Estimating the Policy Positions of Political Actors

Edited by Michael Laver

London and New York

Estimating the Policy Positions of Political Actors

This book provides outstanding, cutting edge scholarship and an up-to-date reference on the state-of-the-art in a very important methodological area, estimating the policy positions of political actors. Policy positions are central both to theoretical models of party competition and to empirical accounts, whether these are case studies or comparative analyses.

The systematic analysis of the policy positions of political actors is an area in which substantial progress has been made over the past thirty years of political science, and in which huge leaps forward are promised with the development and refinement of computer coding techniques. This book both reviews the refinements that have been made to established techniques, including expert surveys and expert coded text analysis, and considers the potential and early successes of computer coding. The chapters allow those who are interested in estimating the policy positions of political actors to make informed judgements about the types of technique that might be most suitable for their own particular purposes.

The book ultimately concludes that there remains huge potential for the refinement of traditional techniques and, also, that the rapidly developing field of computer coding offers enormous and exciting possibilities that promise to make possible far more refined and realistic analyses of political competition.

Michael Laver is Professor of Political Science at Trinity College, Dublin. His recent publications include: *Making and Breaking Governments* (with Kenneth A. Shepsle); *Private Desires, Political Action*; and *Playing Politics: the Nightmare Continues*. His current research focuses on computer coded text analysis and dynamic models of party competition.

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Series Editor's preface

Following the remarkable success of the introduction of economic approaches to the study of political processes in the 1950s, the broad field of rational choice theories and spatial analyses expanded rapidly into the dominant trend of present-day political and social research. The grounds for this development are obvious. Expressions of specific standpoints and interests are key factors in representative democracies, and economic exchange models appear to be very adequate to analyse the dynamics of political decision-making processes based on distinct policy positions among voters, politicians, and political parties. Besides, theoretical rigour and clarity, systematisation, generalisation, deductive reasoning, and the opportunity to formulate precise predictions are all presented as notable advantages by adherents of this approach. These common characteristics of substantive and conceptual 'nearness' and scientific rigidity contributed a great deal to the massive spread and popularity of rational choice theories and spatial analyses in the last decades.

Yet, despite all complexities, building sophisticated mathematical models seems to be less problematic than applying these models to genuine political processes in a non-trivial way. Whereas model builders always have the comforting strategy at hand of relying on assumptions and axioms, empirical researchers have to deal with actual complications of measuring concepts and interpreting ambivalent results. Justified doubts about the validity and reliability of data spoil the life of many students of real political processes. How to find an intelligent way between the *Scylla* of theoretical infertility and the *Charybdis* of empirical triviality? If the quality of the data to be used could be estimated appropriately, the remaining time and energy would be available for further development of even more sophisticated theoretical models and to test them in actual decision-making processes. In other words: high quality data are required in order to apply advanced models in realistic settings. Contributing to this intricate double goal – quality assessment of data in the context of relevant applications – is exactly what the authors of this volume aim at.

In order to deal with the complicated aspects of quality assessment, the contributors to this volume analyse empirical evidence available to estimate

policy positions of political actors in a number of countries and periods of time. Before these analyses are presented, Michael Laver discusses the relevance of policy positions in empirical research in the introduction to this volume (Chapter 1). These opening discussions are followed by Peter Mair's review of the available approaches to establish policy positions, focussing mainly on the use and usefulness of expert surveys in this area (Chapter 2). The remaining twelve substantive contributions are grouped in two parts of the book. The coding of election programmes by experts and the analyses of these data in different settings are the main themes of the contributions to the first part. Andrea Volkens introduces the work of the Manifesto Research Group, which is by far the most important project in this field, covering by now estimates of policy positions for an astonishing 606 parties from fifty-two countries for the whole post-war period (Chapter 3). The crucial question of validating the work of the Manifesto Research Group is discussed by Ian Budge (Chapter 4), whereas Michael Laver returns to the seminal distinction between position and salience in the policies of political actors (Chapter 5). Four other contributions in this part of the volume focus on the measurement and use of party positions. Bodil Agasøster extended the coding scheme of the Manifesto Research Group and shows its usefulness in analyses of intra-party policy variation by studying local politics in Scotland (Chapter 6). Michael McDonald and Silvia Mendes evaluate the differences and similarities between policy spaces based on party programmes and on expert judgements in terms of left–right scales and several other dimensions (Chapter 7). The presentation of policy positions by German and Dutch parties is taken as a starting point by Wouter van der Brug to develop a spatial model to represent both the policy preferences of parties and voters (Chapter 8). Finally, François Petry and Réjean Landry study policy positions of political parties in Quebec in order to estimate inter-party policy distances and to appraise the degree of (dis)agreement between parties (Chapter 9).

The contributions to the first part of the volume are all based on manual coding procedures of party programmes or other statements. In order to overcome the conventional problems of manual coding several variants of computerised coding procedures of texts have been developed and the chapters in the second part clearly show the gains to be obtained in this area. A so-called 'natural sentences approach' to computer coding of the data of the Party Manifesto Group is presented by Leonard Ray (Chapter 10). Jan Kleinnijenhuis and Paul Pennings apply a very extensive and sophisticated research design and computer-based coding procedures in order to compare policy positions of Dutch parties using public opinion surveys, media coverage, and party programmes (Chapter 11). Computer coded content analyses are also used by John Garry in his demonstration of the feasibility of this approach to political texts from several countries in different languages (Chapter 12). Miranda de Vries, Daniela Giannetti, and Lucy Mansergh present their findings of very extensive computerised

content analyses of Italian, Dutch, and Irish political texts and several ways to validate their results (Chapter 13). Judith Bara adapts public opinion coding categories to analyse British and US party platforms with fully computerised and computer-assisted manual coding techniques in a very interesting attempt to link public opinion and party policies (Chapter 14). In a concise concluding chapter, Michael Laver returns to the questions and problems raised by the contributors, briefly summarising the results presented in the substantive chapters in a systematic way (Chapter 15).

There is no need for sophisticated models of political decision-making processes if, in the end, empirical verification collapses due to a lack of appropriate data. However, estimating policy positions in a valid and reliable way is a very complicated and extremely time-consuming task, which should only be undertaken if sophisticated models of political processes are available. The unique character of the contributions to this volume is the combination of explicit concern for quality assessment of empirical data on policy positions on the one hand, and the competence to apply these data in highly interesting real decision-making processes on the other. Attempts to link information from different sources (party programmes, opinion surveys, expert judgements, media coverage, speeches etc.) and data collected with different procedures (variants of manual and computerised coding practices) offer excellent opportunities of discussing the chances of representative democracies to attune party policies to voters' preferences in an efficient way. An amazing amount of work has been done in this area in the last few decades: even more interesting work can be expected in the near future if the gulf between theoretical and empirical work is further bridged.

Jan W. van Deth, Series Editor
Mannheim, October 2000

Part I

Overview

1 Why should we estimate the policy positions of political actors?

Michael Laver

This book is concerned with estimating the policy positions of political actors. This enterprise might well seem a matter of self-evident importance to many who are already 'in the business'. However, even for seasoned researchers it is worth briefly reflecting, before rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty in the analysis of real data, on the reasons for wanting to estimate policy positions in the first place.

Accounts of political competition almost invariably deal with the motives of political actors. Some of these are generally seen as 'base': for example the desire for personal aggrandisement or wealth, the love of power for its own sake, the desire to influence public policy for private profit, or to pursue personal rivalries and squabbles. Other motives are generally seen as more 'public spirited': the desire to do what is best for the country, the desire to introduce particular ways of doing things on philosophical or moral grounds, or to help some particular disadvantaged group, for example.

Strictly speaking, we can look at some politician and argue that his or her 'policy' is to become as rich and famous as possible. But for most of us this would be an ironic use of the notion of policy. Most political competition takes place in a forum in which the arguments that are made have to do with proposed ways of doing things that are 'public goods', in the sense of applying to society as a whole or at least of applying in equal measure to all members of a well-defined sub-group of society. Generally, when we talk about the policy positions of political actors, we have in mind their positions on matters of *public* policy.

Many accounts of political competition are concerned in some way or another with the policy positions of political actors. However, one of the most influential recent accounts, set within the general 'rational choice' paradigm, is driven from the bottom up by the idea that the terrain on which political battles are fought is defined by the range of potential policy options open to decision-makers and the preferences of political actors with respect to these.

One essential analytical requirement of such an approach is to have a systematic way of describing individual policy options or preferences, and the relationships between these. The most persuasive natural analogy at the heart of such descriptions has been spatial. In other words, it has been

assumed that people's mental maps of the social world are consistent with describing relationships between policy options in terms of distance. Thus it seems meaningful to make statements such as 'option X is *closer* to my own position than the status quo' (SQ). This statement is taken to mean the same thing as 'I like X better than SQ' or 'I prefer X to SQ'. Systematic descriptions of individual policy preferences are thus grounded in the notion that a political actor has an 'ideal' or most-preferred policy with regard to a particular issue, and that other policy options can be systematically compared to this 'ideal point' in terms of their 'closeness' to it. Thus emerges the concept of the 'distance' (at least for an individual) between two policy options.

Distances, including psychological distances between perceptions of policy options, are easily interpreted in spatial terms, the analogy with the three-dimensional physical space within which most of us live being extremely compelling. A striking and extraordinarily influential physical manifestation of this was the set of seating arrangements that emerged in the post-revolutionary French Constituent Assembly of 1789, described vividly by Thomas Carlyle:

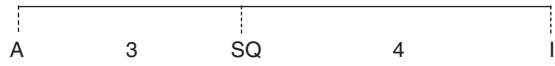
> There is a Right Side (*Côté Droit*), a Left Side (*Côté Gauche*); sitting on M le President's right hand, or on his left: the *Côté Droit* conservative; the *Côté Gauche* destructive.
>
> (Carlyle 1871: 192)

Such seating arrangements – and the idea that like-minded people were physically grouping themselves together, that political preferences had a spatial manifestation – have often been seen as the source of the most ubiquitous spatial analogy in political discourse. This is a 'one-dimensional' description of policy options that ranges from the most revolutionary, on the left, to the most conservative, on the right. The result is a simple one-dimensional 'policy space'.

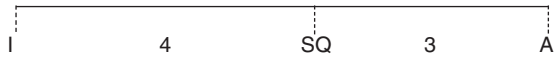
A basic one-dimensional representation of politics is consistent with certain views of the policy options on offer but not with others. Consider the following matrix of distances between the status quo, SQ, the ideal policy of some individual, I, and some alternative to the status quo, A.

I	4	
A	3	7
	SQ	I

This mental map of the political world can be drawn as follows, using the simple Euclidean geometry with which most people are instinctively familiar:



We can 'flip' the dimension horizontally and represent the same inter-point distances:

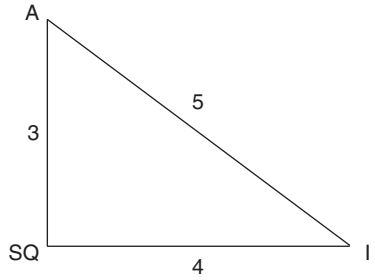


In other words, the distances in themselves do not tell us whether individual I has an ideal policy that is more revolutionary or conservative than the status quo, on which substantive matter we need additional contextual information. They do however tell us unequivocally that, faced with a choice between SQ and A, individual I will choose SQ.

An individual may well have preferences with regard to three policy options that cannot be represented in a one-dimensional Euclidean policy space, however. Consider the following matrix of distances:

I	4	
A	3	5
	SQ	I

It is not possible to represent these distances between SQ, I, and A on a single dimension but it is a simple matter to do so in a two-dimensional Euclidean space. The application of Pythagoras' Theorem tells us that there is a right-angle triangle such that, if the distance between SQ and A is 3 and that between SQ and I is 4, then the distance between I and A is 5:



We can rotate or flip this triangle any way we like while preserving the inter-point distances. Thus once more we have no *substantive* interpretation of the views of the individual concerned without further contextual information. But once more we know unequivocally that I will prefer SQ to A if offered the choice. We also know unequivocally that we need more than a single dimension, such as left *v.* right, to describe I's preferences. This set of distances might arise, for example, if individual I has views on the impact of policy options on the environment that are quite distinct from his or her views of the impact of the same policy options on the left–right dimension.

It is important to be very clear at this stage that using spatial representations of policy preferences involves making strong assumptions about the rationality of the individuals whose views are being modelled. Imagine the following matrix of inter-point distances:

I	1	
A	0	5
	SQ	I

It is impossible to construct a Euclidean spatial representation of this matrix. The zero distance between A and SQ implies that they are at the same point in the space. Individual I has a unique ideal point, yet the distance between I and A (5) is five times the distance between I and SQ (1). If we were to interview I and ask about this distance matrix, we would be told 'I see no difference between A and SQ. I strongly prefer SQ to A'. These statements make perfect grammatical sense and the individual uttering them might indignantly assert his or her right to hold such views. According to most formal definitions of rationality, however, we would probably consider the conjunction of these statements to be irrational.

More generally, to use Euclidean geometry to represent preferences over a range of potential policy outputs is in effect to make quite firm assumptions about the rationality of the individuals concerned. Conversely and interestingly, the types of assumption typically made about individual rationality by most rational choice theories imply that it is possible to use Euclidean geometry to represent preferences over potential policy outputs. (There is an infinite number of non-Euclidean geometries, of course. But the types of policy space that most political scientists concern themselves with, and which form the basis of each of the chapters in this book, are essentially Euclidean.) The use of spatial models of politics is thus more intimately bound up with the rational choice paradigm than many people realise. Authors who might be tempted to use Euclidean spatial models in conjunction with a set of assumptions that challenges the conventional rational choice view of individual rationality thus need to think carefully and deeply about what they are doing.

Spatial models of competition between political actors – be they parties, politicians or committee members – are rooted in the work of Hotelling (1929), Black (1958) and Downs (1957). Innumerable books and articles have by now been published within this tradition. As soon as the authors of these theoretical models aspired to elaborate them in a real-world context, it became necessary to estimate the policy positions of the actors concerned. The general spatial approach has mushroomed into what is more or less an entire sub-discipline of political science, with models of many aspects of the political process being described and analysed in terms of the 'ideal' policy positions of key actors. The development of theoretical models of policy-based political competition has until recently, however, far outpaced the development of valid and reliable data sources and analysis techniques for estimating the policy positions of political actors. Sometimes, indeed, strikingly complex and sophisticated models have been elaborated using strikingly crude data.

The answer to the 'why' question is thus in the end quite simple. We need to be able to estimate the policy positions of political actors in order to be able to operationalise a wide range of models within what has become an important sub-discipline of political science.

The rest of the book

Estimating the political positions of political actors is thus an important methodological enterprise, central both to theoretical models of party competition and to empirical descriptions, whether these are case studies or comparative analyses. It is an area in which much progress has been made over the past thirty years of political science, and in which huge leaps forward are promised with the development and refinement of techniques for the computer coding of text. This book both reviews the refinements that have been made to established techniques, and considers both the potential and the early successes of computer coding.

The scene is set in the next chapter by Peter Mair, who looks at the various techniques for estimating policy positions and the various reasons for wanting to do this. These techniques include: more or less informal seat-of-the-pants judgements by individual authors; systematic literature surveys; surveys of 'experts', mass publics, politicians and other political elites; legislative voting patterns; the content analysis of political texts. Mair goes on to dwell at greater length on the role of expert judgements. After this, the chapters fall into two sections. One deals with expert coded text analysis, exploring both the issues associated with coding data and those associated with estimating policy positions from coded data. The next section deals with some recent developments in the computer coded content analysis of policy documents.

Dealing with expert coding, the chapter by Andrea Volkens gives a recent history of probably the most important political science research project in this field, the ECPR-sponsored Manifesto Research Group (MRG), latterly the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), based in Berlin. Crucially, this paper provides the first ever published information on the quality control and reliability of the CMP expert coders. Following this, the chapter by Ian Budge sets out the theoretical foundations underpinning the CMP: 'saliency theory'. He argues vigorously that 'emphasis equals direction' in party policy and on this basis concludes that the CMP codings should be the 'benchmark' against which other estimates of party policy positions should be measured. The next chapter, by Michael Laver, makes the counter-argument that the emphasis given to a policy dimension is analytically quite distinct from an actor's substantive position on this dimension, implying the need for separate estimates of direction and salience, with implications for the coding of policy documents.

The following four chapters develop and apply the CMP dataset in various ways. Agasøster extends the CMP coding scheme to include local politics. She then applies this extended scheme to the local election addresses of the political parties in Scotland. McDonald and Silvia Mendes provide a systematic evaluation of the various policy scales developed from the CMP and expert survey data. They rigorously assess the reliability, validity and stability of a wide range of scales developed from the CMP data. They conclude that several of these scales do have high levels of reliability and validity and are

appropriate to use for the time series tracking of party policy positions, at least on the main left–right dimension. Wouter van der Brug makes an alternative argument about scaling coded manifesto data. He argues against both the 'closed' approach of operationalising a priori policy dimensions, and the use of the 'open' technique of factor analysis to explore the dimensional structure of the data. He proposes multidimensional scaling as a more appropriate way to explore the dimensional structure of the CMP data and implements this technique for a number of countries. François Petry and Réjean Landry set out to determine whether the partisan composition of the state government in Quebec has an impact on policy outputs, the latter defined in terms of spending priorities and legislation. Legislative outputs and party manifesto texts, as well as specific manifesto pledges, were also coded into the same domains.

The next section deals with the computer coded content analysis of policy documents. The key issues here are the unit of analysis – a word or a more complex text unit? – and the method of generating the computer 'dictionary' used to code text – deterministic or probabilistic? The ideal is a probabilistic dictionary coding complex text units, but the key question is how far the current state of the art can achieve this without giving up the major advantage of computer over expert coding, which is the ability to code vast volumes of virgin text with little human intervention.

The chapter by Leonard Ray sets out a proposed method for using computer coding to reproduce the MRG (or theoretically any other) coding scheme, not yet implemented in practice. A dictionary would be created by counting the frequency of words in sentences pre-coded by expert coders according to the MRG scheme. If a sufficiently large volume of pre-coded text were to be processed in this way, this would generate a probabilistic dictionary that would estimate the probability that any given word in the dictionary was associated with a given MRG coding category. Once the dictionary was stable, virgin text could be coded by computer, and virgin sentences probabilistically allocated to MRG coding categories. Jan Kleinnijenhuis and Paul Pennings report results on three measures of party policy positions in the Netherlands, including an actual Dutch language computer implementation of a method similar to that proposed by Ray. They use three Dutch manifestos from 1998 to generate a probabilistic dictionary, and then apply this in the computer coding of all Dutch manifestos since 1946. Their results are cross-validated against scales generated from expert coded MRG data and are generally encouraging. The authors also present results derived from the hand coding of mass media for the direction and emphasis of the policy positions of various actors, showing independent movements over time of emphasis and position. These results are compared with estimates of voter positions, derived from survey data.

John Garry, building on a paper by Laver and Garry (2000), sets out a simple deterministic method that has already been implemented and used for the computer coding of text in six countries and five languages. The method estimates positions on a priori policy dimensions and generates a

coding dictionary using relative word frequencies in two documents known from independent sources to occupy extreme positions on the dimension under investigation. Computer coding is then used to analyse virgin texts and estimate the position of each text on this dimension. Garry presents results based on the computer coding of manifestos in Britain, Ireland, Germany and Norway. These show high levels of cross-validation against independent estimation techniques and data sources. Miranda De Vries, Daniela Giannetti and Lucy Mansergh apply the Laver–Garry technique to different types of document. De Vries uses the technique to develop a Dutch dictionary and code 1998 Dutch party manifestos, cross-validating these results against expert survey findings. Giannetti develops an Italian dictionary and codes 1996 policy documents for the Italian parties, cross-validating this against mass survey estimates of perceived party positions. Mansergh extends the application of the technique in Ireland to government declarations.

Finally, Judith Bara reports early results of a rather different attempt to computer code English language documents in terms of emphasis on CMP policy domains. In this case, the dictionary is generated on a priori rather than empirical grounds, with words being added to dictionary categories in terms of how the analysts interpreted their meaning. The results of this analysis are compared with those generated by expert coding of the same data, with encouraging conclusions. Both sets of results are then used to analyse election-by-election variations in issue salience, as measured by opinion polls.

As will easily be seen from the chapters that follow, there are many and varied ways to estimate the policy positions of political actors. Our aim, of course, should not be to drive towards some global standard technique or dataset: this would be a doomed and misguided venture since different theoretical problems will always demand different types of data. What we should strive to do is to refine and develop the battery of techniques on offer, and above all to be as explicit as possible about the implications of the methodologies we employ for the types of use to which the policy data may subsequently be put. Too often in the past, analysts have gratefully grabbed any secondary data that they have found lying around, paying insufficient attention to the implications for them of the data's methodological pedigree.

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2 Searching for the positions of political actors

A review of approaches and a critical evaluation of expert surveys

Peter Mair

This chapter offers an overview of the attempts that have been made to locate the positions of political actors in policy and/or ideological spaces over the past twenty-five years or so. I claim neither to review all of the relevant literature, nor to explore all of methodologies involved. What I try to do is identify the main strands of research and comment on their limitations and possibilities. The assumption is that the various attempts to define abstract policy and/or ideological spaces and to locate political actors in these are driven by the imperatives of *comparative* research. In themselves, these approaches offer little to scholars interested only in understanding a single case. Following Sartori's (1970) usage, the attempt to define a policy and/or ideological space involves moving up the ladder of abstraction, and this makes sense only if the goal is to establish concepts and measures that can travel.

The first section of this chapter offers a brief overview of the context and objectives of research on party positions. The second section is devoted to a brief critical summary of the six major approaches that have dominated the literature to date, ranging from a priori judgements to expert surveys (see also Laver and Schofield 1998: Appendix B). Finally, the third section is devoted to six propositions, each emphasising the need for caution when dealing with expert surveys in particular.

The context: why bother locating political actors in a common space?

First and most obviously, the capacity to locate political parties within a common space allows us to compare parties and party systems both cross-nationally and over time. Indeed, given the genetic variety that we find across party systems, locating the parties within a common space clearly affords a variety of useful insights. To begin with, it allows us to identify 'functionally' equivalent parties, and to compare them according to a variety of different characteristics: electoral performance, governmental role, stability, organizational structure, etc. Unless we can compare like with like, these sorts of exercises become impossible (Mair and Mudde 1998).

Moreover, and in practice, there are few if any comprehensive alternative criteria to those of policy and/or ideology, which is what we aim for in spatial models. Family and/or genetic identity, transnational links, and so on, though important, are often difficult to establish in a comprehensive fashion, and any emphasis on the origins of parties may also have become increasingly irrelevant with the passage of time, as well as with the increased fragmentation and destructuring of party systems (although this latter may also even undermine efforts to locate parties in a given dimensional space: see later). In addition, it helps us to compare party systems in terms of such important indicators as the degree of polarisation, the direction of competition, and so on. It also allows us to compare party systems in terms of relative ideological biases, and to measure the degree of convergence or divergence both across different party systems and across time within individual party systems. Indeed, the ability to locate parties in some form of common space, usually in left–right terms, has been a central element in some of the classic and still highly influential typologies of party systems (e.g. Dahl 1966; Blondel 1968; and especially Sartori 1976).

Second, the capacity to locate political parties within a common space helps us to understand the dynamics, structure and consequences of party competition in a more specific sense. On the one hand, it allows us to assess why certain coalitions of parties are more likely to form rather than others, and to test for the extent to which policy or ideological affinity across parties is a factor in explaining coalition formation. In addition, this approach also allows us to compare party systems cross-nationally and over time with respect to the role played by policy or ideology in promoting alliances between different parties, as well as in promoting or restraining the fractionalisation of party systems. The volume of literature in this field is clearly enormous, and in most cases the more sophisticated models that have been developed rely explicitly on some measure or other of policy distance (for the earliest studies see Taylor and Herman 1971; de Swaan 1973; Taylor and Laver 1973; Dodd 1976; for a more recent overview of the field, see Laver and Schofield 1998). On the other hand, it also allows us to assess the extent to which partisan politics makes a difference: that is, the old question of whether politics matters. Locating parties within a common space permits us to assess the extent to which the differences between them have any relevance to the policy outputs of the governments to which they belong. In other words, it allows us to compare parties as inputs, and then to measure these against a variety of outputs, often with the intention of identifying the independent role of political/partisan factors (see, for example, Castles 1982; Keman 1988; Schmidt 1996).

Third, the capacity to locate political parties within a common space helps us to understand the working and effectiveness of representative government. For example, by locating parties in this way, and by comparing their positions to the preferences expressed by voters, we can gain a real and measurable sense of the extent to which these two core components of

representative government are mutually congruent. This again is an old question, but by locating parties in a common space we not only can hope to measure the real degree of congruity or discongruity, but we can also compare party systems, and political systems more generally, in terms of their capacity to match electoral preferences and party policies (see, for example, Klingemann 1995; Schmitt and Thomassen 2001). In addition, and in a variation of the 'does politics matter?' theme that was noted above, this approach may also be used to compare the positions which parties and governments advocate with the policies which they produce, thus revealing the extent to which the democratic mandate in general proves meaningful. In other words, by comparing what parties stand for, both in terms of policy and ideology, on the one hand, and what government actually produces, on the other, we can gain a better sense of the extent to which representative government is responsive to the demands and preferences of a party-mediated citizenry (see, for example, Klingemann *et al.* 1994). Finally, the location of both parties and voters within a common policy space is also beginning to prove essential to those studies which seek to test different voting models, as, for example, in the recent discussions of the competing proximity and directional models (e.g., Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; Krämer and Rattinger 1997).

The mainstream approaches: how have party positions tended to be estimated?

A priori judgements

The use of a priori judgements is one of the oldest and most widely used approaches to locating parties in a given policy space. This procedure simply involves the ordinal ranking of parties according to their core identity and/or genetic origin. Such studies have tended to be restricted to parties from the principal transnational party families – communists, social democrats, liberals, Christian democrats, conservatives, and so on – and have tended only to locate the parties in simple left–right terms. One of the first and most influential attempts to relate coalition outcomes to policy proximity, that of Taylor and Herman (1971), adopted this approach with some success. It was also adopted by Sigelman and Yough (1978) in one of the first systematic attempts to explore variance in the ideological polarisation of party systems. In this latter case, estimates of party left–right rankings were also controlled by reference to an intriguing estimation system produced by the US State Department which, since 1961 according to the authors, had produced regular reports coding parties as either communist, non-communist leftist, centrist or conservative (Sigelman and Yough 1978: 366–7).

However, although intuitively appealing and straightforward, this a priori approach has come to be regarded as having very limited usefulness. In the

first place it is typically applicable only to a very general left–right dimension. Second, as an ordinal ranking, it cannot take account of intra-party distances. Third, and most crucially, it is limited by the assumption that all parties of a given family are ideologically undifferentiated, while parties outside the major families are essentially uncodable. On the other hand, if one is content to consider only the left–right dimension and if ordinal rankings are sufficient then, as we shall see, the location of parties on a priori grounds is unlikely to differ significantly from that derived by other approaches.

Secondary reading

In the early stages of comparative research, the main alternative to a priori judgements was that of secondary reading. Scholars immersed themselves in as much of the available literature as possible on a given party system, and from this derived their own estimates of relative party positions, as well as of changes in these positions over time. This was the approach used by Thomas (1975; see also Thomas 1980), for example, in a then influential study of ideological trends in western party systems. It was also used in formative analyses of ideology and coalition formation by both de Swaan, who based his assessments on 'the judgement of parliamentary historians' (1973: 136), and Dodd, who sought to identify salient cleavage dimensions by means of 'an extensive study of the literature' (1976: 97).

Janda's International Comparative Political Parties Project followed a similar strategy, devoting considerable effort to code the positions of up to 158 parties in fifty-three countries along thirteen issue dimensions, each based on an 11-point scale (Janda 1980: 53–77). The issue dimensions selected by Janda bear a strong resemblance to those later incorporated in the Manifesto Research Group as well as to those in Laver and Hunt's (1992) more recent expert surveys (see later in the chapter). They include such themes as 'Government Ownership of the Means of Production', 'Government Role in Economic Planning', 'Redistribution of Wealth', 'Social Welfare', 'Secularization', 'Support of the Military', 'East/West Alignment', 'Supranational Integration', and 'Civil Liberties'. Given the care with which Janda constructed his policy codes and their application to the period 1950 to 1962, which is otherwise marked by a major dearth of comparable data, it is surprising that these data have not been more widely used. Janda, too, sought to control his core left–right findings using the State Department codes, as well as by reference to an equally intriguing set of comparable estimates produced by experts in the USSR.[1]

The final example to be cited in this context is the literature study conducted by Taylor and Laver (1973) in their classic early analysis of the role of ideology in coalition formation. Indeed, two observations by Taylor and Laver merit particular attention here. First, they describe their use of this secondary reading as relying on 'the judgements of experts' (1973:

216), an interesting use of the term that predates the shift to more formal expert surveys. Second, they offer a rather ironic hostage to fortune in dismissing out of hand the possibility of using manifesto analysis to locate party positions. This was partly for what were then practical reasons. But it was also partly on methodological grounds: 'it is far from certain that the ideological differences between parties which are important in the process of coalition formation are all to be found in manifestos (which are addressed to the electorate rather than to other parties)' (Taylor and Laver 1973: 215–16).

