
4	May 26, 1955	3
5	October 8, 1959	3
6	October 15, 1964	3
7	March 31, 1966	3
8	June 18, 1970	3
9	February 28, 1974	3
10	October 10, 1974	3
11	May 3, 1979	3
12	June 9, 1983	4
13	June 11, 1987	4
14	April 9, 1992	6
15	May 1, 1997	7
16	June 7, 2001	8
17	May 5, 2005	3
18	May 6, 2010	3
19	May 7, 2015	11
20	June 8, 2017	9
21	December 12, 2019	10

I use several variables in my statistical analyses. The primary dependent variable for electoral success is *Vote Share*. The *vote share* variable is a continuous variable and is simply the percentage of the vote obtained by a party in an election. The main independent variable is a form of the *Issue Diversity* variable, a continuous variable that was generated using the MARPOR dataset and ranges between 0 and 100. This variable takes the form of *Issue Diversity Score Mean Distance* in my model. This variable is calculated as the

change in distance between a party's issue diversity score and the average score of competing parties. This variable was calculated using both the issue diversity variable and a mean issue diversity variable. This mean issue diversity variable was calculated as the average issue diversity score for all parties in an election with the exception of the party of interest. I then took the difference between the issue diversity score and the mean issue diversity variable. In this way, the issue diversity distance variable estimates a party's average distance from its competitors.

I control for three additional factors in my models as well. First, I control for *Ideology* as represented by right-left (RILE) scores provided by MARPOR. This will help determine whether variations in party ideologies have an impact on their success in the UK. Second, I control for *Number of Parties Competing*, which represents the number of parties in competition in each election that obtain at least 2 percent of the votes. This is a continuous variable and ranges from 3 to 11 and helps address the data limitation of the MARPOR dataset as well. Third, I control for *Candidates Fielded*, which is a continuous variable made up of the total number of candidates competing for each party in the dataset during each election. For my analyses I use time series regression while controlling for party fixed effects and robust standard errors to control for heteroskedasticity and correct any autocorrelation in the standard errors.

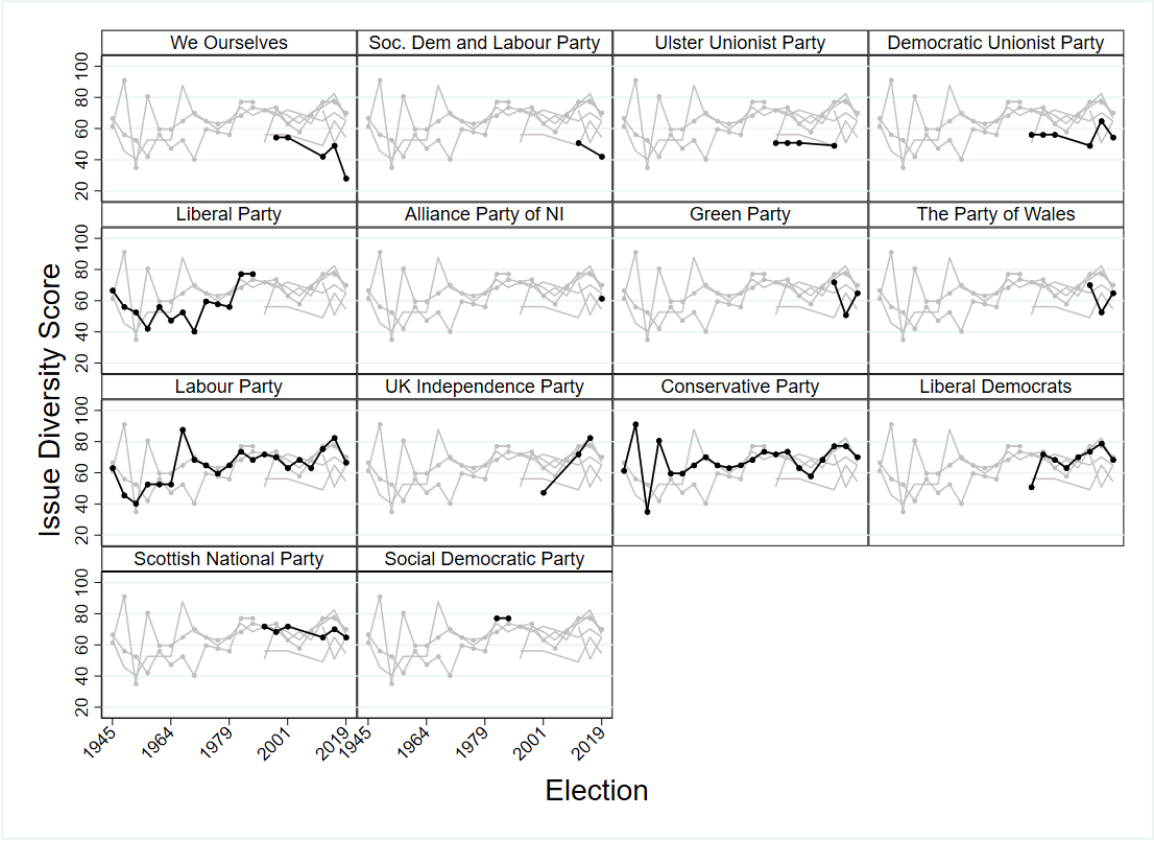
3.3 Results

I now set out to test the measure using the UK manifesto data from MARPOR dataset. Starting with the visual analyses, I first graphed every party by issue diversity

scores against all other party issue diversity scores in Figure 3.1. The darker lines are representative of the issue diversity scores for the labeled party, while the grey lines represent distribution of issue scores for other parties. Of the 13 parties here, we notice that the Labour and Conservative parties have the most history of all the parties available and adopted varied issue diversity scores that, in some instances, resemble each other in pattern. It is important to note that the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party merged to form the Liberal Democrats. If we examine the three together, we notice that they do not vary too much in pattern from the Labour and Conservative parties in terms of issue platform overall. The Social Democratic and Labour Party shown in Figure 3.1 is a different group altogether, focusing on Irish unification as their platform. Given these results, I merged the Liberal Party with the Social Democratic Party and Liberal Democrats for the statistical analyses.

We also notice that the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland is one of the primary outliers in this data as they only have one entry during the 2019 General Election. Additional outliers include the previously mentioned Social Democratic and Labour Party splinter group with two entries in the data, and both the Green Party and the Party of Wales with three entries each, and very similar policy platforms. One party of particular interest is the UK Independence Party, given its niche approach to politics through the focus on Brexit as the main campaign issue. Interestingly enough, we notice that the UK Independence Party adopted a very comprehensive party platform between 2001 and 2017. The Ulster Unionist party adopts a relatively stable policy platform over time, while the Democratic Unionist party starts off similarly, but adopts a slightly more comprehensive

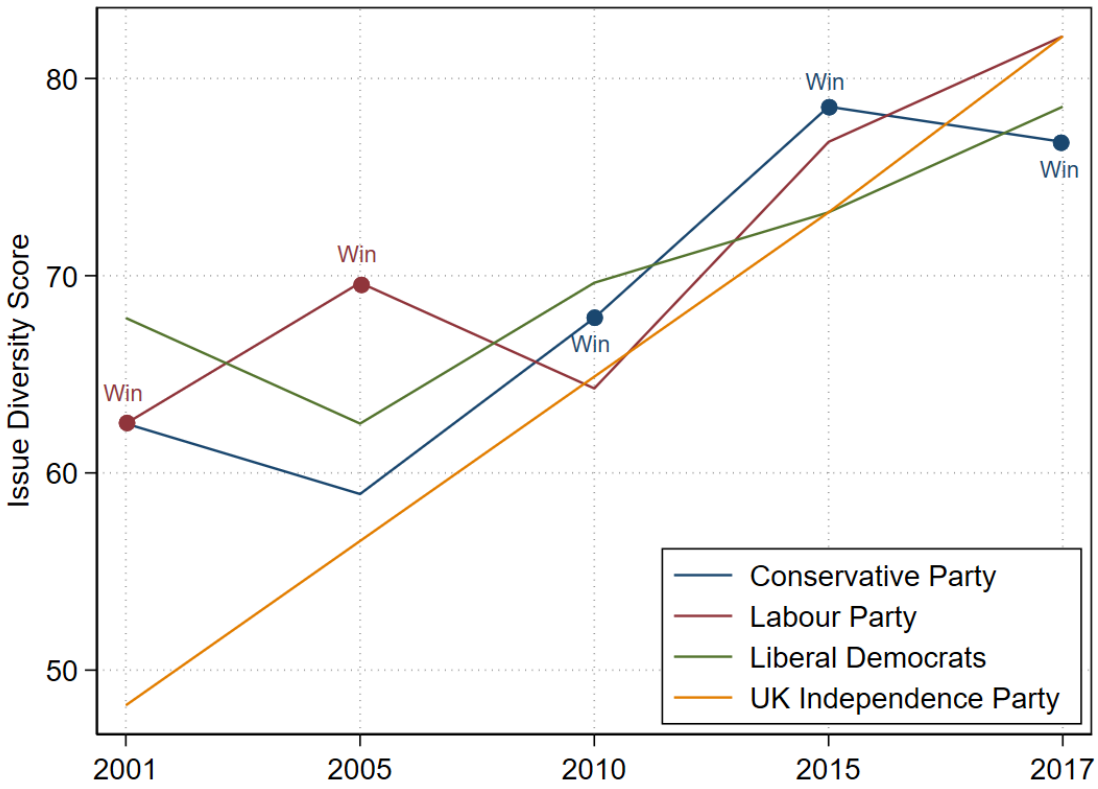
Figure 3.1: Issue Diversity Scores by Election



policy platform before dropping to a more restrictive one. The We Ourselves party start off fairly centered in their policy platform but drop to a restrictive platform after a brief increase. It is also interesting to note that, altogether UK parties seem to typically compete within a range of 51 and 69 on the issue diversity dimension, although with some exceptions.

Since the UK Independence Party is arguably the most well-known niche party in the UK, I proceed with an analysis of where this party stands in relation to the three main parties in this system: the Labour, Conservative, and Liberal Democratic parties. These parties can be seen in Figure 3.2. Given the UK Independence Party was only in the dataset

Figure 3.2: Main vs UKIP Issue Diversity Scores, 2001 to 2017



between 2001 and 2017, Figure 3.2 only contains the issue diversity score for these parties within that range.

The first thing to notice is that the UK Independence Party has adopted a positive linear position on the issue diversity dimension, increasing their platform from a score of 48.2 in 2001, to a score of 73.21 in 2015 followed by a score of 18.14 in 2017. The mainstream parties, on the other hand, varied in their approaches. Starting with the Labour Party, they move from 62.5 in 2001 to 69.64 in 2005—winning both those elections—before they adopted a more restrictive issue diversity score of 64.28 in 2010. The Conservative Party is interesting given that, in 2005 they adopted an issue diversity score that is relatively restrictive in

comparison: 58.92. The Liberal Democrats adopted a slightly more comprehensive platform that same election, but still one that is relatively restrictive compared to the Labour Party: 62.5. More interesting, this is the exact same score the Labour adopted in the previous election, except this position won the Labour party the election in 2001. The Labour Party's previous position in 1997 (not pictured) was 69.64, while the Conservative Party's position was more comprehensive at a position of 73.21 during the same election (also not pictured). This may suggest that the Labour Party won the 2001 election due through a strategy of distinguishing themselves from the Conservative Party. As we will see in the discussion on MP vs MP competition, this seems to be what occurred between the 1992 and 1997 General Elections.

Continuing with the analyses in Figure 3.2, the Conservative Party adopted a more comprehensive platform than the Labour Party, opting for a position of 67.86. The Liberal Democrats adopted, however, adopted the Labour Party's 2005 position of 69.64 in the 2010 General Election, suggesting at this point they may be trying to chase potential electoral gains while Labour and the Conservative Party continue adopting unique positions in an almost cat and mouse game scenario albeit losing at this game.

By 2015, we notice that the Conservative Party has adopted a much more comprehensive policy platform at 78.57, while Labour has opted for a slightly less comprehensive policy platform at 76.79. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, adopted the same policy position as the UK Independence Party at 73.21. The outcome here was the Conservative Party won out with the more comprehensive policy platform, but by 2017 the same party adopted a more restrictive policy. Starting with the Labour Party, they opted

for a similar policy platform as the UK Independence Party at 82.14, while the Liberal Democrats adopted a platform that was slightly more restrictive but still more comprehensive than their previous platform in 2015: the adopting a score of 78.57 The Conservative Party however, distinguished itself from all of the other parties by adopting the most restrictive policy platform among the parties here at 76.79. This won the Conservative Party the election in 2017. What is interesting about position, however, is that it was the Labour Party's position in the previous election, suggesting the Conservative Party opted to moderate their position and distinguish themselves from the other parties that were increasing their issue diversity in a very linear manner.

Moving on to the statistical analyses, the results can be found across three models in Table 3.2. Each model in Table 3.2 represents a different subset of the UK data: the *All* model provides an analysis using the full set of parties (Hypothesis 1), the *MP* model provides an analysis using only the mainstream parties (Hypothesis 2), and *NP* model provides an analysis using only the niche parties (Hypothesis 3). As seen in Table 3.2, the R-squared values for the *All* model suggest it explains 37.4 percent of the variation within the panel units, 67.5 percent of the variation between panel units, and 70.1 percent of the variation overall. The R-squared values for the *MP* model, however, suggest the mainstream party model explains 39.2 percent of the variation within the panel units, 90.1 percent of the variation between panel units, and 46.8 percent of the variation overall. Finally, the R-squared values for the *NP* model suggest the niche party model explains 85.7 percent of the variation within the panel units, 62.8 percent of the variation between panel units, and 43.3 percent of the variation overall.

Table 3.2: Issue Diversity Mean Distance Regressions on Vote Share, 1945-2019

	All	MP	NP
Issue Diversity Score Mean Distance (Continuous)	0.069*	0.099	0.007
	(0.030)	(0.039)	(0.016)
Ideology (RILE)	-0.069	-0.064	-0.052*
	(0.043)	(0.056)	(0.017)
Number of Parties Competing	-0.821**	-0.988+	0.178
	(0.230)	(0.296)	(0.127)
Candidates Fielded	0.032***	0.033**	0.035**
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.007)
Constant	11.887***	16.113***	-4.363**
	(0.885)	(0.343)	(1.294)
AIC	551.866	383.286	70.706
R-Squared (Within)	0.374	0.392	0.857
R-Squared (Between)	0.675	0.901	0.628
R-Squared (Overall)	0.701	0.468	0.433
N-Clusters	12	3	9
N	96	63	33

Robust standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Interpreting the results for the *All* model, we first notice that the *Issue Diversity Score Mean Distance* coefficient is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$), which suggests that an increase in distance from the average party will result in a 0.069 percent increase in the percentage of votes for that party. The coefficient for *Number of Parties Competing* is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$), with a negative direction. As one would expect due to the zero-sum nature of elections, this suggests an increasing number of parties competing in an election will reduce the percentage of the votes for all parties by 0.821. Third, the *Candidate Fielded* coefficient is statistically significant at the 99.9 percent confidence level ($p < 0.001$), suggesting an increase in the number of candidates a party fields would increase votes by 0.032 percent

overall. Finally, the *Ideology* coefficient is not statistically significant in this model. In short, the *All* model suggests evidence exists for Hypothesis 1 although it is important to note that the magnitude of the effect is not relatively large given a one-unit increase in Issue Diversity distance from the average distance.