Mass surveys

The use of mass surveys to locate the positions of parties, particularly in left–right terms, has such a long and voluminous history that it is both impossible and pointless to attempt a proper overview here. Ever since the seminal study by Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) in particular, and ranging through the very valuable contribution by Sani and Sartori (1983), mass surveys have in fact proved one of the principal and most robust means of charting party and/or voter positions (for a valuable long-term overview of the data on voters' self-placement, see Knutsen 1998a). At the same time, the application of this approach is also somewhat skewed, seeming to be particularly appropriate in the analysis of levels of voter–party congruence and that of party system dynamics, while appearing to have been of surprisingly little value in the work on coalition theories or in that of the 'politics matters' school. This particular contrast in application may itself be indicative of a sense that voter positions are taken to mean something different to party positions, at least insofar as the latter are defined in policy terms. In this sense, the contrast may also be indicative of the potentially inverse relationship between ideological polarisation (associated with electoral alignments), on the one hand, and policy competition (associated with party programmes), on the other hand (see P-4 below).

When employing mass surveys to identify party positions, two related approaches tend to have been adopted. In one version, respondents are asked to locate the parties in left–right terms, and their judgements are then taken as presenting an accurate picture of voter perceptions of where the parties stand at that point in time. In another version, respondents are asked to locate themselves in left–right terms, and these individual responses are then aggregated by individual party preference to give a composite picture of the party in question. In this latter case, it is the constituency of the party that is being located rather than the party itself. Each approach is obviously valuable and worthwhile, but each also involves a quite distinct set of assumptions. In the one case, the position of the party is seen to derive from the party itself, albeit with data that are filtered through individual voter perceptions. In the other case, the position of the party is seen to derive from that of its own voters. It is currently unclear to me how – if at all – these differences might work through in practice, or

whether they might reveal different images of the space in which parties compete. Despite these different assumptions, however, both versions of the mass survey approach are believed to come closer to tapping into the core ideological identity of the parties, and the electorates, involved. It is perhaps for this reason that these sorts of data have tended to be favoured by analysts of party systems and those concerned with levels of systemic polarisation (e.g., Sani and Sartori 1983).

Elite studies

Elite studies in this field take a variety of forms although they usually tend to be restricted to single-country analyses and have rarely proved sufficiently robust or comparable for wide-ranging comparative work. One approach is to estimate the proximities of pairs of parties using legislative voting behaviour and use these data to infer something about the dimensions along which the parties are aligned (e.g., Pedersen *et al.* 1971; for an application to the party groups in the European Parliament, see Attiná 1990). The problem here, however, as Taylor and Laver (1973: 215) point out, is that party voting in parliament is heavily constrained by whether the party in question is in or out of government, and hence these data cannot be used as an independent predictor of coalition behaviour.

An alternative approach is based on interviews with parliamentary elites; this method has been used quite successfully in the Netherlands in particular. (See Daalder and van de Geer 1977, for an early application, and Hillebrand and Meulman 1992, for a more recent application; for applications in other countries, see Budge *et al.* 1976.) The problem with this approach, however, is that of cross-national comparability, not to mention the costs in both money and time.

A third approach in this tradition bases analyses of party positions on the attitudes of 'middle-level elites' or party activists. As early as 1973, de Swaan suggested that this could be the most accurate way of assessing a party's stance.

> [T]he best overall indicator of a party's policy position in the long run would be the attitudes of its activists. . . . [I]n theory, some statistical aggregate of the policy preference of the party's activists might be taken as an indicator of its rank on the policy scale.
>
> (de Swaan 1973: 136)

To date, however, work in this field has remained quite sparse. Apart from a valuable paper by van Schuur (1989), who used middle-level elite responses to locate parties on a left–right scale in ten west European countries, it seems that virtually nothing is currently available.[2] Despite de Swaan's assertions, however, doubts can be expressed about whether party elites are truly representative of the party as a whole, and particularly of its externally-directed competitive position (May 1973; Kitschelt 1989; Norris 1995).

Analysis of party programmes and manifestos

Despite some earlier single-country applications (for example Borg 1966; Robertson 1976), the systematic analysis of party manifestos effectively took off in the early 1980s, when the cross-national Manifesto Research Group was sponsored by the European Consortium for Political Research under the direction of Ian Budge and David Robertson. The project has continued since that time. Indeed, in terms of longevity and consistency, it remains one of the great success stories of international political science cooperation and has generated numerous collaborative volumes and one-off articles. (For an overview and analysis of the principal findings, see Budge *et al.* 1987; Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann *et al.* 1994. For an updated description of the project, see Volkens, Chapter 3 this volume.) The data generated by this approach have been applied to a very wide range of analyses dealing with most of the separate themes identified in Section I. The core problem that confronts this approach, however, is the extent to which the data it generates are genuinely comparable across nations. This is not a new problem, of course, and it has been addressed in most of the literature that builds on these data. Since the major benefit of the approaches reviewed in this paper is assumed to be comparability across nations and over time, however, this problem is none the less acute.

Three distinct solutions characterise the handling of the problem of comparability within the manifesto approach. The first involves standardising the methods of analysis applied to data from the common coding scheme. Despite this, the results of the analysis are typically more or less unique to each country studied. Thus the policy spaces generated all looked quite different and the interpretations of these were more or less specific to each country (see the country applications in Budge *et al.* 1987). The results were often valuable and insightful, but they obviously fell far short of the level of comparability to which many of the competing approaches to locating parties aspire.

The second solution was thus to standardise the spaces as well as the coding scheme and techniques, a strategy that involved a complex procedure by which national patterns were slowly abstracted and filtered in order to produce a common left–right dimension. The individual national parties' relationships to this dimension, as well as the relationship between their alignment on this dimension and various standardised measures of policy performance, were then subject to analysis (see Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann *et al.* 1994).[3]

A third solution is to use the common data set as if the various parties were all competing in the same system. In other words, a pooled analysis can be conducted across all parties and all elections, regardless of location or period. This was the approach adopted by Bartolini and Mair (1990), for example, who derived a single left–right economic policy dimension against which all parties across Europe could be arrayed, as well as by

Çarkoglu (1995), who derived a single left–right dimension based on the data covering both economic and social policy. This last solution seems to be closest to the cross-national application of a common left–right dimension in both mass and expert surveys.

Expert surveys

Although the use of literature studies has been sometimes defined as availing of 'expert judgments' (Taylor and Laver 1973: 216), the first formal expert study was conducted by a young American scholar, Michael-John Morgan. To the best of my knowledge, no report of this survey or its results has ever been published, but details of the methodology are reported at length in Appendix B of Morgan's Ph.D. thesis (Morgan 1976: 417–500). In a strategy more or less (unknowingly) replicated in later expert surveys, Morgan sought to establish interval level measures of party distances along a number of ideological dimensions by polling some 160 'knowledgable experts' (1976: 436) and asking them to assign a score on the dimensions to as many of the relevant parties as possible.

The arguments advanced by Morgan to justify this innovative strategy, as well as those subsequently cited in defence of later expert surveys, are effectively those summarised below under P-5. Given subsequent development of expert surveys, however, a number of features distinct to Morgan's approach are worth recalling. In the first place, the experts polled were not assigned to particular countries; rather, each was invited to locate parties in as many countries as he or she felt capable of doing. Second, the dimensions on which parties were to be located were not specified in advance; rather, each expert was invited to use up to three dimensions, defined by the respondent him/herself, and to indicate which if any was primary, and which was 'auxiliary'. Third, the periods in which the parties were to be located was carefully specified, and even included separate polls for the interwar years. In all, Morgan received about 100 replies, which allowed him to locate parties in twelve countries (and nineteen different time periods) along up to six principal dimensions. In all countries and periods, the left–right dimension was seen as relevant.

The second major expert survey was carried out by Castles and Mair (1984). Experts from seventeen countries were asked to locate parties in their 'own' country, with the overall number of responses exceeding 100. No effort was made to poll these experts on the salience of this left–right dimension, nor were the experts asked to provide an indication of how they interpreted left and right. Little more than a decade later, this expert survey was followed by a significantly more systematic and precise poll by Huber and Inglehart (1995). This also sought to locate parties on a left–right scale, this time with the much more ambitious purview of forty-two societies. In all, 800 experts were polled, each being asked about his or her 'own' country, and 340 responses were received. The meaning of left and right in the different

countries was also probed, as was the extent to which other dimensions of conflict existed, thus enabling Huber and Inglehart to analyse both the content and relative salience of left–right competition. This latest expert poll on left and right is the most informative and comprehensive to date, and offers a model for future replications.[4]

Paralleling the general left–right expert surveys are the more nuanced and variegated expert polls initiated by Laver and Hunt (1992) and replicated by Laver and various colleagues on a sporadic country by country basis, usually in the wake of a national election. This strand of expert studies probes party positions on a variety of different policy dimensions and also asks respondents to indicate the relative salience of each dimension for each of the actors involved. Comparability is assured through the prior specification of some key dimensions in all countries and over time, while respondents are also invited to identify additional national dimensions they regard as important. Laver and his colleagues also ask experts to rank cabinet portfolios in order of importance, a potentially crucial dimension in explaining subsequent inter-party bargaining and coalition formation. Perhaps surprisingly, information about the locations of actors along the basic (non-specified) left–right dimension has usually not been requested, although this question has been included in the most recent expert survey for the Netherlands (Laver and Mair 1999).

Three elements mark this particular initiative out in terms of the general expert survey approach. First, it involves a multi-dimensional space, thus allowing for a much more nuanced and sophisticated picture to develop. Second, it remains an ongoing and persistently comparable project, which will eventually facilitate a clearer understanding of party movements through time. Third, it operates on a much larger scale, in that responses are usually sought from fifty to one hundred respondents per country, with response rates in recent replications being substantially in excess of those achieved by either Castles–Mair or Huber–Inglehart.

Finally, and in addition to these broadly-based expert surveys, other more *ad hoc* polls have also been carried out of specific themes. Ray, for example, recently polled almost 300 experts in eighteen countries, and received some 135 responses, probing the position of political parties on the issue of European integration (Ray 1999). What is particularly striking in this case is that the experts were also asked to track movements in party positions by locating them at four different points of time between 1984 and 1996.

The limits of expert judgements

> 'All right,' said Deep Thought. 'The Answer to the Great Question . . .'
> 'Yes . . .!'
> 'Of Life, the Universe and Everything . . .' said Deep Thought.
> 'Yes . . .!'

'Is . . .' said Deep Thought, and paused.
'Yes . . .!'
'Is . . .'
'Yes . . .!'
'Forty-two,' said Deep Thought, with infinite majesty and calm.
(Douglas Adams, *The Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy* 1979)

Although expert judgements of party positions are frequently sought by scholars and applied in an increasing variety of settings, the insights they offer are necessarily limited and contingent. In this section, I explore some of the main reasons why we should treat this approach with more caution than is currently implied in the literature. In brief, I advance six propositions, each of which is intended to indicate a particular limit or drawback to the application of party positions as derived by expert judgements.

P-1: Any indicator is better than none

Although this proposition seems eminently sensible on the face of things, it is important to note that scholars may sometimes prove quite uncritical in their use of the available indicators. This is a general problem, of course, not confined to indicators of party positions.[5] In relation to expert surveys, however, one can point to the sometimes absurdly long shelf-life that has come to be associated with the Castles–Mair (1984) data, which have been used not only to locate party positions into the 1990s, but which have also been sometimes extended backwards to the 1960s, or have been taken to apply to the post-war period as a whole. As is evident, these data are but a snapshot from the early 1980s, and they clearly should not be given the degree of weight that some applications have implied (see Mair and Castles 1997). Indeed, at one stage the index was stretched to include a number of new, post-1983 parties, together with an imputed reading of what their Castles-Mair left–right score was likely to be (Hazan 1995: 442–3). Finally, there may also be problems involved in what is perhaps the uncritical application of one and the same indicator – in this case, left–right positioning – for a variety of different purposes, such as predicting coalitions, defining the profiles of governments, measuring patterns of competition, and so on. As is suggested below, the ideology of parties is itself a multi-faceted phenomenon, and there is also sufficient reason to be wary of conflating policy positions, on the one hand, with ideological identity, on the other.

This is not intended to be an argument against the use of these or other indicators as such. It is indeed a truism that any indicator is better than none, and scholars often have no choice but to make use of the limited measures that are available. Rather, the proposition is advanced simply with a view to urging greater care and caution in the application of such indicators. In the end, these are only indicators. It is also necessary to be

careful that debates regarding the supposed truth or falsity of relationships between variables do not revolve exclusively around the methods used to measure these relationships, rather than around the sometimes questionable validity of the variables or the indicators themselves.[6]

P-2: The accuracy and consistency with which a party can be located on a given policy dimension is a function of the salience of that policy dimension for the party in question. Hence determining the location of parties on a given policy scale is more meaningful for some parties than for others

This proposition reflects the clear possibility that evidence of fluctuations over time in expert survey estimates of a party's position stems at least in part from the observers' uncertainty about where that party stands. Note here the summary data in Table 2.1, showing the ordinal left–right ranking of those parties in those party systems included in each of the three major expert surveys to date (Morgan, Castles and Mair, Huber and Inglehart). Seven countries were included in all three surveys, and data from all three taken together reflect party positions across an eighteen-year period. This was a period of substantial political change, running from the cold-war politics of the mid-1970s to the triumph of liberal democracy in the mid-1990s. Despite this, the relative positions of many parties appear not to change. Thus we see the Socialist Party (PS) and the Liberals remaining 'stable' in Belgium, and a reshuffling among the Christian Democrats (PSC), the Francophone Dem. Front (FDF) and Volksunie (VU). In Denmark, all of the parties prove relatively stable, with the exception of the Liberal–Conservative reshuffle between 1982 and 1993. In Finland, the People's Democratic Union (SKDL), Social Democrats (SD) and Conservatives prove stable, while the remaining parties reshuffle. In Italy, only the Republican Party (PRI) and Social Democrats (PSDI) reshuffle, as do only the Political Reformed Party (SGP) and Reformed Political Union (GPV) in the Netherlands in the late 1970s. In Norway, the left Socialists, Labour and Conservatives prove stable, while the Christian, Centre and Liberal parties reshuffle. In Sweden, all parties prove stable, except for the Liberal and Centre parties in the late 1970s.

These patterns suggest two conclusions. First, the remarkable stability of the main left–right actors suggests that we might do just as well by making our own judgements rather than relying on a range of different experts: Table 2.1 reports more or less self-evident placings. These data thus offer some support for the simple a priori approach discussed earlier. Second, the parties that do reshuffle are probably those about whose location the observer is likely to be uncertain. In other words, it may not be that the party itself is moving; it may be that experts are uncertain about where it is 'really' located and we are effectively looking at measurement error rather than 'real' movement. And it may well be that accuracy or consistency in expert judgements may be a function of salience, with experts better able

Table 2.1 Ordinal ranking of parties (from left to right) in three expert surveys

Country	*Morgan (1976)*	*Castles–Mair (1984)*	*Huber–Inglehart (1995)*
Belgium	Socialist Party (PS) Christian Democrats (PSC) Francophone Dem. Front (FDF) Volksunie (VU) Liberals (Lib)	Socialist Party (PS) Francophone Dem. Front (FDF) Christian Democrats (PSC) Volksunie (VU) Liberals (Lib)	Socialist Party (PS) Christian Democrats (PSC) Volksunie (VU) Francophone Dem. Front (FDF) Liberals (Lib)
Denmark	Socialist People's Party (SPP) Social Democrats (SD) Radical Liberals (Rad) Liberals (Lib) Conservatives (Con)	Socialist People's Party (SPP) Social Democrats (SD) Radical Liberals (Rad) Liberals (Lib) Conservatives (Con)	Socialist People's Party (SPP) Social Democrats (SD) Radical Liberals (Rad) Conservatives (Con) Liberals (Lib)
Finland	People's Democratic Union (SKDL) Social Democrats (SD) Centre Party (KESK) Finnish Rural Party (FRP) Liberals (Lib) Swedish People's Party (SPP) National Coalition (Con)	People's Democratic Union (SKDL) Social Democrats (SD) Centre Party (KESK) Liberals (Lib) Finnish Rural Party (FRP) Swedish People's Party (SPP) National Coalition (Con)	People's Democratic Union (SKDL/VAS) Social Democrats (SD) Centre Party (KESK) Liberals (Lib) Finnish Rural Party (FRP) = Swedish People's Party (SPP)= National Coalition (Con)
Italy	Communist Party (PCI) Socialist Party (PSI) Social Democrats (PSDI) Republican Party (PRI) Christian Democrats (DC) Liberal Party (PLI) Social Movement (MSI)	Communist Party (PCI) Socialist Party (PSI) Republican Party (PRI) Social Democrats (PSDI) = Christian Democrats (DC) = Liberal Party (PLI) Social Movement (MSI)	Communist Party (PDS/RC) Socialist Party (PSI) Social Democrats (PSDI) Republican Party (PRI) Christian Democrats (DC) Liberal Party (PLI) Social Movement (MSI)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	*Morgan (1976)*	*Castles–Mair (1984)*	*Huber–Inglehart (1995)*
Netherlands	Labour Party (PvdA) Democratis 66 (D66) 'Christian Democrats' (CDA) Liberals (VVD) Political Reformed Party (SGP) Reformed Political Union (GPV)	Labour Party (PvdA) Democratis 66 (D66) Christian Democrats (CDA) Liberals (VVD) Reformed Political Union (GPV) Political Reformed Party (SGP)	Labour Party (PvdA) Democratis 66 (D66) Christian Democrats (CDA) Liberals (VVD) Reformed Political Union (GPV) Political Reformed Party (SGP)
Norway	Socialist Party (Soc) Labour Party (Lab) Liberal Party (Lib) Christian People's Party (KF) Centre Party (Cent) Conservatives (Con)	Socialist Party (Soc) Labour Party (Lab) Liberal Party (Lib) Centre Party (Cent) Christian People's Party (KF) Conservatives (Con)	Socialist Party (Soc) Labour Party (Lab) Centre Party (Cent) Liberal Party (Lib) Christian People's Party (KF) Conservatives (Con)
Sweden	Communist Party (CP) Social Democrats (SD) Centre Party (Cent) Liberal Party (Lib) Conservatives (Con)	Communist Party (CP/L) Social Democrats (SD) Liberal Party (Lib) Centre Party (Cent) Conservatives (Con)	Communist Party (CP/L) Social Democrats (SD) Liberal Party (Lib) = Centre Party (Cent) = Conservatives (Con)

to locate parties on dimensions that the parties themselves regard as being important.

Hence expert surveys may suggest that parties are changing their positions for any of three reasons, only the first two of which are meaningful. They may change (a) because of convergence or divergence in the party system itself, including changes provoked by the emergence of new parties; (b) because the party simply changes its views, and moves from one position to another; or (c) because of observer uncertainty.

P-3: Given the increased fragmentation of party systems, expert surveys are likely to indicate increased levels of polarisation over time

This proposition derives from a very simple conjecture: the more parties an expert must locate along a given dimension, the more likely it is that he or she will use a wider range of the space in determining those locations. Other things being equal, experts may report a broader spread of positions in more fragmented systems. Hence more fragmentation will lead to greater perceived levels of polarisation. The evidence from the Castles–Mair and Huber–Ingelhart expert surveys offers some support for this tendency; in both surveys, increased fragmentation was associated with a greater range in values (see Table 2.2).

Since party systems have become more fragmented over the years, expert survey results are likely to imply increased ideological polarisation. But this may in part be an artefact of the expert survey approach.

P-4: Policy space may not be the same as the ideological space

The electoral and ideological appeal of any party is multi-faceted. Given this, and given the distinction between what a party stands for and how it competes – to follow Sani and Sartori (1983), the distinction between the domains of party identification and the dimensions of party competition – how should we interpret party locations in a policy space? Are these positions that parties adopt in order to compete? Or do they represent their domains of identification?

The answer is probably some combination of the two but the nature of this combination will vary from party to party. Thus the position of a religious party on a dimension defined by social policy may well have more

Table 2.2 Number of parties and polarisation as evidenced by expert surveys (Castles–Mair data recalculated to 10-point scale)

Number of parties	*Mean polarisation (range)* *Castles–Mair*	*Huber–Inglehart*
2–4	3.8 (2.0–6.3)	4.2 (2.7–6.5)
5–8	5.9 (5.4–8.2)	6.1 (4.3–7.8)
9 or more	7.8 (7.9–9.3)	7.1 (3.9–9.0)

to do with how that party is identified than with how it chooses to compete. Conversely, when the same party is located in terms of economic policy, the position is likely to owe more to a strategic choice by the party than to its core identity. In terms of party competition, and most especially in terms of the comparison of party system dynamics, such different emphases may prove very important. When we both read and conduct expert surveys, on the other hand, the distinction may easily be blurred.

This raises the broader question of whether the space in question is defined by policy or by ideology. This distinction is often fudged in the literature on party distances, where policy is sometimes used interchangeably with ideology. The contrast between policy and ideology can be acute, however. Bartolini and Mair (1990), for example, noted a marked *inverse* relationship between left–right economic policy distance as measured by the analysis of manifestos, on the one hand, and left–right ideological polarisation as measured at the mass electoral level, on the other hand. This was not seen simply as a product of the different methods employed. Indeed the suggestion was that 'it is precisely in those countries which are characterised by an absence of ideological polarisation at mass electoral level that policy competition *per se* will play a major role in determining differences between parties' (Bartolini and Mair 1990: 7).

P-5: Expert surveys should always be treated as 'expert' surveys

As noted above, expert surveys are seen to have three advantages over alternative approaches to estimating party positions. First, precisely because they reflect the judgements of experts – who are presumably intelligent, well-read and informed – they acquire a certain weight and legitimacy. Second, they are seen to have the advantage of making a judgement of party position based on what the party is currently doing or saying, rather than being based on assumptions derived from past party behaviour. If one is testing the extent to which ideological proximity determines coalition formation, for example, then clearly it is necessary to find a measure of proximity that is independent of past coalition behaviour. Otherwise one would be left with a largely tautological model (this point is also discussed in Morgan 1976: 430–5). Third, expert judgements are quick, easy and comprehensive. They permit the collection of highly *comparable* and *standardised* data across a much wider variety of party systems than could be afforded by evidence drawn from idiosyncratic mass surveys or the analysis of multi-tongued party programmes. There is a fourth advantage to the expert survey, of course: as with Deep Thought, the computer to end all computers in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, with an expert survey you get a precise numerical answer to your query.

All of this also begs the question: how do the experts themselves derive their judgements? The answer, of course, is that they do this using some implicit combination of the other main approaches to estimating party policy positions. In other words, being well-read, well-informed, experienced and

for the most part intelligent observers, experts base their judgements on a combination of often unconsciously imbibed sources such as past coalition behaviour, party programmes and ideology, and both mass and elite perceptions. Expert judgements are therefore not really an alternative to these other approaches; instead, they reflect a crude synthesis of these other approaches, filtered through the perceptions of well-read and intelligent observers. They are less an alternative than a short-cut.

P-6: Although surveys of expert judgements have become more professional and precise over time, wider political changes suggest that their results have become less useful

This sixth and final proposition derives from three separate sub-propositions that I discuss one by one.

First: *in electoral terms, we are witnessing a significant decline in what might be termed the 'vote of belonging'.*[7] Although scholars vary in their interpretations of the level and extent of change, and despite substantial cross-national variation, most agree that there has been some distancing of parties from society. The strength of loyalties to parties has declined in most countries, as has the scale and involvement of party membership. In social linkage terms, parties are now much more autonomous than before and significantly less tied down by particular constituencies. Parties no longer belong to a given set of voters, nor do voters belong to a given party. Both sets of actors now range more freely, and hence the notion of *bottom-up* representation has become a less meaningful feature of representative government more generally (see Andeweg 1998).

Second: *in electoral terms, we are witnessing a significant decline in the capacity to mobilize the 'vote of exchange'.* This is especially the case when this vote is expressed through collective interests. In other words, parties are now limited in their capacity to make and redeem policy promises. This does not mean that parties are less inclined to make promises to the voter; indeed, the evidence suggests that pledges are now much more readily offered than before (e.g., Thompson 1999). What it does imply is that the scope of these promises is now more limited, and that the room for manoeuvre within which they can take effect is more constrained. There is an enormous literature dealing with this question and a closely fought debate about the real extent to which the policies of parties in government are now circumscribed. But given that so much government activity is devoted simply to maintaining existing and inherited programmes (Rose 1990); given that internationalisation and globalisation effectively curtail the exercise of certain national policy instruments; and, within the European Union area, given that the demands of harmonisation and convergence effectively rule out certain policy options, then it is almost impossible to assert with any degree of conviction that governments remain free to make the promises of their own choosing. Too many options are simply ruled out from the beginning.

Third: *in terms of competition, parties are now much more free in their choice of partners and allies*. In other words, the options available to parties seeking to build alliances for government have grown with time. There are many different factors that can be cited to account for this increasing promiscuity in processes of government formation, including the two cited immediately above. Whatever the explanation, however, the trend is undeniable. In Italy, for example, the first Olive Tree coalition joined the former Communist Party with senior figures from the former Christian Democrats, two parties whose mutual rivalry had served to define the parameters of the Italian party system from 1948 through to the early 1990s. Ireland recently witnessed the first ever coalition between Fianna Fáil and Labour, as well as the first-ever coalition joining Fine Gael and Democratic Left. The Netherlands in 1994 saw the first ever government to be formed that excluded the religious mainstream: the first secular government in modern Dutch history. In Spain, the Catalan coalition shifted its support from the Socialist Party to the Popular Party. In Germany, the Greens have emerged as an alternative junior partner for the Social Democrats, opening up new government formation formulae in that country for the first time in thirty years. More options are now open, and the question of who gets into government has become much more a matter of short-term bargaining and contingent choice.

If we put each of these three elements together, the conclusion almost speaks for itself. Party interactions in general, and processes of coalition formation in particular, seem now much less *determined* than before. A party's behaviour is no longer easily explained in terms of its sociology; there are few given constituencies any more, and the notion of bottom-up representation has slowly withered away. Nor is it easily explained in terms of programmatic emphases; the capacity for top-down representation has also been limited and the increasing effect of external constraints forces the adoption of a consensual approach across the mainstream of any given party system. Nor is party behaviour so easily explained in terms of traditions and/or genetic identities; parties are now much more open to forming new sorts of alliances, and have become much more promiscuous in terms of their choice of governing partners. Politics in this sense has become increasingly autonomous, with short-term leadership considerations, the sheer force of circumstance, and what Converse (1964) once referred to in another context as 'the nature of the times', now emerging to play a far greater role.

It is for this reason that knowing where parties are located in left–right terms or, indeed, in terms of almost any policy and/or ideological space, may be less significant than before. In other words, although the expert surveys in particular have become more professional and more precise with time, what they tell us about party systems may have become less important. Given the relevance of short-term contingent choice, and given what we know of leadership ambition and strategy, then knowledge of the location of parties

may not end up telling us very much about the processes of coalition formation. Given changes in the character and demands of representation, such knowledge may tell us little about how well a government functions, or about its legitimacy. And given that party systems appear increasingly *de*structured in terms of ideology and support, it may not offer any substantial insight into the functioning of these party systems themselves. It is perhaps ironic that at a time when we are finally in a position to mount ever more professional expert surveys, we must now also begin to question their utility.

Notes

1 The US source is cited as a then annual report of *World Strength of Communist Party Organizations*. The Soviet source is cited as *Politicheskie partii zarubezhnykh stran (Political Parties of Foreign Countries*, 1967). See Janda (1980: 73–5).
2 There are possibilities inherent in an ongoing cross-national research project on party memberships, led by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley.
3 For a more recent and quite interesting application of this later technique see Kim and Fording (1998), who weigh these comparable party positions by levels of electoral support and then use the resultant figures to estimate the left–right positioning of the electorate as a whole.
4 A detailed comparison of the results of the Castles-Mair and Huber-Inglehart data is reported by Knutsen (1998b). See also Mair and Castles (1997: 154–6). A more general comparison of various different left–right scales is summarised in Laver and Schofield (1998: Appendix B, Figures B1–18).
5 See, for example, the debate on the extent of the relationship between the strength of the left, on the one hand, and economic growth, on the other, which waged in the pages of the *Journal of Politics* in the late 1980s – noted in Mair (1996: 325–6).
6 In Klingemann *et al.* (1994), for example, the key concern appears to be with the way in which the relationship between the common left–right dimension and various policy outputs can be modelled, while at the same time the integrity and validity of the dimension itself (the indicator of party positions) is taken more or less for granted.
7 The term comes from Parisi and Pasquino (1979: 14–18), who develop a valuable typology of party–voter linkages, and who distinguish between three types of party–voter linkage: 'the vote of opinion', which is based on the voter's pragmatic evaluation of the competing party appeals; the 'vote of *appartenza* [belonging]', which reflects the voter's long-standing affective loyalty to the party concerned; and the 'vote of exchange', which is given by the voter in return for the satisfaction of a need or in return for the meeting of a particular interest.