Interpreting the results for the *MP* model, we first notice that the *Issue Diversity Score Mean Distance* coefficient is not statistically significant. This suggests the *MP* model provides no statistical evidence that mainstream parties experience a decrease or increase in electoral support when they move away from their average party positions along the issue diversity dimension. Likewise, the *Ideology* coefficient is not statistically significant either. The coefficient for the *Number of Parties Competing*, however, is statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level ($p < 0.1$), with the appropriate negative direction: this suggests an increasing number of mainstream parties competing in an election will reduce the percentage of the votes for all mainstream parties by 0.988. Finally, the coefficient for *Candidate Fielded* is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$), suggesting an increase in the number of candidates a MP party fields would increase votes by 0.033 percent overall. In short, the *MP* model suggests we have no evidence supporting Hypothesis 2, but that an increase in the number of mainstream parties competing may have a negative impact on mainstream party electoral success, although the number of candidates these parties field can increase their vote share.

Finally, interpreting the results for the *NP* model, we again notice that the *Issue Diversity Score Mean Distance* coefficient is not statistically significant. This suggests the *NP* model provides no statistical evidence that niche parties experience a decrease or in-

crease in electoral support when they move away from their average party positions. The *Ideology* coefficient is statistically significant in this case, however, at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$). This coefficient suggests that more ideologically left-wing niche parties struggle relative to ideological right-wing niche parties in the UK by a reduction of 0.052 in the percentage of votes—an interesting finding given the relative increase in popularity among not only niche parties in Western Europe, but the radical right-wing variety. Moreover, while the coefficient for the *Number of Parties Competing* is not statistically significant, the coefficient for *Candidate Fielded* is statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that an increase in the number of candidates a NP party fields would increase votes by 0.035 percent. This finding is interesting because it may suggest the number of candidates that a niche party fields can help them capture more seats simply due to having more candidates running. In short, the *NP* model suggests we have no evidence supporting Hypothesis 3 but does provide an interesting set of findings associated with UK niche parties.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tested the hypotheses that adopting more issues negatively (in the case of mainstream parties) or positively (in the case of niche parties) impacts electoral success in UK elections. Having established a minimalistic (Sartori 1976) measure to operationalize the concept of Issue Diversity, I used the MARPOR dataset to test my hypotheses for three subsets of the data: all parties (Hypothesis 1), mainstream parties only (Hypothesis 2), and niche parties only (Hypothesis 3). The results were mixed: I found

support for Hypothesis 1, which focused on parties more generally across elections, but no support for either Hypothesis 2 or Hypothesis 3. Nevertheless, I did encounter interesting findings relating to mainstream and niche parties and discuss these below.

Specifically, I found that parties generally experience increased voter support if they move away from their average party issue diversity scores. While the impact is not a substantially large one, it does provide an indication that the number of issues a party adopts in their policy platforms can have an impact on the party' s success. This could also compound if the parties adopt significant changes to their policy platforms by adopting even more issues. While I found no support for this pattern when subsetting to focus on mainstream and niche parties individually, I did find that UK elections predominantly favor ideologically right-wing parties when we focus on predominantly niche parties. As far as mainstream parties are concerned, the findings also suggest that more mainstream parties running may be detrimental to existing mainstream parties. Moreover, in the case of both mainstream and niche-like parties, I found that the number of candidates fielded has a significant impact on vote share attainment. These latter findings are interesting and necessitate elaboration.

First, increasing the number of mainstream parties competing in UK election may hurt other mainstream parties. Per my theoretical model, this may be indicative of mainstream parties overlapping on the number of issues they adopt. The result, then, is that mainstream parties struggle to distinguish themselves from other mainstream parties during elections, and thus suffer electorally. Second, and in regard to niche parties, ideologically left-wing niche parties struggle relative to ideological right-wing niche parties. This may

suggest that right-wing niche parties, of which many in Western Europe are of the radical right populist variety, may achieve more electoral success in the UK than other niche parties. This may at least partially explain the relative success of the UK Independence Party between 2001 and 2017. Moreover, I found that the relationship among the number of candidates a party fields significantly helps increase vote share among both types of parties—even for niche parties. This finding may suggest that more niche party candidates in elections could lead to a "normalization" of candidates in legislatures and thus could provide niche parties with increased electoral success over time. In short, while the findings were mixed, much of the findings in my models nevertheless yielded interesting results.

While there are important limitations in my data that need to be addressed, these also open avenues for future research. The first is obvious: while the *All* model already represented a small N analysis, subsetting to two types of parties only reduced the number of the observations in the resulting models further. Future work on this topic needs to be wary of data limitations as they can impact the results. In fact, while the findings for the *MP* model and the *NP* model were interesting and may inform the literature on mainstream and niche party competition, they necessitate additional research to confirm these relationships. Such studies will be able to confirm or deny these findings and provide party scholars with an informative understanding of why niche parties have become so popular in Western Europe.

In addition to these avenues for new research on niche parties, the findings in this study provide scholars with interesting avenues for new research on issue diversity. Specifically, if parties generally suffer when they adopt more issues than they do on average,

then future research on what those maximums and minimums are may be interesting. In addition, given voters are a major constraint on party behavior, future research may consider how much parties consider role of voter political sophistication when adapting their policies at election time.

Chapter 4

An Issue diversity Dimension Case Study: Japan

4.1 Introduction

Having examined how the issue diversity dimension functions in the United Kingdom, I now test my measure of the issue diversity dimension of party strategy with a case study on Japan in an effort to answer one important question: What impacts do party strategies have on electoral outcomes in Japan? This is an interesting question when we consider Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its near continuous hold of government in Japanese politics. Indeed, the LDP has held the "party-in-government" role more often and for a longer time frame than any other party in the country since democratization in 1947. Yet, LDP's consistent success at the polls has not been unchallenged, as it fell out of favor and out of power in at least two elections in the past: 1993 and 2009. Nevertheless,

a party consistently succeeding and forming the government as many times as the LDP is rare to see in a democracy, and especially in a multiparty system governed by coalitions. This is rare because parties in multiparty systems find themselves routinely alternating between government and opposition roles, while others will find themselves never entering government coalitions (Hobolt & Karp 2010). However, the LDP's near-continuous hold on the "party-in-government" position actually makes the Japanese case a perfect one to test the issue diversity dimension measurement due how different it is from typical Western European countries. In fact, it begs an important underlying question: if the LDP has constantly ruled in Japan, then has the LDP strategically changed its behavior over time to merit electoral gains or losses? In other words, rather than attempting to seek external factors explaining gains or losses in electoral support, what impact does strategic behavior have on party success? I seek to answer this question for both the LDP and opposition parties since doing so will help identify exactly when and how parties—such as the LDP—change their party strategy, while providing insight onto their impact.

I argue that, when incumbent parties in systemically homogeneous systems move away from established positions, they will typically suffer electorally as they become less recognizable to their base supporters. I also posit that this will lead parties to re-adopting traditional (or previous) policy positions in an effort to regain previous electoral success. As the LDP has only lost their government forming majority in 1993 and 2009, Japan is a prime case for this investigation. In fact, unlike the UK, systemic homogeneity is almost exclusive to a democratic system like Japan's where one-party rule is nearly expected. This is not often seen in a democracy, as it is almost a step away from a one-party state often

found in authoritarian regimes (see Magaloni & Kricheli 2010, for an excellent review of the literature on one-party authoritarian states). I suggest two things in this study: an increase in a party's distance away from their average issue diversity dimension position should decrease electoral success, and that that an increase in a party's distance on the issue diversity dimension between elections should decrease electoral success.

4.2 Japanese Politics and Electoral Reform

While parties need to capture a majority of seats to form a government in most parliamentary systems, this process in Japan is interesting because the electoral system used to elect representatives to its lower house in the Diet—the House of Representatives (I refer to this as the House moving forward)—has changed over time. Japan has used two electoral systems in their House elections since 1947. From 1947 until 1994, it used single non-transferable vote (SNTV) in multi-member districts (MMD) to elect their House members, with voters casting a single vote for a candidate in districts and most districts electing between three and five candidates each. This is interesting because SNTV can be problematic without cohesive decision-making and can, as a result, hurt a party's electoral success (Nemoto et al. 2014). In fact, the SNTV system has been considered an 'extreme' system due to its candidate-centered focus, which promotes clientelist politics over policy debates (Lin 2011, Shugart 2001). The LDP—a party formed in 1955—nevertheless came to dominate the party system by winning enough seats to form every government between 1958 and 1993. While several smaller opposition parties contested these elections, they soon stopped running candidates and thus did not qualify as majority-seeking parties.

In both 1988 and 1992, the issue of electoral reform was placed on the agenda nationwide due to media coverage and anger emanating from the general public regarding large-scale corruption scandals. The general argument presented was that politicians were forced into corruption due to intraparty competition that prevented them from running on their party labels and forced them to source massive amounts of personal campaign funds. This eventually led to the opposition parties submitting a motion of no confidence in the LDP government in 1993 over its failure to enact electoral reform. To the surprise of many, the motion passed when a group of LDP politicians defected from the party. This group of defectors ultimately deprived the government of its majority and, in the election that followed, a seven-party coalition government was formed. This coalition government went on to reform the electoral system in early 1994 (for more on the politics behind reformation, see Shiratori 1995).

Japan emerged from reforms with a mixed member majoritarian (MMM) system comprised of two tiers. The first tier is composed of single member districts (SMD) wherein 295 members are elected, while the second tier uses closed party lists across 11 regional blocs using proportional representation (PR) to elect an additional 180 members. As the allocation of seats in the tiers are independent, a majority-seeking party must win as many seats as possible across these tiers to obtain a majority of 238 seats in the House.

In spite of reforms, the LDP soon returned to power in June 1994. This time, however, LDP coalitioned with the *Japan Socialist Party* (JSP) to form the government (Curtis 1999). This was not the only interesting political occurrence in Japan at the time, however, since two new parties formed after electoral reform: the *Democratic Party of Japan*

(DPJ) and the *New Frontier Party* (NFP). Both parties fielded several candidates within the SMD tier during the 1996 election, although to limited success. In 1998, as the NFP collapsed, the DPJ rose as the second majority-seeking party in Japan. As a result, most SMD competition has been between the LDP and DPJ (Reed 2007). In the case of these two majority-seeking parties, they list their candidates across the SMD and PR tiers, although some are listed in both tiers. When this occurs, the PR listing is treated as a "revival" opportunity should failure occur at the SMD tier (Krauss et al. 2012, p. 755). In other words, if a candidate wins in the SMD tier, they are removed from the PR list tier; while if they lose in the SMD tier, they are kept on the PR list and could potentially still win a legislative seat. This is important because it suggests a candidate's chances of entering the House depends predominantly on their SMD performance, which in turn means all LDP and DPJ candidates must attempt to maximize their prospects at the SMD tier should they hope to be successful (Bawn & Thies 2003, McKean & Scheiner 2000).

Although the SMD tier consists of a continuous struggle between the LDP and DPJ, it also includes candidates from non-majority seeking parties. These parties, many of which the literature has referred to as niche parties (see Meguid 2005, 2008), capture the bulk of their seats in the PR tier. In fact, due to the nature of the SMD tier, most of these niche candidates have next to no chance of winning seats in the SMD tier. Their inclusion in the SMD tier simply provides a "human face" for their party in an attempt to increase PR tier vote share (Cox & Schoppa 2002, Mizusaki & Mori 1998). In other words, voters obtain a more localized and personal experience through SMD tier candidates, even if they do not necessarily vote for them in the SMD tier, which translates into a more positive

perception of the party in the PR tier. This positive image at the PR tier can translate to said party winning more closed list PR seats.

Yet, this is not the only reason why smaller party candidates compete in the SMD tier: some compete because their party leaders have formed an electoral alliance with a larger party. Through coalition formation, these parties coordinate and avoid running against their coalition partners in a manner that maximizes electoral outcomes for all coalition candidates. Often these agreements involve the larger, mainstream party agreeing not to run candidates in certain districts and asking their supporters in those districts to vote for the small party candidate allied with them (Ferrara & Herron 2005). In return, the smaller, more niche party ally usually agrees to run candidates only in the districts agreed upon with the mainstream party while requesting their own supporters in other districts vote for the mainstream party candidate. While these agreements are not always successful (Reed & Shimizu 2009, Reed 2013) they do suggest that candidates from allied niche parties try to maximize their SMD seats rather than their PR seats.

Three examples of coalitions where this occurred include the LDP and *New Clean Government Party* (NKP) coalition since 2000, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) coalition with the DPJ in 2009, and the *People's New Party* (PNP) coalition with the DPJ in 2009. In all cases, the result of these reforms is obvious: LDP has found a means of maintaining their government party role post-electoral reform, as 2009 is the only other situation in which they have lost government control since reform—the same election in which several parties (including smaller ones) coalitioned to take the majority in the House. Electoral reforms had little impact on the LDP's success in legislative elections.

This discussion has suggested that the power hierarchy has remained relatively stable in Japan in spite of electoral reform. In other words, while rules have changed both in terms of how the electoral system works and how parties campaign and run candidates, the LDP has managed to maintain their position as the government forming party position (Katz & Mair 1993). Since neither the change in electoral rules nor the ways in which parties in Japan now run their candidates explain the LDP's electoral success, I consider the alternative explanation: that the LDP party's electoral strategy may be influencing their electoral outcomes.

4.3 Position Changing

Since a party's position on an issue impacts their electoral prospects positively or negatively, changing positions can be a significant move for an incumbent party like the LDP. The issue of position changing was first discussed in electoral spatial models (see Black 1958, Davis et al. 1970, Downs 1957, Enelow & Hinich 1984, Krehbiel 1988, Roemer & Roemer 2001) in an effort to understand both when and why utility-maximizing and office-seeking parties adopt changes. Since these initial studies, the predominant sentiment has been that changes in public opinion or among opposition parties directly impact an incumbent party's decision to shift their position. Specifically, parties respond strongly to changes in public opinion (Adams et al. 2004, 2006, 2009) as politicians analyze the public's mood through surveys, opinion polls, political commentaries, and discussions to determine their best strategies (Erikson et al. 2002). However, they also respond to shifts in positions among rival parties (Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009*b*). It is important to note that this is not

a one-directional relationship, however, as the public and their own positions on issues are dynamic, moving in response to the policies the government adopts as well (Erikson et al. 2002, Soroka & Wlezien 2005, Wlezien & Soroka 2012). The motivation is clear: parties are loss averse (Kahneman et al. 1990, Kahneman & Tversky 1979), and so the costs of governing among incumbents can induce changes in party positions (Bawn & Somer-Topcu 2012, Nannestad & Paldam 2003, Powell & Whitten 1993). This dynamic, two-directional relationship thus suggests the process is complex in the case of incumbents who want to ensure they are re-elected.

Additional models have suggested a different dynamic exists since it is not always possible to determine what the public really wants. If this is the case, then it is unlikely that public opinion will impact a party's decision to change their position on an issue (Budge 1994). Research has suggested parties instead depend on using their current status as either the opposition or government party as a proxy for decision-making (Bendor et al. 2011, Carmines & Stimson 1989, Harmel & Janda 1994, Riker 1982, 1986). Since the incumbent government party controls the government, that party often assumes they are more knowledgeable than the opposition on what the public would want. That is not to say that the opposition does not attempt to shift the status quo. In fact, Riker (1982, 1986), and to an extent Carmines & Stimson (1989), suggest that opposition parties attempt to introduce new issues that can change the dimensionality of competition while possibly dividing the electoral majority of the governing party since, "[n]ew issues offer the opportunity for converting old losers into new winners" (Carmines 1991, p. 75). In other words, these models suggest the opposition's attempts to change the status quo through new issues can

make the decision-making process more difficult for the incumbent party. But what about a party like the LDP, which has almost continuously held the party-in-government position in Japan since democratization?

4.4 The role of Systemic and Party Strategy Homogeneity

I posit that the Japanese political system skews party competition in favor of the incumbent government party through a systemic homogeneity framework. There are two conditions for systemic homogeneity. The first condition is the party-in-government continuity condition. This condition refers to a situation in which parties in government have previously held control of the government, and the decision-making authority that comes with doing so. In other words, this scenario suggests a party that has previously held control of government has a higher likelihood to be a part of the majority government in the future compared to other parties.