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Part II

Expert coded text analysis

3 Manifesto research since 1979

From reliability to validity

Andrea Volkens

Introduction

Since 1979, the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) has been collecting and coding election programmes with the aim of estimating the policy preferences of political parties. Detailed descriptions of this project can be found in Budge *et al.* (1987), Laver and Budge (1992), Klingeman *et al.* (1994). During the first phase of the project, while the classification scheme was being developed, each group member was responsible for his or her own data collection. The second phase of the project started in 1989. In the context of its 'Comparative Manifestos Project' (CMP), the Social Science Research Centre – Berlin provided resources for updating and expanding the MRG data set to 2,347 programmes of 632 different parties in fifty-two countries.[1] Coders are now hired to do the content analysis according to a coding handbook. A reliability test given in the handbook is used for training coders. This paper thus sets out to review the MRG classification scheme in terms of quality control.

The first main section of this chapter introduces the scope and scale of the Manifesto Research, giving a short description of the initial phase of the project and introducing the classification scheme used. The next section deals with the quality control of data in the second phase of the project. Up to now thirty-nine coders have completed the reliability test and measures of accuracy will be presented for these. Before starting a third phase of the project, a further section considers whether the classification scheme can be improved. I argue that the amount of information one can expect to gain by analysing election programmes depends first and foremost on the length of these programmes. The longer the programmes, the more detailed the information that can be derived from them.

MRG coding units and classification scheme

In 1979, the Manifesto Research Group was constituted by the European Consortium for Political Research. Ian Budge initiated and has since then led a group of researchers interested in comparative content analysis of

policy positions taken by political parties. The object of the group was to analyse election programmes that were seen as indicators of the parties' policy emphases and positions. There are many advantages in using election programmes as a source for identifying the political goals of parties. Election programmes cover a wide range of political positions and themes and can therefore be seen as a 'set of key central statements of party positions' (Budge *et al.* 1987: 18). Because the programmes are usually ratified by party conventions, they are authoritative statements of party policies and represent the whole party, not just one faction or politician. In addition, election programmes are published before every election. Thus, ideological movements of parties can be studied over time.

The MRG set out to cover all significant parties in twenty countries for the whole post-Second World War era. Table 3.1 shows all countries and number of elections, parties, and programmes that have been covered up to now by MRG and CMP. During the first decade of the project, 1,040 programmes were subjected to content analysis, 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (Berelson 1952: 18). As with all human coded content analysis, the group had to select a coding unit and devise a classification scheme. After years of experimentation and discussion, the group settled for the so-called 'quasi-sentence' as a coding unit.[2] A quasi-sentence is defined as an argument which is the verbal expression of one political idea or issue. In its simplest form, a sentence is the basic unit of meaning. Therefore, punctuation can be used as a guideline for identifying arguments. The starting point of coding is the sentence, but long sentences may contain more than one argument so that long sentences are broken up into 'quasi-sentences'.

The major task of the group was to develop a classification scheme that could accommodate the content of election programmes in comparative as well as longitudinal perspective. The starting point for this enterprise was

Table 3.1 Countries, elections, parties and programmes covered by the MRG and CMP projects

Countries	*Elections*	*No. of elections*	*No. of different parties*	*No. of programmes*
1. OECD				
Australia*	1946–1998	22	6	76
Austria*	1949–1995	15	5	50
Belgium*	1946–1995	17	23	119
Canada**	1945–1997	17	6	62
Denmark**	1945–1994	21	16	183
Finland	1945–1995	15	13	93
France**	1946–1997	14	20	66
Germany**	1949–1998	14	15	61
Greece	1974–1996	9	8	33
Iceland	1946–1987	14	10	56
Ireland*	1948–1997	16	10	60

Table 3.1 (continued)

Countries	*Elections*	*No. of elections*	*No. of different parties*	*No. of programmes*
Italy*	1946–1996	14	19	107
Japan*	1960–1996	13	12	71
Luxembourg*	1945–1994	12	7	49
The Netherlands*	1946–1998	16	12	84
New Zealand*	1946–1996	18	5	52
Norway*	1945–1993	13	9	85
Portugal	1975–1995	9	14	51
Spain	1977–1993	6	15	46
Sweden*	1944–1998	18	8	98
Switzerland	1947–1995	13	9	63
Turkey	1950–1995	12	13	35
United Kingdom**	1945–1997	15	5	45
United States*	1920–1996	20	5	43
2. Eastern Europe				
Albania	1991–1997	4	11	30
Armenia	1995	1	5	5
Azerbaijan	1995	1	4	4
Belarus	1995	1	8	8
Bosnia-Hercegovina	1990–1996	2	8	8
Bulgaria	1990–1997	4	10	20
Croatia	1990–1995	3	17	25
Czech Republic	1990–1998	4	14	27
Estonia	1992+1995	2	13	14
Georgia	1992+1995	2	24	26
German Dem. Rep.	1990	1	14	14
Hungary	1990+1994	2	8	14
Latvia	1993+1995	2	14	18
Lithuania	1992	1	9	9
Macedonia	1990–1998	3	12	20
Moldova	1994	1	4	4
Montenegro	1990–1996	3	11	17
Poland	1991+1993	2	23	29
Romania	1990+1992	2	17	20
Russia	1993+1995	2	16	22
Serbia	1990–1997	4	15	31
Slovakia	1990–1994	3	16	23
Slovenia	1990–1996	3	11	17
Ukraine	1994+1998	2	24	27
3. Latin America				
Mexico	1946–1997	18	13	52
4. Other				
Israel**	1949–1996	14	41	129
Northern Ireland*	1921–1973	13	3	33
Sri Lanka*	1947–1977	7	2	13
Total:	52	460	632	2,347

* documents until the beginning of 1980s coded by MRG-member (no. of programmes: 1,040)
** all documents coded by MRG-member.

the twenty-one positional categories developed by David Robertson (1976: 73–5) for analysing modes of party competition in Britain. Two considerations guided the extensions of these categories. Deductively, the categories were expanded out of theoretical considerations of saliency theory (Budge, Chapter 4 this volume). Inductively, the classification scheme was enlarged to span the entire content of all programmes under investigation. Based upon these considerations, the group devised a classification scheme with fifty-four broad categories grouped into seven policy domains. The fifty-four categories, called the Standard Coding Frame, are listed in Appendix 3.1. Each category of the standard coding frame is specified by a set of typical issues and political ideas (Budge *et al.*: 459–65). The classification scheme comprises twenty-six bipolar positions, such as (504) 'Welfare State Expansion' as opposed to (505) 'Welfare State Limitation', twenty-seven unipolar positions (or valence issues) such as (501) 'Environmental Protection', and one general thematic concern for which no direction could be identified, namely (408) 'Economic Goals'.[3] Each quasi-sentence is coded into one, and only one of the fifty-four categories.

In 1989 two categories were added to capture the content of communist and environmentalist party programmes. These are (415) 'Marxist Analysis' and (416) 'Sustainable Development' (see Appendix 1.2).[4] Thus, the number of categories for the Standard Coding Frame is now fifty-six (Volkens 1992a). In addition, sub-categories were created for Eastern European and Southern American countries, to cover the specific policy problems of these areas. A total of eighty-one sub-categories have been used for Eastern European countries in addition to the fifty-six Standard Categories (see Appendix 3.3), but so far only one sub-category has been created for Mexico (see Appendix 3.4).[5] All sub-categories are hierarchically grouped into Standard Categories so that they can easily be aggregated to one of the fifty-six Standard Categories.

Based upon this classification scheme, that discriminates between parties but is at the same time parsimonious, three types of comparisons are possible: first, comparisons of changes in policy positions or in emphases over time within specific parties; second, differences in policy positions or in emphases across parties; and, third, differences across countries. The basic data used to support such comparisons are the percentages of total quasi-sentences devoted to each category. Thus, the MRG combines a positional with a saliency approach in one measure.

The approach has opened many interesting research perspectives. The group has written three books and numerous articles that demonstrate the potential given by the possibility of locating political parties in a programmatic space. However, after many years of cooperative work it turned out that many group members had changed their research interests and were no longer in a position to carry the burden of data generation. Meanwhile, the manifesto data had become central to major projects of the Social Science Research Centre, Berlin. Thus, the Centre's research unit on

'Institutions and Social Change' decided to continue and broaden this data collection using its own resources. The data-sets are made available to the academic community for major publications.[6]

Quality control since 1989

During the last ten years, 1,308 programmes from fifty countries have been coded.[7] Some countries are still coded by original MRG members.[8] To cover all other countries, however, coders have been hired by CMP to do the content analysis based upon a coding handbook. In content analysis projects, a group of coders is usually thoroughly trained before the actual coding process begins. This training phase ends with a reliability test after which all codings are completed by the trained group of coders. This procedure is not feasible in an ongoing comparative project with fifty countries, each of which holds elections every three to five years. Therefore, in order to keep the codings going for many years, a handbook was written, giving all details of the coding procedure (Volkens 1992a). After having studied the handbook, all new coders are requested to fill in a reliability test. This differs in one important respect from the usual reliability test because it is used for training purposes. Therefore, an exemplary programme was chosen that is difficult to code correctly in terms of both coding units and categories. After having completed the test, all coders get detailed replies and are informed about any deviations from the approach of the MRG/CMP. The more coders deviate from the approach, the more time is necessary for training and the more strongly coders are urged to contact the supervisor via email during the actual coding process.

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show the results of these specific reliability tests for thirty-nine coders.[9] The number of coders does not correspond to the number of countries covered because some coders took on more than one country and others have dropped out of the project after covering one election. The specific kind of reliability test is a test of accuracy. Of the three features of reliability tests – accuracy, reproducibility, and stability – 'accuracy is the strongest reliability test available' (Krippendorf 1980: 131). Accuracy shows whether data are reproducible by 'independent researchers, at different locations, and at different times, using the same instructions for coding the same set of data' (Krippendorf 1980: 132) and measures the degree to which the solution of a coder conforms to the 'correct' solution of a supervisor. The 'correct' solution of the CMP reliability test had been elaborated and agreed upon in 1989 by two long-term members of the MRG who had extensive experience of coding election programmes from different countries.

Table 3.2 gives the percentage point deviation of thirty-nine coders from the 'correct' number of quasi-sentences.[10] On average, the thirty-nine coders deviated 10 percentage points from the 'correct' solution. Overall, twenty-four of the thirty-nine coders were within a range of 10 percentage

Table 3.2 Number of quasi-sentences: deviation of thirty-nine coders from 'correct' solution

No. of coders	*24*	*12*	*3*	*Average*
% deviation	0–10	11–20	21–30	10

point deviation and thus did a very good job. Another twelve coders deviated between 10 and 20 per cent. Given the difficulty of the text with respect to the identification of quasi-sentences, this result was to be expected.[11] Only three coders can be said to have 'failed' the test because they deviated between 20 and 30 per cent from the 'correct' solution. These three coders were given further training, but not rejected from the project.

Table 3.3 shows Pearson correlations between the distributions of the number of quasi-sentences coded into the fifty-six categories plus the number of uncoded sentences and distribution of the standard solution. The strength of the correlation coefficients shows that most coders came up with a solution that was highly compatible with the 'correct' solution. The average correlation between the solutions of the thirty-nine coders and the 'correct' solution is 0.72. The solution of twenty-four coders correlated with the 'correct' solution more than 0.70. Only five coders can be said to have failed the test because they dropped below 0.49. An even stronger test than mere correlation statistics would have been a measurement based on the sequence of categories coded for every quasi-sentence.[12] However, such a comparison is very time-consuming and a test measurement has shown that wrong codings tend not to cancel out. This can be shown by looking at the most common coding errors uncovered in these tests:

1 Quasi-sentences that 'should' have been coded into a substantive category were treated as uncodable.
2 Category (408) 'General Economic Goals' was chosen instead of precise policy positions such as (410) 'Economic Growth'.
3 Instead of treating (703) 'Agriculture' as a valence issue, a specific position such as (402) 'Incentives' was chosen.
4 Category (305) 'Political Authority', interpreted in the sense of the party's general competence to govern, was chosen instead of a more precise policy position.
5 Generally speaking, policy statements can express the meaning of the categories more or less strongly. Some coders tended to neglect weak expressions of argument. A good example is the treatment of weak expressions of (601) 'Nationalism' where a cultural response pattern emerged. Coders from long-term Western democracies tended to identify weak expressions of nationalism whereas coders from countries with recent non-democratic experiences tended to overlook weaker statements.

Table 3.3 Fifty-six categories plus uncoded sentences: correlations between solutions of thirty-nine coders and 'correct' solution

No. of coders	*3*	*12*	*9*	*8*
Pearson's R	1.0–0.90	0.89–0.80	0.79–0.70	0.69–0.60
No. of coders	*2*	*3*	*2*	*Average*
Pearson's R	0.59–0.50	0.49–0.40	0.39–0.30	0.72

However, the number of mistakes does not mean that all codings by 'bad' coders are unreliable. First of all, the supervisor has drawn attention to all the deviations. Secondly, and more important, the 'bad' coders were precisely the ones who contacted the supervisor most often during the actual coding process to ask for coding solutions. They translated all sentences that were difficult for them to code into English and the coding was then done by the supervisor. The two programmes covered by the worst coder (0.341 correlation with 'correct' solution) were in fact almost completely coded by the supervisor herself.[13]

In addition to accuracy, a measure of reproducibility can be computed by comparing the solutions of the reliability tests for all pairs of the thirty-nine coders. 'Reproducibility is the degree to which a process can be created under varying circumstances, at different locations, using different coders' (Krippendorf 1980: 131). The average Pearson correlations between the distributions of the number of quasi-sentences coded into the fifty-six categories plus the number of uncoded sentences for all pairs of coders is 0.71. As mentioned above, though, this reproducibility measure underestimates the quality of the MRG/CMP data because of the training and correcting procedures that followed the reliability test. The stability of codings, 'the degree to which a process is invariant or unchanging over time' (Krippendorf 1980: 130) has not been tested yet because most hired coders dropped out of the project after having completed one contract. However, for all trained coders who stay with the project, the next phase of the project will include an intracoder reliability test.

As compared to reliability, the validity of data is much more difficult to establish. 'We speak of a measuring instrument as being valid if it measures what it is designed to measure, and we consider a content analysis valid to the extent its inferences are upheld in the face of independently obtained evidence' (Krippendorf 1980: 155). Of the many types of validation efforts, (for which, see Krippendorf 1980: 155ff), the MRG relied on face validity.[14] 'The major check on the validity of our coding procedure is the extent to which it generates results that make sense within countries. The individual chapters assess this in more detail, but their overall results suggest that the estimates of party and government policy generated by the coding scheme are quite plausible'

(Laver and Budge 1992: 22). Meanwhile, a number of researchers have investigated the 'correctional validity' of these data (Krippendorf 1980: 164) by comparing positions of parties as measured by content-analysing election programmes with positions of parties as measured by expert judgements or left–right placements of voters.[15] On the whole these results show the MRG data to have good validity, especially when comparing changes in policy positions over time. However, up to now the proof of the pudding is still to come. In the future, the predictive capacity of the data will be assessed by investigating whether content analysis, expert or voter judgements are superior in predicting the behaviour of parties.

The content of 2,326 election programmes from 606 parties in fifty-two countries

The approach of the MRG/CMP has been highly influential as a general method of estimating the policy positions of political parties. Today, quite understandably, some researchers are developing new classification schemes that fit their own specific research purposes. However, there is a limit as to how many different themes and positions one can expect to be mentioned in an election programme. The kind of information one can get by analysing election programmes depends above all upon their length. The longer programmes are, the more detailed the information one can get from them about policy positions. With short programmes, the problem of 'structural zeros' arises. If a party does not mention a specific issue, one can assume the saliency of the issue to be low, but one cannot assume the party occupies a centrist position in it. Thus the information one can get by analysing short programmes is restricted to highly aggregated policy dimensions.

Table 3.4 shows the average number of quasi-sentences identified in 2,326 programmes, broken up into seven decades and four groups of countries. The table demonstrates that parties nowadays compile much

Table 3.4 Average number of quasi-sentences in seven decades for four groups of countries

Decades:	*24 OECD countries*	*Eastern Europe*	*Southern America*	*Other countries*	*All countries*
1930s	237	—	—	60	145
1940s	160	—	94	68	151
1950s	171	—	225	104	165
1960s	260	—	265	73	237
1970s	333	—	335	122	321
1980s	561	—	510	36	509
1990s	649	221	886	26	388
1930s–1990s	384	221	508	69	333

longer programmes than they did after the Second World War. Moreover, parties from older democracies tend to compile longer election programmes than parties in the newer Eastern European democracies. For all research questions that are longitudinal and include comparisons between western and eastern countries, a fifty-six category scheme such as that used in the MRG/CMP approach is sufficient, given the small number of policy statements in the older programmes and those of the newer democracies.

However, for many of the more recent programmes, there is leeway for a more differentiated classification scheme than that of the original MRG scheme. Although classification schemes should always be developed deductively to fit specific research purposes, one way of improving the MRG classification scheme is to look inductively at the distribution of the fifty-six categories. All categories that are highly populated are suitable for further disaggregation and refinement. Table 3.5 presents the average percentage distribution for the fifty-six Standard Categories.

The most highly populated categories are:

1 (000) 'Uncoded Sentences': This, however, holds true only for very few countries. For instance, about 30 per cent of the quasi-sentences in Denmark are treated as uncodable. But in most other OECD-countries, the number of uncoded sentences is negligible.
2 (201) 'Freedom and Human Rights': Favourable mentions of personal freedom and of civil rights could be treated separately. This separation would discriminate between liberal parties, which are mainly concerned with freedom, and green parties, which are mainly concerned with human rights.
3 (202) 'Democracy': The MRG category combines statements in favour both of representative democracy and of participatory (or direct) democracy; these could be treated separately.
4 (408) 'Economic Goals': This category includes unemployment, a

Table 3.5 Percentage distribution of programme contents in fifty-six categories and uncoded sentences

Categories:	*24 OECD countries*	*Eastern Europe*	*Southern America*	*Other countries*	*All countries*
Foreign Special Relation +	1.079	0.564	0.106	1.996	1.031
Foreign Special Relation –	0.387	0.115	0.641	0.992	0.388
Anti-Imperialism +	0.391	0.317	0.729	0.695	0.407
Military +	1.331	1.373	0.271	4.381	1.545
Military –	1.116	0.581	0.559	0.830	0.982
Peace +	1.311	0.696	0.793	4.927	1.457
Internationalism +	2.355	1.923	2.736	2.484	2.293
European Community +	1.136	0.961	0.001	0.002	0.994
Internationalism –	0.481	0.510	1.451	0.445	0.505

Table 3.5 (continued)

Categories:	*24 OECD countries*	*Eastern Europe*	*Southern America*	*Other countries*	*All countries*
European Community –	0.305	0.003	0	0	0.223
Freedom and Human Rights +	2.670	4.442	3.794	3.578	3.092
Democracy +	3.602	4.843	8.985	2.994	3.907
Constitutionalism +	0.809	1.807	1.889	1.471	1.068
Constitutionalism –	0.401	0.122	0.366	0.860	0.383
Decentralization +	2.202	2.471	2.880	0.571	2.145
Centralization +	0.219	0.250	0.131	0.004	0.209
Gov-Admin Efficiency +	2.904	1.185	2.376	2.000	2.505
Political Corruption +	1.047	0.990	1.297	2.194	1.129
Political Authority +	3.462	3.363	2.355	1.675	3.284
Free Enterprise +	2.417	2.830	1.963	1.338	2.402
Incentives +	2.516	2.132	1.779	1.568	2.357
Market Regulation +	1.908	1.669	2.833	1.228	1.833
Economic Planning +	1.303	0.376	1.139	0.712	1.083
Corporatism +	0.342	0.133	0.002	0.140	0.280
Protectionism +	0.390	0.555	0.371	0.562	0.433
Protectionism –	0.274	0.413	0.237	0.007	0.284
Economic Goals	3.206	2.319	1.269	3.388	3.012
Keynesian Demand +	0.325	0.313	0.005	0.239	0.310
Productivity +	2.334	1.556	2.043	3.679	2.284
Infrastructure +	3.889	2.912	3.674	1.767	3.542
Controlled Economy +	1.021	0.578	0.436	0.523	0.888
Nationalization +	0.521	0.289	1.097	0.154	0.463
Economic Orthodoxy +	2.978	1.764	1.692	1.030	2.577
Marxist Analysis +	0.008	0.317	0.381	0	0.125
Anti-Growth Economy +	0.215	0.308	0.001	0.002	0.213
Environmental Protection +	3.224	3.283	2.856	0.142	2.995
Culture +	1.863	2.431	1.173	0.366	1.841
Social Justice +	4.429	2.829	4.821	3.547	4.074
Welfare +	6.340	5.701	5.303	5.052	6.101
Welfare –	0.397	0.206	0.005	0.008	0.331
Education +	3.405	2.859	3.444	2.812	3.259
Education –	0.006	0.005	0.000	0.002	0.006
National Way of Life +	0.963	3.290	5.168	6.713	1.922
National Way of Life –	0.152	0.347	0	0.420	0.205
Traditional Morality +	1.712	2.210	1.648	7.613	2.247
Traditional Morality –	0.197	0.220	0.195	0.740	0.242
Law and Order +	1.302	2.590	1.456	0.591	1.491
Social Harmony +	1.721	2.125	1.392	1.654	1.784
Multiculturalism +	0.720	2.022	0.448	2.027	1.054
Multiculturalism –	0.196	0.131	0.000	1.319	0.264
Labour +	2.751	1.603	6.437	1.759	2.545
Labour –	0.191	0.001	0.443	0.303	0.172
Agriculture +	3.784	4.632	7.621	1.539	3.858
Middle Class +	1.201	0.424	1.080	0.598	1.009
Minority Groups +	0.911	0.379	0.180	1.241	0.821
Non-economic Groups +	4.187	1.951	3.429	2.867	3.655
Uncoded Sentences	8.618	3.637	0.907	10.009	7.622

major thematic concern in most of the recent programmes, which warrants an independent category.[16]

5 (503) 'Social Justice': The MRG scheme combines the end of class, sexual, and racial discrimination under this heading. These different kinds of discrimination could be treated separately because they are frequently mentioned.

6 (504) 'Welfare State Expansion': As opposed to (505) 'Welfare State Limitation' which is hardly ever mentioned in election programmes, policy positions in favour of extending the welfare state abound. Thus, election programmes are appropriate for studying policy positions on welfare state expansion in more detail than the MRG.[17]

7 (706) 'Non-economic Demographic Groups': The category combines readily separable groups of women, the old, and young people.

These refinements need not change the longitudinal consistency of the data, so long as newly defined sub-categories can be aggregated to the original broader categories. All other categories are thinly populated even in the recent programmes of western parties. For these categories little additional information can be expected by extending the MRG classification scheme.

Conclusions

The approach of the MRG/CMP has been widely used for analysing policy positions of parties in contemporary democracies. Starting as a group of researchers interested in the content analysis of election programmes, coding is nowadays mainly conducted by hired coders. For most of the coders hired since 1989, the reliability tests demonstrated a very high degree of correspondence to a 'correct' coding solution. The reliability of the CMP data is even higher than the test for accuracy shows because, first, the test is mainly used for training coders and, second, coders contacted the supervisor during the actual coding process to ask for coding solutions.

However, the reliability of data can only be adequate as far as the classification scheme is able to identify policy positions that discriminate between parties. Given the average number of quasi-sentences, the fifty-six standard categories seem to be appropriate for analysing election programmes longitudinally in western countries and across countries in Eastern Europe. For the more recent programmes in established democracies, which are usually much longer than the average documents in distant decades and in Eastern Europe, a couple of categories could be added in an hierarchical manner. Even in contemporary elections, however, some parties choose to publish shorter programmes, and if a comparison includes one short programme, the aggregate level of the MRG classification scheme is still appropriate.

Appendix: Coding Categories

3.1 Fifty-four Standard Coding Categories

DOMAIN 1: External Relations

101 Foreign Special Relationships: Positive
102 Foreign Special Relationships: Negative
103 Anti-Imperialism: Positive
104 Military: Positive
105 Military: Negative
106 Peace: Positive
107 Internationalism: Positive
108 European Community: Positive
109 Internationalism: Negative
110 European Community: Negative

DOMAIN 2: Freedom and Democracy

201 Freedom and Human Rights: Positive
202 Democracy: Positive
203 Constitutionalism: Positive
204 Constitutionalism: Negative

DOMAIN 3: Political System

301 Decentralization: Positive
302 Centralization: Positive
303 Governmental and Administrative Efficiency: Positive
304 Political Corruption: Negative
305 Political Authority: Positive

DOMAIN 4: Economy

401 Free Enterprise: Positive
402 Incentives: Positive
403 Market Regulation: Positive
404 Economic Planning: Positive
405 Corporatism: Positive
406 Protectionism: Positive
407 Protectionism: Negative
408 Economic Goals
409 Keynesian Demand Management: Positive
410 Productivity: Positive
411 Technology and Infrastructure: Positive
412 Controlled Economy: Positive
413 Nationalization: Positive
414 Economic Orthodoxy: Positive

DOMAIN 5: Welfare and Quality of Life

501 Environmental Protection: Positive
502 Culture: Positive
503 Social Justice: Positive
504 Welfare State Expansion
505 Welfare State Limitation
506 Education Expansion
507 Education Limitation

DOMAIN 6: Fabric of Society

601 National Way of Life: Positive
602 National Way of Life: Negative
603 Traditional Morality: Positive
604 Traditional Morality: Negative
605 Law and Order: Positive
606 Social Harmony: Positive
607 Multiculturalism: Positive
608 Multiculturalism: Negative

DOMAIN 7: Social Groups

701 Labour Groups: Positive
702 Labour Groups: Negative
703 Agriculture and Farmers: Positive
704 Middle Class and Professional Groups: Positive
705 Underprivileged Minority Groups: Positive
706 Non-economic Demographic Groups: Positive

3.2 Two Standard Categories added in 1989

415 Marxist Analysis: Positive
416 Sustainable Development: Positive

3.3 Eighty-one Sub-Categories used for Eastern Europe

1010 Albania: Positive
1011 Russia/USSR: Positive
1012 Western States: Positive
1013 Moldova: Positive and Romania: Positive (To be used for Romania and Moldova only)
1014 Hungary: Positive
1015 Eastern European Countries: Positive
1016 Baltic States: Positive
1017 Community of Independent States (CIS): Positive
1018 Nordic Council: Positive
1019 SFR Yugoslavia: Positive (To be used for (ex-)Yugoslavian countries only)

1020 Albania: Negative
1021 Russia/USSR: Negative
1022 Western States: Negative
1023 Moldova: Negative and Romania Negative (To be used for Romania and Moldova only)
1024 Hungary: Negative
1025 East European Countries: Negative
1026 Baltic States: Negative
1027 Community of Independent States (CIS): Negative
1028 Nordic Council: Negative
1029 SFR Yugoslavia: Negative (To be used for (ex-)Yugoslavian countries only)
1031 Russian Army: Negative
1032 Independence: Positive
1033 Rights of Nations: Positive
1041 National Security
1071 International Party Partnerships
1081 EU Party Partnerships
2031 Presidential Regime: Positive (To be used for presidential or semi-presidential regimes only)
2032 Republic: Positive
2041 Monarchy: Positive
2050 Transition to Democracy
2051 Communist: Positive
2052 Communist: Negative
2053 Rehabilitation and Compensation
3011 Decentralization pro Slovakia (To be used for CSFR only)
3012 Decentralization pro Moravia-Silesia (To be used for CSFR only)
3013 Republican Powers: Positive (To be used for CSFR only)
3014 Decentralizaton pro Kosovo-Metohija and Voivodina (To be used for Serbia only)
3015 Autonomy of Silesia (To be used for Poland only)
3016 Autonomy of Transnistria and the Bugeac (To be used for Moldova only)
3021 Centralization pro Slovakia (To be used for CSFR only)
3024 Centralization pro Kosovo-Metohija and Voivodina (To be used for Serbia only)
3026 Centralization of Transnistria and the Bugeac (To be used for Serbia only)
3051 Public Situation: Negative
4011 Privatization: Positive
4012 Social Ownership: Positive
4013 Mixed Economy: Positive
4014 Privatization Vouchers: Positive
4015 Property-Restitution: Positive
4016 Property-Restitution: Negative
4017 Privatization: Negative
4121 Control of Economy: Negative

4131 Publicly-Owned Industry: Positive
4132 Socialist Property: Positive
5011 Environmentalism in Infrastructure
5021 Private–Public Mix in Culture
5031 Private–Public Mix in Social Justice
5041 Private–Public Mix in Welfare
5061 Private–Public Mix in Education
6011 National Way of Life pro Slovakia (To be used for CSFR only)
6012 National Way of Life pro Moravia-Silesia (To be used for CSFR only)
6013 National Way of Life: pro Republic (To be used for CSFR only)
6014 Greater Macedonia (To be used for Macedonia only)
6015 The Karabakh Issue (To be used in Armenia only)
6016 Rebuilding the USSR: Positive
6031 Traditional Morality pro Moravia/Silesia (To be used for CSFR only)
6033 Traditional Morality pro Kosovo (To be used for Serbia only)
6051 Restrictive Citizenship
6052 Lax Citizenship
6061 Political Coalitions
6062 Communist Parties: Negative
6063 General Crisis
6071 Cultural Autonomy: Positive
6072 Multiculturalism pro Roma
6082 Multiculturalism against Roma
7051 Minorities Inland
7052 Minorities Abroad
7061 Youth
7062 Old People
7063 War Participants (To be used for (ex-)Yugoslavian countries only)
7064 Refugees
7065 Women

3.4 One Sub-Category used for Southern America

2021 Checks and Balances

Notes

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1 All numbers given in this chapter are correct as of Spring 1999.
2 Canada, France, and Germany differ with respect to coding units; for details see Volkens 1992b and Volkens 1995.
3 Test codings had shown that party programmes never mention opposing positions to valence issues.
4 The category 'Marxist Analysis' had been developed by Kaare Strom and applied to the Norwegian communist party.

5 Twenty-three of the eighty-one sub-categories are country-specific, fifty-eight are coded for all Eastern European countries. On average, only 12.07 per cent of the quasi-sentences in programmes of Eastern European parties are devoted to the eighty-one sub-categories. On average, only 1.58 per cent of the quasi-sentences in Mexican programmes are devoted to the Mexican sub-category.
6 Volkens 1995. Access to additional recent programmes is requested about once a week and granted for specific research purposes whenever the research questions do not interfere with our own research interests. Data on twenty-five countries for the time period 1945 to 1998 will be published by Ian Budge, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Andrea Volkens, Judith Bara and Eric Tannenbaum: *Estimating Mapping Policy Preferences. Parties, Electors, Governments*, Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2001.
7 See Table 3.1: total of 2,326 programmes minus 1,018 programmes covered during the first phase; excluding Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka which have not been updated.
8 Canada, France, Germany, and Israel.
9 Up to now, the total number of hired coders is forty. One coder did not fill in the reliability test but sent another text for checking deviations.
10 The 'correct' (absolute) number of quasi-sentences can not be given because this would spoil the reliability test for future training.
11 In most programmes, the number of quasi-sentences are much easier to identify because quasi-sentences conform to actual sentences.
12 According to Früh (1981: 172), measurements which are independent of sequence can be used for differentiated classification schemes.
13 Fortunately, these were written in English language.
14 For details of quality control during the first phase see Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987: 23–4 and 458.
15 For such tests, see McDonald and Mendes (Chapter 7 this volume); Gabel and Huber 2000.
16 A concern for the situation of unemployed persons, however, is coded into category 701; state aid for the unemployed is coded into category 504.
17 Peter Flora is currently re-coding all election programs of European parties with respect to welfare state questions.

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4 Validating the Manifesto Research Group approach

Theoretical assumptions and empirical confirmations

Ian Budge

The importance of the Manifesto Research Group estimates

The preceding chapter demonstrates the richness as a resource for comparative time-series analysis of the estimates made by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG). There is currently no other data set that records the policy positions and movements of central political actors over so many countries and time points. The best that other attempts (for example, the expert surveys of Castles and Mair 1984; Laver and Hunt 1992) can offer are problematic locations of parties, at one point in time, that cannot be compared unambiguously with locations in other countries or years. Analyses of texts have the advantage that they are concerned with statements of policy made at a particular place and time by a specific person or organisation. They therefore avoid the problems associated with expert judgements of party positions, which estimate policy positions at least in part from the actual behaviour they are designed to explain. Such surveys can also be ambiguous about the time period involved, the criteria used to locate actors and the precise identity of the actor being located (Budge 2000; Huber and Inglehart 1995). The same criticism might be raised against using electoral perceptions of party policy positions (Gabel and Huber 2000).

Parties, preferences and policies are at the heart of rational choice theories of democracy. So it is to be hoped that the MRG data-set will support major extensions both of the theories themselves and of their applications to actual politics (Robertson 1976; Baron 1991; Budge 1994; Adams and Merrill 1998). This should be accelerated by the forthcoming publication of all estimates in both printed and electronic form (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara and Tanenbaum, forthcoming).

Another use of the MRG data will become even more important in the near future: that is, validating the computerised analyses of texts, including party programmes, that have been developed recently (see Chapters 10–14 in this volume). Computerised text analysis is an exciting development that opens up the prospect of rapid and easy analysis of policy texts in general,

not just of party programmes. This will facilitate more extended studies of strategic interaction between collective and individual actors in all sorts of political contexts.

Given that non-textual data sources all have severe limitations, a question arises as to how innovative text-based techniques are best validated. Hand-coded party election programmes seem to provide the best data against which to run such validation exercises. This is partly because programmes, as public documents issued for mass audiences, are written in a very straightforward way. They aim at getting certain points over clearly and simply. Repetition is their hallmark; making policy points involves highlighting them, repeating them in slightly varied form and coming back to them in a variety of contexts. Word counts should therefore work better here than on more complex arguments.

Party manifestos also have a special standing as the only collective policy statement that parties as such ever make. No other source represents the combined views of the party as an organisation. Party rules usually specify a series of formal processes through which the manifesto is composed and approved: preparation by the leadership, discussion at various levels of the organisation and endorsement by a representative gathering of the party. If one wants to study *party* policy, and not the policies advocated by internal factions or individuals inside the party, one has to study the party manifesto.

The main advantage of using hand-coded manifesto data to validate other methods is, of course, that they have already been comprehensively studied, coded and analysed by the Manifesto Research Group. While the unit of analysis of computer coded data, usually a word or phrase, typically differs from the quasi- sentences of the MRG data, the basic idea of measuring the relative emphasis of the text given to various policy areas is the same. If new approaches generate similar spatial representations to those generated by the MRG data set, this can be used to provide some form of validation.[1]

Validating the MRG estimates

The MRG data are thus available to assist in the development of policy-based measures and theories over the next decade, as well as providing a rich data base on their own account. Not only are these data extensive, they are also reliable. The preceding chapter has described the scrupulous procedures through which they have been collected under unified central supervision. A detailed comparison (Hearl 1999) between findings based on the pre-1983 data and findings based on the data updated to 1996 has shown the stability of the estimates. This attests not only to their overall reliability but also to the general comparability of collection procedures over the post-war period.

If we are going to use the MRG data to validate other techniques, of course, we must also be confident of *their* validity. Are these data really

measuring what we assume them to measure: that is the 'true' policy positions of the parties? Evidence that they do so as well as any other available measure comes from Chapter 7 of this volume, where McDonald and Mendes take judgemental data as unproblematic for the purposes of their test, and show the MRG estimates perform just as well if not better on a series of statistical checks.

Given their rich and still unexploited research potential, questioning the validity of MRG data seems like looking a particularly attractive gift horse in the mouth. A critique has however developed of the theoretical assumptions on which the MRG coding procedures are mostly based (Janda, Harmel *et al.* 1995; Harmel, Janda and Tan 1995; Laver 1995; Laver and Garry 2000; see also Chapter 5). The critique relates to the practice typically employed in the MRG coding, of assigning sentences to one-position policy codes. Thus if democracy is mentioned in a manifesto no provision is made for the possibility that a party is against democracy. All references are taken to be positive and pro-democracy.

The rationale here is that most issues involved in party competition are 'valence' issues, where only one course of action is popular and it would be electoral suicide for a party to endorse an opposing position. That this is the case has been plausibly argued by Stokes (1966) and Riker (1993). In the case of so obviously a good thing as democracy, it is indeed easy to see why an anti-democracy position would lose votes: only an evil person would oppose it. It is much better for an opposing party to say relatively little about democracy directly but instead to emphasise the need for effective and authoritative government: also clearly a 'good thing' for electors.

The MRG argument is that this reasoning also applies to goods like social services (who could want fewer social services?) or evils like taxes, referenced under 'economic orthodoxy' in the coding. Who could hope to win votes on promises of increasing them? If this argument holds for most issues, we will not find party differences in terms of the pro or con positions they adopt on them, since they will generally endorse the same position in most policy areas in so far as they mention them. The key differences between parties will follow from the varying extent to which they do mention them. This will relate to the parties' calculations about which is most trusted by voters to carry out the popular policy on each issue, for example socialists on social services (expanding these) and conservatives or market liberals on cutting taxes, as part of their general support for economic orthodoxy.

These ideas are codified in Table 4.2 and discussed more extensively in the relevant section later in this chapter. We can note here however that they are also the effective principle behind computerised word counts as reported in Chapter 14 by Judith Bara and Chapter 12 by John Garry. Laver and Garry (1998: 12) in fact explicitly note that almost all mentions of 'taxes' and 'choice' are associated with the right: presumably references to cutting them and maximising them respectively.

We consider these points in the penultimate section of the chapter (pp. 60–2), explicitly comparing 'confrontationalist' assumptions with Stokes' (1966) critique. First however, we address doubts (Harmel, Janda *et al.* 1995; Laver and Garry 2000) about the extent to which the one-position saliency codes typically used by the MRG really measure the kind of policy spaces assumed by classical theories of party competition and coalition formation. The chapter tackles these points by:

a) showing that they do (in 'Measuring policy spaces');
b) examining 'saliency and valency' assumptions to see if they provide a reasonable theoretical underpinning for such spaces (in 'MRG coding and procedures').

We conclude that the MRG data provide a solid basis for measuring party policy differences and can therefore be used substantively, to provide good estimates for party policy in post-war democracies; and methodologically, as a general standard for validating other measures.

Measuring policy spaces

Figure 4.1 shows how MRG estimates trace the movements of the American parties on a standard left–right dimension (Laver and Budge 1992) over the series of post-war American elections from 1952 to 1996.[2] Not only do such spaces allow for Downsian-type analyses of party competition (Downs 1957; Robertson 1976; Baron 1991; Budge 1994) they also permit judgements to be made of the validity of the estimates by comparing these with the historical record.

If the Goldwater Presidential candidacy of 1964 did not see a swing to the right in the MRG estimates of the position of the Republican party, followed by strong rightward tendencies under Reagan (in 1980 and 1984), then we would not be confident of the validity of the estimates. Similarly if the McGovern campaign of 1972 did not coincide with a strong leftwards shift by the Democratic Party, we would also be suspicious. But they do! Clinton's shift rightwards in 1992 is also captured. The paths of the parties mapped out in Figure 4.1 broadly correspond to the impressions of contemporary commentators and subsequent historians. Indeed it is difficult to see how the representation could be much improved upon to fit the historical record. Here is empirical evidence for the validity of the codings.

These MRG estimates of the left–right positions of US parties can be reproduced for each of the fifty post-war party systems to which such codings have been applied. For these cases they provide a plausible correspondence with the historical record (Klingemann *et al.* 1994; Laver and Budge, eds 1992; Budge, Klingemann *et al.*, forthcoming). There is thus a comprehensive series of positive applications of the MRG policy data to actual cases which critics of the MRG approach need to confront rather than pass by in silence.

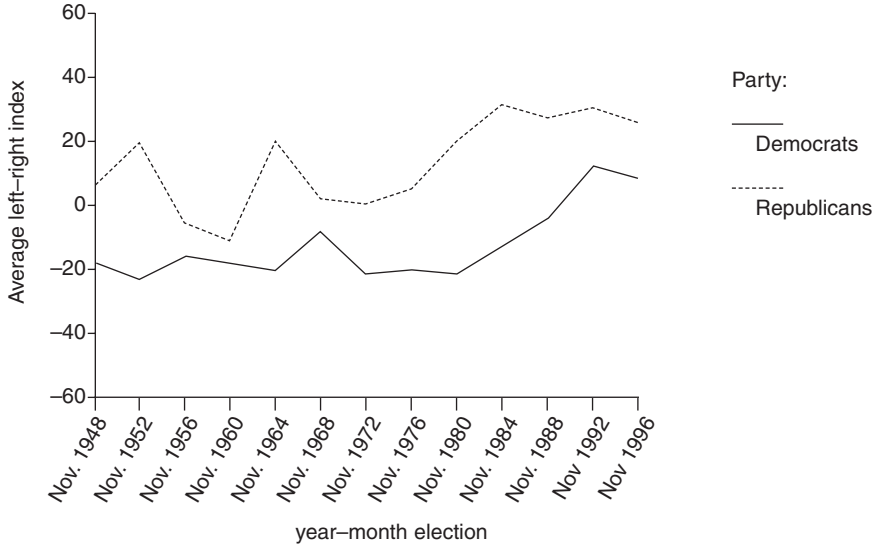

Figure 4.1 Party policy space as measured by the MRG coding of Republican and Democratic platforms for post-war US presidential elections, 1948–96, showing positioning and direction of movement over time

The other classical policy spaces within which rational choice theories of parties have been set relate to coalition formation. Sometimes theories assume multidimensional policy spaces (Grofman 1982; Schofield 1993); again these have been convincingly operationalised by the MRG data (Laver and Budge, eds 1992). Often, however, such spaces have been conceived in terms of a one-dimensional left–right continuum similar to that pictured earlier (de Swaan 1973; Axelrod 1970). The plausibility of the MRG data in the coalition context is illustrated by Figure 4.2, which shows changes in Dutch party positions between 1989 and 1994. This is of interest in light of the critical government formation of 1994, when the secular Labour (PvdA) and Liberal (VVD) parties succeeded in ousting the Christian Democrats (CDA) from office for the first time in seventy-five years. The actual coalition change is prefigured by the shift of the Labour Party to a central policy position, from which it could more easily form an alliance both with the Progressive Liberals (D'66) and the VVD.

Again, a policy space emerges from the MRG codings which fits both theoretical concerns and historical experience. Similar spaces can be formed on this basis for all the coalition systems over time, and used both to operationalise and test theories with highly credible results (Laver and Budge, eds 1992). More specialised indices can also be created along the same lines and used to trace party movement or social and political change (Evans and Norris, eds 1999: 14–20).

Other uses of MRG data – relating party to social factors (Evans, Heath

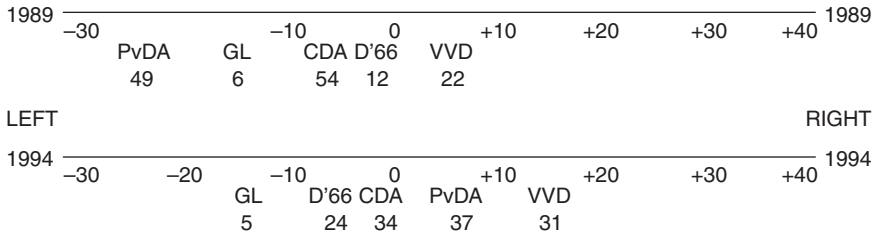

Figure 4.2 Party policy space as measured by the MRG coding of Dutch party election programmes 1989 and 1994

Note
Party positions are measured as described in the text in the same way as US parties. Figures under each party initial are the number of seats held in the legislature. Parties are: GL: Green Left. PvDA: Labour Party. D'66: Progressive Liberals. CDA: Christian Democratic Appeal. VVD: Liberals.

and Payne 1999) or tracking and anticipating policy outcomes (McDonald *et al.* 1999) – have also fitted with theoretical and historical explanations, strengthening the validity of the data. The results are sufficiently well known however not to overstress the point here. In their applications the MRG data have produced empirically plausible and theoretically consistent results. This puts the onus on critics to prove any case to the contrary, with comparable evidence.

MRG codings and procedures

Nonetheless, even if made in the abstract, such criticisms still have to be confronted. Any assertion that the MRG codings are incapable by their nature of measuring party policy positions and tracing the direction of policy movement has been squarely met in the preceding section. The codings *do* measure movements in party positions in plausible and acceptable ways. Are there other reasons to distrust the results? These certainly do not appear in the 'pictures' and actual measurements they produce. What about the nature of the assumptions used to get there? It is here that critics concentrate on the MRG's 'valency and saliency' assumptions. We discuss these here, starting with the procedures based on them which we have used to produce the above figures.

As indicated earlier, the MRG approach codes sentences into fifty-seven policy categories (see Chapter 3). The percentages of manifesto sentences coded into each category constitute the data used in further statistical analyses. To create a common left–right scale to be applied in all countries, certain categories were identified theoretically as belonging to the right ('free enterprise', for example) and certain to the left (such as 'economic planning'). Exploratory factor analyses were carried out to see if the selected categories hung together – which they did – and to investigate

whether any others belonged with them on the same dimension. Percentage scores for 'right' and 'left' categories were added up separately, and the total 'left' score subtracted from the total 'right' one to give the final locations in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. This procedure is summarised in Table 4.1.

Some of the contrasting left and right scores derive from directly opposed positions (pro-military and anti-military, for example). Others, however, find no direct contrast on the other side: pro-peace on the left is not contrasted with anti-peace on the right, because there was no 'Peace: negative' category in the MRG scheme. This is where the criticism is made. By contrasting mentions of peace on one side with a lack of mentions on the other side, the measure is recording 'saliency' rather than 'position' and this is 'improper'.

In order to pursue this argument we have to go back to the original MRG codings and see why they take the form that they do. The aim is to count all sentences in a text whether they seem to have a direct policy content or not (thus the 'count' for each category includes vague historical generalisations about a problem or simple references to its importance). The justification for doing this is that party programmes are carefully considered and finely honed documents, so no sentence appears in them without a purpose.

Including all such references to an issue-area does make it difficult to tie most sentences down to specific pro and con positions however. Long digressions on the growth of unemployment are presumably saying it is a bad thing and the party would do something to counter it. Is any party going to say explicitly that it is *for* unemployment? Immediately the question is put it seems unlikely. A party might however *say* very little about unemployment and devote a lot of attention to the evils of inflation,

Table 4.1 Creation of an additive left–right scale from codings of manifesto sentences

Right emphases: *Sum of percentages for*		*Left emphases:* *Sum of percentages for*
Military: positive		Decolonisation
Freedom, Human Rights		Military: negative
Constitutionalism: positive		Peace
Effective authority		Internationalism: positive
Free enterprise		Democracy
Economic incentives		Regulate capitalism
Protectionism: negative	minus	Economic planning
Economic orthodoxy		Protectionism: positive
Social services limitation		Controlled economy
National way of life: positive		Nationalisation
Traditional morality: positive		Social services: expansion
Law and order		Education: expansion
Social harmony		Labour groups: positive

implying that all other considerations should be subordinated to fighting this problem.

These tricks of party rhetoric are no doubt familiar to every reader. They do not leave much room for parties to line up for and against each other on each issue. What party wants to appeal for votes by extolling either unemployment or inflation, or supporting war against peace?

It was the seminal finding of the pioneering analysis of party manifestos made by David Robertson (1976) that parties do not directly oppose each other on an issue by issue basis. They rarely take specific policy stands at all or mention any other party or its positions. Instead their programmes assume that there is only one tenable position on each issue and devote their energy to emphasising the policy areas on which their credibility on that position is strong enough to pick up votes. This is a discovery which has been repeated in subsequent analyses of party rhetoric (Riker 1993: 81–126) and computer word counts of manifestos.

It is mistaken therefore to characterise either Robertson's original coding, or the MRG coding so far as it is derived from Robertson's, as blind to questions of party position. Rather they *are* positional in nature but only one-positional so far as most issue-areas are concerned. This is because the texts themselves are one-positional. The MRG coding categories are inductively derived – basically formed by grouping related sentences in the text – and so they reflect the textual practice of only endorsing the 'obvious' position on each issue: being against environmental destruction, for example, but all for a hard line on law and order (Laver and Garry 1998: 12). Hence the MRG coding scheme directly reflects party assumptions that there is only one tenable policy on each issue.

However we do not need to rely simply on induction to justify the MRG approach. A perfectly plausible theory of party competition underlies the strategists' programmatic presentations. Its constituent assumptions can be set out as follows:

1 Party strategists see electors as overwhelmingly favouring one course of action on most issues. Hence all party programmes endorse the same position, with only minor exceptions.
2 Party strategists also think that electors see one party as more likely than the others to carry through the favoured course of action.
3 Hence each party has a set of issues that 'belong' to it, in the sense that the centrality of these issues in an election will increase its vote.
4 A party therefore emphasises its 'own' issues in its election programme, in an attempt to increase the salience of these for voters. It emphasises 'rival' issues less or not at all.
5 Policy differences between parties thus consist of contrasting emphases placed on different policy areas.

Given the limitations of party informational and processing capacities,

strategists write programmes in response to perceived majority endorsements of obvious courses of action on each issue. Parties seeking votes do not buck majority opinion. They thus do not oppose perceived popular preferences and hence mostly end up endorsing the same position. Examining pro and con stands on each issue thus gives little mileage in measuring party differences as parties are *all* generally pro or con on a specific issue. (For internal checks and empirical evidence for this assumption see later in this chapter.)

Dynamism is given to party competition and the construction of programmes by strategists' belief that electors see one party as more able to carry through their preferred preference in a particular policy area than others. Again this seems plausible: to cut taxes, reduce government spending, and generally impose economic orthodoxy one would prefer market liberals to socialists, and vice-versa for extending social services. To win votes therefore strategists do not argue much about policy positions, which are taken as accepted, but emphasise the importance of those issues where the party is ideologically committed and hence most trusted by electors. This is what enables us to contrast the left and right stances of parties and to trace movement in them as in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. If the assumption is correct that varying emphases on issues are by and large the only way that parties express their policy differences, it follows that the only way to get at these is by measuring the relative saliency given to them in the manifestos. This is what the MRG coding scheme was designed to do.

Its theoretical basis is set out in the 'valency and saliency' theory of party competition outlined earlier which is supported by:

1 Classical qualitative studies of party competition: see Stokes (1966) on the predominance of valence issues and Riker (1993) on the 'dominance principle' of party rhetoric. Such studies demonstrate that parties, rather than continuing to endorse a minority-supported position against a majority-supported one, shift to emphasising other issues in line with saliency ideas.
2 Computerised counts which show that key words are selectively emphasised by different parties and that this is what differentiates between them (Laver and Garry 2000). (Of course this does not mean that the disadvantaged party *never* mentions an issue; because of its importance it may lose credibility if it totally ignores it. It just means that it mentions it noticeably less than the other party.)
3 Results deriving from internal checks in the MRG codings themselves. The checks were included because some members of the original group were sceptical of precisely the 'valency and saliency' ideas codified earlier. Like latter-day critics, they could not really credit that party competition did not consist in direct confrontation between pro and con positions on each specific issue. To settle this dispute all issues where such confrontations seemed likely had pro and con positions

assigned to them in the coding. This feature undermined the pure saliency nature of the MRG framework. But it did allow for a continuing empirical check on the validity of the saliency assumptions, which turned out to be strongly supported. *Even where key issues were coded into opposing positions they yet turned out to be valence issues with the overwhelming number of references going to one of the possible positions* (Budge, Robertson, Hearl, eds 1987: 50–1; Table 3.5).[3]

While this result supports the theory underpinning MRG procedures, it means that the coding itself is not in principle a pure saliency one. In practical terms however it works like one simply because one or other of the pro–con positions on individual issues are so overwhelmingly dominant. Few parties will for example propose limiting education: thus references to education are almost all for expansion.

A critic might still say that some pro and con positions *are* encapsulated in the MRG coding scheme, so why can't they be put in for all categories? That would satisfy both the saliency and confrontational approaches and could be used to settle the differences between them on a comprehensive basis. There are three reasons why this should not be done:

Consistency and continuity

Introducing pro and con categories does not simply mean subdividing existing categories but revising the whole coding scheme and re-applying it to all the documents: an enormous, costly and probably impossible task at this point. It cannot be undertaken simply to meet an abstract consideration, unsupported by empirical evidence, that anything is actually *wrong* with MRG measurements.[4]

Unreliability

The multiplication of small, thinly populated categories makes for random error and statistical noise in the codings (Laver and Budge, eds 1992: 23). The blurring of boundaries which currently occurs between 'military: negative' and 'peace' (see note 3) illustrates this problem and cautions against extending the confusion.

Theoretical and coding consistency

Discussions of content analysis all emphasise the extent to which coding procedures have to base themselves on some theory about the nature of the evidence to be analysed (Stone *et al.* 1966: 5–7; Weber 1990: 79–80). The 'saliency and valency' assumptions underlying the MRG codings have already been specified. A confrontational (pro and con-) coding bases itself on a different view of the way parties compete, and of how they therefore

compose their manifestos in order to attract votes (see next section). The two interpretations are already somewhat confused in the MRG codings, because of the bipolar categories introduced as checks. However, as we have emphasised, the coding is essentially saliency-based as a result of the nature of most of the categories and the fact that one out of the bipolar categories generally predominates. Basing a single set of coding decisions on two contrasting theories about party competition is a recipe for increased error and confusion. It is better to keep them separate so far as possible and decide clearly which fits the evidence better. At the moment the balance is in favour of saliency theory and its associated codings.

Incorporating valency within spatial analyses

Saliency theory gives a picture of party competition that corresponds more closely to the intentions and strategies of the parties themselves than an approach based on a confrontation between different party positions. The picture that emerges is more subtle and differentiated than that provided by a mechanistic counterposing of pro and con positions on each issue. Parties do not square up to each other, landing heavy blows on each others' strong points like a pair of inexperienced pugilists. Instead they duck and weave, avoiding direct hits from their opponents, while seeking an opening for their own blow to a weak spot. Besides their greater fidelity to the actual mode of party competition, saliency ideas have another advantage over confrontational ones. They are capable of accommodating one of the most serious and sustained critiques of Downsian spatial analyses ever made.

Stokes' (1966: 170–6) central point is that spatial analyses inevitably miss out the major issues in politics, since these are generally valence rather than positional issues. By 'positional' issues, Stokes means ones where parties take up the 'pro' and 'con' positions assumed by confrontational codings.[5] By 'valence' issues he means ones where only one position is possible, as assumed in the MRG approach, because of overwhelming perceptions of its moral superiority or obviousness or rightness. Stokes argues that the most important issues in politics tend to be valence ones, citing the famous slogan of 'Korea, Corruption and Communism' used by the Republicans in the 1952 US Presidential campaign. How could these winning issues – which everybody *had* to be against – possibly produce differentiated positions over a spatial continuum, asks Stokes? But in fact, as Figures 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrate, valence issues can be used to locate parties and trace their movements in space once we recognise that parties differentiate themselves on them *not by directly opposing positions but by varying emphases on a shared position*. It was this discovery by Robertson (1976), later extended and codified in the MRG procedures, which enabled the whole range of policy issues to be incorporated in Downsian style spaces.

To see how far confrontational approaches miss this point we need only consider their assumptions in a form analogous to that of the 'saliency and

valency' approach discussed earlier (see list on page 57). This is, of course, a personal interpretation of assumptions which have not yet, to my knowledge, been so explicitly stated. They do, however, seem to constitute the theoretical ideas underpinning confrontational codings (Harmel, Janda and Tan 1995; Laver and Garry 2000). These are:

1 Issues are generally confrontational and not valence in nature, i.e. parties take up a range of explicit positions on each issue, ranging from fully pro to fully con-, without inherent constraints.
2 The party position on each issue can thus be measured separately and independently of its position on any other issue by the balance of pro versus con references to that issue proposal.
3 Hence party policy differences on individual issues are separate from and independent of relative emphases on them, and must be measured from direct statements of support or opposition to specific policy proposals.
4 Relative emphases on issues only come into the measurement of party policy differences as weights attached to previously measured pro–con differences, when putting individual issues together to form a composite index or policy space.

The differences between saliency and confrontational approaches mostly go back to Assumption 1 in each list, about the ability and willingness of parties to take up opposing stands on individual issues in their manifestos (of course, we are not talking here about party behaviour in other than electoral arenas). The presumption is that parties *will* take opposing stands on each issue (Laver and Hunt 1992: 124–5). If this is so then the party position on the issue is clearly defined regardless of what (or how much) it says about other issues (see Assumptions 2 and 3 above). Relative saliency only enters at another level of measurement, when individual issue differences are aggregated to form a space or composite index, and may then be weighted by the relative attention paid to them in the manifestos.

A corollary of these assumptions, which does not seem to have been explicitly considered by advocates of the approach, is that it is electorally worthwhile for parties seeking votes to adopt minority stands on issues (in contrast to Assumption 1 in the theory of party competition outlined on page 57). There will be a popular majority and minority on most issues, thus a confrontational stance will put at least one party in the minority position. What seem to be purely technical assumptions about measuring texts inevitably have substantive implications about the nature of party competition itself, when the text is such a central one as the party election programme.

If 'saliency and valency' ideas are correct, bringing saliency in only at a later stage gives a misleading impression of what party policy differences actually are. Either parties will be recorded as agreeing on some issues to

which they give very varying emphases, or these varying emphases will actually do all the differentiation without being credited for it, as seems to have happened in Laver and Garry's (2000) computer analysis. Here text units *are* assigned to bipolar scales (e.g. extend/reduce state intervention) but on the basis of parties' emphases on one-positional non-opposed terms. Words like (cutting) taxes and (increasing) assistance are central to the coding but do not themselves denote pro–con positions on the same issue. Doing the one does not exclude the other either logically or empirically. Positions on the scales are thus defined by the relative saliency of certain themes just like the MRG Left–Right scales in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 and other MRG-derived scales. All computerised procedures based on word counts (Chapters 10–14) base themselves on the relative saliency of words and hence seem more naturally linked to the MRG codings than to confrontational ones.

MRG codes as a general standard for party policy estimates

We clearly need a validated standard measure in the field of textual analysis to be sure that computerised approaches produce trustworthy results. The comprehensiveness of the MRG measures, the plausibility of their estimates, external and internal validation of assumptions and procedures, all designate them as a central point of reference for party policy estimation. Indeed if these data were ruled out, there is no standard that could replace them and we would have to rely on *ad hoc* comparisons of very disparate and problematic estimates (electoral perceptions and 'expert' judgements for example) which are in any case available only for limited time-points.