In a parliamentary democracy, there are a few ways to achieve government party status. One is by obtaining enough votes in elections to earn a majority of seats in the legislature to form the government, while another means is through successfully negotiating a coalition with other parties to form a majority (or in some cases, minority) government (for conversations on coalitions, see Blais et al. 2006, De Swaan 1973, Laver & Schofield 1998, Warwick 1996). I suggest that this is not unlike an incumbency effect, where politicians who win office become more likely to win further office in the future. Early studies on incumbency effects focused on the American case, with Mayhew (1974) initially perceiving them as a means of explaining the decreasing impact of political parties on the electoral system.

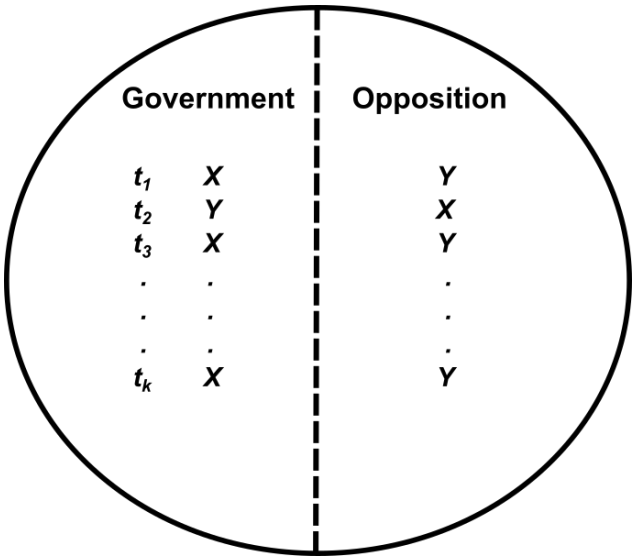
Since this study, research has suggested that incumbents share an electoral advantage (see Ansolabehere & Snyder Jr 2002, Erikson 1971, 1972, Ferejohn 1977, Fiorina 1977, Gelman & King 1990, Krehbiel & Wright 1983). However, while several studies have suggested a rise in incumbent effects (see Alford & Hibbing 1981, Collie 1981, Garand & Gross 1984, Lee 2001), recent studies have suggested declines (Jacobson 2015) or mixed effects (Carson et al. 2020).

Research on incumbency effects has recently been extended to democracies with different electoral rules as well. For example, Hainmueller & Kern (2008) examined incumbency effects within mixed electoral systems, finding that spillover effects exist in Germany, from the SMD tier to the PR tier, which are significant enough to change electoral outcomes. In an example focusing on New Zealand and its mixed electoral system, Karp (2009) found that parties obtain an additional advantage through incumbent candidate name recognition that leads to spillovers from the SMD tier to the PR tier—although the evidence suggested incumbents benefit overall from the PR tier. In a study examining municipal elections in Denmark, Dahlgaard (2016) found an incumbency advantage exists and results in local councilors becoming more likely to campaign and run for re-election, as well as more likely to be elected. While these are very different examples, they highlight how incumbency effects take different forms and vary in their impact on elections.

I suggest that a similar effect exists in Japan because the LDP has consistently held the government party position either alone or in coalition since its inception in 1955. The impact may in fact be substantial, as a study by Reed et al. (2012) found that the main LDP and DPJ incumbent contenders in the 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2009 lower house elections

were consistently over 30 percentage points more likely to win their districts relative to non-incumbents (however, for potentially mixed incumbency effect results in Japanese elections, see Wang 2011). I thus model the Party-in-Government Continuity Condition in Figure 4.1. Here, when established parties continuously form or take turns forming the majority government, as seen on the left side of the model in Figure 4.1, they are more likely to hold those positions in the future—such as party X at time t_k. Given the LDP's consistent hold of the government party role, Japan already fulfills this dimension of systemic homogeneity, while countries like the United Kingdom do not; they have more variability in who holds the government party role between 1 and t_k.

Figure 4.1: Party-in-Government Continuity Condition



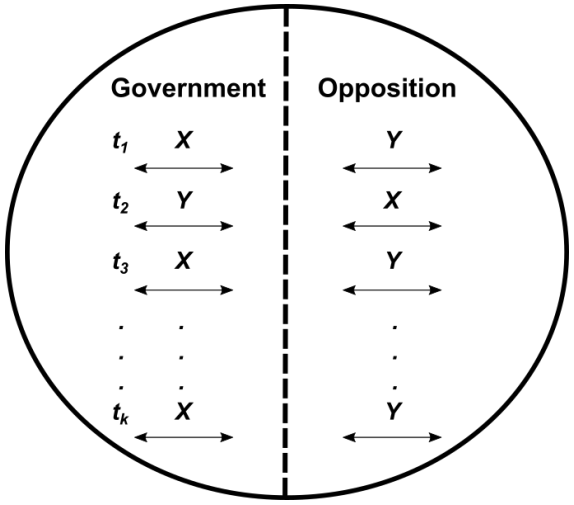
Note: X and Y refer to different parties competing for party-in-government status across elections from t_1 to t_k.

The second condition for systemic homogeneity is at the party-strategy level: political parties must be consistently homogeneous in their party strategies over time to stay in power. This is modeled in Figure 4.2, where we see that parties X and Y maintain rela-

tively stable positions, as shown with their position at some center across a spectrum at any period t in the figure. This does not mean that these parties always adopt the same policies; that is, parties need not converge on the same policy within an issue space as they do when moderating positions (Abou-Chadi & Orlowski 2016, Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009*a*, Ezrow 2005). Rather, party strategy homogeneity suggests parties, on average, change positions slowly over time to avoid drastically changing their stance on an issue from one election to the next relative to the incumbent government party. In other words, parties aim to be strategic in the way they present their issue positions. They do this because of party branding; that is, a party's name functions as a shortcut for voters come election time (Aldrich et al. 1995, Cox 1997, Downs 1957, Lupu 2013). This suggests that moving too far from policies too quickly within the Japanese context may be a losing strategy since voters punish politicians for changing positions (Tomz & Van Houweling 2012), which incentivizes maintaining a consistent party policy brand (Wittman 1989). If parties are barely changing election to election, relative both to their own previous positions and to the positions of others, then we should not only see their positions look very similar between time 1 and time 2, but there should also be very small differences between subsequent cases (time 2 versus time 3, time 3 versus time 4, and so on).

While this does not suggest that all parties converge on the same policy, there may be some movement by parties towards the center or median policy in attempts to reach the median voter. However, this is not likely to occur in all party systems, as multiparty systems tend to not adhere to the traditional Downsian model (see Downs 1957), although studies by Blais & Bodet (2006) and Golder & Stramski (2010) have suggested

Figure 4.2: Party-strategy Homogeneity Condition



Note: X and Y refer to different parties competing for party-in-government status across elections from t_1 to t_k.

levels of ideological congruence between citizen and government may not be significantly different between proportional representation systems and traditional majoritarian systems. The similarities between parties within an electoral system are one reason why it is difficult for scholars to discern parties' positions. In fact, while the ability to blur the differences between a party's positions on issues and those of other parties is an often-used strategy during campaigns (Rovny 2012, Somer-Topcu 2015), the literature on party ambiguity emphasizes such difficulties as significant obstacles for party scholars (Somer-Topcu 2009). By examining a party's strategies in a comparative manner among parties within the same system through the issue diversity dimension of party strategy, I hope to identify when changes have significant effects—and when those effects are positive or negative.

We can use a Western European example to emphasize the importance of these conditions. Like Japan, Germany is a multiparty parliamentary system. Parties entering the *Bundestag* (Germany's parliamentary lower house), however, have yielded very similar

government party coalitions. Out of 19 sessions of the *Bundestag*, the *Christian Democratic Union of Germany* (CDU) has taken part in 13 coalitions forming the majority government. However, CDU is not the only party frequenting government coalitions in Germany: the *Free Democratic Party* (FDP) has taken part in almost as many majority coalitions at 12, with the *Social Democratic Party of Germany* (SPD) taking part in 10 majority coalitions (Krause et al. 2021). In the German case, coalition bargaining is one of pathways through which parties enter government and we often see most coalitions incorporating similar party compositions over time (see Indridason 2011, Indridason & Kristinsson 2013, Tillman 2015, for conversations on coalition building, including post-electoral coalition building, cabinet-based coalition agreements, and pre-electoral coalitions).

These examples demonstrate how the same parties can sometimes continuously end up holding a government majority, as well as how we can expect little to no change beyond the status quo until a different party or coalition takes hold. This is significant because a typically non-mainstream party—a radical right party in fact—entered Germany's *Bundestag* in 2017: the *Alternative for Germany* (AFD). Not only do the historical circumstances behind this party matter—that is, this is the first radical right party in Germany since the dissolution of the *German Party* (DP) in 1961—but the electoral circumstances are a cautionary tale. Specifically, the AFD narrowly missed earning the 5 percent electoral threshold necessary to sit on the *Bundestag* after forming in 2013 but became the largest opposition party in Germany with 92 seats in the 2017 federal election (Krause et al. 2021).

Looking back at Japan, a similar outcome occurred in the 2014 general election, although it took a different turn. The original *Japan Innovation Party* (維新の党, or JIP),

was a radical right populist party that formed for this election on a platform of constitutional reform and earned 41 lower house seats, or 8.6 percent of the total seats in the lower house. However, they failed to impact policy and then reformed as *Initiatives for Osaka* (IfO) and *Vision for Reform* (VfR) in 2015, eventually coalitioning with the DPJ for upper house elections in 2016 and earning 12 seats on its own, or 61 seats with the coalition out of the 242 possible seats in the upper house. This gave them a total of 25 percent of the total seats available in the legislature and a much stronger opposition voice. They were not done, however, and the party further reformed into the new *Japan Innovation Party* (日本維新の会, or InK) in 2015 as a new radical right populist party with a focus on unlimited defense spending and neoliberal policies. It was a significant enough shift that InK became the third largest opposition party in Japan as a result of the 2021 general election, winning 41 of 465 lower house seats, including all seats for which they fielded a candidate in Osaka.

It is also important to note that novel radical party formation is not strictly limited to the ideological right. In fact, a radical left populist party *Reiwa Shinsengumi* (RS) formed in 2019 as an anti-establishment party. While this party only won 3 of 465 lower house seats in the 2021 general election, both RS and the radical right party examples are significant on a social level because they demonstrate the existence of insurgent movements that can impact different facets of life for both Japanese citizens and non-Japanese residents. Specifically, when radicalized parties enter government, they can influence policy and, at least indirectly, promote radical policies and political behavior (see Kitayama 2018, Shibuichi 2015, for examples on how radicalism can impact perceptions and treatment of resident 'Zainichi' Koreans in Japan).

These examples highlight the importance of both the Party-in-Government Continuity condition and the Party-Strategy Homogeneity Condition especially (but not exclusively) in the Japanese context. These conditions suggest parties that continuously win elections and enter the parliament must be doing something to foster that support and increase or continue their winning streak. Parties in Japan, unlike those in systems that do not foster the brand name that government party status provides them, may be cautious about extreme shifts in positions. In fact, we do not see these conditions in either the UK or Germany given the diversity in the government party role. In the UK, for example, we see parties alternate the government party role often—albeit predominantly between the Conservative and Labour parties. In fact, the Conservative Party has run the government in 12 of the 22 elections in the dataset (although once in coalition with the Liberal Democrats), while the Labour Party has run the government in the remaining 10 of the 22 elections.

Similarly, the CDU has been much less capable of winning the sole government party role in Germany than the LDP in Japan, however. In fact, the CDU has exclusively depended on coalitions to form the government. From 1983 to 1998 (4 elections), the CDU formed the government with the FDP, and then from 2005 to 2021 (4 elections) with multiple parties: the Greens in 2002, then SPD in 2005, the FDP in 2009, the SPD again in 2013 and 2017. The 2021 election lead to a government coalition of the SPD, FDP and Greens. In short, both the UK and German parties are significantly different from Japan's LDP in their ability to form governments; the LDP has rarely necessitated coalitions, often holding the government party position consistently on its own.

Thus, if the Party-in-Government Continuity Condition holds, then we need to consider the Party-strategy Homogeneity Condition to understand their success. To do this, I generate issue diversity dimension scores due to how well they capture party positioning among parties across elections. As a dimension of party strategy, I can use issue diversity scores to determine those situations in which parties adopt the Party-strategy Homogeneity Condition and those that do not. I expect that those parties that violate this condition by adopting extreme policy positions may influence the rise of opposition parties, and possibly radical parties in Japan. I expect this would occur because such parties would either isolate or attract non-traditional voters—or those voters who typically are not part of that party's core supporters—while simultaneously hurting the existing party core base. Indeed, the core voters should be punishing any politicians who change positions (Tomz & Van Houweling 2012) because of the tendency parties have to adopt certain policies. This tendency forms a reputation among voters such that those parties become associated with particular policy positions (Aldrich et al. 1995, Jones & Hudson 1998, Lupia et al. 1998, Müller 2000, Wittman 1989, 1995). If a party changes their position too quickly or too dramatically, this could hurt their electoral prospects because they may become unrecognizable to supporters, who in turn isolate them come election time. While there may be party loyalists who may focus on either the brand or the policy positions adopted, it is likely they would focus on both given they are related. In other words, a party's brand reputation may shift as they adopt or drop issues within their policy platform over time. Any shifts towards extreme positions or shifting positions too quickly could hurt electoral success.

Although the LDP is typically the consistent party-in-government, overall public opinion should still be sensitive to shifts in the LDP's positioning on issues. Since parties function within institutional and sociological environments (Golder 2003, Inglehart 1998) through which they adopt policy comprehensive or restrictive approaches, rarely changing the government party should lead to a substantively more sensitive impact on base support due to either type of change regardless of the supporters considered. In other words, unlike electoral systems where a more comprehensive policy platform may be more likely to increase their electoral success, parties in a system like Japan's would likely experience more extreme electoral reactions from voters when they move away from traditional positions. If the party's base supporters do not like the changes in party positioning, then we should expect a decline in electoral outcomes. Likewise, undecided supporters would also be less likely to accept extreme shifts given they may cease to recognize the party under such circumstances. I thus propose the following hypotheses:

H1: An increase in a party's distance from their average issue diversity dimension position should decrease electoral success.

H2: An increase in a party's distance on the issue diversity dimension between elections should decrease electoral success.

4.5 Summary

To summarize, I introduced the unique case of Japan to determine the extent to which my approach to measuring the Issue Diversity dimension can inform our understanding of Japanese party success. Specifically, I suggested that parties in the Japanese

context are careful to change their positions over time too quickly due to voter perceptions—especially in the case of incumbent government parties, such as but not exclusively including the LDP. I hypothesized that it may be the case that Japanese parties opt to change the number of issues they adopt slowly over time to avoid significantly hurting their electoral prospects, although I also suggested that changes between elections could lead to negative impacts on electoral support. I test both hypotheses in the next section.

Chapter 5

Testing the Issue Diversity Dimension Score Measure in Japan

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I test my hypotheses using the Issue Diversity dimension in the Japanese context. The Japanese case is unique because of the electoral circumstances behind it: one party has consistently held the party-in-government status with minor exceptions in its history. I referred to this as the Systemic Homogeneity Framework. When an electoral system fits within this framework, the electoral context is unlike those of cases such as the United Kingdom where the party-in-government position is much more competitive. I thus expect a shift in the traditional relationship between party strategy and electoral success, such that a more mainstream-oriented strategy is not necessarily better. I also expect between-election effects, such that adopting more issues between elections should

diminish electoral success. The Japanese thus provides an opportunity for more rigorous case work and analyses to determine exactly how the relationship between Issue Diversity and electoral success works.

5.2 Data and Methodology

I use the MARPOR dataset to generate the Issue Diversity dimension scores used to test my hypotheses (Krause et al. 2021). I use the MARPOR dataset because it is the best dataset for studying the internal dynamics of party systems due to its wide amount of party manifesto information (Somer-Topcu 2009), especially in the case of Japan.

The primary dependent variable is *Vote Share*, which is simply the percentage of the vote obtained by a party in an election. The primary variable of interest is *Issue Diversity*, a continuous variable generated using the MARPOR dataset and ranging between 0 and 100. This variable takes two forms in my analyses. To test hypothesis 1, I generate the *Issue Diversity Distance* variable. I calculate this by taking the absolute difference in Issue Diversity score from the overall mean Issue Diversity score for a party. To test Hypothesis 2, I generate the *Issue Diversity Difference* variable. I calculated this variable by taking the absolute difference between an Issue Diversity score in an election at time t and time t-1.

I control for several additional electoral factors in my models as well. First, I control for *Number of Parties Competing*, in order to represent the number of parties in competition in each election that obtain at least 2 percent of votes cast. This is a continuous variable and ranges from 4 to 10. Second, I control for *Party-in-Government* status, which

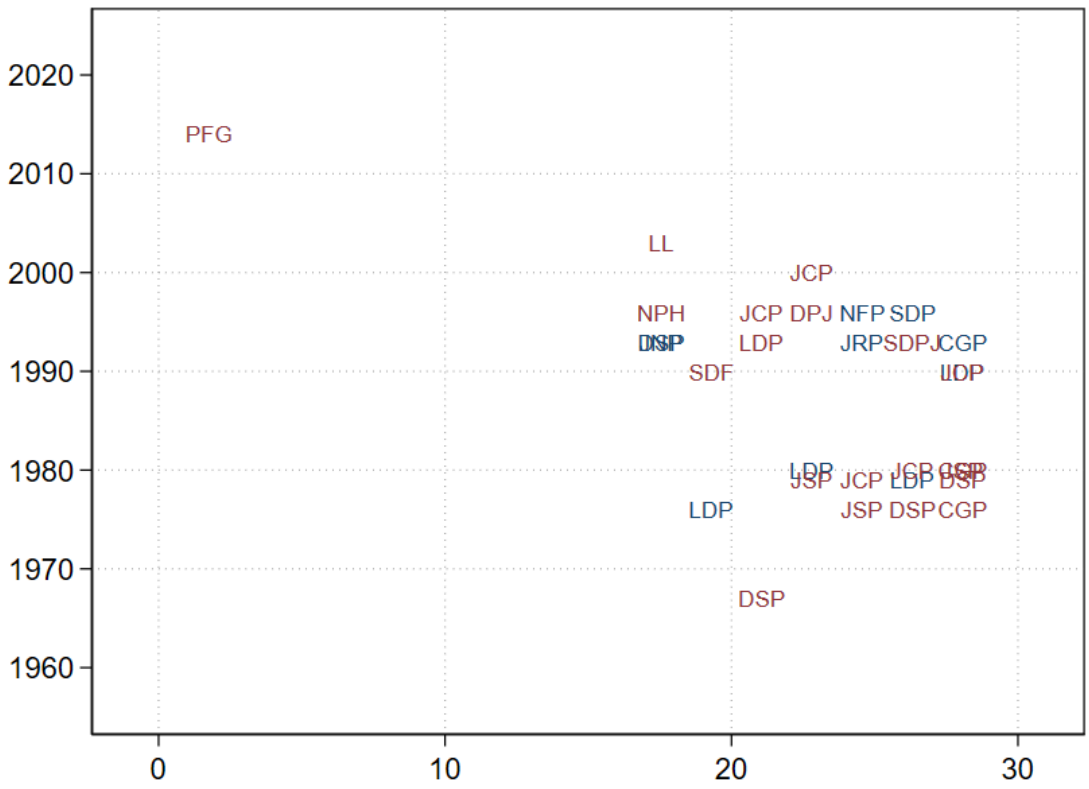
serves a measure of which party or parties control the government at time of election. This is represented by a dummy variable with 1 representing being the government party, and 0 otherwise. This control provides a means of controlling for strong incumbency effects in the data.

5.3 Results

Before the analyses, I examined Issue Diversity dimension scores visually. These results are found in Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 and are separated by the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of the Issue Diversity dimension for legibility due to size and scale. These figures represent Japanese party positions over time, from 1960 to 2014 (the latest data available from the MARPOR dataset for Japan at time of writing). The government party or parties in the case of coalitions are color coded blue. Recall that with the exception of 1993 and 2009, the LDP has consistently been the party-in-government. Thus, most LDP entries are blue with the exception of these two election years.

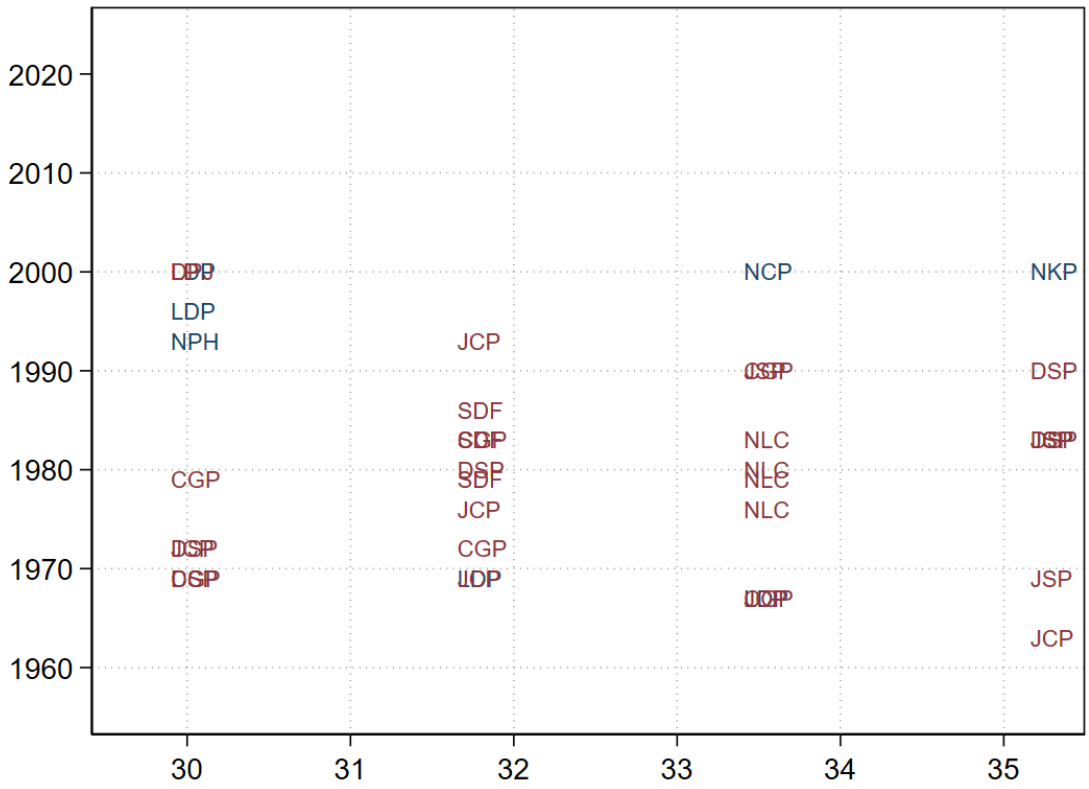
These figures are interesting as they provide an overview of what patterns exist among parties. Notice that most of the LDP's solo governments occurred when they had scores below the 25th percentile, as well as scores above the 75th percentile. However, most of LDP's coalitions—mostly with the New Clean Government Party (NKP)—occurred after the 2000 general election. This may suggest comprehensive policy platforms in the Japanese context promote government formation coalitions. We see this clearer in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.1: Japanese Party Issue Diversity Dimension Scores (0.30 or Less) by Election: 1960 to 2014



In addition to including all of the LDP's Issue Diversity scores, Figure 5.5 has three dashed vertical lines, each representing the cutoffs at the 25th percentile (30), 50th percentile (35), and 75th percentile (47). It also has one horizontal line at the year 1996. This horizontal line represents the first time LDP needed to coalition to achieve the government party role. Finally, the 1993 and 2009 elections are colored differently because those were two instances in which the LDP was not the party-in-government. According to Figure 5.5, there is a remarkable difference in variation among Issue Diversity scores before and after the 1996 General Elections. While the LDP's Issue Diversity scores varied in clusters across

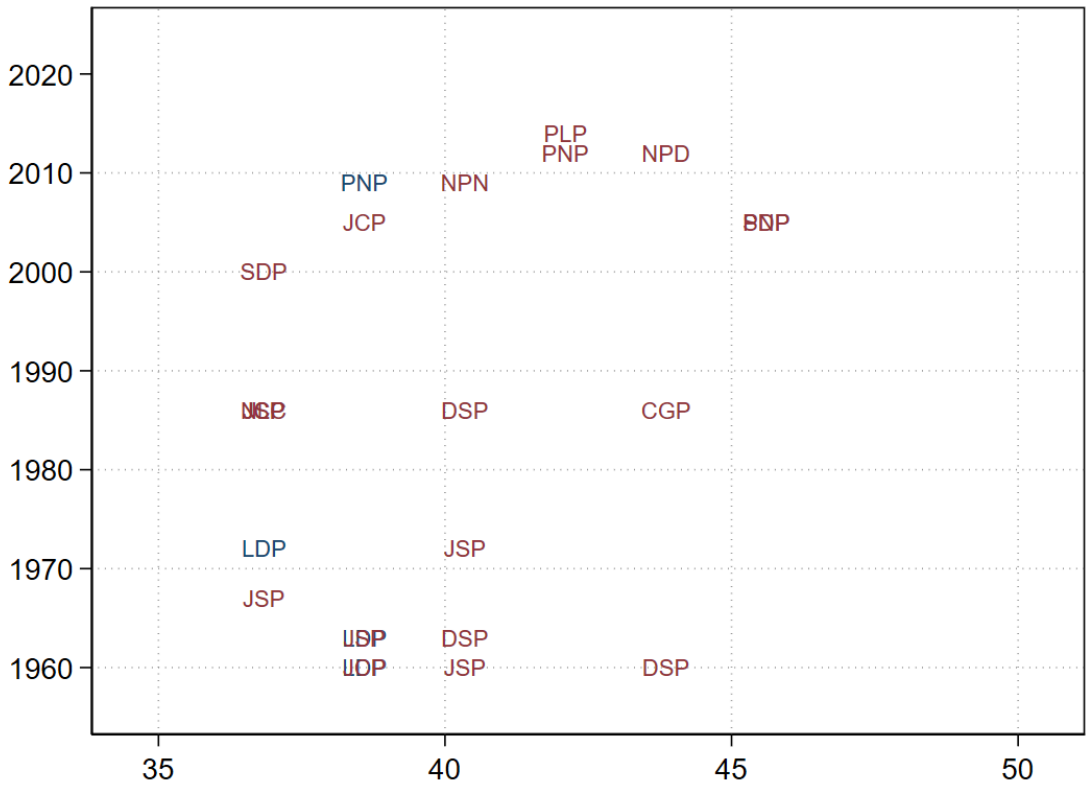
Figure 5.2: Issue Diversity Scores (25th to 50th percentile): 1960 to 2014



the dimensional spectrum, they are remarkable polarized after the 2000 General Election in that they are only higher than 50. Moreover, there is an interesting pattern across cases in 1960, 1963, 1967, and 1972: each one represents a case where the LDP adopted a mid-range Issue Diversity score. To determine the real impact of these patterns on the LDP's success, we can examine the seat changes over time in Table 5.1.

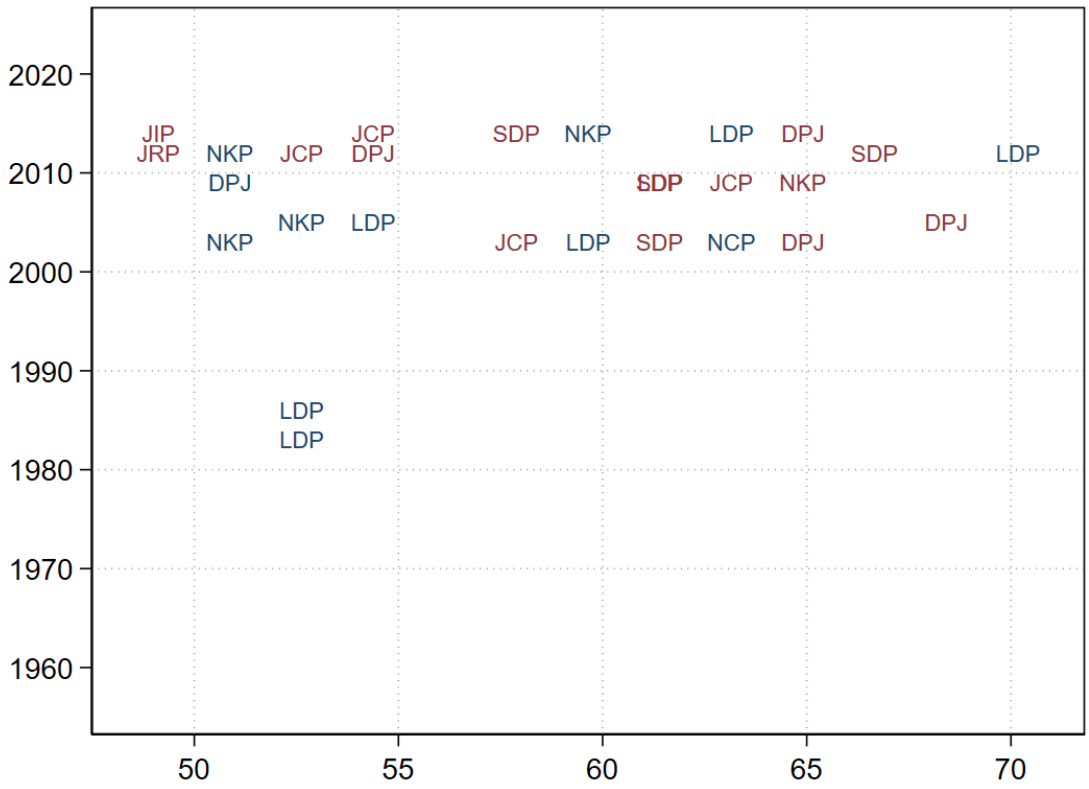
According to Table 5.1, although LDP earned 296 seats in 1960, they lost 13 seats by the next election after earning only 283 seats. From here, they adopted a relatively stable policy platform between 1963 and 1967 with almost no change in Issue Diversity