Using the MRG data as a central standard means, where there are disagreements with other measures, that MRG estimates should be taken as the more authoritative ones. It is quite likely, of course, that better standards may be developed in the future. But they should be *shown* to be so through the same detailed evaluations already applied to the MRG data, not simply *asserted* to be better. Otherwise we risk methodological anarchism, where every investigator has their own measure and there is no way of evaluating their substantive conclusions properly.

The question of authority is particularly relevant to computerised textual analysis. Clearly this offers the possibility of rapid, reliable coding with vast savings in cost and a consequent extension of quantitative research. However, we need to be able to test the computer estimates to know that they really are valid and useful. A comparison with MRG codings and left–right mappings of the documents is facilitated through the 'valency and saliency' assumptions underlying both the manual and the computer codings. However, only when the results of the latter match the former can we proceed to use them with any confidence.[6] Validating computerised coding in this way is a first necessity before proceeding to substitute it for manual procedures.

Of course, even an authoritative general coding scheme for party policy positions does not always serve more specialised concerns within the policy field. Debating whether a *general* coding of election programmes is best based on saliency assumptions is not the same thing as assuming that it can serve all purposes equally well. Specialised investigations may well need their own specialised codings. For overall comparability, however, we need a general cross-time, cross-national coding of all election programmes, focused on party policy positions, but able to serve other investigations when re-coding cannot be done. The central question is, therefore, what kind of general scheme best serves these purposes? In terms of the argument here, this is clearly the MRG codings and data.

These examples also help demonstrate what a standard is *not*. It is not a final, unsurpassable procedure set in stone. We have already demonstrated that the present coding has defects (e.g. overlapping of original codes and inserted bipolar check codes) to which others could be added (e.g. 'noise' particularly involving less populated categories) (Laver and Budge, eds 1992: 23). However, this is no reason for abandoning it for, or substituting it by, more dubious alternatives. Indeed not only is the MRG scheme the best general measure of party policy positions we presently have, but it is likely to remain so until computerised text processing is fully validated.

When computerised coding *is* validated against the MRG scheme it may gradually substitute for it (though probably the two should run in parallel for a considerable period to make more extensive validation possible). Basing themselves on the same saliency assumptions about parties the computerised estimates should be entirely comparable with the MRG results. However, the new coding should, prospectively, vastly improve the range and flexibility of existing categories. Setting a standard is thus very far from reifying existing measures. But it is to lay down a systematic way of developing new ones. The considerations laid out above show that the point of departure has to be the MRG data. Once this is accepted, we can get on with the job of improving on them.

Notes

1 Spatial representations, as in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, provide the best general sources of face validity because they draw on the results of codings as a whole rather than simply comparing detailed codes within the general framework.

2 Figures 4.1 and 4.2 are based on the updated and cleaned data in Budge, Klingemann *et al.* (forthcoming) and may thus differ in detail, though not substantively, from previous versions.

3 Of the twelve 'pro versus con' contrasts contained within the MRG coding for validation purposes only two show near-equal emphasis in each side: for and against Military Expenditure and Protectionism (Table 3.5). The latter receives only minor mentions overall. In the case of the Military categories, the negative one has a blurred boundary with Peace: would 'beating arms into ploughshares' go into 'opposition to military strength' or 'peace'? Such blurring was the price paid for multiplying categories to accommodate early scepticism about the way a

purely salience-based theory would work. On most bipolar contrasts however the negative side attracts such few endorsements anyway that the codings can overall be taken as effectively one-positional.

4 A more flexible and reliable computerised approach, basing itself on the MRG categories but characterising these in terms of positive or negative qualifiers, might overcome these problems. The expectation would still be that only positive or negative references, but not both, would dominate all parties' stands on each category; but that could then be checked empirically. The results would constitute another validity check on the procedures and theory underlying the MRG approach, which current evidence suggests they would meet (Ray, Chapter 10 this volume).

5 It seems better to use the terms 'saliency' and 'confrontational' to distinguish the two approaches, since *both* are concerned with estimating party policy positions. Their differences relate to how this is to be done: by relative emphases on one position over the whole set of issues, in the case of the saliency approach, or by the pro and con positions taken up by parties on each individual issue, in the case of the confrontational approach.

6 The comparisons will be greatly facilitated through the publication of all the MRG estimates for twenty-five major post-war democracies. This is being undertaken in Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara and Tannenbaum, *Mapping Policy References: Estimates for Parties, Governments and Electorates 1945–1998* (Oxford, OUP, 2001).

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5 Position and salience in the policies of political actors

Michael Laver

The policies of political actors are fundamental to many analyses of political competition. While in everyday speech we talk in rather general terms about such policies, it quickly becomes clear when we begin to develop more precise models of political competition that the 'policy' of any given actor has a number of quite distinct elements. At the very least there are two major components of the policy of a given actor: position and salience.

For most people, an actor's 'policies' have to do with 'positions' taken on particular issues. Is he, for example, for or against capital punishment? Does she support or oppose the legalisation of soft drugs? Or of voluntary euthanasia? What level of wealth tax, or energy tax, or income tax do you favour? Do they support penal policies that stress the rehabilitation, or the punishment, of offenders? And so on.

Another self-evident feature of any actor's 'policy' is the importance or 'salience' he or she attaches to the issue at stake, in a world in which we are well aware that the salience of an issue can not only change over time for any given individual, but can be manipulated. Many people are now more concerned with the environment today, for example, than were their ancestors 100 years ago. In most people's minds, the threat of nuclear war between two superpowers has probably receded somewhat since the mid-1960s. Decisions now have to be made about the governance of an Internet that did not even exist when most contemporary politicians were born. Salience is important in political competition because we generally assume that people take more notice of positions on issues they feel are more salient.

This short chapter briefly explores various conceptual features of the position and salience of the policies of political actors, before moving on to consider the significance of these for those who set out to estimate the position and salience of real-world policies, as part of the process of operationalising models of political competition.

Policy positions

Two of the fundamental canons of practical politics are that you do not always say what you think, and you do not always believe what other people

say. This manifests itself in the type of populist cynicism that promotes the view 'all politicians are liars'. But it also can be seen in the angst of the truly public-spirited and honourable politician who knows that telling the truth may not always be the best way to achieve even the loftiest objectives. This means that a person does not in practice have a single unambiguous policy 'position' on a given issue. Indeed we can distinguish at least three different positions that a given person might have, or might be perceived to have, on any given issue. There is an *ideal* policy position, a *stated* policy position, and what we might think of as a *policy forecast* of the practical policy implications of the person in question taking a particular political role within a given institutional context.

Ideal policy positions

The notion of an actor's 'ideal' policy position on some issue is an entirely theoretical construct that is fundamental to almost all spatial models of political competition. It identifies the policy position that, if implemented, would give the individual concerned more utility than any conceivable alternative. There is however no implication whatsoever of feasibility in most theoretical implementations of the notion of an ideal policy position. Indeed this notion is used precisely to distinguish an ideal position from what might actually be feasible in a real world of histories, institutions and constraints. Furthermore, your own ideal policy position on some issue can never be known with any certainty to others or even, quite possibly, to your conscious self. Certainly, any other person can only make inferences about your ideal policy position from actions you take and statements you make. From the perspective of others, this ideal policy position can be interpreted as a forecast of what policies you would implement if made the dictator of the entire universe, subject to no constraint whatsoever.

This suggests that the notion of an ideal policy position may be effectively metaphysical, since it divorces the utility derived from some outcome from any real-world context in which that outcome might actually come about. For example, you might find yourself in a position to implement your ideal policy position by clever politics and popular acclaim, or by slaughtering millions of innocent people and forever isolating yourself from society. If you can only achieve your ideal policy in the real world by a slaughter of the innocents that would be utterly revolting to you, in what sense is it 'ideal'? At a more down-to-earth level, your ideal outcomes may depend upon the ideal outcomes of others: consider the fashion victim who likes to wear the most silly-looking outfits because some, but not too many, other people like to wear the same thing.

In practice, of course, theorists of political competition tend not to linger too long over either metaphysics or the sociology of fashion. Rather, they build their models by setting aside matters of context and thinking of a person's ideal policy position in terms of what he or she would do if freed

from any constraint. Even if this is utterly unachievable in the real world, it is still taken as that person's reference point: used as a basis for evaluating all other policy positions that might be on offer. In this sense your own ideal point is the zero on the ruler that you are assumed to use to measure how far away is some alternative from what you would 'really' like (without going too deeply into what 'really' really means). Because it is an unobservable construct buried somewhere deep in your brain, your own ideal policy point must always be estimated by others and such estimates are always subject to uncertainty and error.

Stated policy positions

Many people give voice to many opinions on many matters in many different contexts. In doing so they make statements about their policy positions that are designed to be interpreted by others, some of whom are allies and some enemies. Except for those who are psychologically incapable of editing their private thoughts before they speak or write them for the benefit of the rest of the world, every public statement is essentially strategic. Even when the things that are said are what the speaker honestly believes to be the truth, any public statement is strategic in the sense that a decision has been taken to tell the 'truth', when telling a lie was a logical possibility. Knowing this, the recipient of any message must inevitably decode it if subsequent behaviour is to be conditioned on the content of the message.

There is thus a clear analytical distinction, for both the sender and the receiver of any message, between an ideal and a 'stated' policy position. Unless they claim extraordinary psychoanalytical powers, both academics and political actors analysing political competition must use as their empirical raw material stated, as opposed to ideal, policy positions, drawing inferences and deductions from these. They do so in the knowledge that a stated policy position will be an ideal point only if the subject has made a strategic decision for this to happen, and that people often face strategic incentives to misstate their ideal policy positions.

Policy forecasts

Imagine that my ideal policy position on nuclear weapons is the complete abolition of all of these horrible things from the face of the Earth and that my psychoanalyst confirms this to all who care to listen. Imagine that I run as a candidate for the Irish lower house (Dáil) and issue an election manifesto advocating the complete abolition of all nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth. You may be considering voting for me because you like most of my other policies but may be one of those peculiar people who believe that nuclear weapons in some perverse way promote world peace by making the prospect of war so horrible. Have I lost your vote? Probably not, since you will almost certainly come to the conclusion that, if elected to the Dáil,

the impact that I would have on the world-wide abolition of nuclear weapons is as close to zero as makes no difference. While there may in theory appear to be a gulf between us on the nuclear issue, there is almost no difference at all once we take into account the practical impact of my policy position on the real world. In effect, if you like everything else about me, you can listen to my anti-nuclear tirade, then pat me on the head and safely vote for me anyway. Now if I was running for President of the United States . . .

In other words, every stated policy position is located in a practical political and institutional context that constrains the real-world impact of the person making the statement. An important aspect of that context is the *status quo.* This is because, in order to estimate the potential real-world impact of any given policy position, it is necessary to know whether or not this position is in effect already at the status quo, or at some considerable remove from this.

Given a stated policy position, a status quo and a political and institutional context, political analysts (including other political actors) will construct a forecast of the effect on policy outputs of the actor in question taking over a designated political role. It is these policy forecasts that ultimately condition the strategic decisions of others.

The salience of policy dimensions

It is self evident that some policy issues are 'important' to specified individuals in a given political context and others are not. You can scour any number of Irish newspapers, for example, dealing with any number of election campaigns, and find not a single reference to recent events on the planet Pluto. The fact of the matter is that both politicians and voters in Ireland are absolutely unconcerned with recent events on Pluto, and anyone who might ask a question about such events on a TV current affairs programme, for example, would probably be regarded as insane. Pluto, and it must be said places much closer to home such as Tuvalu or Kiribati, have very, very low salience in current Irish politics. Asking about recent events in Northern Ireland, however, would provoke a completely different reaction since the future of Northern Ireland is considered by many people to be a highly salient issue in Irish politics.

A crude binary notion of salience sorts issues into those that have an impact on politics and those that do not. A more refined notion sees salience as a matter of degree, with some issues being more salient for particular individuals and some being less, and sees issues as rising and falling in salience over time. (We do after all no longer burn people at the stake for mentioning the mere possibility of Pluto.) When we pry a little deeper, more general notions of salience are in fact aggregates of the individual views of members of the population under investigation, each of whom might regard Issue X as being more, or less, salient at a given time than Issue Y.

In a purely analytical sense, it is straightforward to see that there is a clear distinction between a person's position on an issue and how salient he or

she feels this issue is. Take an issue that generates intense feelings on both sides among some people, and engenders great apathy among others: foxhunting, for example. There are those who believe passionately in the 'country pursuit' of hunting and killing live foxes. There are others who believe passionately that this 'blood sport' is barbaric. Both sides feel strongly enough that they sometimes fight with and injure each other. There are others, again, who might have some view or the other on foxhunting but, if the truth were told, do not care very much about it either way. If I simply tell you that someone feels very strongly indeed about foxhunting, you will still have no idea at all about whether they are for it or against it. Telling you that this issue is salient for somebody gives you no clue whatsoever about their substantive position on it.

Despite this clear analytical distinction there are issues such that, as a matter of empirical fact, almost everyone agrees on the desirable outcome while disagreeing about how important the issue is in the first place. Take the environment, for example. Empirically, there seem to be rather few people who have a real taste for a heavily polluted environment: who thrill to the fragrance of poisonous exhaust emissions or view litter-draped hedgerows as objects of beauty. Given a free choice most people do prefer a cleaner rather than a more dirty environment. Yet some people clearly feel more intensely about this than others. For such issues, since there is (as a matter of empirical fact rather than analytical necessity) little disagreement on the ideal policy outcome, differences in the importance attached to the issue provide the crucial distinction between different political actors. This is because it is differences in salience rather than position, in such cases, that condition political decisions.

The reasons for this are explored in recent work by Humphreys and Garry (2000). Among the situations they consider in an extensive discussion of the role of policy salience in political competition are those in which there is very little disagreement over ideal policy outcomes, but in which the policy space is constrained, for example by a fixed budget. Imagine allocating a fixed budget between a number of spending areas – for example health, education, welfare, housing and transport – in a situation in which everyone agrees that more spending in each of these areas is, other things being equal, a good thing. There may be no particular disagreement over ideal policies, but nonetheless large variations in the importance that each actor attaches to each spending area. Humphreys and Garry show that it is the relative saliences of each area for a given actor that determine his or her preferred budget allocation. The relative saliences in effect induce preferences on the constrained budget.

Humphreys and Garry argue that this situation applies whenever the policy space is constrained, in the sense that outcomes on one policy dimension constrain potential outcomes on another. The most clear-cut case arises when there is no disagreement between actors on ideal policy

positions. In this case it is the relative saliences attached by actors to policy dimensions, and those alone, that induce real world preferences. If there are significant disagreements on ideal policy outcomes, and the policy space is still constrained, then Humphreys and Garry argue that the preferences of an actor in the constrained game are a complex function of the relative saliences attached by actors to policy dimensions and their unconstrained 'ideal' policy positions. Independent information on both ideal policy positions and relative saliences is then needed to determine the preferences of an actor in a real political game.

When salience and position are clearly distinct, it does nonetheless remain the case that the relative importance of different policy dimensions affects how close or far away a given actor feels from any specified policy position. This is conventionally taken into account by calculating the overall distance between two points, for a given actor, by weighting distances on the component policy dimensions by their relative salience (see, for example, Laver and Hunt 1992: 76-82; Laver and Shepsle 1996: 156–7, 235–40).[1] In such circumstances, unanticipated changes in the relative salience of issues for particular actors, which Laver and Shepsle (1998) call 'agenda shocks', can destabilise existing political equilibria.

The well-known process of logrolling, furthermore, can only operate in situations in which actors disagree on *both* policy positions and the salience of policy dimensions and maintain a clear distinction between policy and salience. Figure 5.1, adapted from Laver and Hunt (1992; Figures 4.5 and 4.6), shows two actors with quite different ideal policy positions. The elliptical indifference curves show that one actor, A, feels that the horizontal policy dimension is about twice as important as the vertical dimension. Another actor, B, feels that the vertical policy dimension is about twice as important as the horizontal. This allows them to do a logrolling deal whereby A concedes B's ideal policy on the vertical dimension while B concedes A's ideal policy on the horizontal dimension. Both feel better off with public policy at the resulting logrolling point, L, than at the status quo, SQ. If both actors rate both policy dimensions as being of equal importance, on the other hand, then they cannot agree on any alternative to SQ, located midway between them in the policy space.

Estimating position and salience from published texts

Various techniques have been used to estimate the policy positions of political actors and the relative salience of different issues. These include surveys of voters, political elites and political scientists, roll call analysis and the content analysis of party manifestos (for reviews, see Laver and Schofield 1998; Laver and Garry 2000). Of these, analyses of party manifestos are the most precisely located in terms of the preceding discussion. These are analyses of stated policies, as opposed to ideal points or policy forecasts. Interpreted strictly in this way, they are thus subject 'merely' to measurement

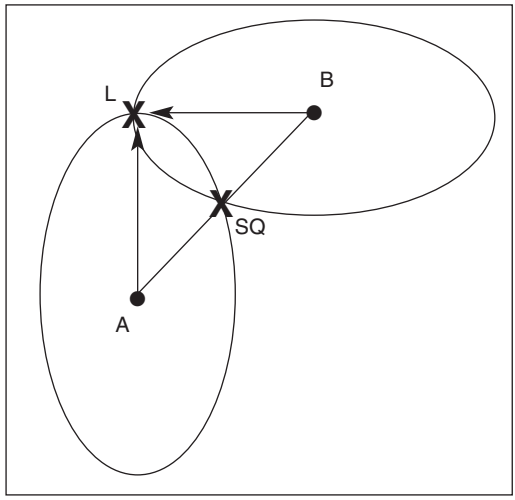

Figure 5.1 Logrolling between actors with different views about issue salience

error. The problem, of course, is that the results of manifesto analyses are often used as estimates of things other than stated policies. For example they may be – and indeed have been – uncritically adopted as estimates of ideal policy positions, or as policy forecasts of the real-world impact of a certain party going into government.

With this very important caveat, we do keep our feet on firm ground when we study party manifestos. They are official party documents published during election campaigns. This makes it difficult for party members to claim that the manifesto policy is not the stated party policy. And these stated positions do have practical political relevance, since party leaders can be attacked for failure to implement published manifesto policies if given the chance to do so.

The Manifesto Research Group

Party manifestos in parliamentary democracies have by now been subject to very extensive empirical analysis, for the most part by a single longstanding research group: the Manifesto Research Group (MRG). The MRG developed its own content analysis coding scheme and used this to analyse nearly all of the manifestos of nearly all of the political parties contesting nearly all of the elections in most post-war parliamentary democracies (Budge *et al.* 1987; Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann *et al.* 1994. For an up-to-date progress report see Volkens, Chapter 3 this volume). The original motivation of the MRG was to make operational a very specific model of party competition, which held that parties compete with each other in terms of the salience of particular issues in the policy package that they put to voters. This is why,

in our terms, MRG researchers set out to measure the *salience* of an issue for a party, operationalised as the relative emphasis given to the issue in the party manifesto, not the party's substantive *position* (ideal, stated or otherwise) on the issue in question.

'Saliency theory' legitimises using MRG data on *policy emphasis* to estimate *substantive party positions* since it assumes a strong relationship between party position on, and party emphasis of, an issue. A particularly forthright recent statement of the model (Budge 1999) indeed goes so far as to argue that 'direction equals emphasis'. This leads him to set up a dichotomy, in Chapter 4 of this volume, between what he describes as 'saliency theory' and what he describes as the 'confrontational' (in our terminology the 'positional') approach to modelling party competition. The preceding discussion, as well as the work of Humphreys and Garry, shows that there is indeed a complex analytical relationship between position and salience to be teased out in particular circumstances. This notably arises when a multidimensional policy space is constrained (for example by a fixed budget) and there is no substantial disagreement between actors on ideal policy outcomes. We have also seen, however, that there is another class of issue for which there may be extreme disagreement on substantive policies between actors who each hold the issue in question to be highly salient. In such cases, issue emphasis provides no systematic information about policy position.

All of this is very important because it gives us some understanding of why it might be that the MRG data, despite being concerned fundamentally with the *salience* of different policy concerns, have been used in practice to derive estimates of party *positions* that are argued by Budge (Chapter 4 this volume) to have good face validity. There may well be a particular set of issues for which 'direction equals emphasis'. Humphreys and Garry show us that these are, precisely, issues in a constrained policy space on which there is general agreement on ideal policies but substantial variation in the relative importance of each issue for each actor. Other of the MRG coding categories go beyond saliency theory and explicitly code policy positions: examples are 'social services expansion: positive' and 'social services expansion: negative', or 'decentralisation: positive' and 'decentralisation: negative'. Judicious use of these two types of MRG coding category can be, and clearly has been, used to generate reasonable estimates of policy positions. Reanalysis of MRG data by Laver and Garry (2000), using a new approach to scaling these data designed to capture as much information as possible about policy *positions*, generated estimates of party positions with very good cross-validation against independent expert surveys.

Alternative manifesto coding schemes

If we were starting from scratch, however, the preceding discussion implies that we should set out to analyse political texts in a way that maintains a clear analytical distinction between position and salience. We should leave for empirical investigation, rather than a priori assertion, the matter of

whether the actual pattern of popular preferences in the real world is such that position equals salience for some particular issue.

The desire to maintain a clear distinction between position and salience is what motivated the construction by Laver and Garry (1997, 2000) of a new coding scheme for the content analysis of political texts. This scheme is explicitly positional in that no policy position is defined without defining its antithesis, as well as a neutral position between the two. The relative *salience* of some policy category is then derived by summing all codings in the category: pro, neutral and con. This scheme is designed for use in a quite detailed version by expert coders, and in a rather cruder version as the basis for computer coded content analysis. Laver and Garry also defined a scale for deriving policy *positions* from these same data, based on how a reader of the document might seek to extract policy information from it, and obtained very good cross-validation of their estimated policy positions against completely independent estimates derived from expert surveys.

Laver and Garry also suggest a procedure for defining and continually redefining a dictionary, in any language, that can be used to apply their method of computer coded content analysis to huge volumes of virgin text. Two subsequent chapters in this book report analyses of policy positions applying this approach to texts written in languages other than English (Chapter 12 Garry; Chapter 13 de Vries, Giannetti and Mansergh).

Salience and/or position in the analysis of political texts?

As a number of chapters in this book indicate, we are at the threshold of a new era of computer coded content analysis. The time is thus ripe for a careful reappraisal of methods of analysing political texts with the intention of estimating the policies of their authors. Furthermore the once-potent 'sunk costs' argument in favour of retaining an existing longstanding approach to doing this in which a vast number of person-hours has been invested to generate a huge dataset, for example the MRG content analysis coding scheme, will no longer apply. Text can now be instantly coded and recoded using a range of different methods: obliging us to make careful decisions about which method is most appropriate for a particular application, rather than simply taking what is available for want of any alternative.

The bottom line, however, is that there are important issues in most polities for which it is simply not possible to infer an author's ideal policy position from the level of emphasis attached to it in the text under analysis – for which direction does not equal emphasis in a text under analysis. These are issues deemed highly salient by people with radically different substantive policy positions. They include issues involving: the redistribution of resources in an unequal society, which generates a fundamental conflict of interest between rich and poor; a range of potent 'moral' issues such as abortion, capital punishment and euthanasia; issues generating conflicts of interest between religious, linguistic, ethnic or other social groups; and so on.

Since the distribution of opinion on an issue can change over time and is always a fundamentally empirical matter, it seems unwise to prejudge this when designing a particular research project. This suggests that research designed to estimate the policies of political actors should maintain a clear distinction between position and salience. Recent advances in the computer coding of text effectively mean that the need to recode large volumes of text is no longer a major obstacle to introducing a better coding scheme should one be felt necessary. There is thus no longer a compelling reason not to code texts for both the salience and position of policies in particular areas. The aim should be to collect information on both components of the subject's policy and leave the matter of whether issue *salience* in practice implies substantive issue *position* as something to be illuminated by the data rather than assumed a priori.

Note

1 Laver and Shepsle calculated all of their results assuming either equal salience of all policy dimensions or actor-specific saliency weights for each dimension. They found little difference between assumptions in the results for their model. This was because this particular model is driven by median policy positions on key dimensions, which remain the same whatever the salience of the dimension in question.

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6 A framework for analysing local party policy emphases in Scotland

Bodil Agasøster

Introduction

Using *national* election manifestos, the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and related research has studied changes in policy emphases or policy positions *between* parties over time and across countries. Quantitative content analysis can, however, also be applied to study variation in policy emphases and positions *within* parties at the same election, if the focus is shifted to *local* manifestos. Drawing on the theoretical framework of the CMP, this chapter aims at developing a classification scheme for the systematic analysis of programmatic statements in local election manifestos. This procedure may be useful for discussing a much-debated question in party politics: to what extent can political parties be regarded as unitary actors?

First, we look briefly at the CMP content analysis approach and its applications, covered at much greater length elsewhere in this volume. We then discuss the status of local manifestos, describe their characteristics and suggest a framework for the analysis of these documents. Finally, we apply the scheme to a study of Scottish local manifestos in the 1997 British General Election. By means of simple statistical measures, we identify party differences in policy preferences between the four main Scottish parties, and explore differences in the extent to which their local messages vary across Scottish constituencies. In addition to the manifestos, the chapter draws on semi-structured interviews with Scottish party officials.

Studying election manifestos

The Manifesto Project

The CMP researchers regard national election manifestos as the most suitable programmatic documents for quantitative content analysis. Volkens (1992: 4) gives us four main reasons why:

1 The wide range of political themes the parties position themselves to in a manifesto makes it a good overview of party policy.

2 Among party documents, election programmes have special authority due to their ratification by party conferences.
3 Manifestos are agreed on by the whole of the party concerned, and therefore have a unitary character.
4 The regularity of their publication before general elections makes them ideal for studying policy changes over time.

We will argue that local manifestos can also be used for quantitative content analysis.

The CMP is well-known for its achievements, but has nevertheless been subject to a variety of criticism. The robustness of the coding frame has been questioned. The categories have been criticised for being both too broad and too narrow. One problem is posed by the country-specific sub-categories that inflate the number of categories and may compromise cross-country comparability. Sub-categories are, however, normally aggregated up to the category they are derived from. Another weakness is the time-specificity of the categories, which can prevent the coding scheme from covering all policy concerns in newer manifestos. Issues such as the Internet, drugs, and the collapse of communism were not considered in the original scheme. The coding scheme is under constant revision in order to fit new countries, up-date the categories and improve the validity of the coding. The scheme has also been criticised for being unbalanced: it contains a large number of economic policy categories (sixteen) yet few categories relating to the political system (five).

Towards content analysis of local manifestos

Local manifestos as programme statements

In what respects does the status of local manifestos differ from that of national ones? First, they differ in terms of the unique authoritative status of national manifestos. The same authoritative quality cannot be ascribed to constituency literature, even if constituency campaigns are normally based on a party's national manifesto, with the candidates perhaps attaching different relative weights to different policy areas (Robertson 1976: 137f). Budge and Farlie (1983) hold that local party literature cannot be regarded as containing authoritative party statements. Rather, in most cases, local party statements must be viewed as *individual candidate pronouncements* linked by a common point of view to national party statements. At the local level, according to Budge and Farlie, parties are freer to ignore external events and ideological supporters, factors often posing important constraints for national parties when writing manifestos. This gives local manifestos a wide potential for variation.

While admitting that local manifestos lack the status of party consensus associated with national manifestos, we maintain here that local manifestos

are legitimate expressions of local party policy, because the election agent, who is both legally responsible, answerable to and accepted by the central party, has the ultimate responsibility for their contents. When asked who decides the content of the local election address, the view of the former General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party was that the agent takes the final decision, but that some candidates influence this considerably (Jack McConnell, personal interview, 15 Oct. 1997). The influence of the candidate depends on his/her personality and seniority; a sitting MP usually has more influence than a first-time runner. In practice, therefore, it may be either the agent or the candidate who writes the leaflet. In 1997, for example, most constituency Labour parties and many local SNP associations submitted biographical data about the candidate and policy suggestions to Headquarters, and the rest was done by Scottish party officials. The Conservatives also had leaflets printed centrally, but the content was more individualised.

In writing local manifestos, the authors pick rather freely from the national policy manifesto and often add local issues (related to national policies or not) and information on the candidate. According to the former General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, however, the content of an election address would only contradict national Labour Party policy if the local party could get special permission to do so (Jack McConnell, personal interview, 15 Oct. 1997). In this party, policy cohesion across the country seems to be high.

The function and distribution of election addresses

National party manifestos have been described as 'a key link in the democratic interaction between governors and the governed' (Strøm and Leipart 1989: 264). Local election addresses have a similar function at the local level. The candidate's election address traditionally constitutes the main piece of information communicated from her/his party, introducing the candidate and her/his policies to the electorate.[1] The distribution of the election address is still regarded as the most basic local campaign activity (Denver and Hands 1997: 101). In Britain, it is normally sent out as the single piece of election literature that each candidate is entitled to have delivered free of charge to each voter by the Royal Mail.[2] Almost all candidates have some sort of an election address produced, and a lot of consideration is given to which pictures and statements to include. The publication of the local manifesto and other literature is a considerable expense in most local campaigns. This means that all parties cannot afford to publish and distribute a local manifesto to all voters in all constituencies.[3] When a party can afford it, the election address is typically addressed to the individual voter in order to personalise the communication.