Figure 5.3: Issue Diversity Scores (50th to 75th percentile): 1960 to 2014



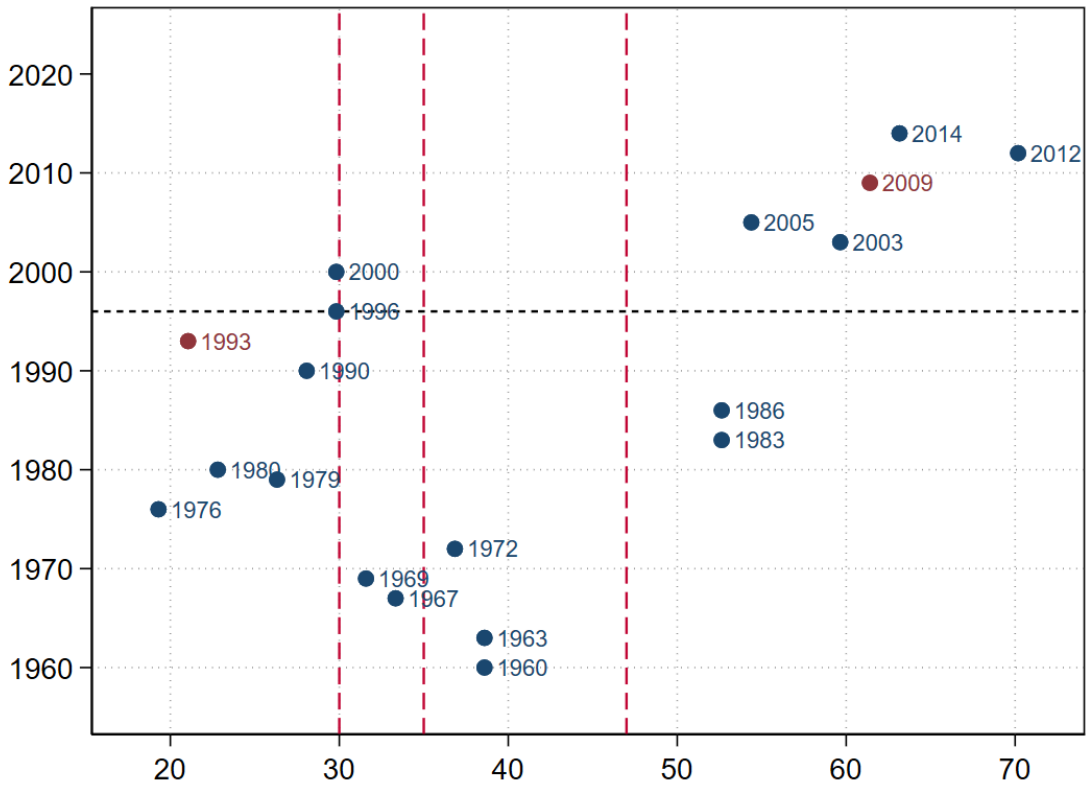
scores. However, we then see they lost an additional 6 seats in 1967 compared to 1963, having earned only 277 seats at this point. This correlates with a shift towards a more restrictive policy platform between those two elections. They then gained 11 seats in 1969, which correlates with the adoption of a more restrictive policy platform, although the shift is much smaller between 1967 and 1969 than it is between 1967 and 1963. This success is short lived, however, as they adopt a more comprehensive policy platform in 1972 to find themselves losing 17 seats in that election. This seat loss also seems to be associated with a large shift between the 1969 and 1972 elections.

Figure 5.4: Issue Diversity Scores (75th percentile or greater): 1960 to 2014



However, things become more interesting when we focus on the extremes: that is, the low and high ends of the scale. Between 1976 and 1980, the LDP increases and then decreases their position on the Issue Diversity dimension, leading to variable results: a decrease in seats by 1 in 1979 after increasing their Issue Diversity score, followed by an increase in seats by 36 in 1980 after a decrease in Issue Diversity score. We see the same pattern occur on the high end of the spectrum: the LDP gained 59 seats between 2003, where they adopted a policy platform placing them at 59.6, and the 2005 election, where they adopted a policy platform placing them at 54.3. However, when they shifted gears and adopted a policy platform of 61.4 in the 2009 election, they ended up losing 177 seats in

Figure 5.5: LDP Issue Diversity Dimension Scores: 1960 to 2014



their first electoral loss in history (the 1993 loss was due to opposition coalitions and LDP defections that kept them from holding the majority).

While there are exceptions to these patterns, the visual data suggests there may be some correlation between a party's position on the Issue Diversity dimension and electoral success. I now test the statistical relationship between this dimension of party strategy and electoral outcomes, starting with Table 5.2.

To do this, I estimated time series regressions with party fixed effects and robust standard errors to control for heteroskedasticity and possible autocorrelation in the standard

Table 5.1: Change in the Number of Lower House Seats Held by LDP, 1960 to 2014

Election	Total Seats	Constituency Seats	Proportional Seats	Seat Change
2014	291	223	68	-3
2012	294	237	57	+175
2009[B]	119	64	55	-177
2005	296	219	77	+59
2003	237	168	69	+14
2000	223	177	56	-16
1996[C]	239	169	70	+16
1993[A]	223			-52
1990	275			-25
1986	300			+50
1983	250			-34
1980	284			+36
1979	248			-1
1976	249			-22
1972	271			-17
1969	288			+11
1967	277			-6
1963	283			-13
1960	296			N/A

Notes: *A*: LDP loses Party-in-Government position for the first time. *B*: LDP loses Party-in-Government role for the second time. *C*: Marks first election under new Mixed System.

errors in an effort to test my hypotheses. Moreover, to determine the impact of each variable on party vote shares, I estimated multiple staggered regression models for each hypothesis.

I test the first hypothesis in Table 5.2 across three staggered models. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) scores for each model suggest the most parsimonious of these models is model 3. The R-squared values for model 3 suggest it explains 29.5 percent of the variation within the panel units, 4.7 percent of the variation between panel units, and 10.3 percent of the variation overall.

Examining the variables in Table 5.2, we see that *Issue Diversity Distance* coefficient is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$) in each model. The direction of the coefficient for *Issue Diversity Distance* is negative across all models,

Table 5.2: Issue Diversity Distance Regressions on Vote Share

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Issue Diversity Distance	-0.293*	-0.407*	-0.265*
	(0.126)	(0.196)	(0.124)
Number of Parties Competing	-1.170		-1.375*
	(0.709)		(0.613)
Party-in-Government (Reference Category: Not in Government)			
In Government		3.505+	4.516*
		(1.795)	(1.897)
Constant	25.329***	17.387***	25.271***
	(5.772)	(1.868)	(5.225)
AIC	744.976	748.793	739.054
R-Squared (Within)	0.248	0.225	0.295
R-Squared (Between)	0.019	0.017	0.047
R-Squared (Overall)	0.000	0.003	0.103
N-Clusters	25	25	25
N	123	123	123

Robust standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

suggesting that an increase in distance leads to decreasing voter support. Specifically in model 3, this suggests that an increase in *Issue Diversity Distance* will decrease the percentage of votes by 0.265. The *Number of Parties Competing* coefficient is also statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$) in model 3, suggesting a decrease in percentage of votes won by parties as the number of parties competing increases. This is expected as an increase in parties competing should lead to a loss in the percentage of votes among existing parties as voters have more options to choose from at the ballot box. Similarly, the coefficient for the "In Government" category of the *Party-in-Government* variable is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$) in model 3. The direction of the coefficient is positive, which is expected since parties in the government

role at the time of election should, on average, benefit from incumbency. In the Japanese case this is predominantly, although not exclusively, the LDP. To summarize, Table 2.2 provides evidence supporting Hypothesis 1 that increasing a party's distance from their average issue diversity dimension position should decrease electoral success.

The results for the second hypothesis test are found in Table 5.3. These models focus on testing the impact of the *Issue Diversity Difference* variable on a party's vote shares. Unlike the measure in the first hypothesis test, the *Issue Diversity Difference* variable here captures changes in Issue Diversity scores between elections. AIC values for these models suggest the most parsimonious model is again model 3. The R-squared values for model 3 indicate that it explains 26.9 percent of the variation within the panel units, 4.9 percent of the variation between panel units, and 22.3 percent of the variation overall.

Examining Table 5.3, we first notice that the *Issue Diversity Difference* coefficient is not statistically significant in any of the models. This suggests there is no support for Hypothesis 2 in the results. The coefficient for the *Number of Parties Competing* variable is statistically significant in model 3 at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$), however, and suggests a negative effect of parties competing on vote attainment. As in Table 5.2, this was expected given an increase in parties competing should lead to a loss of in the percentage of votes among existing parties due to an increase in options available to voters during elections. Likewise, the coefficient for the "In Government" category of the *Party-in-Government* variable is statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$) and has a positive direction in model 3. This is once again expected since parties in the government role at the time of election—typically the LDP in Japan—should benefit

Table 5.3: Issue Diversity Difference Regressions on Vote Share

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Issue Diversity Difference	0.068	-0.067	0.050
	(0.107)	(0.114)	(0.093)
Number of Parties Competing	-2.249+		-2.302*
	(1.061)		(0.958)
Party-in-Government (Reference Category: Not in Government)			
In Government		3.796	4.309+
		(2.533)	(2.214)
Constant	31.035**	15.898***	30.373***
	(7.176)	(1.468)	(6.552)
AIC	592.510	613.122	588.802
R-Squared (Within)	0.224	0.039	0.269
R-Squared (Between)	0.004	0.136	0.049
R-Squared (Overall)	0.036	0.313	0.223
N-Clusters	12	12	12
N	96	96	96

Robust standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

on average from incumbency. As model 3 is the primary model of interest in these results, I conclude there is insufficient evidence to support Hypothesis 2: I find no evidence supporting between-election effects.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to answer the question: What impacts do party strategies have on electoral outcomes in Japan? I argued that radical changes across the Issue Diversity dimension would negatively impact electoral success among Japanese parties given it would hurt voter perceptions of those parties. I presented two hypotheses to test this argument using the MARPOR dataset and time-series regressions. While I found support

that a change in a party's pre-established platform will significantly impact their electoral success (Hypothesis 1), I did not find support that party positions can impact electoral success in a shorter time horizon between elections (Hypothesis 2).

While examining the data visually, I opted for a close examination of the LDP as a test case. I found that there are indeed patterns suggesting LDP's shifts in position along the Issue Diversity dimension may be impacting their electoral success over time. I thus followed with statistical tests of my hypotheses and found interesting results. First, I found evidence supporting hypothesis 1, suggesting that an increase in a party's distance from their average Issue Diversity score does negatively impact their electoral support. Moreover, a pattern in the findings suggests that there may be some relationship among those Issue Diversity scores in the post-reform era and electoral system, although a deeper investigation is necessary to determine exactly what that is. Whether it suggests that parties in the post-reform era focusing on adopting as comprehensive a strategy as possible, or if it is simply a matter of other parties trying to be more like the LDP is unknown. Future research can, however, focus on the opposition and its relationship to the LDP in terms of Issue Diversity scores.

I did not find evidence for hypothesis 2 in my regression results, which suggests I found no evidence that between-election changes in Issue Diversity scores as operationalized in this study are significantly impacting a party's electoral fortunes. This finding is interesting given it suggests, absent of alternative means of operationalization, that voter perceptions of parties may be more critical than initially suggested, with a general preference for parties that are stable and relatively unchanging. While the results yielded from

the first hypothesis test do suggest that these perceptions can and do change, ultimately hurting those parties that stray too far from their pre-established positions, it also nevertheless suggests that we may see parties may get away with changing positions slowly over time. Additional research in a closer case study may be necessary to determine whether this is the case due to a lack of statistical support.

To summarize then, it seems that a radical change in a party's pre-established platform will significantly impact their electoral success in the Japanese context, but parties may be able to avoid significant penalties when changing positions between elections. Further work and evidence are necessary to determine if additional factors could impact this relationship, albeit in the form of a survey of voter perspectives on the issue. As the LDP has consistently been in power, this would be easy to discern as many voters have likely either considered or voted for the LDP in the past. Such a study would thus be interesting and may help determine how voters in Japan consider candidates and parties.

Future research in Japanese electoral politics should therefore consider these findings, as they present several interesting avenues of research. For example, these findings suggest the LDP may have a vested interest in innovating slowly, which may merit future case studies on how parties campaign, how they opt to use their rhetoric, and what (and whether they keep the) promises they make. These findings may also yield interesting projects on the role of accountability within multiparty systems, and especially mixed electoral systems. Recent research on accountability has in fact demonstrated that electoral punishment does occur in mixed systems (see Breunig et al. 2020, Rudolph & Däubler 2016, for a few studies on how voters hold parties accountable under mixed systems). Ac-

countability is not just for plurality-majority systems after all. As Japan uses a closed-list proportional representation system for its proportional tier, this finding could be the start of a study on how voters hold parties accountable in a one-party dominant system where the government party has the possibility of losing control. How impactful can that potential be in shaping party behavior? Future research could address this question thoroughly.

These findings also have implications on party formation, given we have seen a rise of extremist parties in Japan. Future studies could examine the role of Issue Diversity on party formation in Japan, including the implications behind new or extremist opposition parties emerging due to a lack of change in the electoral system. This could be achieved via surveys of Japanese voters, or by examining patterns among opposition parties relative to the LDP. In short, the results in this study suggest that Japan is more complex than party scholars may realize, and further research on this case can enlighten researchers on the importance of party behavior.

Chapter 6

Issue Diversity Among Radical Right Populist Parties in Western Europe

6.1 Introduction

Using the insight gained in the case studies on the UK and Japan, I attempt to answer one important question in this chapter: What explains the rise of radical right populist (RRP) parties in Western Europe? I examine whether the issue diversity dimension of party strategy can capture the behavior of RRP parties and explain the electoral success among RRP parties given their unique status within the political arena. As their success across several European countries has elevated these parties to previously unimagined heights, I intend to determine the conditions under which these parties succeed. I examine how RRP

parties have adapted to electoral environments and expect they can converge towards comprehensive policy platforms (a mainstream-oriented approach) to increase their electoral favor under specific environmental condition. Specifically, I suggest that voting for a RRP party can become more attractive if these parties adopt broader issue policy platforms.

6.2 Theory

Radical right parties have become increasingly important in elections across Western Europe although they have existed for a long time. For example, the right-wing nationalist party *National Front* (FN) in France began running candidates in 1973 in the hope of obtaining legislative success through their anti-immigration policy platforms. While they initially received less than one percent of the vote, FN had become one of the strongest radical right parties in Western Europe by 2017 with 13.20 percent of the vote and eight seats in the assembly. Another example is the far-right *United Kingdom Independence Party* (UKIP). UKIP was unsuccessful in the UK General Elections until 2001 when it gained 1.5 percent of the vote, slowly rising to 12.6 percent in 2015 through their anti-EU platform and rhetoric. The latter election was an important phenomenon as UKIP became the predominant third party in the UK (Sky News 2012). These are significant achievements for small parties that demonstrate how, while not necessarily threats early on, radical right parties can become competitive and threaten larger established parties. The question now is, what explains their increasing success?

While we see a familiar pattern in these cases as small, or niche, extremist parties accumulate support and seats in parliaments over time, these two cases only touch the

surface of the radical right's impact on politics in Western Europe. In fact, the radical right has recently been represented in the parliaments of about half of the countries of Western Europe—taking on responsibilities as either the party-in-government or opposition (as in the cases of Austria and Italy), as well as minority support parties (as in the cases of Denmark and the Netherlands) (Mudde 2012). However, their rise to success is important for scholars due to what they represent as they become increasingly popular and prevalent in the political arena: increasing anti-establishment or ultra-nationalistic support among the populace (Minkenberg & Perrineau 2007, Mudde 1996*b*, 2007). Indeed, these parties often promote anti-establishment rhetoric, although their targets can vary. In some cases, this rhetoric is simply directed against the major, traditional parties that win elections and run the government. In other cases, however, the target is the larger democratic system. The latter is achieved through the proliferation of fascistic or populist ideological stances that can spread across a population, sometimes without a clear catalyst. I therefore evaluate these parties in an effort to understand their success.

6.3 Variations in the Radical Right

To start, radical right parties are not typically large in size but rather small and often considered niche. While not all niche parties are considered radical right parties, most radical right parties are considered niche in the existing literature. Yet, few scholars have attempted to examine the radical right as niche parties to determine if a relationship exists between the two concepts, likely due to the lack of a comprehensive means of capturing such behavior. In fact, many studies focus instead on the voter side of the equation (see Falter &

Schumann 1988, Han 2016, Rooduijn 2014*b*, Rydgren 2008, Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2009, for select examples). While a study by Wagner & Meyer (2017) investigated radical right populist (RRP) parties as niche parties to determine how accommodation by traditional right-wing parties help RRP parties become more mainstream, no one to this point has examined how RRP parties change their strategic, policy-oriented behavior to mimic more traditional mainstream parties. I hope to fill the gap in the literature by investigating how the issue diversity dimension of party strategy impacts these parties' electoral prospects.

When investigating the radical right, it is important to note that it is not ideologically homogeneous. While some scholars suggest voters may perceive these parties as protest parties and thus support them due to their "outcast" status in efforts to indicate discontent with political elites (Betz 1994, Fennema 1997, Van der Brug & Fennema 2003), this approach downplays the importance of ideology. This is problematic for two reasons. First, if voters only support these parties because they perceive them as outsiders in the political arena, then party ideology would at best have a minimal impact on their electoral success (Golder 2016). However, evidence suggests that these parties are largely motivated by similar ideological and pragmatic considerations as those of other parties (Van Der Brug et al. 2000, 2005), and so we cannot simply ignore party ideology. Second, ideology serves as a meaningful cognitive heuristic that voters and parties use during elections: voters use it to identify the ideological content of policy issues (Huckfeldt et al. 1999), while parties use it as a symbolic predisposition for particular policy attitudes (Sears et al. 1980). In fact, party ideology functions as the normative base of a party's policies while providing

voters with the advantage of being more generally formulated and clear than the nationally centered policies parties pursue (Christian & Campbell 1983, Sainsbury 1980). In other words, we can better understand these parties by examining their ideology than by only examining their policies. If party ideological foundations impact success, then it is necessary to disentangle the differences among the radical right to determine both degree of heterogeneity and any associated levels of success.

Existing research on ideology among radical right parties has been comprehensive. Golder (2016) specifically categorizes the party ideologies of the radical right as: extremism, radicalism, populism, and nationalism (p. 482). However, due to considerable overlap between these ideological groups, they can be reduced to extremism and populism. The former is interesting as studies have suggested that parties retaining an extremist, or antidemocratic, ideology are almost always electorally weak (Ignazi 1992, Taggart 1995, Golder 2003, Cole 2005, Carter 2005) and thus not considered legitimate or effective options among voters in most countries (Bos & van der Brug 2010). Indeed, there are few truly extremist parties in the world, and those that do exist rarely succeed electorally. A notable exception was the Italian Social Movement, which initially saw a decline in support during the 1980s followed by an increase support in 1994 when scandals and corruption allegations led to the collapse of the center-right and center-left parties (Karapin 1998). Few extremist parties have been as successful, but the populist variety is a different story and deserves further study.

To start, what ultimately differentiates radical parties at the ideological level? While some may suggest it is the content in messaging, studies have found that the content

of RRP party messages does not vary significantly from those of extremist parties; rather the intensity through which they push their messages is what distinguishes the two (Mudde 1996*b*, Zaslove 2004). The populist variety of the radical right has been successful due to the impact of the populist ideology on the party and how it is perceived during elections. Populism postulates a struggle between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite," with a focus on translating the view of the people into policy, which RRP parties often suggest the current ruling elite refuses to do. However, as a "thin-centered ideology," populism usually must attach to other more substantive sets of ideas to thrive (Abts & Rummens 2007, Mudde 2004, 2007, Stanley 2008). This is interesting because we may then expect populist parties to be predominant among both the ideological left and the right. However, as an "add-on" ideology to traditional right-wing or a left-wing ideology, populist parties have been predominantly associated with parties of the right to form either neo-liberal or radical right-wing populists in the European context (Mudde 2007, Pauwels 2010). For these reasons, I focus exclusively on the RRP flavor of populism in this study. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge studies such as Gomez et al. (2016), March & Mudde (2005), (March 2011), and Rooduijn et al. (2017) that demonstrate populism is increasingly found among parties of the contemporary European radical left as well (see Fagerholm 2018, for a good comparison of the radical right and the radical left).

6.4 Argument

I argue that adopting more policy issues can make RRP parties more appealing to voters than non-RRPs parties, although especially traditionally mainstream parties, due

to the conflict manifest within their populist ideology. RRP parties are unique in that they can distinguish themselves from mainstream parties, while also simultaneously adopting the same types of comprehensive platforms that help traditionally mainstream parties in elections (Meguid 2005, 2008). This is achieved through the populist "add-on" to their ideological leanings, which allows them to capitalize on legitimate forms of dissatisfaction among the democratic populace (Abts & Rummens 2007) through criticism of either the political system as a whole, or other specific politicians. Recalling Downs (1957), parties that succeed in two-party elections want to minimize the distance between themselves and voters. However, things become more complicated in multiparty competition. Based on work by Arrow (1963), Cooper (2001) and Riker (1982) suggest that a system of choosing where every possible permutation of preferences is transitive when given more than two choices does not exist. This is problematic as it suggests it is much more difficult to present a candidate in a multiparty system that is preferred by a majority of the populace, which can hurt perceptions of legitimacy in a political system. While Cox (1987) presents ways to reduce or eliminate some of these difficulties through strategic coordination on either the elite or voter side, multiparty systems remain complicated because some parties may benefit from moderating their positions (Abou-Chadi & Orlowski 2016, Adams & Somer-Topcu 2009*a*, Ezrow 2005), while others may opt for non-centrist positions to maintain their supporters (Adams 1999*b*, Adams & Merrill III 1999). RRP parties pursue the latter through their focus on populism, which in turn impacts their party brand through extremist claims that opposing parties are divisive and fail to represent the average voter (Mudde 1996*a*, Voerman & Lucardie 1992)

A party's brand is important because it serves as a heuristic for voters come election time. As parties need to distinguish themselves from other parties for the sake of their electoral success (Cox 1990, Kitschelt 1994), their brand functions as a reputational heuristic voters can use to estimate whether the party's previous behavior can inform them regarding a party's future behavior (Aldrich et al. 1995, Cox 1997, Downs 1957, Lupu 2013). In other words, voters can use the party's brand reputation as well as how a party or candidate has performed to reward or punish parties (Key 1966, Kramer 1971). However, this leads to a puzzle in the case of RRP parties: how do RRP parties enter voters' minds if they do not necessarily have a track record to fall back on come election time?

Campaigning may help resolve the puzzle, as it is possible that intensive campaigning can improve a party's electoral prospects. Studies have found both experimental (Gerber & Green 2000) and survey-based (Karp et al. 2008) evidence that campaigns at the local level are the most effective at mobilizing and turning out voters. However, Karp et al. (2008) found that candidate-based systems may provide more opportunities for mobilization than proportional representation systems given the former's ability to foster a "personal vote" (for more on the personal vote and the "home style," see Cain et al. 1987). Given the personalistic manner in which elections occur, and the lack of a track record to inform voters, RRP parties have an incentive to promote their message through leadership in a future-oriented manner. In other words, these parties promote prospective voting, wherein voters judge a party's governing potential and ability to improve the status quo (Lewis-Beck & Tien 1996, Lockerbie 1992). RRP parties achieve this through strategic use of the reputational party brand. Several studies link the radical right's success to the na-

ture of party competition, with evidence suggesting they face a favorable environment when parties traditionally considered mainstream converge within the policy space (Kitschelt & McGann 1997). This convergence pushes voters towards populist parties, including those on the radical right, which criticize mainstream parties for colluding rather than competing for power (Golder 2016). However, this reasoning requires that mainstream parties change their positioning.

Rather than wait for mainstream parties to converge towards their policies, RRP parties can converge towards mainstream parties by increasing their issue diversity through the use of populist ideology. Through the incorporation of (typically non-centrist) right-wing ideology, populism manages to connect political issues to social mobilization against globalization, the proliferation of Euroscepticism, and a sense of crisis occurring within political systems (Taggart 2004). In this way, the populist strategy depends upon the context in which parties compete as well as the way in which they frame competition. When voters find they do not like certain policies out of fear or when they see "injustices" occur, they become discontent with the status quo in the political system. This is especially prevalent when scandals occur, as well as during bad economic periods.

6.4.1 What are RRP party issues?

Given the conflict within populist ideology, RRP parties thrive when they can demonstrate the political system is corrupt, which is easy to do when scandals erupt. As scandals are a common and problematic occurrence within politics across all countries, often leading to voters losing trust in the government (Banducci & Karp 1994, Clarke et al. 1998, Lanoue & Headrick 1994, Hetherington 1999, McAllister 2000). This erosion

of trust provides RRP parties with a powerful opportunity to boost their party brand while hurting their opponents' party brand. The erosion of trust is so impactful that RRP parties like to ensure voters remember scandals (Golder 2016). However, the erosion of government trust is not the only impact scandals can have, as they negatively impact political institutions (Bowler & Karp 2004) and ultimately erode confidence in democracy entirely. For example, a study by Birch (2010) found that citizens who perceive elections as fair are more likely to vote than those who have reservations about electoral conduct. As voters may become disillusioned with the system or even lose interest in politics, the outcome would be reduced voter turnout that can hurt the electoral process. Even so, the situation can become especially problematic as supporters of RRP parties may be more willing to mobilize and turn out to vote once the party becomes more electorally successful (Immerzeel & Pickup 2015). If this is the case, it could provide some insight into these parties' rising popularity across Western European countries.

In addition to scandals, RRP parties thrive when the country is in a bad economic situation as it provides them with the ability to pursue what are usually anti-immigrant and anti-European policy stances. One example is in the campaign slogan, "Eliminate unemployment: Stop immigration!" by the German Republicans (Betz 1994, p. 416). Since the economy impacts party support positively or negatively depending on economic conditions, these types of campaigns attract voters. While economic issues have predominantly been a mainstream party issue, less than favorable economic conditions have hurt mainstream parties and favored RRP parties. In fact, Arzheimer & Carter (2006) and Jackman & Volpert (1996) find unemployment is one of the primary factors associated with radical right suc-

cess, as high levels of unemployment seemingly provide optimal conditions for mobilizing protest campaigns among the extreme right. This does not suggest RRP party voter bases consist predominantly of the unemployed, nor does this suggest that unemployment has a relationship with immigration in real terms. In fact, the literature on whether this is the case is mixed. A study by Sébastien & Jiménez (2011) found immigration only has a temporary impact on natives' unemployment, depending upon the policy framework, while a study by Boubtane et al. (2013) found evidence of migration contributing to host economic prosperity, including a negative impact on both aggregate unemployment and native-born and foreign-born unemployment rates. These parties nevertheless polish their "pure" party brand through campaigning by tying this issue to other issues.

Moreover, RRP parties often tie economic issues to anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic policy stances given they typically own these issues. Issue ownership occurs when voters perceive a party is the expert on an issue (Bélanger & Meguid 2008). RRP parties own the immigration issue through their anti-globalization or Eurosceptic rhetoric. Specifically, these parties adopt xenophobic strategies that target immigrants and foreign workers, although especially those of non-European descent (Jackman & Volpert 1996). In fact, Hainsworth (1992) described immigration as the RRP "issue par excellence" due to how strongly RRPs own that issue. It is such that supporters of RRPs in Western Europe considered the question of immigration by far the most important issue on the political agenda—and in this way are the most hostile towards immigrants (Betz 1994, p. 104). It is so impactful that, at the party level, ecological investigations have found that the *National Front* performs best within high immigration and working-class conditions (Arzheimer &

Carter 2006, Kitschelt & McGann 1997, Lubbers & Scheepers 2002). In fact, studies by Elisabeth (2005) and Arzheimer & Carter (2006) found that blue collar workers and small business owners in France and Denmark are much more likely to vote for RRP parties if they believed in limiting the reach of the European Union. By tying immigration to Euroscepticism, or the position against joining or expanding the European Union (Van Kessel et al. 2020), as well as anti-globalization claims (Vinocur 2017), these parties can capture support from many in the working class.

While RRP parties do not exclusively campaign on Euroscepticism platforms, they are typically the strongest opponents of the European Union in national party systems (Gómez-Reino & Llamazares 2013) and do take hard stances on European integration and EU membership (Szczerbiak & Taggart 2008) since they see immigration and "Europeanization" as threats to national interest, sovereignty, and identity (Van Elsas & Van Der Brug 2015, Zaslove 2004). Indeed, these parties treat Europeanization and globalization as the enemy of all who care about national identity and the inequities resulting from an increasingly connected world (if interested, see Brune & Garrett 2005, for a good study on the potential real effects of globalization on inequities). They also take hard stances at the supranational level for the same reasons (see Brack 2012, 2013, 2015, Cutts et al. 2011, Minkenberg & Perrineau 2007, for more on RRP parties and Euroscepticism at the European Parliamentary level). Together, these policy issues help make up the typical RRP party policy platform.

6.4.2 Framing issues among RRP parties

RRP parties frame scandals and economic downturns as crises and failures of "corrupt elites," which provide voters with "evidence" that a major overhaul of existing governmental institutions is necessary while improving their "pure" people-oriented party brand. Framing here is not unlike the framing process discussed in Druckman (2004) and Merolla et al. (2013), as RRPs use the issue space to argue the futility of existing government and elicit such responses from the public by controlling the conversation. A RRP party can frame issues in a manner invoking feelings of discontent among both their own supporters and supporters of other parties. Indeed, a study by Otjes et al. (2018) suggests these parties activate economic nativism, or the suggestion that foreign forces threaten the national economic interest through immigration and free trade, among their supporters to substantively increase their electoral fortunes. We see this occur because the populist transformation of their party brand differentiates RRP parties from typical parties through, "a mixture of homespun common sense and emotional appeal" (Canovan 1999, p. 15), which is especially impactful under mediocre economic conditions since most anti-establishment rhetoric is already sensationalist and prone to claiming "corrupt elites" cause crises (Rooduijn 2014*a*, Rooduijn & Burgoon 2018). As such, this may be one way in which parties can avoid supply side restraints on their ability to rise and thrive (see Alonso & Rovira Kaltwasser 2015, for an interesting example of supply side restraints RRP parties face in Spain).

As radicalized parties have vocally framed issues linking immigration to unemployment, it is important to note that perceptions are significant factors behind RRP party success since voters may begin to believe a link between the immigration and unemployment

exists when facing mediocre economic conditions (Golder 2003) due to how persistently RRP parties promote these claims. However, there is little theoretical or empirical evidence to support the claim that immigration causes unemployment (Borjas 1994, 1995, Friedberg & Hunt 1995, Zimmermann 1995) and, in fact, most empirical studies find that immigration does not influence wages or unemployment (Altonji & Card 2018, Borjas 1994, Fromentin 2013). However, actual economic crises such as the Great Depression of the 1920s and the Great Recession in 2007 may have advanced the rise of social unrest, political instability, and not coincidentally radical party formation as well (De Bromhead et al. 2013, Ponticelli & Voth 2020). It is nevertheless important to note that it is not the policy of interest that matters so much as the environmental conditions. In fact, Grittersova et al. (2016) found little evidence that radical parties benefit from fiscal adjustment policies established during crises. Rather, the uncertainty behind crises typically increases after major economic and political shocks (Bloom 2009). RRP parties know this and take advantage of these situations to increase their electoral favor among specific groups of voters.

6.4.3 Who supports RRP parties?

Who supports these parties is important to consider. A study by Bowler & Lanoue (1992) on the Canadian New Democratic Party's (NDP) electoral prospects during the 1984 federal election suggested the NDP won support from two groups: party loyalists who supported NDP regardless of its electoral prospects, and protest voters who were dissatisfied with the major parties or incumbent government. The party loyalists, or base supporters, are thus those supporters with xenophobic tendencies who will support these parties so long as they do not abandon their anti-immigrant stance due to a feeling of increasing group

threat and resource conflicts. Specifically, voters native to a country may begin feeling threatened by competition for public resources, and thus lash out when confronted with increasing immigration (Quillian 1995, Semyonov et al. 2006). These "losers of modernity" (Betz 1994, p. 25) are typically uneducated voters who have poor economic prospects.