In many places, and particularly in marginal seats, a substantial amount of local literature is produced. Some would argue, therefore, that the election

address might not be the document best fitted for content analysis. Against this, it could be said that it is the only piece of local election communication that can be analysed comparably in a wide number of constituencies, even if it can still sometimes be difficult to identify in particular cases.

Identifying a party's election address

Looking back on the 1992 British General Election, Butler and Kavanagh (1992: 233) report that the election address has become less *recognisable* than it used to be, as both Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in some seats distributed a special issue of their local free newspapers, which normally report on local government activities, rather than a traditional election address. Both parties also sometimes print two or more versions of the local manifesto and send different copies to different members of a household.[4]

In the present study, when there were doubts about the status of a particular document, the agent was contacted for confirmation. A west-central Scotland Labour Party agent in 1997 said that the constituency party had regarded the traditional election address as 'old-fashioned' and consequently had sent out two leaflets: one focusing on policies, the other on 'the candidate on the campaign trail'. This agent regarded a strong candidate focus a more modern form of campaigning. After the purpose of this project was explained to him, he recommended applying the most policy-oriented leaflet. The rationale behind such a choice would have been that this version matches the CMP coding categories better. We coded and averaged data from both types of document when we had access to both, since this approach gives the most complete picture of the election communications of a local party. None the less it was often quite difficult to be absolutely certain whether a certain local party operated with more than one manifesto.

Variations in policy emphases and layout

Issues must relate to real problems in order to be plausible and to appeal to voters (Budge and Farlie 1983). As problems arise locally, one might expect considerable variation in what are seen as 'real problems' across Scotland and this could cause diversified election communications. It seems likely to be rational for parties to emphasise different issues and policies in different local areas. The ability of parties to adapt policy to local circumstances, however, is mediated by organisational factors. We thus expect the Labour Party, which appears to be the most centralised party, to display the lowest level of variation, followed by the Conservatives, the SNP and the Liberal Democrats, the most decentralised of the British parties. The Liberal Democrats were the only party not to have any election literature centrally printed for local parties (Derek Barrie, personal interview, 26

May 1997). Policy-making at the local level helps a party to be sensitive to local needs (Andrew Myles, personal interview, 21 Oct. 1997). We expect this to be reflected in higher levels of policy variation in the local manifestos of parties with substantial local input to policy-making.

In election campaigns, party rationality should be regarded as multi-levelled. Robertson (1976: 139) discusses the conflicting incentives of local and national party organisations in British general elections, sometimes balancing the chance of winning a particular seat against those of the party forming the next government. Central staffers prefer maximum party cohesion in the message and seek to avoid inconsistency, as winning office is their main interest. Individual candidates, according to Robertson, have stronger incentives to ensure their own election and therefore may focus on other themes and even take positions that differ from the party line. Rather than setting up opposing positions on the same issue within the same party, we expect to find constituency parties adapting national manifestos to local needs by stressing particularly relevant parts.

Butler and Kavanagh's work on British general elections deals among other things with local campaigning, referring to candidates and manifestos across Britain (see, for example, Butler and Kavanagh 1992). The methods they use are not made explicit, but their generalisations, reporting substantial inter-party variation in the content and the layout of election addresses, are interesting (Butler and Kavanagh 1992: 234). The local tactical situation seems to be an important consideration. The most frequently used format is an A4 leaflet folded in three, either colour-printed on glossy paper or simpler in form. It normally contains pictures of the candidate, a letter to the voter, statements of personal characteristics and achievements, and local and/or national policy statements and party achievements. For example, the Labour Party in 1992 and 1997 used glossy red-and-yellow pamphlets with colour photos in safe and marginal seats, and cheaper, red-and-white ones in unwinnable seats. Marginality also had implications for the *content* of the address (Butler and Kavanagh 1992: 235). The form of the Conservative local manifestos varied more than that of the Labour Party. Their 1992 manifestos also contained a photo of the local candidate alongside the national party leader more frequently than those of the other parties (Butler and Kavanagh 1992). In Scotland in 1997, the appearance of the Liberal Democrats' leaflets clearly varied more than the other parties' communications.

The analysis

The coding scheme

As with the CMP, we analysed the *saliency* of policy concerns rather than political promises. CMP categories were applied as closely as possible, although the scheme was adapted to capture what is typical of *local* manifestos. The

revised coding scheme should also be applicable to national level documents, making cross-level comparisons possible. To our knowledge, no other attempt has been made to design a coding scheme for policy documents issued at the local level.

As in the case of the CMP, certain sections of the documents were excluded, including headings, even if they often constitute a considerable share of the text, as the content of headings can be difficult to classify. The same applies to cartoons, statistics, Gaelic text (which particularly prevails in SNP leaflets in Highland seats) and large-type appeals to the voter to vote for a particular party or candidate. Picture captions were also excluded, except when referring to general policies rather than to the particular picture exclusively. The CMP scheme leaves out the party leader's introduction to national manifestos, as these sections are not regarded as authoritative statements. The local manifestos lack this formal status to begin with; we did, however, include the candidate's letter to the voters, otherwise the local manifesto texts would have been very short. Pictures often illustrate the policy concerns of the party and the candidate; they can also tell us whether or not an association with the party leader or other 'party notables' is expected to help the candidate. However, the CMP approach does not include analysis of pictures so these were not included in the present study.

We have sought to be explicit about all coding decisions that differ from CMP guidelines. The main difference between our coding scheme and the CMP framework is the addition of a new *Domain 8: Categories added for the analysis of local level election addresses*. For a quantitative analysis building on the CMP categories, there were two alternative ways of proceeding in the coding of local manifestos. One was to code national policy according to the manifesto scheme, and code all local and candidate references as *000: Non-meaningful statements*. The other approach was to add a new domain to enable detailed coding of references to specifically local concerns. The latter approach was chosen so that possibly interesting patterns in the local references could be studied. For example, the question of whether the local parties pay more attention to the candidate in some regions than others can be explored, as can whether the candidate's bonds to the constituency are given more emphasis in rural than in urban regions. Most references to the candidate and local circumstances, of which most would otherwise have been uncodable, have been allocated to Domain 8. The categories have the ambition to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Table 6.1 gives an overview of these categories).

Local manifesto statements may refer to the national or the local (or regional) level. It was a matter of judgement whether a number of sub-categories for references to local realities such as health and education matters should be constructed. We decided to code references to local circumstances to the CMP standard categories. For example, references to the need to improve local education were coded as *506: Education expansion*.

Table 6.1 Domain 8: Categories added to the CMP scheme for the content analysis of local manifestos

801: Candidate and family's biographical information: Education and employment; hobbies; ability; information on when candidate joined the party; where candidate was born, brought up and went to university (as long as references are not 803).
802: Candidate's party or elected office(s): Governmental posts; elected office at all levels; all party candidatures and campaigning experience; candidate's priorities/promises if elected (including promises of loyalty to constituents before government loyalty); work already done for constituents (relevant to MPs); appeals to voters to contact him/her if he/she and party can be of help regarding issues, transport to polling stations, etc. (only if integrated in the text itself).
803: Candidate's bonds to constituency or the close area: If born or grown up there, local family history, etc.; candidate's knowledge of and commitment to constituency; candidate's association with former/sitting MP; a constituent's (who addresses voters in the manifesto) bonds to constituency.
804: Asking for vote/supporting candidate/local party: Constituents', former MP's or party leader's declaration of support to candidate (and party); references to party's local support (without pointing at tactical situation); bids to voters to let party know if he/she supports it.
805: Tactical information/asking for tactical votes: 'Neutral' information on tactical situation in seat, e.g., after boundary changes; statements on who can actually win the seat; references to local government strength. Bids for tactical votes.

However, a symbol distinguishing between local/regional/Scottish references, and general/British, was added to all quasi-sentences.

In the CMP, sub-categories were created for some countries in order to capture content that was perceived as unclear when using the standard categories. No sub-categories were created for Britain since the scheme was first developed for the analysis of British and US manifestos. In the present study, however, additional sub-categories concerning particular Scottish matters seemed unavoidable. These categories are also relevant for analysis of Scotland-wide election manifestos.[5]

Positive references to Scottish independence were coded by adding a sub-category to CMP category *204: Constitution: positive*. Negative references to Scottish independence were coded as a sub-category of *203: Constitution: negative*. The question of Scottish independence was extremely party politicised and it was particularly important to code the numerous references to this in an informative way. Likewise, new categories were created for the issue of Scottish devolution. Positive mentions of Scottish devolution were coded as a sub-category of CMP category *301: Decentralisation: positive*; negative mentions were coded as a sub-category of *302: Decentralisation: negative*. References to Scottish devolution were qualitatively different from those to decentralisation in general. A party may well have been positive to general decentralisation, and negative to

the form of devolved authority linked to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament. CMP categories *601 (602): National way of life: positive (negative)* were extended with sub-categories to cover references to Scottish nationalism of a cultural and historical character and to the virtues of the Scottish people. Finally, a sub-category was added to *101: Foreign special relationships: positive* for positive references by the SNP to other small countries to which Scotland might be compared. Table 6.2 lists these changes. Apart from these, we applied the standard CMP coding scheme to the Scottish documents.

The sample

The main criterion for identifying the official election addresses was the label 'Election Communication' and the name of the constituency normally printed on them. Some manifestos were gathered from party headquarters and party officials, others from campaign activists and the rest from election agents and candidates. In the cover letter for a survey on local campaign techniques and resources sent out to all Scottish party agents after the 1997 election, we asked respondents to return a copy of the manifesto with the questionnaire in enclosed envelopes. Only some agents enclosed the requested leaflet. In cases where we did not receive it, a letter asking for it was sent to the candidate. The sample effectively has thus been chosen by self-selection by party agents and candidates and consists of 168 manifestos out of a possible 288, or 58.3 per cent.[6]

The procedure

The coding was carried out manually by the author following Volkens' (1992) instructions (for reliability testing, see Appendix 6.2). Uncoded sentences were avoided as far as possible, by coding 'uncodable' sentences to the same category as the greatest share of the quasi-sentences in the section they appear in, sometimes using section headings as an indication.

Election addresses are far shorter than central party manifestos, and sometimes extremely brief. This is not an insurmountable obstacle: there is

Table 6.2 Additional categories to the CMP scheme enabling content analysis of Scottish manifestos

1010: Scottish foreign special relationships: positive.
2030: Scottish independence: negative
2040: Scottish independence: positive
3010: Scottish devolution: positive
3020: Scottish devolution: negative
6010: Scottish national way of life: positive
6020: Scottish national way of life: negative

also substantial variation in length among national manifestos. As with the CMP the percentages of quasi-sentences in each coding category, that is the *relative* emphases on each category, were used as the primary data for subsequent analysis.[7]

The aim of the CMP was to distinguish parties from each other, particularly in terms of left and right. Here, the main objective is to study intra-party variation in policy emphases and we used simple statistical measures of dispersion and central tendency to measure the extent of intra-party variation. In the next stage of the analysis, the CMP left–right scale will be used to compare the set of local manifestos with the Scottish manifestos of the relevant parties.

Preliminary results and conclusions

The results of coding the local manifestos can be found, for each party, in Appendix 6.1. From this we can see that SNP election addresses were typically quite a bit longer (83 quasi-sentences on average) than those of the Conservatives (58.8), Liberal Democrats: (54.8) or Labour (47.8). The lengths of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos vary the most, while Labour Party manifestos display far smaller deviations from the average length.

Following Budge *et al.* (1987), we summarise overall results by reporting the ten most important categories for each party. The overlap between these for different parties is extensive. For all parties, *305: Political authority* is among the three top categories, and *504: Welfare state expansion* among the top five. Other leading categories for all parties (except the Conservatives) are *202: Democracy* and *506: Education: positive*.

Some Domain 8 categories appear frequently; indeed *802: Candidate's party or elected office* was among the top five for all parties and *801: Candidate's biographical information* was among the top seven for three parties. Other new categories also make it to the top ten. For the SNP, references to *6010: Scottish way of life: positive* and *2040: Scottish independence: positive* ranked second and fourth, respectively. It is not surprising that all parties devoted considerable attention to constitutional questions, as these were very important in the campaign. Labour stressed *3010: Scottish devolution: positive*, the Conservatives stressed *203: Constitution: positive* and *3020: Scottish devolution: negative*. It is also interesting to note that the SNP has the highest share of references to local and Scottish (rather than British) politics, followed by the Conservatives and Labour. The Liberal Democrats devoted least attention to local/Scottish references.

Some traditional left–right coding categories are also well represented in the local manifestos. For the SNP and Labour, the two most left-wing parties, references to *503: Social justice* and *701: Labour groups: positive* were important. In contrast the Conservatives and Liberal

Democrats devoted extensive space to *605: Law and order* and *402: Economic incentives*.

There were differences between parties in the level of intra-party policy variation. We can observe this by looking at the standard deviations around the means for each party in each coding category in the Tables in Appendix 6.1. The tendency is for a greater variation within the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties compared to Labour and the SNP. This adds support to our hypothesis about the link between the degree of party centralisation and variation in policy content, as well as the findings of Butler and Kavanagh from the 1992 campaign that Conservative local manifesto content varied more than that of Labour (1992: 234).

It is evident that party competition affects policy contents. For example, the share of Conservative manifestos taken up by anti-independence references – *2030: Scottish independence: negative* – was higher in seats where the SNP was a strong opponent than elsewhere. There were also higher shares of Domain 8 references to local circumstances where the party issuing the manifesto held a safe seat. This probably relates in part to an 'incumbent effect' whereby the incumbent is recognised by voters much more than where a party performs poorly. Indeed, the influence of the *candidate* is a factor that seems to make an independent contribution to manifesto contents. The space devoted to categories 801 and 802 varies with how well known and popular the candidate is.[8] For the SNP, there is a tendency for manifestos to be more standardised when the candidate is largely unknown; SNP 'party notables' have more individualised local manifestos.

These results will be subjected to considerably more detailed analysis, but the main point of this chapter has been to develop and apply a coding scheme that can be used for systematic comparisons of local manifesto contents and therefore of intra-party policy variation. Some substantive conclusions have been reached as a result of the present analysis, however. We found evidence of considerable variation between the Scottish parties in the standardisation of their policy message across all constituencies. The set of local Labour Party manifestos displays the lowest level of intra-party variation in policy emphases, and can thus be regarded as the most unified actor in the 1997 election.

Appendix 6.1: variation among Scottish parties' local manifestos

Means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values are given for the top ten categories in the sample of each party's election address. The first row in each table, EAOBS, is the number of coding units, i.e. quasi-sentences in the manifestos. The two following rows display the share of the manifestos devoted to national and Scottish/local mentions respectively.

Table A6.1.1 The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party
Number of coding units is an absolute number, the other variables are percentages. N=44

Variable/Label	*Mean*	*Std Dev*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
EAOBS=number of coding units	58.841	28.172	23.00	179.00
Share of national observations	46.2417	16.2201	15.00	79.63
Share of Scottish and local observations	53.4695	16.2460	20.37	85.00
802=party or elected office	9.4905	9.6186	.00	37.50
305=political authority	7.7243	7.3474	.00	27.87
110=Eur. Community negative	6.1011	4.5132	.00	17.24
801=personal char.	5.7486	4.9158	.00	17.39
504=welfare state positive	5.2764	3.5935	.00	11.21
408=economic goals	5.1334	3.9010	.00	17.19
605=law and order	4.8930	3.4412	.00	12.20
3020=Scottish dev. negative	4.2659	3.1065	.00	10.94
203=constitution positive	3.9560	2.6267	.00	10.81
402=economic incentives	3.2652	2.5062	.00	9.26

Table A6.1.2 The Scottish Labour Party
Number of coding units is an absolute number, the other variables are percentages. N=41

Variable/Label	*Mean*	*Std Dev*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
EAOBS=number of coding units	47.793	14.209	22.00	90.00
Share of national observations	57.9693	12.1213	30.77	82.50
Share of Scottish and local observations	42.0307	12.1213	17.50	69.23
305=political authority	19.7102	9.2620	2.56	38.24
504=welfare state positive	11.6861	6.6657	3.70	40.54
202=democracy	9.3576	4.7329	.00	20.00
706=non-ec. dem. groups	7.2088	3.5941	2.15	18.42
802= party or elected office	6.2415	7.8463	.00	33.33
408=economic goals	6.1100	3.2379	.00	12.50
506=education positive	6.0688	2.3874	1.28	14.04
503=social justice	5.5990	3.1464	.00	15.00
3010= Scottish dev. positive	5.2749	2.4756	1.28	13.64
701=labour groups positive	3.3366	3.2432	.00	11.48

Table A6.1.3 The Scottish Liberal Democrat Party
Number of coding units is an absolute number, the other variables are percentages. N=38

Variable/Label	*Mean*	*Std Dev*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
EAOBS=number of coding units	54.803	28.570	18.00	147.00
Share of national observations	71.2829	17.3756	18.46	95.56
Share of Scottish and local observations	28.7171	17.3756	4.44	81.54
504=welfare state positive	14.8071	4.3447	5.26	25.64

Table A6.1.3 (continued)

Variable/Label	*Mean*	*Std Dev*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
305=political authority	13.6866	9.4990	.00	32.35
506=education positive	9.3711	4.0061	1.09	16.67
802= party or elected office	6.0458	5.5724	.00	20.00
402=economic incentives	5.9968	4.5702	.00	25.00
801=personal char.	5.2987	4.3235	.00	21.05
605=law and order	4.9279	4.9098	.00	17.86
202=democracy	4.7642	8.0577	.00	50.00
303=government/adm. efficiency	3.5389	3.0658	.00	10.00
501=environmental protection	3.4039	4.4174	.00	21.43

Table A6.1.4 The Scottish National Party
Number of coding units is an absolute number, the other variables are percentages. N=45

Variable/Label	*Mean*	*Std Dev*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
EAOBS=number of coding units	83.222	25.820	13.00	138.00
Share of national observations	2.6644	4.3435	.00	26.61
Share of Scottish and local observations	97.3356	4.3435	73.39	100.00
504=welfare state positive	17.3204	5.7665	3.09	36.84
6010=Scot. way of life positive	9.4020	5.0710	.00	30.77
305=political authority	8.9307	5.9919	1.45	30.77
2040=Scot. independence positive	7.4378	4.1970	.00	15.38
802= party or elected office	5.9247	5.7586	.00	29.41
202=democracy	4.8667	3.0339	.00	12.25
801=personal char.	4.8200	4.6284	.00	22.68
506=education positive	4.6653	2.2999	.00	8.86
701=labour groups positive	4.3678	2.6992	.00	15.67
503=social justice	3.0713	2.1168	.00	9.09

Appendix 6.2: reliability testing

Internal reliability

The intra-coder reliability of the content analysis was controlled by repeating the coding of five per cent of the documents four months after the original coding. A similar procedure was chosen by Håkansson (1994), who analyses Swedish party propaganda in the Swedish EU-membership debate. His point of departure is the different coding categories, i.e., the share of content coded as category x the first time compared to the second time. The level of consistency/reliability for each category is expressed as a percentage. The reliability scores across his twelve categories ranged from 72 to 100. Due to our high number of categories, we found it more useful to measure a total share of deviations. This gives a vigorous test, since the degree to which the coding conforms to a given standard is measured (Volkens 1999a).

Table A6.2.1 Reliability scores for the coding of the national and local manifestos by party

National manifestos				*Local manifestos*			
Cons.	Labour	Lib. Dem.	SNP	Cons.	Labour	Lib. Dem.	SNP
83.0	90.0	91.5	85.1	90.1	95.5	91.9	92.2

Every 20th local manifesto and every 20th page of the national manifestos were re-coded, regardless of the length of the national manifesto or the number of local manifestos per party. Every page of the national manifestos and each single local manifesto had the same probability of being chosen. Three aspects were considered for each quasi-sentence of the original coding: the ability 1) to produce the same separation into quasi-sentences as in the original coding, 2) to reproduce the same content coding category, and 3) to distinguish between references to the national and the Scottish/local levels.

There is no absolute standard for what level of deviations should be accepted as reasonable. Volkens (1999a) chooses 80 per cent correspondence as the minimum limit for coders. Results with between 90 and 100 per cent correspondence are regarded as very good. In most contexts, a level of consistence of 80 per cent and above is accepted (Håkansson 1994).

The results of the reliability test are presented in Table A6.2.1. Although far from perfect, a reasonable level of correspondence was achieved. At the national level, for two of the parties, the reliability is lower than the level regarded as 'very good' by the manifesto researchers. For the other parties at the national level, and for all four at the local, the 90 per cent limit was passed. The lower levels of reliability for the Conservatives and the Nationalists at the national level is partly caused by the high level of references to the constitutional issue and my difficulties in coding these mentions consistently.

External reliability

The CMP reliability test is described in Volkens (1992: 48–53). I undertook the exercise and it was evaluated by Andrea Volkens, Science Centre Berlin (WZB). My work was assessed as 'very good, except for two of the "most common mistakes"'. I endeavoured to overcome these weaknesses when coding, which was undertaken after WZB 'certification'. Volkens assisted me by email by directing the coding of two local manifestos as well as my coding of difficult quasi-sentences, both from local and Scottish manifestos.

Notes

The chapter builds on my Ph.D. thesis on variation in election campaigning across Scotland in British General Elections 1987–97. Thanks to Judith Bara and Kaare

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1 According to Butler and Kavanagh (1992: 233), however, the local manifesto had by 1992 lost some of its importance compared with fifty years ago, when it contained more of the candidate's own emphasis on issues thought to have particular local or personal appeal.
2 This rule has existed since 1918.
3 In 1997, the Liberal Democrats did not have an election address in some central belt constituencies where they are particularly weak.
4 Examples of this in 1997 were the Liberal Democrats in the Highland constituency of Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber, and the Conservatives in Ayr in the south-west and Gordon in north-east Scotland.
5 All four parties publish Scottish versions of the manifesto which are similar to the British-level documents, but have a Scottish outlook.
6 The sample breaks down on party as follows: Conservatives: 44/72 = 61.1%; Labour: 41/72 = 56.9%; Liberal Democrats: 38/72 = 52.8%; SNP: 45/72 = 62.5%.
7 The 1997 Scottish level manifestos were also coded, but these data will not be explored here.
8 Exceptions to this rule can be found in the manifestos of some Conservative government ministers: sometimes the manifestos of prominent candidates contain few references to Domain 8. This was probably caused by the unpopularity of the Tory government before the election.

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7 The policy space of party manifestos

Michael D. McDonald and Silvia M. Mendes

Democracy assigns political parties the important role of presenting citizens with alternative policies. Parties engage in a competitive struggle to gain favour with voters by presenting policy alternatives (Schumpeter 1944). The alternative positions provide the voters with an opportunity to elect a government that will take policy in one direction or another (Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995). Were parties to offer no policy choice, the public would be denied any possibility to control policy outcomes (Sullivan and O'Connor 1972). Party policy alternatives also play a role in determining who governs even where the voters' choice is not the final determination; this is often the case in multiparty systems, inasmuch as negotiations among viable governing alternatives depend on party policy positions (Laver and Schofield 1990; Laver and Shepsle 1996). Finally, when it comes to policy actions pursued by governments, mandate theory says that parties in government pursue policies they have promoted during election campaigns. Evidence, too, indicates that governing parties of the left and of the right pursue different policies (Hibbs 1977; Castles 1982; McDonald, Budge, and Hofferbert 1998).

A rich source of systematic information on party policy statements comes from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP). This has codified policy emphases in party programmes of competitive democracies throughout the post-war period. Through elections into 1993, the data cover twenty-seven nations and 229 parties (Volkens 1994), with new democracies in Central/Eastern Europe, South-east Asia, and Latin America being added almost every year.

An explicit and implicit criticism of the CMP data is that they tell us about what parties have said but not about party policy positions as such. The same or similar sort of criticism is implicit in the fact that, despite the CMP's widespread availability, several scholars have felt compelled to identify the positions of parties through expert surveys.

Here, we evaluate the CMP data as a source of information on party policy positions. In the first section, we discuss why the saliency theory foundation of the CMP data has raised questions about their use for identifying party policy positions and thereafter review various ways it has been used to

construct indicators of policy positions. The second section evaluates the validity and reliability of left–right party positions from three expert surveys. The idea is to determine whether these expert scales can be used as a sound basis for identifying where parties are located along that dimension. The third section addresses two issues. It begins with an evaluation of the validity of five CMP-based left–right scales by asking how well they square with the expert judgements. Thereafter, we evaluate the reliability of the five scales. The fourth section offers a preview of the use of the CMP data to construct party policy scales for dimensions other than left–right. We conclude with a discussion of the usefulness of both expert surveys and CMP data for placing parties in policy space.

The CMP data and derived policy scales

The CMP data have been thoroughly documented by Budge *et al.* (1987; see also Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann *et al.* 1994; Volkens 1994). Here we briefly review the important decisions made by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG).

Policy emphases and policy positions

Following David Robertson (1976), as well as Ian Budge and Dennis Farlie (1977), the MRG coded manifesto statements into categories of policy references. The MRG originally agreed to use fifty-four common policy categories, plus allowance for sub-categories within particular countries. Later, two more were added to bring the total to fifty-six. Each category fits within one of seven policy domains: (1) Foreign Affairs, (2) Freedom and Democracy, (3) Government, (4) Economy, (5) Welfare and Quality of Life, (6) Fabric of Society, and (7) Social Groups.[1]

The direct objects of the coding process are manifesto sentences or, where language dictates, 'quasi-sentences'. The theoretical framework for the coding is provided by saliency theory of political campaigns. Saliency theory 'implies that the most important aspect of the documents is the degree of emphasis placed on certain broad policy areas, rather than each party's support for, or opposition to, a specific policy within these areas' (Budge 1987: 24). That is, parties compete by emphasising policy areas they believe give them electoral advantages and by glossing over or ignoring those areas that they deem to help their rivals. One source of controversy rests on the question about whether the saliency theory produces indications of policy emphasis rather than policy position.

It is not as if the MRG coding is non-positional in policy terms. In most instances, the categories are easily interpretable as policy options, ideas, or outcomes that are valued by the party. Fifty-four of the fifty-six categories involve clear value statements. Table 7.1 shows that twenty-six CMP policy categories come from thirteen policy concepts where mentions could be

coded as either positive or negative. These pro/con categories are essentially matters of whether a party places value on one policy option or its opposite: such as a more or less protectionist policy. Thirteen other categories require favourable mention of a type of policy. That means, for instance, with the directive to code favourable statements with respect to free enterprise, a long set of critical statements about free enterprise by a Communist party would not be coded as emphases on the free enterprise system. These thirteen 'favourable mention' categories are interpretable as matters of valuing particular types of policy ideas – such as wanting to have market forces organise the national economy. Another fifteen categories refer to the goal of, need for, or importance of such things as peace, market regulation, and so on. This set considers particular policy outcomes as being of value to the party. That leaves only two of fifty-six categories where the value placed on an idea or an outcome is potentially non-directional. By all accounts and evidence, one of these two, nationalisation, is actually directional.[2] The other is the purposefully non-directional, catch-all category of a party's intention to pursue some sort of economic goal left unspecified by the coding instructions.

Based merely on the words alone, therefore, it is far from clear that party policy positions are not identifiable from these data. By our interpretation, statements are coded as saying which types of policy options, ideas, and outcomes parties value. At this level of analysis, what we know is that the emphasis versus positional facets of the CMP data are arguable. A determination of whether the CMP data can be used to locate parties in policy space must rely on the use and evaluation of the data themselves.

CMP data and derived measures of party policy scales

The use of the CMP data is subject to the sagacious warning that 'there is no single "correct" representation . . . there is no unambiguously correct dimensionality for the policy space . . . different applications call for different levels of detail' (Laver and Shepsle 1996: 27). The fifty-six coding categories exist for precisely those reasons. Analysts can combine fine distinctions to suit the needs of their particular research questions. If broader categories had been used at the initial coding stage, there would be no *post hoc* opportunity to expand them.

Having details is a boon, but details can just as well be seen as a burden. They all but require researchers to engage in a pre-analysis measurement investigation so that the CMP data can be organised in a form suitable for addressing a particular research question. Almost anyone who has conducted such measurement investigations can attest to the frustration they often breed. Numerous choices are presented but few standards exist to guide any choice. Members of the MRG with intimate knowledge of the CMP data have combined different coding categories and, not surprisingly, have arrived at different measurements of the party policy positions for the

Table 7.1 The Manifesto Research Group policy categories

Positive and negative categories	*Mention favourably*	*Need for/goal of/ importance of*	*Other*
Foreign special relations	Anti-imperialism	Peace	Pursue economic goals
Military	Freedom and human rights	Incentives	Nationalisation
Internationalism	Democracy	Market regulation	
European Community	Political authority	Government efficiency	
Constitutionalism	Free enterprise	Eliminate corruption	
Protectionism	Economic planning	Keynesian demand	
Centralisation	Corporatism	Productivity	
Welfare state expansion	Marxist analysis	Controlled economy	
Education expansion	Anti-growth	Economic orthodoxy	
National way of life	Agriculture and farmers	Environmental protection	
Traditional morality	Middle class/prof.	Cultural and leisure facilities	
Multiculturalism	Underpriv. minority groups	Law & order	
Labour groups	Non-econ. demog. groups	Social harmony	
		Tech. and infrastructure	
		Social justice	

same left–right dimension. Table 7.2 looks at four of these studies. In all four cases, at least one of the authors was a member of the MRG. Despite a high degree of familiarity with the CMP data, there is not a high degree of agreement on which categories go into the left–right location of parties.