The protest voter group is significant because of the reasoning behind their vote for RRP parties. Unlike base supporters, these voters do not regularly support RRP parties, but rather see them as an alternative to the traditional mainstream party. According to Pop-Eleches (2010, p. 236), these voters are not typically driven by the appeal of the radicalized party's ideological or policy position, but rather due to the radicalized party's rejection of other potential choices. This approach to voting thus assumes that parties like those of the RRP flavor are "insurgent" alternatives that voters can turn to during times of frustration with mainstream parties (Pop-Eleches 2010, p. 238). In a system without RRPs, discontent voters would have nowhere to go or even manifest their satisfaction except through protest voting (Alvarez et al. 2018, Denemark & Bowler 2002, Ford et al. 2012), possibly abstaining from the civic process altogether (see Dassonneville et al. 2015*b*, Palfrey & Rosenthal 1985, for more on why voters abstain), or seeking new political avenues. However, while protest voting may serve as a significant factor in RRP party success, it is hard to determine when it occurs (Giugni & Koopmans 2007). Moreover, attributing all RRP party success to protest voting suggests that the party's ideological positions are irrelevant as voters would support them if and only if they do not like the mainstream parties.

I suggest that the strategy of promoting themselves as the key for resolving government induced ills in society is electorally fruitful when these parties increase the number

of issues they adopt to mimic mainstream party policy platforms because they also attract voters with anti-immigrant leanings who otherwise would not consider these parties realistic alternatives. As immigration is their primary message (Hainsworth 1992), these parties can entangle the immigration issue with other policy issues, some of which already occurs in the case of economic issues (Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Jackman & Volpert 1996) and Euroscepticism (Gómez-Reino & Llamazares 2013, Jackman & Volpert 1996, Szczerbiak & Taggart 2008, Taggart 2004, Van Elsas & Van Der Brug 2015, Zaslove 2004). Since these parties care about policy (Wittman 1973), adopting additional policy issues to their platform can help them come off as realistic (non-niche) competitors among those non-protest voters who want a realistic alternative to the traditional mainstream party as they can capture more of what these voters want to see in a competitive party.

The ability to address more issues within their policy platform should be especially important during times of economic crisis, as congruence between voters and the government on issues of interest often decreases considerably (Rooduijn et al. 2016, Traber et al. 2018), resulting in voters looking for alternatives. When voters do seek out alternatives, RRP party messages that the existing political system and its elites are out of touch with ordinary people (Rydgren 2007) can become more convincing if they behave more like traditional parties since this approach places them on the competitive party radar as opposed to fringe or protest options. Some evidence of this phenomenon exists as studies have found unemployment, immigration and income inequalities significantly increase voter support for RRP parties (Georgiadou et al. 2018), as well as research suggesting more typically mainstream, center-right parties fail to outperform radical right parties when they do not focus

on immigration during economic downturns (Downes & Loveless 2018). We have also seen this strategy work for another party family with resounding success: green parties.

Green parties have seen success over time using this proposed strategy. Originally, green parties functioned as traditional niche-parties with one family of issues in mind: the environment. While this began as opposition to nuclear power (Kitschelt 1989, Kreuzer 1990, Richardson & Rootes 2006, Rudig 1985, Rüdig 2012), green parties have since mobilized on varying environmental issues at different points in time. Nevertheless, they have not focused only on the environment, nor have they been limited to the typical single-issue stereotype that befalls most niche parties. In fact, Green parties have rejected the traditional single-issue party agenda, adopting liberal positions on social issues, including immigration, women's rights, pacifist foreign policies, and predominantly leftist economic issues (Grant & Tilley 2019). Indeed, Green parties shifted their position from predominantly radical environmentalist positions in the 1980s to a much broader left-libertarian position (Kaelberer 1998, Lowe & Rüdig 1986). These changes have yielded positive results for Green parties as they have increased their support among the populace, and so it is necessary to consider whether this strategy works for RRP parties. RRP parties may attract those voters who care about the immigration issue, but who may not otherwise vote for them, if they portray themselves as competitive alternatives by increasing the size of their issue platforms. This provides the hypothesis for testing:

H: If RRP parties increase the number of issues they adopt, they will experience more electoral success.

6.5 Summary

To summarize, I have suggested testing the Issue Diversity dimension on a unique set of parties in Western Europe: Radical Right Populist (RRP) parties. These parties are unique given they try to "sell" voters their specific anti-establishment, anti-immigration, and anti-European party brand through rhetoric and issue framing that specifically establishes them as the solution to social, economic, and political problems. I thus hypothesized that RRP parties may benefit electorally from increasing the number of issues in their policy platforms. I test this hypotheses in the next section.

Chapter 7

Testing the Issue Diversity Dimension Among Radical Right Populist Parties in Western Europe

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I use the issue diversity measure to estimate Radical Right Populist (RRP) party electoral success. To do this, I examine Western European countries with RRP parties due to their abundance in that region. Using Golder (2003) as a guide, I examined 17 RRP parties across 12 countries from 1956 to 2021 using data collected from the Manifesto Project Dataset. I analyze this data using time series fixed effects regressions. I then present a discussion of the results.

7.2 Data

I collected party manifestos for 12 Western European countries from the Manifesto Project Dataset, ranging from 1956 to 2021 (Krause et al. 2021). I then proceeded to identify RRP parties within the dataset. Since categorization is often not clear-cut within the literature and few studies using identical lists of radical right parties (Betz 1994, Betz & Immerfall 1998), I use the lists generated by Golder (2003) and Wagner (2012*a*) as a guide to form a comprehensive list of RRP parties. I provide this list in Table 7.1. This leaves a dataset of 18 different RRP parties across 12 countries from 1956 to 2021, for a total of 104 RRP parties in the dataset.

Table 7.1: RRP Party Totals and Frequencies

Country	RRP Party Names (Frequencies)
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria (19)
Belgium	Flemish Block (8), Flemish Interest (4)
Denmark	Progress Party (11)
France	National Front (8)
Germany	Alternative for Germany (3)
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (3)
Italy	North League (8), Brothers of Italy (2)
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (4), Fortuyn List (2)
Norway	Progress Party (12)
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (3)
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (8), Ticino League (3), Freedom Party of Switzerland (3)
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Independence Party (3)
Total	104

This dataset provides an opportunity for comparative analyses of RRP party behavior, although it is important to note that the dangers of selection bias still exist. Indeed, selection bias can seriously damage the ability to make valid inferences (Geddes 1990,

Golder 2003, Heckman 1979). This is especially problematic because of the limitations in the MARPOR dataset. Specifically, it only includes those parties that have earned at least one legislative seat in the past. This threshold hurts analytical estimates, so we must be wary of this. While there is little we can do when there is a lack of data available, it is still important to acknowledge this limitation—especially in small N studies such as this one.

I use several variables to conduct my analyses. The dependent variable for electoral success is *Vote Share*, which is the percentage of the vote obtained by a party in an election. The main independent variable is *Issue Diversity Score*, a continuous variable generated using the MARPOR dataset and ranges between 0 and 100.

I control for several electoral factors in my models as well. First, I control for *Ideology* as represented by right-left (RILE) scores provided by MARPOR. This will help determine whether variations in RRP party ideologies have an impact on their success. Second, I control for *Number of Parties Competing*, in order to represent the number of parties in competition in each election that obtain at least 2 percent of the votes. This is a continuous variable and ranges from 3 to 17. It is important to note that this variable does not exclude non-RRP parties—it is a measure of all parties that compete. Third, I control for *Incumbency*, which is a dummy variable capturing whether a RRP has ever previously won a seat in a legislature (coded 1) or not (coded 0). Finally, I control for mediocre economic and social conditions via a time-based variable: *Crisis*. This is a categorical variable that identifies large periods of global recession, as well as pre-recession and post-recession periods. This is coded as follows: pre-1973 (Pre-Crisis 1), 1973 to 1975 (Crisis 1: reflecting the recession of the 1970s), 1976 to 1980 (Post-Crisis 1 / Pre-Crisis 2), 1981

to 1982 (Crisis 2: reflecting the recession of the early 1980s), 1983 to 2006 (Post-Crisis 2 / Pre-Crisis 3), 2007 to 2010 (Crisis 3: representing the Great Recession), and 2011 to Present (Post-Crisis 3). For my analyses I use time-series regression while controlling for party fixed effects and robust standard errors to control for heteroskedasticity and correct for any autocorrelation in the standard errors.

7.3 Results

The time series regression results are found in Table 7.2. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) across these models suggest that the most parsimonious model of the two is model 2. This model's R-squared values suggest it explains 35.5 percent of the variation within the panel units, 0.5 percent of the variation between panel units, and 14 percent of the variation overall.

Starting with the coefficient for the *Issue Diversity Score* variable we notice it is statistically significant across each model at varying levels: the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$) in model 1, and at the 99 percent confidence interval ($p < 0.01$) in model 2. The direction of the coefficient is positive for both models, while the magnitude of the coefficient for this variable in models seem to vary slightly. This slight variation is attributable to the impact of the *Crisis* categories given that their inclusion in one model and omission in the other is the primary difference between them. Interpreting model 2 given it is the most parsimonious, the coefficient for *Issue Diversity Score* suggests that increasing Issue Diversity scores by one-unit will increase the percentage of votes won by 0.081. While this supports the hypothesis, whether this effect is meaningful necessitates discussion.

Table 7.2: Time-Series Regressions on Vote Share among RRP parties in Western Europe

	(1)	(2)
Issue Diversity Score	0.107*	0.081**
	(0.041)	(0.026)
Ideology (RILE)	0.017	0.044
	(0.071)	(0.063)
Incumbency *(Reference Category: No Previous Legislative Seats)*		
Previous Seat in Legislature	5.432**	4.802**
	(1.680)	(1.375)
Number of Parties Competing	0.485	0.068
	(0.677)	(0.360)
Crisis *(Reference Category: Pre-1973 (Pre-Crisis 1)*		
1973 to 1975 (Crisis 1)		5.169
		(4.491)
1976 to 1980 (Pre-Crisis 2)		3.661
		(3.987)
1983 to 2006 (Pre-Crisis 3)		5.000*
		(1.738)
2007 to 2010 (Crisis 3)		9.705***
		(2.220)
2011 to Present (Post-Crisis 3)		10.894***
		(1.152)
Constant	-5.045	-6.436+
	(7.498)	(3.355)
AIC	617.641	581.219
R-Squared (Within)	0.155	0.355
R-Squared (Between)	0.016	0.005
R-Squared (Overall)	0.066	0.140
N-Clusters	17	17
N	102	99

Robust standard errors in parentheses

Note: the "1981 to 1982 (Crisis 2)" category is omitted as there are no cases with RRP parties.

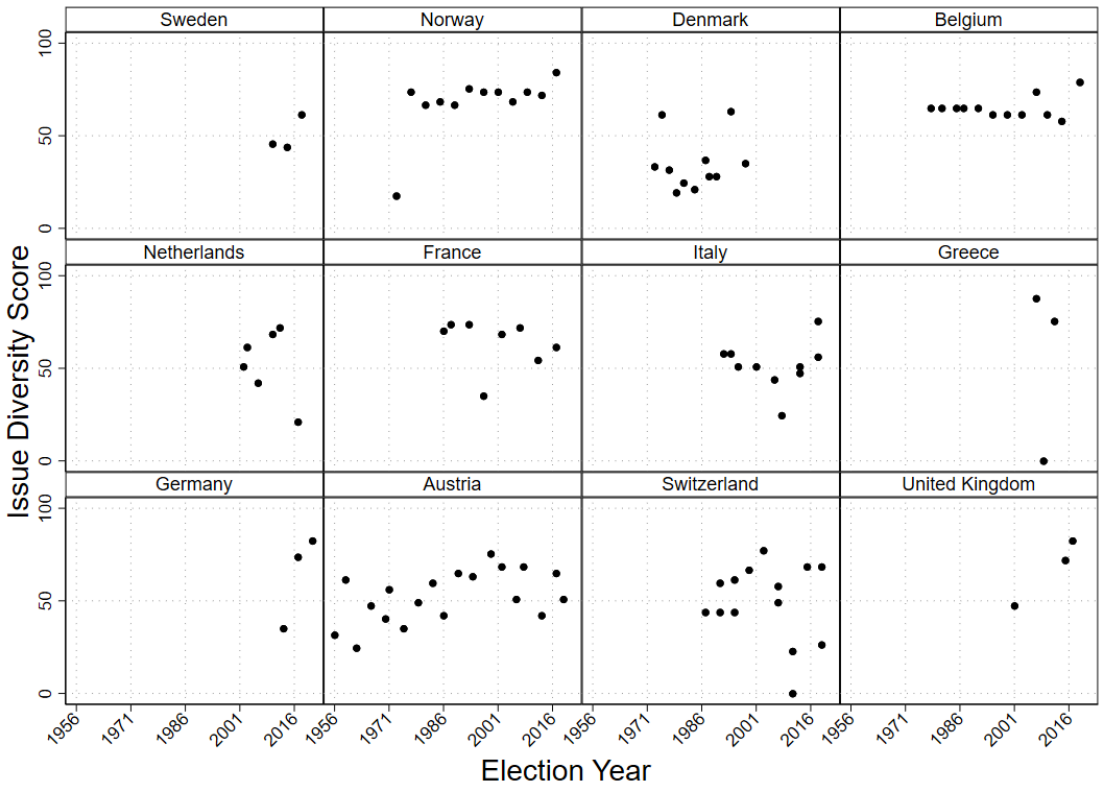
+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 7.1 helps inform our understanding of the impact the coefficient on *Issue Diversity Score* in Table 7.1 is having by mapping out these parties along the issue diversity dimension. In fact, according to Figure 7.1, there is a wide variation of RRP parties by issue diversity score across countries and over time. In Sweden, for example, we notice that parties cluster closer to the 50 level, while Norway has most RRP parties above a score of 50. Denmark clusters most of their parties much lower below the 50 score level, while Belgium follows in Norway's approach with most RRP parties above 50. The Netherlands has a range of variation in their RRP parties as they scatter both under and above the 50 level, while France's parties are slightly above 50 with one exception. Italy has a diverse variety of scores both well above and below 50 over time, while Greece has two above 50 and 1 below 50. Germany is similar to Greece in this respect, while Austria has a wide variety that centers in close proximity to the 50 score level. Switzerland is similar to Italy in the diversity of its RRP parties as they are spread out, while the United Kingdom has their RRP parties at or above the 50 level.

This variation in Figure 7.1 suggests that a one-unit increase in Issue Diversity Score leading to an under 1 percent increase in vote share attainment may have a significant impact on some parties—such as those that already adopt comprehensive policy platforms above a score of 50—but potentially not as significant an impact for those parties that adopt restrictive policy platforms. The former would benefit given they are likely more interested in seeking election to the legislature, while the latter are more likely interested in impacting policy. It may help RRP parties in Norway, the United Kingdom, and Greece, for example, as RRP parties in those countries adopt increasingly comprehensive policy platforms, but

it may not be as meaningful RRP parties in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Denmark since they adopt more restrictive policy platforms.

Figure 7.1: RRP Party Issue Diversity Scores by Country and Election Year



Continuing with the analyses in Table 7.1, the coefficient for the *Incumbency* variable, which tests whether a RRP party's previous history of success obtaining at least one seat in the legislature impacts their current electoral success, is statistically significant across both models at the 99 percent confidence level ($p < 0.01$). Per the result in model 2, having won at least one seat in a previous election is positively associated with an increase of 4.802 percent of the vote.