We might ask whether one of these left–right scales is correct and the others are wrong, but that is not what is at issue. Each might be correct, depending on one's purpose. That is Laver and Shepsle's point. However, we do want to know which of these five possibilities, if any, square with the ideas of left and right that researchers have in mind. If the CMP data cannot be used to retrieve the left–right positioning of parties that researchers want to use, then at best there is doubt about using the CMP data to construct a valid measure of that concept. At worst, there is distrust of using the CMP data to measure policy positions.

A second possible source of variety in left–right party positioning may come from the scoring systems applied to the CMP-based scales. Measurement is aptly defined as 'the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rules' (Stevens 1946: 667). Decisions about how (that is, the rules) the contributions of various categories are counted (the numerals) in the process of assigning them to the parties (the objects) can make quite a difference. The possibilities are numerous and varied; for manageability at this point we focus on two.

1 *Subtractive measures:* scoring based on the difference between presumably opposite types of emphases relative to the overall policy space of the party.
2 *Ratio measures:* scoring based on emphases placed on certain types of values relative to emphases placed on presumably opposite types of values.

Laver and Budge (1992) identified twenty-six coding categories that go into their measurement definition of left–right. They add thirteen left items and subtract from this quantity the sum of thirteen right items. A party that makes 200 total statements with 100 (or 50 per cent) of them about left items and 40 (or 20 per cent) about the right items receives a score of +30 (i.e., 50–20). This difference or subtractive measure is consistent with saliency theory. Of all the statements the party made, on balance, 30 more units were devoted to left matters than to right matters. Imagine that at the next election this party says exactly the same things it had said last time but adds 200 new statements about an issue that is not of concern to the left–right scale (e.g., favourable statements about protecting the environment). Now the party is making 400 total statements, and relative to that total they are making only half as many left statements (25 per cent) and half as many right statements (10 per cent) as they did for the first election. The party's left–right position is recorded as moving from +30 to +15. That is, the party is scored as considerably less left-leaning at the second

Table 7.2 MRG categories included in left–right scales across four studies

	MRG Var #	*MRG Domain*	*Laver and Budge*	*Budge and Robertson*	*Bartolini and Mair*	*Laver and Garry*	
						Economic	*Social*
	102	Foreign		Frgn special relations, con			
	103	Foreign	Decolonisation	Decolonisation			
	105	Foreign	Military, con				
	106	Foreign	Peace				
	107	Foreign	Internationalism, pro				
	110	Foreign		European Community, con			
	202	Freedom	Democracy				
	204	Freedom					Constitutional-ism, con
	304	Govt					Government corruption
	403	Economic	Regulation of capitalism	Regulation of capitalism	Regulation of capitalism	Regulation of capitalism	
Left	404	Economic	Economic planning		Economic planning	Economic planning	
Items	406	Economic	Protectionism, pro		Protectionism, pro	Protectionism, pro	
	408	Economic			Economic goals		
	409	Economic			Keynesian economics		
	410	Economic			Productivity		
	411	Economic			Tech./infrastructure		
	412	Economic	Controlled economy		Controlled economy	Controlled economy	
	413	Economic	Nationalisation	Nationalisation	Nationalisation	Nationalisation	
	504	Welfare	Welfare, pro				
	506	Welfare	Education, pro				
	602	Fabric		Nat'l way of life, con			Nat'l way of life, con
	604	Fabric		Traditional morality, con			Traditional morality, con
	701	Groups	Labour groups, pro	Labour groups, pro			

Table 7.2 (continued)

	MRG Var #	*MRG Domain*	*Laver and Budge*	*Budge and Robertson*	*Bartolini and Mair*	*Laver and Garry*	
						Economic	*Social*
	104	Foreign	Military, pro				
	108	Foreign		European Community, pro			
	203	Freedom	Constitutionalism, pro				Constitutional-ism, pro
	201	Freedom	Freedom and human rights	Freedom and human rights			
	301	Govt		Decentralisation, pro			
	303	Govt		Government efficiency			
	304	Govt		Government corruption			
	305	Govt	Government authority	Government authority			Government authority
Right Items	401	Economic	Free enterprise	Free enterprise	Free enterprise	Free enterprise	
	402	Economic	Incentives	Incentives	Incentives	Incentives	
	407	Economic	Protectionism, con		Protectionism, con	Protectionism, con	
	414	Economic	Economic orthodoxy	Economic orthodoxy	Economic orthodoxy	Economic orthodoxy	
	505	Welfare	Welfare, con			Welfare, con	
	601	Fabric	Nat'l way of life, pro				Nat'l way of life, pro
	603	Fabric	Traditional morality, pro	Traditional morality, pro			Traditional morality, pro
	605	Fabric	Law and order				Law and order
	606	Fabric	Social harmony	Social harmony			Social harmony
	607	Fabric		Multiculturalism, pro			

election compared to the first. It has moved toward the centre by virtue of devoting attention to policy matters that are not within the categories relevant to the left–right scale.

An alternative view of the position of parties is with respect to their left–right tendencies, *given* however much concern they have for items of the left and the right. One could count the left and right statements of a party as a percentage of all left and right statements made by that party (Kim and Fording 1998; Laver and Garry 2000). In the example above, the 50 per cent left and 20 per cent right emphases at the first election could lead to scoring the left–right position as 71.4 (50/70). The party's left–right position at the second election is likewise 71.4 (25/35).[3] Under this scoring system, therefore, the party's left–right position holds steady.

Which is the proper description of a party's position, the subtractive or ratio scores? There is, as we have already said, no way to answer this question in the abstract. Validity depends on what the researcher intends to measure. If one's intention is to locate a party in a space defined by its emphases on left versus right values relative to all values (thereby stressing the overall saliency of left and right values), then the subtractive measure is preferred. If, on the contrary, one's intention is to locate the party along the left–right dimension as such, regardless of saliency, then the ratio is preferred.[4]

Evaluating expert party policy scales

Measurement validity often appears to be an elusive standard because it depends so very much on the intent of the person constructing a scale. It is easy to interpret Laver and Budge's content-varied left–right scale and Bartolini and Mair's economic left–right scale as nothing other than different intentions of different authors. We confront this difficulty by accepting the left–right party positioning on expert scales as the meaning of left–right that we intend to measure. That simplifies the question. We ask: Can the CMP data be used to measure the left–right positions of parties as those left–right positions are understood by experts? Of course, taking the expert scales as *the* standard for evaluation without knowing much about their reliability and validity runs the risk of inferring that any mismatch between the expert and the CMP scales results from problems with the CMP data. It might well be the case that different expert scales measure left–right positions differently, contain a good deal of random noise, or both. That would force the unrealistic requirement that the CMP scales match moving targets. Therefore, we begin by exploring the reliability and validity of three expert scales.

Since 1980, Castles and Mair (1984), Laver and Hunt (1992), and Huber and Inglehart (1995) have reported expert scales of party positions. They provide common coverage of eighty-four parties in sixteen Western democracies throughout the post-war period. The Castles–Mair

and Huber–Inglehart scales expressly focus on the left–right location of parties. Laver and Hunt asked their experts to place the parties along eight dimensions. They suppose that their public ownership dimension is the most indicative of the usual conception of left–right (Laver and Hunt 1992: 122). In order to test that supposition, as well as to explore the content and construct validity of the Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart measures, we analyse the Laver–Hunt scales on three of their dimensions: first, public ownership, second, social issues, and third, taxes versus spending.

The expert scales – one from the early 1980s, a second from the late 1980s , and a third from the early 1990s – enable us to apply David Heise's (1969) measurement model for separating reliability and stability. This model assumes a Markovian process, so that a party's change from today's position to tomorrow's will be unaffected by its position yesterday. Assuming also that the reliability at each time point is the same, all one needs for the Heise stability and reliability estimates is a simple correlation matrix. (See Table 7.3.)

Table 7.3 shows that the Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart scales are more highly correlated with one another than either is with any of the three Laver–Hunt measures. Interestingly, as Laver–Hunt themselves expected, their public ownership scale is more highly correlated with the Castles–Mair scale than are either their social or tax/service scale. On the other hand, the Laver–Hunt tax/service scale is slightly more highly correlated with the Huber–Inglehart scale than are the social or public ownership scales. Even more interesting is the fact that the Laver–Hunt social scale correlates more highly with general left–right scales – Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart – than it does with either the public ownership or the tax-service scales. This pattern of correlations suggests that perhaps the general left–right scales include content from all three dimensions surveyed by Laver and Hunt. When we regress the Castles–Mair and the Huber–Inglehart scales onto Laver and Hunt's three scales, we find that the

Table 7.3 Correlations between expert scales

	C&M	*L&H Own*	*L&H Social*	*L&H Tax*	*H&I*	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*
C&M	1.000					5.28	2.23
L&H Own	0.902	1.000				6.07	2.15
L&H Social	0.777	0.641	1.000			5.08	2.54
L&H Tax	0.896	0.949	0.653	1.000		5.58	2.14
H&I	0.930	0.890	0.768	0.903	1.000	5.39	2.18

C&M is the Castles–Mair scale, *L&H Own* is the Laver–Hunt public ownership scale, *L&H Social* is the Laver–Hunt social scale, *L&H Tax* is the Laver–Hunt tax and service scale, and *H&I* is the Huber–Inglehart scale. The metrics of all scales are adjusted so that they range from 0 through 10, with 0 as the leftmost and 10 as the rightmost positions. This allows the means and standard deviations to be compared directly.

left–right variation in each of the two general left–right scales is associated with all three of Laver and Hunt's dimensions.

$$C\&M = -.478 + .466\ Own + .278\ Social + .270\ Tax, \text{ with } R^2 = .886;\ s_e = .764.$$
$$(.253)\ (.124)\qquad (.044)\qquad (.126)$$

and

$$H\&I = -.134 + .270\ Own + .258\ Social + .460\ Tax, \text{ with } R^2 = .87\ ;\ s_e = .776.$$
$$(.514)\ (.126)\qquad (.044)\qquad (.128)$$

It appears, therefore, that the content of the left–right concept covers issues related to public ownership and government economic management *and* to welfare state matters of taxing, spending, and service *and* to social value questions involving authoritarianism, individual liberty, moral order, and the like.

This inference squares with Huber and Inglehart's own content inquiry into the meaning of left–right used by their experts. In all sixteen countries under analysis here, the most important left–right issues cited by their experts refer to what Huber and Inglehart call 'economic and class conflict', a grouping of issues that includes private ownership, redistribution, inflation, employment, and public spending (Huber and Inglehart 1995: 78 and 86–9). Furthermore, Huber and Inglehart (1995: 86–9) report that the secondary dimension of the left–right content cited in all sixteen countries covered here involved either authoritarianism (government control of all spheres of life, civil rights and liberties, etc.), traditional versus new culture (religious value, moral order, secularism, social conservatism, the environment, etc.), or xenophobia (racism, immigration intolerance, etc.).

To bring the Laver and Hunt measures into line with the left–right content of Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart, we have calculated a weighted average of the Laver–Hunt public ownership plus social values plus tax and service scales in order to reformulate a left–right scale. The public ownership and tax/service scales have a weight of 1.5 and the social scale has a weight of 1.0. That gives three times as much weight to economic as to social issues, a fact that accords with the regression coefficient weights in the two equations above.

Substituting the weighted Laver–Hunt measure into the correlation matrix produces the statistics in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Correlations between expert scales using the weighted Laver–Hunt measure

	C&M	*L&H*	*H&I*	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*
C&M	1.000			5.28	2.23
L&H	0.941	1.000		5.64	2.06
H&I	0.930	0.936	1.000	5.39	2.18

Table 7.4 shows that the weighted Laver–Hunt measure is more highly correlated with both Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart than was any single one of their three separate measures. Therefore, we accept the weighted *L&H* scale as more content and construct valid compared to any one of their separate measures.

The Heise measurement model produces stability and reliability estimates of:

Reliability	=	0.947
Stability, early 1980s to late 1980s	=	0.994
Stability, late 1980s to early 1990s	=	0.988
Stability, early 1980s to early 1990s	=	0.982

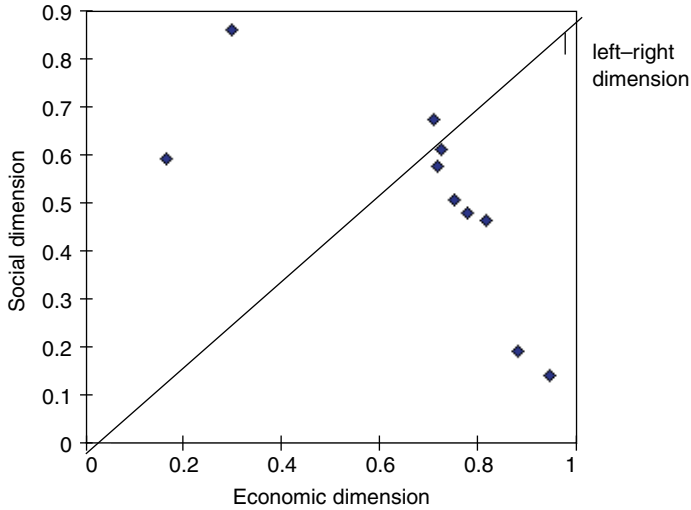
The measurements are highly reliable; 94.7 per cent of the variation is systematic and just over 5 per cent is random. Once the modest unreliability is taken into account, the positioning of the parties is almost perfectly stable. These results can be taken as both good news and bad news. To the good, there is very little randomness in the experts' placements of the parties. The bad news is that a problem would arise if one were to attempt to use the expert scales as a basis for analysing party movements (see, e.g., Knutson 1998). There are essentially no observable movements other than those due to a small amount of measurement error. Across a decade's time, the experts saw the parties in essentially the same relative locations. Perhaps the parties never moved, or perhaps the experts are reporting an over-time general statement about party locations.

Validity and reliability of CMP scales

In order to evaluate the validity and reliability of the scales constructed from the CMP data, we use the five left–right scales catalogued in Table 7.2. We have created scores for each of the five scales by, first, summing the right items and the left items and then calculating a subtractive measure (right–left) and a ratio measure (right/[right + left]).[5] Because the expert scales show no sign of change in party positions, as if the experts have summarised the typical positions of the parties, we use each party's 1972–92 period average from the CMP scales for testing the CMP scale validities. Requiring a party to have a manifesto throughout this twenty-year period reduces the number of parties we analyse from eighty-four to sixty-six. Once we know something about the CMP validity, we turn back to the Heise reliability and stability test and apply it to the CMP scales.

CMP validity

Figures 7.1a and 7.1b illustrate the factor loadings (principal axis with varimax rotation) of all five CMP scales. The analysis includes the three



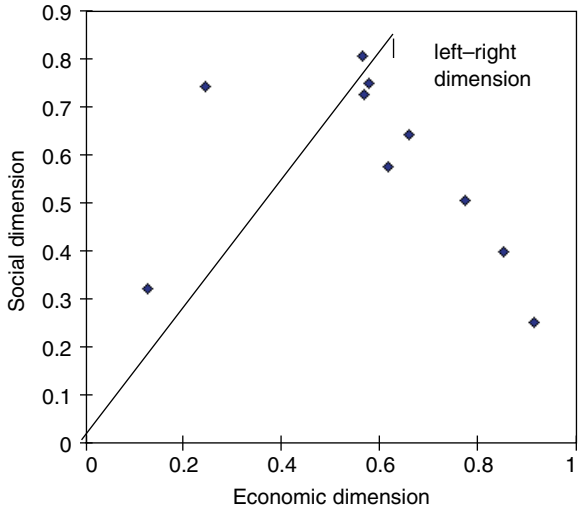
Numerical value of factor loadings, Figure 7.1a

Scale	*Varimax rotation*		*Rotation to expert scale centroid*	
Castle–Mair	0.731	0.610	0.952	–0.013
Laver–Hunt	0.713	0.670	0.977	0.044
Huber–Inglehart	0.723	0.577	0.924	–0.033
Budge–Robertson	0.759	0.505	0.905	–0.111
Laver–Budge	0.825	0.462	0.927	–0.186
Bartolini–Mair	0.895	0.192	0.804	–0.437
Laver–Garry econ	0.965	0.141	0.824	–0.521
Laver–Garry social	0.133	0.592	0.486	0.363
Laver–Hunt own	0.787	0.479	0.909	–0.149
Laver–Hunt social	0.275	0.858	0.767	0.472

Figure 7.1a Factor loadings of expert scales and CMP subtractive scales

expert left–right scales and, in order to help define the factor space, the Laver and Hunt public ownership and social ratings. Figure 7.1a shows the loadings for the subtractive measures; Figure 7.1b shows the loadings of the ratio measures.

For ease of exposition at this point, the two factors can be discussed as 'pure' indicators of an economic dimension (the horizontal axis) and a social dimension (the vertical axis). In that view, the expert scales appear to be a mix of those two dimensions, with slightly more weight attributable to the economic than the social. Relative to the expert scales, the CMP scales are more economic-laden. Indeed, they are even



Numerical value of factor loadings, Figure 7.1b

Scale	*Varimax rotation*		*Rotation to expert scale centroid*	
Castle–Mair	0.578	0.767	0.960	–0.014
Laver–Hunt	0.563	0.826	0.999	0.033
Huber–Inglehart	0.568	0.743	0.935	–0.020
Budge–Robertson	0.616	0.589	0.839	–0.149
Laver–Budge	0.780	0.516	0.877	–0.325
Bartolini–Mair	0.924	0.254	0.751	–0.596
Laver–Garry econ	0.859	0.405	0.834	–0.454
Laver–Garry social	0.115	0.326	0.331	0.100
Laver–Hunt own	0.660	0.656	0.919	–0.145
Laver–Hunt social	0.234	0.760	0.752	0.260

Figure 7.1b Factor loadings of expert scales and CMP ratio scales

closer to the horizontal axis than is the Laver–Hunt public ownership expert scale.

Given that we are accepting the expert scales as the meaning of left–right, the CMP scales are slightly off the mark on the validity question. To determine by just how much the CMP scales miss that mark, we follow Guilford and Hoepfner's (1969) advice and rotate the horizontal dimension so that it goes directly through the centroid formed by the three expert scales. The rotation substitutes the criterion of defining a dimension by how well it hits a theoretical mark as opposed to the how well it accounts for particular types of variance (where the varimax criterion is maximising

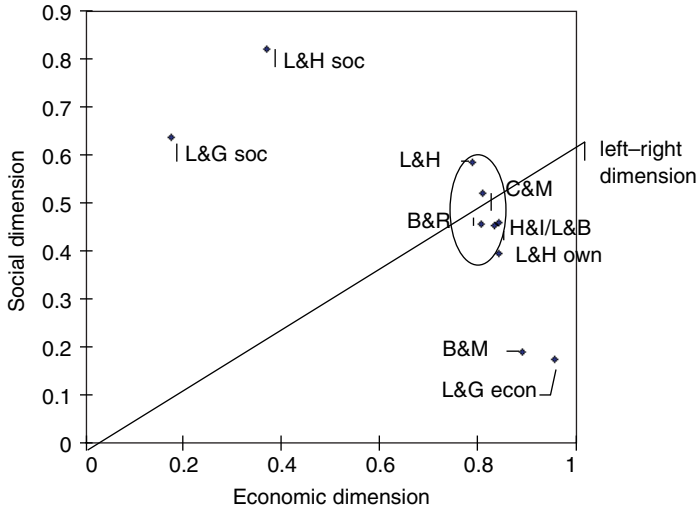
the squared factor loadings). The expert scales are quite well defined by the left–right axis. They load highly on it and near zero on an orthogonal axis. This corroborates the inferences that they are highly reliable (communalities > .9) and valid (nearly pure) measures of what we take to be left–right party positioning. The loadings of the CMP scales show them to be measuring something similar but slightly angular. In that sense, none of them is a precisely valid measure of left–right. They have, it would appear, too much economic content and/or too little social content to match what the experts have in mind for left–right.

This conclusion should not be overdrawn. The CMP measures, especially the subtractive measures of Budge–Robertson and Laver–Budge, are close approximations to the left–right party positions given by the expert scales. The Bartolini–Mair and Laver–Garry CMP scales were designed to measure principally the economic or the social positioning of parties, and they do.

Attempts to make adjustments to the scales moved the CMP measures closer to the experts but a residual analysis revealed that five parties are scored consistently different by the experts and CMP. The Italian Communists (PCI) and Danish Centre Democrats (CD) have scores considerably farther left for the experts than for the CMP. The conservative Italian MSI is about as right-leaning as a party gets, according to the experts. The CMP scales place the MSI to the right of centre but not at the extreme right. Finally, the Finnish KESK and Norwegian Hørye are each scored as right of centre by the experts, whereas the CMP scales have both parties as centre-left.

After removing the five parties that mismatch on the expert versus CMP scales, we reanalysed the subtractive CMP scales reported in Figure 7.1, given that the subtractive scales appear more similar to the expert scales than do the ratio scales. The results are illustrated in Figure 7.2; numerical values are reported below the figure. Without those five parties in the analysis, the Laver–Budge and Budge–Robertson CMP scales appear very near to the left–right dimension. The Laver–Budge position is virtually identical to that of the Huber–Inglehart experts, and the Budge–Robertson position is quite near.

Several conclusions are warranted. The CMP data can be used as valid measures of party policy positions as judged against the party positioning given by experts. On this question of validity, the subtractive measures appear slightly more valid than the ratio measures. In particular, the two subtractive CMP scales that were designed to combine economic and social policy statements, Budge–Robertson and Laver–Budge, are close approximations to left–right party positions produced by experts. Except for five parties, these two CMP scales are near equivalents of the Huber–Inglehart expert scale. Arguably, the mismatches on five parties could be held against a validity claim for the CMP scales, but just as arguably the expert placements of those five parties could be responses to the reputation of the five parties rather than to their actual policy advocacy. This is, we think, an issue that merits further investigation.



Numerical values of factor loadings

Scale	*Varimax rotation*		*Rotation to expert scale centroid*	
Castle–Mair	0.809	0.515	0.959	0.002
Laver–Hunt	0.787	0.581	0.976	0.070
Huber–Inglehart	0.836	0.444	0.944	–0.072
Budge–Robertson	0.806	0.448	0.921	–0.053
Laver–Budge	0.845	0.451	0.955	–0.071
Bartolini–Mair	0.896	0.176	0.851	–0.331
Laver–Garry econ	0.963	0.160	0.899	–0.380
Laver–Garry social	0.145	0.633	0.461	0.457
Laver–Hunt own	0.846	0.387	0.922	–0.126
Laver–Hunt social	0.349	0.822	0.735	0.508

Figure 7.2 Two-dimensional factor analysis results for expert and CMP scales, excluding five parties (Danish CD, Finnish KESK, Italian PCI, Italian MSI, and Norwegian Høyre)

CMP reliability

We have evaluated the validity of the CMP scales based on the average of the parties' policy positions across a twenty-one-year period. That leaves open the question of whether the CMP data can be used for single time points. Application to shorter time frames would make it possible for researchers to use the CMP scales to analyse movements as parties adopt

different mixes of strategic and sincere positions from one election to the next. This is not possible with the expert scales, for we have already seen that experts place the parties in almost completely stable locations. Therefore, we need to know two additional facts about the CMP scales with respect to single elections: first, are they reliable measures of party positions? Second, if they are reliable, do parties move around or stay at fixed positions in the policy space?

We evaluate the reliability of both subtractive and ratio CMP scales through the same Heise measurement model we earlier applied to the expert scales. The time points are, as nearly as practicable, the most recent election prior to each expert survey: Castles–Mair prior to 1983; Laver–Hunt prior to 1990; and Huber–Inglehart prior to 1993. In countries that held no election between 1990 and 1993, the time-3 point is the last election in the CMP94 data set (Volkens 1994), and the time-2 election is the one preceding that. With these data, we generated the correlation matrices reported in Table 7.5. In turn, from each threefold set of correlations, we estimate the reliability of the measure and the stability of the positions.

The Laver–Budge CMP scale is just as highly reliable as the expert scales. The Budge–Robertson scale and the Laver–Garry economic scale are also reasonably reliable. The Bartolini–Mair scale falls below most conventions for acceptable reliability, with less than 80 per cent of its variation being systematic. The Laver–Garry social policy scale, with reliabilities of only 0.069 for the subtractive scoring and of 0.123 for the ratio scoring, is mostly noise. There are likely to be several reasons for these varying reliabilities. First, scales formed with a large number of items, such as Budge–Robertson and Laver–Budge, tend to produce higher reliabilities compared to those with fewer items. This is true in conventional testing, and it appears to be true for the CMP data. Second, it may well be that the Bartolini–Mair scale requires that different items have different weights (see note 5). Third, reliability estimates could be sensitive to the inclusion of certain items. In particular, the positive and negative welfare items, excluded from the Bartolini–Mair scale but included in Budge–Robertson, Laver–Budge, and Laver–Garry economic scales, are likely to add systematic variation to party positions (Budge *et al.* n.d., ch. 2).

The stability estimates are as heartening for any and all party analysts as the reliability estimates are for those who have used or want to use the CMP scales. As measured by the Budge–Robertson and Laver–Budge CMP scales, the parties are not completely stable. Parties do offer different positions from one time to another. This, as we have been suggesting, opens the door to the possibility of using the CMP scales to analyse party movements. We know from other analyses (Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987; Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994; Budge *et al.* n.d., ch. 2) that over the long run parties do not stray too far from their usual ideological, left–right location. It is rare to see one party 'leap-frog' another in left–right positions. We see from Table 7.5, however, that the party positions are

Table 7.5 Correlations, reliability and stability of left–right party positions for each of six CMP scales, based on a three-wave panel for sixty-six parties

CMP Scale		*Correlations* Ratio Score* / Subtractive Score			*Scoring*	*Reliability*	*Stability*		
		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3			T1–T2	T2–T3	T1–T3
Budge and Robertson	Time 1	1.00	0.768	0.591	*Ratio**	0.875	0.878	0.770	0.676
	Time 2	0.427	1.00	0.673	*Subtractive*	0.889	0.480	0.831	0.399
	Time 3	0.355	0.739	1.00					
Laver and Budge	Time 1	1.00	0.787	0.650	*Ratio**	0.987	0.798	0.826	0.659
	Time 2	0.741	1.00	0.815	*Subtractive*	0.942	0.786	0.845	0.664
	Time 3	0.626	0.796	1.00					
Bartolini and Mair	Time 1	1.00	0.663	0.632	*Ratio**	0.757	0.875	0.953	0.834
	Time 2	0.614	1.00	0.722	*Subtractive*	0.654	0.938	1.016	0.953
	Time 3	0.624	0.665	1.00					
Laver & Garry Economic	Time 1	1.00	0.863	0.604	*Ratio**	1.060	0.814	0.700	0.570
	Time 2	0.778	1.00	0.742	*Subtractive*	0.874	0.891	0.920	0.820
	Time 3	0.716	0.804	1.00					

Table 7.5 (continued)

CMP Scale		*Correlations* Ratio Score* / Subtractive Score			*Scoring*	*Reliability*	*Stability*		
		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3			T1–T2	T2–T3	T1–T3
	Time 1	1.00	0.099	0.184					
Laver					*Ratio**	0.123	——	——	——
& Garry	Time 2	0.039	1.00	0.228					
Social					*Subtractive*	0.069	——	——	——
	Time 3	0.202	0.350	1.00					

Note

The time points are defined by a nation's prior election closest to 1983, 1990, and 1995. In countries that held no election between 1990 and 1993, the time 3 point is the last election in the CMP94 data set (Volkens 1994), and the time 2 election is the one preceding that. The reliability and stability estimates are calculated by the measurement model formulae developed by Heise (1969).

* Ratio scoring sometimes leaves a party's position undefined. In those instances, we excluded the party from all correlations in the respective scale. Exclusions include: *B&R* – Finnish SDP; *B&M* – Italian MSI; *L&G econ* – Italian MSI; *L&G soc* – Belgian VU; Canadian NDP; Canadian Lib; Canadian PC; Danish KF; Finnish FDP; Swedish Com, Swedish SD.

changeable in the short run. Together these sets of findings mean that the parties do not wander so far from their ideological base as to alienate their core constituents, but they do take up different positions at different times.

CMP scales other than left–right

Our efforts thus far have been directed at evaluating the validity and reliability of CMP scales that locate parties' left–right policy positions. There are theoretical propositions that call for tests of party policy position-taking in multidimensional space. This is why, for instance, Laver and Hunt (1992) went to such lengths to have their experts identify party positions along eight dimensions. In this section, we provide an analysis of the validity and reliability of party positions along distinguishable economic and social dimensions.

All three factor analyses reported above suggest an interesting possibility with respect to the economic and social dimensions. The CMP scales that have been constructed as measurements of economic and social policy positions are closer to orthogonal than are the Laver–Hunt expert placements of parties on their economic and social dimensions. The Bartolini–Mair and Laver–Garry CMP economic scales load higher on the economic dimension and lower on the social dimension than does the Laver–Hunt public ownership scale. Likewise, the Laver–Garry social scale, while a noisy measure, has a lower association with the economic dimension than does the Laver–Hunt expert-based social policy scale (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2). One interpretation of these results is that the Laver–Hunt experts allowed a party's position on economic policy to influence their placement of the parties on social policy and, likewise, allowed a party's position on social policy to influence their placement of the parties on economic policy.