From here, we notice two things. First, the results for the *Crisis* variable in model 2 suggests are no cases of RRP parties during the 1981 to 1982, or "Crisis 2," period. Thus, the regression analysis omits this period from our results. Second, there are several categories of the *Crisis* variable in model 2 with statistically significant coefficients. Specifically, the coefficient for the 1983 to 2006 category is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level ($p < 0.05$), while both the coefficients for the "2007 to 2010" and the "2011 to Present" categories were statistically significant at the 99.9 percent confidence level ($p < 0.001$). In each of these cases, the crisis at the time suggested that emergencies and economic downturns have a positive impact on RRP party success relative to the pre-1973 period. Specifically, the period of 1983 to 2006 led to an increase in the percentage of votes won by 5.000 relative to the pre-1973 period, while the 2007 to 2010 period increased the percentage of votes won by 9.705 relative to the pre-1973 period. Finally, the 2011 to present period suggested an increase in RRP party percentage of votes won by 10.894 relative to the pre-1973 period.

It is also important to note that, while I controlled for *Ideology* in the form of RILE scores to determine whether variations or degree of ideology among RRP parties has an impact on electoral success, none of the categories were statistically significant in any model. Similarly, while I tested for the potential impact of *Number of Parties Competing* on electoral success, the coefficient for this variable was not statistically significant in any of the models estimated either.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to provide a quantitative response to the following question: What explains the rise of radical right populist (RRP) parties in Western Europe? I expected that the Issue Diversity dimension is the answer, and I found support suggesting this may be the case. After examining data on 17 RRP parties across 12 Western European countries from 1956 to 2021 I found support for my hypothesis: that is, RRP parties can increase their electoral success by increasing the number of issues they adopt.

To be more specific, increasing the number of issues can increase the electoral success among these parties, but so too do economic downturns impact their success positively—both during and post-crisis. In the case of the former, it is also important to note that the impact on party may vary by the type of party as there are invariably RRP parties that would benefit from even potentially minor increases in electoral success, while there are others that would not gain much at all. In the case of those that do benefit, it may be an exponential benefit. For example, while the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP) was not very successful in the 2001 UK General Election, they became much more successful in subsequent elections, such as the 2015 General Election. Success for these parties may thus be slow but could expand between elections.

The latter issue of increases in electoral success during economic downturns is interesting because it suggests that these parties experience a delay in support. Specifically, in the post-early-1980s recession period we saw a slight boost to their electoral success relative to the pre-1973 period, followed by almost twice the impact during the Great Recession period between 2007 and 2010. The impact was even slightly stronger after the

Great Recession. This all may suggest that voters consider RRP parties are a bad idea during a crisis, but as crises continually occur that voters may start to feel increasingly comfortable voting for an alternative, non-establishment party. In fact, they may even feel more comfortable voting against the establishment during a post-crisis period *because* the economy just recovered from a crisis. Voters under escalating crisis conditions may simply question the capacity of RRP parties to "get the job done" properly and may feel they are just as good as traditional parties given continually occurring downturns (see Betz 2002, for a rational choice voter model approach to studying RRP party success for more on this as a possibility). If this indeed the case, it can have significant implications on how these parties compete. Specifically, if voters are not rejecting RRP parties' "pure" vs "corrupt" party brand distinction, it may suggest that these parties—which have traditionally been considered "one and done" due to dissolution soon after competing—are not as temporary as establishment politicians may wish to claim.

More importantly, these findings may suggest RRP parties are politically sophisticated enough to succeed against traditionally mainstream parties. In fact, where they do fail to garner support, we may surmise that these parties simply need to bide their time to succeed electorally due to a lack of sufficient "evidence" of establishment party failure. In other words, it may be the case that RRPs simply need more crisis-based firepower to help support their rhetoric if they wish to convince supporters that they are the solution to society's ills. Future research on this subject should consider if and when this occurs by exploring RRP parties in more depth, possibly through specific case studies of RRP party success.

Future research can explore these issues as well as others, such as whether RRPs impact non-RRP parties' decision-making processes. In fact, studies on this by Abou-Chadi & Krause (2018) and Dahlström & Sundell (2012) have already explored such issues with a focus on mainstream parties, so it would be interesting to see if a follow up that explores the impact of the Issue Diversity dimension coalesces with those findings. Likewise, why not explore additional party families, such as communist parties per a study like Backes & Moreau (2008) and Bell (1993) (see also Botella & Fernández 2003, for a good primer on how communist parties in Western Europe have changed over time)? Why not explore how the Issue Diversity dimension impacts responses to RRP parties in a similar fashion to how Bale et al. (2010) explore social democrat and center-left party responses to RRP parties? It would also be interesting to examine how the Issue Diversity dimension impacts party support in light of voters who do *not* support RRP parties; that is, examining what reduces support for RRP parties (Immerzeel & Pickup 2015, see) and whether the Issue Diversity dimension mitigates those effects could be a promising avenue for follow up work. This study provides several different, yet interesting, branches of research using the Issue Diversity dimension from which scholars can choose.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

I have attempted to do several things in this project in an effort to understand the issue diversity dimension of party strategy and its impact on political party success given it has been understudied in the party strategy literature. After conceptualizing and formalizing a measure to of issue diversity (chapter 2), I followed with a quantitative case study in the United Kingdom to determine the impact of issue diversity on electoral outcomes between mainstream and niche parties (chapter 3). I then contrasted the United Kingdom case by conceptualizing the role of issue diversity in Japan's electoral system in light of the unique nature of Japanese electoral politics (chapter 4), followed by using MARPOR to determine whether Japanese parties suffer electorally when they deviate too far from their average issue diversity policy platforms (chapter 5). I then pivoted to a case study on Radical Right Populist (RRP) parties in Western Europe due to their increasing relevance within elections (chapter 6), and tested the impact of issue diversity on RRP party electoral outcomes using MARPOR party data across 12 countries and 65 years (chapter 7).

There are several takeaways from this project. First, the United Kingdom case suggested that movement away from the average issue diversity score in an election will generally lead to positive electoral outcomes, but that no support for a relationship exists among mainstream parties and niche parties when we subset the data. Nevertheless, the findings did also suggest that the number of parties hurts mainstream competition, while increasing the number of niche candidates may help improve their electoral success. Coupled with the finding that ideologically left-wing niche parties struggle relative to ideologically right-wing niche parties, as well as the finding that all parties can increase their electoral success by fielding more candidates, these findings may provide some insight into the issues democracies in Europe are facing with more radicalized parties. This is an especially salient point as most radical right parties are considered niche parties in the existing literature. In fact, these phenomena may even explain the relative success of the United Kingdom's *de facto* anti-establishment RRP party, the UK Independence Party.

Second, the Japanese case suggested that parties in this electoral system do experience negative electoral outcomes if they move too far from their average issue diversity score, but that these effects may not exist in the short term between elections. This is a significant finding as it suggests voter perceptions of parties in Japan may be critical, with a potential preference towards more stable and unchanging policy platforms. While this reasoning may explain why the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is constantly successful, it also has implications for democracy in Japan as a whole. As a case significantly conflicting with the United Kingdom, scholars may be interested in determining the impact of what is consistent single-party rule in a democracy as opposed to a more competitive democratic

system like that of the United Kingdom. It is worth returning to this point within the context of RRP parties given its implications for democracy in the context of these cases.

The final case study focused on RRP parties across Western Europe, which provided interesting findings: RRP parties experience different electoral outcomes when changes occur in their policy platforms. Specifically, when they adopt a policy platform with more issues, they typically experience greater electoral success. However, I found this increase is small and thus may only matter for select RRP parties; that is, those that already adopt relatively comprehensive policy platforms (i.e., those that already adopt more issues and behave more like mainstream parties). In fact, those parties that adopt very restrictive policy platforms (i.e., those that adopt fewer issues and behave more like niche parties) are unlikely to see much in terms of relative gains. This distinction is important since it suggests variation exists within RRP parties based on their relative goals as either policy seeking or office seeking parties. The latter is likely to benefit more from even marginal increases in electoral success than the former.

Returning to the issue of competitive and non-competitive elections across democratic countries, these cases have provided a varied but intricate view into the potential differences and dangers democracies face within the electoral environment. In a competitive electoral system where parties at a minimum switch off in terms of which party takes the role of the government and opposition—such as in the United Kingdom—I demonstrated that it is difficult to determine when different types of parties adopt changes to their policy platforms. In general terms, a more comprehensive policy platform was beneficial, but it is still not entirely clear where the benefits hit their peak, nor where they bottom out. In this

type of election, we also saw a favoritism towards ideologically right-wing parties, although especially in the case of niche parties.

However, the case of Japan demonstrated a different dynamic: in a system where incumbency is increasingly beneficial and where voters are potentially more comfortable with less change as opposed to more change, the nature of competition becomes much less nuanced and bland—albeit seemingly non-competitive. Specifically, absent of major changes in the electoral system—such as electoral reform—the Japanese case demonstrated that parties are better off adopting relatively "safe" policy platforms. These "safe" policy platforms barely change and may be stable enough to appease voters.

Examining the RRP case within the context of competitive versus non-competitive elections further enlightens the conversation, as they typically rise in competitive elections. However, it is also important to note that these parties do vary in their strategic interests and motivations; that is, they do not all want to get elected to office as many would be content with impacting (typically xenophobic, anti-globalization, and Eurosceptic) policies. It is nevertheless not a coincidence that they arise and thrive in more competitive elections, however. Non-competitive elections suggest higher bars to entry and competition than competitive elections. In fact, in a less competitive electoral system like Japan's, the bar to compete is so high, and party brand so enshrined, that it is almost impossible even after electoral reform to dethrone the LDP from government rule. In the absence of media manipulation, this may suggest that those voters who often claim they are unhappy with the LDP and want change are in the minority—a much more silent majority may hold all the cards in re-electing the LDP.

Does this imply the need to reduce electoral competition to avoid RRP parties from competing? If so, then the question is a simple "why?" The assumptions to answer this question are more normative but, if we assume RRP parties are bad for democracy, then the benefit of a non-competitive election must be that they prevent radical party formation. The Japanese case suggests this is not the case, as there are radical parties in Japan. While it is true these radical parties simply do not fare well in the Japanese electoral system, they do nevertheless exist and are popular with at least small numbers of voters to varying degrees. This directly contrasts with competitive elections, where we see examples such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) experience relatively favorable electoral outcomes across some elections, as well as 17 unique RRP parties across 12 Western European countries. It is nevertheless the case that, just as UKIP saw variations in success over several elections in recent years, so too have those RRP parties seen mixed electoral success across Western Europe.

Moving away from the competitive versus non-competitive elections discussion, these findings also have several implications for decision-making; that is, when voters choose and why voters choose. Specifically, the patterns behind how voters across these cases vary. In the United Kingdom, voters seemed opposed to those parties that adopt restrictive policy platforms, although they seemed slightly opposed to parties ideologically too far left and not-too opposed to more niche parties of the right-wing ideological variety. In Japan, voters seemed opposed to parties that change significantly from their pre-established positions, although that may not apply to changes between elections. Yet, in the case of RRP parties they saw positive outcomes when they adopted more comprehensive policy platforms,

although especially during and after economic downturns. Together, these cases suggest that voters are themselves diverse, with different preferences they find salient and that in turn serve as constraints on party behavior. Moreover, due to the variation in constraints it is necessary to understand the environment in which parties compete. An accurate model of how parties compete needs to include not only salient voter preferences as constraints, but an understanding of the parties competing—complete with their motivations for competing, ideological leanings, issue ownership, and the issues they adopt. Finally, a model of understanding parties necessitates an understanding of the socioeconomic conditions in which parties compete, as they can breathe life into competitors that may otherwise not be realistic challengers. When this happens, we may see sudden and significant shifts in the status quo.

My hope now is that future party research can tackle the deficiencies in this project, although first and foremost the data availability problem. To reiterate, while MARPOR is a robust, rich, and useful dataset, it is by no means perfect. In fact, the inability to include all parties due to the one legislative seat threshold significantly limits automatically reduces the explanatory power of most analyses. This may be more of a limitation in what is possible, however, given the diverse set of political parties that compete across elections worldwide. Nevertheless, the lack of an accurate "real world" model does, by definition, lead to at least slightly biased estimates since they can never reflect elections in the real world as accurately as they could otherwise. While there are several methods to try to avoid some of these problems, they are more of temporary solution that perhaps can be avoided with more data collection if possible. A secondary, but related, avenue for future

research is a deeper quantitative dive into the role of voters. Indeed, my decision to focus more on the parties than the voters on the data side comes from limitations in fieldwork due to current worldwide health conditions. Indeed, at time of writing and during the most crucial phases of the research and writing process, the world was upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools shut down and homes were refurbished to include office space, we also saw borders close. This was problematic for this project given there was a planned survey for the Japan chapter. Unfortunately, in spite of planning travel and even receiving funding from my home department for a possible survey collaboration with Waseda University in Japan, travel restrictions made this impossible. As funding expired and borders were still closed off to most researchers (even today at time of writing they are closed for non-citizens and non-residents), I continued forward with this project. My hope is that future studies on this subject will have better luck with the fieldwork aspect and collect primary data directly applicable and based on the research question as opposed to secondary, pre-collected data for alternative purposes. Doing so can provide more intricate and accurate findings.

A third endeavor for future research is considering unique approaches to using the issue diversity dimension, given it does provide novel insights into the electoral process. There are several directions that each of these studies could have taken, and several branches of future directions that reactions to these studies can take. One example includes examining the role of the issue diversity dimension in terms of accountability and punishment, as well as how this works in countries where there are high degrees of systemic homogeneity (such as, but not limited to, Japan and Germany). Another example includes examining how the adoption of comprehensive policy platforms help or hurt parties belonging to different

party families. A third example may focus on considering how party formation works under different electoral rules and the role of the issue diversity dimension in that process. There are several avenues that researchers could take in follow up studies that will help provide the party research field with interesting new insights.

A fourth, but still significant limitation to this project as a whole is the selection of cases. Due to the restraints on time and resources, the cases used in this study were selected due to their popularity within the literature (i.e., the United Kingdom), their unique status within the space of democratic countries (i.e., Japan), and the increasingly relevant and thriving nature of a particular type of party (i.e., RRP parties). However, these cases are not the end all for future work on party strategy—they may not even be the most interesting cases available. Eastern Europe, for example, is often understudied in the party literature beyond issues of authoritarianism versus democracy, so studies on the party system there may be a fascinating next step. Likewise, studies on parties in Southeast Asian countries may provide interesting cases for inquiry due to recent cases of democratic backsliding across countries in that region.

A fifth direction for future research may be estimating models where the effects of other factors impact the issue diversity dimension. In other words, I suggest studies that ask questions such as "what factors impact a party's decision to adopt a more comprehensive vs restrictive policy platform?" Treating the issue diversity dimension as the outcome rather than the explanatory factor may lead to interesting projects and begin the process of further enlightening research on this subject area. Ultimately, this could potentially provide a new dimension of interest in the comparative political party literature among researchers.

Finally, I do wish to reiterate that this project was not meant to be a comprehensive or exhaustive deep dive into the issue diversity dimension. Instead, I took as diverse an approach as I could at examining one specific country case in Western Europe (the United Kingdom), one specific non-European case (Japan), and one specific type of party (radical right populist parties). As such, the findings in this study may only apply to these cases. However, this is what makes my study exciting—especially for someone like me who really enjoys studying what makes parties and party systems tick—there is still so much work to be done on this topic and in this field! In fact, I was once told by someone that party research had been "done to death" and that there were much more interesting topics within the field of political science. While I do agree there is quite a bit of research on parties already exist, and do also agree it would be difficult to find anyone who disagrees with this, I sincerely believe there is still much left to be done. I am, at least personally, very excited to see what comes next in the world of party research and am honored to make my mark on it, however small it may be at this moment in time.

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