We have developed our own CMP scales for economic and social policy. In a manner similar to the instructions Laver and Hunt gave their experts, we included economic items that we thought indicated support for or opposition to public ownership *and* willingness to tax and spend. We selected social items to indicate party policy positions that place a high priority on individuals as the basic social unit of society (liberal), as contrasted with placing a high priority on the community as a whole as the basic social unit (conservative). Using those conceptualisations, we included thirteen left and nine right categories as indicative of left–right economic policy positioning, and five liberal and five conservative categories as indicators of social policy positions. From these we calculated subtractive measures (right/conservative minus left/liberal) of economic and social policy positions. (See Table 7.6.)

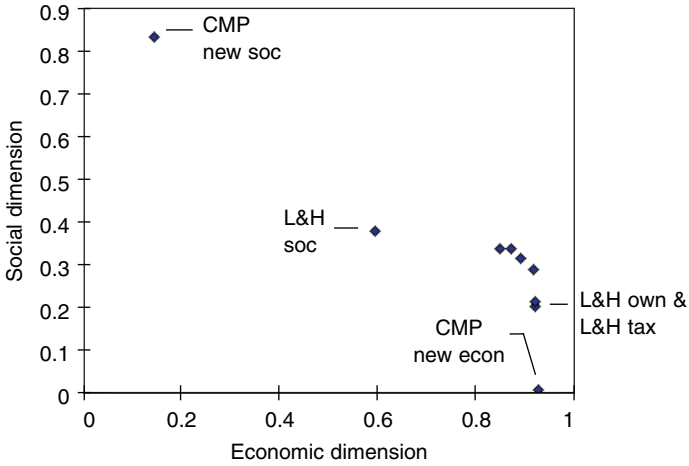
To check the content validity of these new indicators, we factor analysed them (using their 1972–92 averages) together with the left–right CMP scales from Laver–Budge and Budge–Robertson *plus* the left–right expert

Table 7.6 Subtractive measures of economic and social policy positions

Economic categories		*Social categories*	
Left	*Right*	*Left*	*Right*
Centralisation: pro	Decentralisation	Nat'l way of life: con	Nat'l way of life: pro
Market regulation	Free enterprise	Trad'l morality: con	Trad'l morality: pro
Economic planning	Protectionism: con	Multiculturism: pro	Multiculturism: con
Corporatism	Productivity	Minority groups: pro	Law and order
Protectionism: pro	Infrastructure	Non-economic groups	Social harmony
Keynesian economics	Economic orthodoxy		
Controlled economy	Welfare: con		
Nationalisation	Education: con		
Marxism	Labour groups: con		
Social justice			
Welfare: pro			
Education: pro			
Labour groups: pro			

scales from Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart *plus* the public ownership, social, and taxing and spending ratings from Laver–Hunt. All sixty-six parties for which we have CMP and expert data are included. The results are shown in Figure 7.3.

The most striking aspect of the results is that the new CMP-based economic and social scales are nearly orthogonal to one another. By this rendering, there are two distinct dimensions. In this policy space, both the expert and CMP left–right scales arise more as a matter of economic than social policy positions. We saw this in the previous factor analyses (Figure 7.2). Now, in addition, we see that there is not much to distinguish the Laver–Hunt public ownership and taxing/spending from one another or from the general left–right dimension. Their two economic scales are, as one would hypothesise, less related to the social dimension than the Castles–Mair and Huber–Inglehart expert placements of parties expressly on the left–right dimension, but only slightly so. Most interesting, perhaps, is the fact that in this space, where the economic and social dimensions are more clearly distinguishable than in the preceding analyses, party positions on social policy, as ascertained from the Laver–Hunt experts, are more a matter of left–right economics than social liberalism/conservatism. Therefore, there is good reason to worry about whether experts are able to separate their views about party social policy position-taking from their views of party economic policy position-taking.



Numerical values of factor loadings

Scale	*Varimax Rotation*	
Castle–Mair	0.911	0.291
Huber–Inglehart	0.886	0.318
Budge–Robertson	0.843	0.341
Laver–Budge	0.866	0.343
Laver–Hunt own	0.914	0.208
Laver–Hunt social	0.597	0.383
Laver–Hunt tax	0.914	0.216
CMP new econ	0.921	0.012
CMP new social	0.157	0.838

Figure 7.3 Two-dimensional factor analysis results for expert and CMP scales, designed to investigate the separability of economic and social dimensions

Are the new CMP-based economic and social policy scales reliable? The answer is mixed. The over-time (early 1980s, mid/late 1980s, and late 1980s/early 1990s) threefold intercorrelations for each scale are shown in Table 7.7.

Applying the Heise measurement model to these correlations produces the following reliability and stability estimates.

		Economic	*Social*
Reliability	=	0.960	0.703
Stability, early 1980s to late 1980s	=	0.712	0.482
Stability, late 1980s to early 1990s	=	0.855	0.690
Stability, early 1980s to early 1990s	=	0.609	0.333

This particular economic scale is highly reliable, $r_{xx} = .960$. There is also

Table 7.7 Correlations between CMP-based economic and social policy scales

	$Econ_{t1}$	$Econ_{t2}$	$Econ_{t3}$	$Social_{t1}$	$Social_{t2}$	$Social_{t3}$
$Econ_{t1}$	1.000					
$Econ_{t2}$	0.684	1.000				
$Econ_{t3}$	0.585	0.821	1.000			
$Social_{t1}$				1.000		
$Social_{t2}$				0.339	1.000	
$Social_{t3}$				0.234	0.485	1.000

t1 = early 1980s
t2 = mid/late 1980s
t3 = late 1980s/early 1990s

stability in the economic policy position-taking of parties similar to the stability estimated for the Laver–Budge left–right scale. The social scale's reliability is not so filled with noise as to render it uninformative, but it does fall below a .80 reliability that we would take as minimally acceptable. If we can trust this measure, there is a suggestion that party policy position-taking is less stable, more dynamic, on social liberalism/conservatism than on economic left–right. Could it be that the parties' strategic attempts to attract voters come principally from manoeuvring along the social dimension, while they stand pat on the economic principles that help to define who they are – communists, socialists, social/Christian democrats, free-marketers, and conservatives? The pattern of stability and change suggests as much.

Conclusion

The main message to draw from the analyses presented here is that the CMP data can be and have been used to provide valid and reliable measurements of party policy positions. Accepting expert survey assessments of party policy positions as the standard for what it means for a party to be on the left, on the right, or in the centre, we have shown that the Budge–Robertson and the Laver–Budge CMP-based measures of left–right party locations are quite similar to what the experts say. And, once we take account of the expert versus CMP differences with respect to five parties – the Danish CD, Finnish KESK, Italian PCI and MSI, and Norwegian Hørye – these two CMP measures are placing the parties in essentially the same way on the left–right positions. On the question of reliability, we demonstrate that the three expert surveys are highly reliable measurements of party left–right positions, with reliabilities close to 95 per cent. We also show that the Laver–Budge left–right CMP scale is just as reliable. With respect to validity and reliability, there is little that distinguishes between the results from expert surveys and, at least, the Laver–Budge CMP scaling of parties. The evidence here tells us that, to

the extent one has confidence in the party positioning from expert surveys, there is every reason to have just as much confidence in party positioning based on the CMP data.

Validity and reliability are necessary features of good measures. On two other important matters of party policy positions, our analysis strongly suggests that expert surveys come up short and the CMP data can prove to be useful. The experts place the parties in such stable positions that there is little hope of using the expert surveys to investigate party policy position dynamics. The CMP is probably the only data source that can prove viable as a means of observing party policy position dynamics and analysing party movements predicted by various theoretical propositions. Furthermore, there is also an indication that expert surveys may produce suspect results about where the parties stand on separable dimensions of politics and policy. The Laver and Hunt (1992) survey was expressly and carefully designed to elicit expert responses to party policy positions along several seemingly distinct policy dimensions. Our results indicate a reason to doubt whether expert respondents actually can and do make clear and sharp distinctions of where the parties stand. We show that the CMP data can be used to make these distinctions. Simply put, the parties say what they say about, for example, social and economic policy. Analysing what they say tells us that parties conduct their political debates on separable dimensions, nearly completely separable.

All in all, the CMP data offer analysts everything that can be offered by data from expert surveys. But that is not all. On the matters of both party policy dynamics and policy positions on separable dimensions the CMP data are all we have, and they are good: valid and reliable.

Notes

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1 For a detailed description of the fifty-six categories (originally fifty-four), see Budge, Robertson, and Hearl (1987: 459–65) or Volkens (1994: 167–75). The sub-categories used in particular countries are listed in Budge, Robertson, and Hearl (1987: 466–7) and are discussed by the country specialists who contributed to that volume. A list of the fifty-six category names can be found in Table 7.1.

2 Andrea Volkens reports (personal communication) that the nationalisation category is intended to reflect favourable mention. While the instructions to coders do not precisely say that at the moment, but will in the future, parties on the right have rarely been coded as mentioning nationalisation. An average of less than seven ten-thousandths of one per cent (.00066 per cent) of right party statements

involve nationalisation. We can then rest assured that nationalisation is a directional category.

3 Laver and Garry (2000) actually use a scoring method derived from a Bayesian updating idea of platform reading. They place the left–right difference in the numerator and the left–right sum in the denominator of their ratio. This constitutes a linear transformation of the simple percentage measure we are describing. Therefore, the point about scoring remains. Their ratio would also produce an indication that the party position in the example did not change: [(50 – 20) / (50 + 20)] = [(25 – 10) / (25 + 10)] = 42.9.

4 Until we develop external criteria for assessing validity, a convenient means to determine whether one wants to score the left–right concept by the subtractive or ratio measure is to ask: if a party says nothing about left and right items, do I want to consider that party as having a precisely middle position on the left–right dimension (the subtractive score) or as having an undefined left–right position (the ratio score)?

5 The approaches of Bartolini and Mair (1990) and Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987) or more recently of Gabel and Huber (2000) imply that we should be using weighted items before summing, inasmuch as they identify the left and right items through factor and discriminant function analysis. We have doubts about applying those methods to the CMP items. Both factor analysis and discriminant function analysis consider the scores on the items as caused by a latent stimuli. While being on the left may incline a party to say something positive about welfare, Marx, nationalisation, and so on, whether a left party actually goes ahead and says something depends on what is happening in the world around them. A left party has the motive, but it is the world at the time that supplies or denies the opportunity. Whether one agrees with the argument on its face, the data suggest there is something to it. After a left–right scale is constructed from the CMP data, the individual items should be correlated with the overall scale and should have a fairly constant error rate around the regression line. The CMP items are correlated, but they each show a distinctly heteroscedastic pattern. For instance, left parties have little to say about free enterprise regardless of the circumstances, but right parties sometimes say a great deal and sometimes say very little (presumably depending on whether the economy is at issue in the election).

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8 Analysing party dynamics by taking partially overlapping snapshots

Wouter van der Brug

Introduction

This paper proposes a method for analysing the dynamics of the relationship between political parties and voters. This relationship has hitherto typically been analysed within the analytical and theoretical framework of the cleavage model. The 'cleavage' perspective appears not to be the most promising way to proceed, however, because it neglects important electoral research results implying that electoral behaviour is decreasingly determined by social divisions (see, for example, Franklin *et al.* 1992). This paper argues that the link between parties and voters can be studied fruitfully by a spatial model in which policy preferences of parties and voters are represented by positions in a policy space. This has several advantages. First, using a spatial representation reflects empirical findings demonstrating that voters are increasingly policy oriented and less motivated by their socio-structural positions. Second, cleavage models have a rather exclusive focus on the relationship between parties and voters, whereas spatial representations allow for the analysis of additional types of party behaviour, for example coalitional or legislative. A third advantage is that the focus on policy positions reflects underlying normative democratic theories which hold that elections must link public preferences to public policies. Spatial models allow us to assess the extent to which empirical reality reflects these normative assumptions.

This chapter sets out a method for analysing the relationship between how parties present themselves in their manifestos and how voters perceive these parties. Since elections link the preferences of voters to public policies only in a very indirect way, a first preference for a party cannot be interpreted as a first preference for a specific policy. Thus, as argued by Thomassen (1994: 254), elections are most likely to link the preferences of voters to public policies if 'both political parties, in the composition of their programmes, and voters, when they decide what party they will vote for, are constrained by the same unidimensional ideology' (see also Van der Brug 1999a, b). In this study, therefore, the link between party programmes and voter perceptions will not be analysed at the level of

concrete issues, but at the level of ideological dimensions. Electoral research has demonstrated repeatedly that left–right proximities are strong determinants of party choice (Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983; Mannheimer and Sani 1987; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Van der Eijk *et al.* 1999). This chapter will thus assess the extent to which positions of parties – estimated using the contents of party manifestos – correspond to voters' perceptions of their left–right positions.

The argument begins with a discussion of the substantive meanings of spatial representations of parties. It then explores the (dis)advantages and validity of some of the methods used by other researchers to derive party positions from contents of party programmes, after which it proposes an approach that is more suitable than existing methods to the analysis of various dynamics in the relationship between parties and voters. Finally, this chapter reports empirical analyses that illustrate the advantages of the proposed method.

Some reflections on spatial representations

Spatial models are heuristic devices used to study general and systematic patterns in the behaviour of political actors. In order to acquire scientific understanding of certain phenomena, the analyst wishes to observe systematic patterns underlying the behaviour of the actors involved. The abstract representation of political actors in some space helps to describe these patterns. Conceivably, because of the frequent use of spatial metaphors in political communication, many students of political processes tend to speak of spatial representations of political objects as if these were not theoretical abstractions from reality, but they are. Spatial models describe relationships between subjects and stimuli. Spatial representations thus have no meaning outside the relationships they describe. Since spatial representations are only meaningful to the extent that they explain a certain phenomenon, such as voting behaviour, coalition formation or roll call voting, it makes no sense to speak of *the* 'dimensionality' or 'structure' of the Danish, German or Dutch party system, for example. There is no iron rule telling parties to be governed/constrained in all of their actions in different arenas by the same ideological principles. On the contrary, parties are much more constrained in some arenas than in others.

They are least constrained in choosing how to present themselves to voters in their manifestos. It is relatively easy, therefore, for a Christian Democratic Party to emphasise a concern with the decay of traditional moral values, without proposing any concrete policies that could change these developments. When entering negotiations with others about the formation of a coalition, however, parties are more constrained. Government parties have an incentive *not* to put issues on the agenda about which they disagree with coalition partners to such an extent that no acceptable compromise can be reached. Instead of fighting simultaneously

on different fronts they must decide which battle they most want most to win (Schattschneider 1960: 67). So, even though more than one ideological dimension may structure party behaviour, not all these dimensions are equally important.

This logic applies equally to voters. Students of public opinion have often found that several ideological dimensions structure the opinions of citizens on a large number of issues (e.g., Middendorp 1991; Kitschelt 1995). In almost all western European countries, however, voter preferences and party choice turn out to be structured predominantly by a single left–right ideological dimension (Oppenhuis 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Van der Eijk *et al.* 1999). These findings do not contradict each other. Voters are simply under more constraint when choosing a party from a short list of alternatives in a given election than they are when stating general preferences on a wide range of issues. So, to quote Sartori (1976: 338): 'When the citizen speaks, he may have many things to say. But when he is coerced into casting a . . . vote, he may well have to . . . vote for the party . . . perceived as closest on the left–right spectrum'. Different spatial representations may thus be needed to understand different types of behaviour in different arenas.

At the level of ideological position-taking by parties, three types of dynamic can be discerned. First, actors may change their position along a stable ideological dimension. Parties may change their position on the balance between state regulation and free market arrangements and thus move along an ideological dimension that represents this. Second, one ideological dimension may become obsolete while another increasingly shapes relationships between various actors. A case in point is Inglehart's (1977) prediction that the socio-economic left–right dimension (structuring conflicts about distribution of material goods) would become less important and be succeeded by a materialist–postmaterialist dimension (structuring conflicts about distribution of nonmaterial goods). Finally, a rather neglected type of ideological change is one in which new issues are organised and defined in such a way that they can be described in terms of existing ideological dimensions. Parties and voters may then remain rather stable in their positions *vis-à-vis* each other and the dimensions that structure the party system may remain stable as well. None the less, the new issues will change the meaning and/or labels attached to ideological dimensions (see e.g. Silverman 1985). In the 1950s, for example, the term 'left-wing' may be connected primarily with support for de-colonisation, while in the early 1980s it might come to be linked most obviously with protest against the deployment of nuclear missiles.

In order to analyse such changes one needs, first of all, a theory of how parties present themselves in their manifestos. At least two rival theories may be discerned. These include Downs' (1957) rational choice model of parties and voters and the 'saliency' theory of party competition (Robertson 1976; Budge *et al.* 1987; Budge 1993). One of the assumptions

of Downs' model is that parties are motivated by winning votes and will therefore move to an ideological position which will maximise their share of the votes. This aspect of the Downsian model was criticised by Budge *et al.* (1987) on the grounds that parties do not compete in a confrontational way by taking different positions on the same issue. Instead they emphasise those issues on which they feel they have a good reputation while down playing others (for more details, see Budge, Chapter 4 this volume).

Elsewhere I have argued that parties clearly do both things: they selectively emphasise different issues, and also they take different stands on the same issue (Van der Brug 1999a). In their election campaigns it may be rational for them to avoid confrontations and simply emphasise their strong points (Budge *et al.* 1987), although examples of confrontations are not so rare (Thomson 1999). In other arenas, direct confrontations will be more common. For example, parties have to take clear positions when voting for or against a bill in parliament. When forming a coalition, furthermore, parties cannot avoid a direct confrontation on matters about which they disagree. In these arenas, therefore, party strategy is a mixture of agenda setting, selective emphasis and position taking on matters about which actors disagree.

A method to study the simultaneous dynamics of parties and voters

Characteristics of the data used

This section sets out a method for the analysis of the dynamic relationship between voters and parties. Information about the preferences and perceptions of voters is taken from surveys. The coded contents of party documents will be used to assess party positions. Establishing a link between these two types of data is complicated by the fact that party programmes are coded using a scheme derived from the saliency theory of party competition, whereas a more confrontational perspective is dominant in the survey data that will be used. This makes sense from a substantive point of view, since a confrontational perspective appears to yield most insights in electoral behaviour, whereas party manifestos can best be characterised by selective emphasis.

When estimates of the policy positions of voters and their perceptions of the policy positions of parties are taken from survey data, such positions are normally measured on a rating scale that labels the extremes in a way that contrasts opposite positions on some issue. Voter perceptions of the position of a party on a dimension are derived from a distribution of survey responses. Here, I use interpolated medians, subsequently referred to simply as 'medians', to describe the central tendencies of these distributions (Van der Brug 1997).

The policy positions of party programmes are estimated from data generated by the Manifesto Research Group, which as we have noted based its work on an approach that sees party competition in terms of the selective emphasis of issue dimensions (for details see Budge *et al.* 1987; Volkens, Chapter 3 this volume). It is assumed that the emphasis placed on an issue in a party's election programme is an indication of the priority of the relevant policy area for the party. Differences in these priorities are to some extent guided by parties' ideological principles. To the extent that ideological principles determine which issues or political problems receive highest priority, differences in these emphases reflect ideological differences. Therefore, coded manifesto data on policy emphases enable us to estimate ideological distances between parties.

Spatial analyses of party documents: drawbacks of two other methods

As noted earlier, there are three types of dynamics in the ideological positions of parties: changes in positions on a specific policy dimension; changes in the importance (salience) of different dimensions; and changes in the substantive meaning of ideological dimensions. How can we estimate the spatial positions of parties from their programmatic emphases in ways that allow us to observe these types of changes? Various methods have been used for the spatial analysis of the manifesto data. I argue here that they are not appropriate for the purposes pursued in this study, and that multidimensional scaling (MDS) is more suitable.

One method for using manifesto data to estimate party positions, on a left–right dimension assumed a priori, involves the selection of issue categories that indicate 'left-' or 'right-' wing policies (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994: Pennings and Keman 1994. See also Mendes and McDonald Chapter 7 this volume). The left–right position of a programme is estimated on the basis of the relative emphasis of left-wing and right-wing items. The advantage of this method is that it produces a measurement of left–right positions that can be compared over time and between countries. Unfortunately, the method also has some disadvantages.

First, ideological dimensions take on their substantive meaning within specific geographical, historical political contexts (Silverman 1985). Different policies and values are attached to the notion of 'right-wing' or 'left-wing' in the Netherlands than in Lithuania, for example. In addition, each country has a specific political agenda that to a large extent determines what issues are emphasised. Inflation has been so low for years now in most western European countries that, independent of a party's ideological position, little emphasis will be placed upon it. This renders it difficult to derive ideological positions from emphasis on such categories. The fact that a party no longer emphasises inflation is then not a reflection of the fact that it has become less right-wing. Second, a large part of the data are ignored, whereas one of the explicit motivations of the Manifesto

Research Group was 'the need to code *all* the content of the election programme' (Budge *et al.* 1987: 22; emphasis in original). Third, this a priori assumption that the left–right dimension is the most important rules out the possibility of assessing whether changes in its importance have occurred over time. In longitudinal studies this has generated invalid conclusions regarding convergence or divergence of parties, because other dimensions of party conflict are neglected.[1]

In summary, the a priori operationalisation of the most salient ideological dimension allows one to observe only changes in positions on a specific policy dimension, but not changes in the salience of different dimensions or changes in their substantive meaning. Below I will propose an inductive method that examines, rather than postulates, the extent to which ideological dimensions are salient and, furthermore, uses all of the data from a coded manifesto rather than a selected part of this.

An *inductive* method that has been used extensively to extract policy positions from manifesto data is factor analysis (Budge *et al.* 1987; Laver and Budge 1992). However, factor analysis is not a valid method to analyse this type of data. Since, according to the theory, parties emphasise their 'own' issues, a proximity relation exists between parties and issue categories. Psychometricians have repeatedly demonstrated that the use of factor analysis on proximity data is prone to give deceptive results (Coombs and Kao 1960; Ross and Cliff 1964). Let me elaborate on the notion of a proximity relation (for details, see Coombs 1964; Van Schuur 1984; Jacoby 1991). We may theoretically think of the coded manifestos as containing relations between the party documents (cases) and the fifty-six issue variables (issue categories). To make matters simple, assume that we have a number of issues that reflect a single ideological left–right continuum. Some issues are typical left-wing issues and left-wing parties will place most emphasis on those. Parties in the centre place little or no emphasis on these issues and right-wing parties do not mention them at all. So, not only do parties have positions on the ideological continuum, but so do issue categories. The relationship between a party and an issue category is a proximity relationship. The closer a party is to the specific issue, the more emphasis it will place on it. Figure 8.1 shows the relationship between positions of parties on the left–right dimension and the amount of emphasis placed on three issues, in the hypothetical case that this relationship is deterministic.

With factor analysis one attempts to detect a latent structure on the basis of linear associations. If the party manifestos have a proximity relation with the issue categories, then two issues at opposite extremes of the underlying dimension will not be linearly related, even if the responses are perfectly compatible with unidimensionality. An empirical example is presented in Figure 8.2, which graphically displays the amount of positive and negative references to the military in the manifestos. The relation-

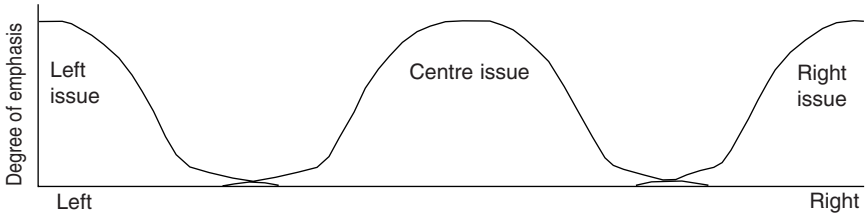


Figure 8.1 Hypothetical deterministic relationship between left–right positions of parties and amount of emphasis placed on a left-wing, a moderate, and a right-wing issue

ship between these two categories is almost perfect. One group of parties places much emphasis on negative aspects of the military, whereas another group emphasise positive aspects of the military. Although some documents contain positive as well as negative references to the military, the issue is avoided in most documents. This corresponds to the predictions made by saliency theory. Even though the relationship between the two issue categories corresponds perfectly with theoretical predictions, as well as with unidimensionality, the linear relationship between the two variables is only –0.11, which means that they share only 1 per cent of their variation.

In factor analysis the assumption is made that the magnitude of a correlation reflects the extent to which variables are manifestations of a 'common' factor. When data reflect proximity relations, as in this example, correlations are not monotonic transformations of similarities and any method that assumes so, as does factor analysis, is not valid.

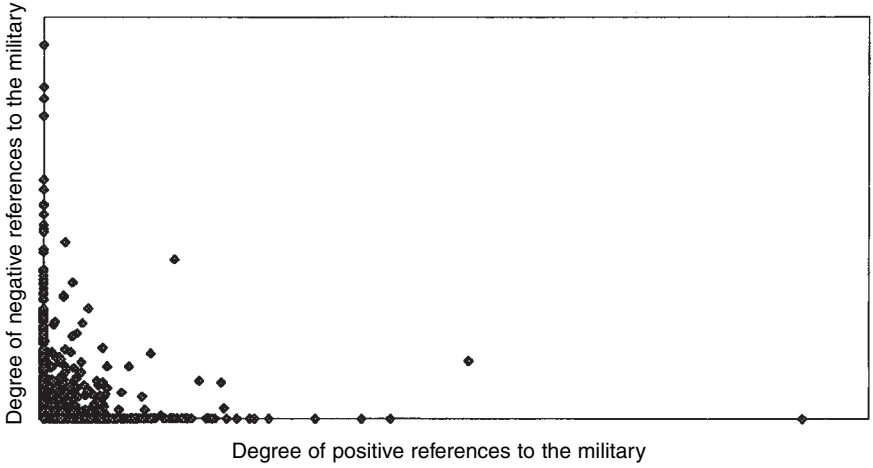


Figure 8.2 Relationship between degrees of positive and negative references to the military in party manifestos

An alternative approach

A method to analyse the various types of dynamics in the relationship between parties and voters has a number of requirements. It must be a method that: allows for the estimation of changes in the salience of different dimensions; uses all the information in the coded manifestos; and is not based on correlations. To meet the last requirement, it was decided to use a spatial method that is based on distances: multidimensional scaling (MDS). MDS is a class of algorithms to determine positions of stimuli on the basis of distances between them. To use such methods, we must first develop a procedure to measure distances between party programmes.

Saliency theory characterises party competition by the different emphases parties place on issues. The more different – using the spatial analogy 'distant' – two parties are, the more they will emphasise different issues. Since the fifty-six categories purport to cover comprehensively all topics the parties are concerned with, it is logical to base a distance measure on the differences in emphasis placed on these categories. Formula 8.1 can be used to compute Euclidean distances between party programmes.[2]

Formula 8.1:

$$d(a,b) = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{56} (a_i - b_i)^2}$$

where:

d(a,b): Distance between document a and document b.
a_i: Proportion of coded sentences in document a, dedicated to category i.
b_i: Proportion of coded sentences in document b, dedicated to category i.
i: Index of issue categories. In this case from 1 to 56.

Formula 8.1 is computed on the proportion of *coded* sentences in each category. Uncoded sentences are not taken into consideration. It allows us to compute distances between all pairs of manifestos, from different periods of time or from different countries. The distances can thus be used for comparative or dynamic analysis by means of MDS. The input for these analyses consists of a matrix of distances between the manifestos. After specifying the dimensionality of the space in which the manifestos are to be represented, the algorithm iteratively maximises the fit between the original distances (the input) and the distances between the parties as represented in the configuration. This fit gets better as the dimensionality of the space increases. Statistical methods exist to aid the analyst in deciding upon the most appropriate dimensionality to fit the distances.

One problem remains to be solved. Performing a single MDS-analysis on a full set of party programmes from one country would yield a representation of party programmes from all periods in a single time-invariant space. However, as previously discussed, when new issues arise and old ones are resolved, the nature of the space in which parties compete changes as well. Performing separate analyses on the distances between party manifestos from each election year has its drawbacks too, however. They do not permit an assessment of whether the positions of parties have changed over time, because the separate analyses only contain party programmes written in the same year.

A solution to this problem, suggested by Torgerson (1958: 191), consists of dividing the set of stimuli in several partially overlapping subsets. These subsets are scaled separately and the overlapping stimuli are used to join the subscales together. Table 8.1 gives a schematic overview of the way one could define such overlapping subsets.

In Table 8.1 the first analysis includes coded party programmes from the first, second and third elections. The second analysis contains programmes from the second, third and fourth elections, and so on. When defining the length of the intervals for the submatrices, each decision is somewhat arbitrary. On the basis of various considerations I have used ten-year intervals in analyses of Dutch parties in previous work (for details, see Van der Brug 1997, 1999a).

The results of MDS-analyses are 'scatterplots' of stimuli in a multidimensional space. The coordinate axes of such plots have no predetermined substantive meaning, and do not usually coincide with dimensions of substantive importance. Kruskal and Wish (1978) recommend a method to interpret the dimensions substantively by plotting vectors in these graphs. This method can also be used to assess the linkage between voters' perceptions of parties' left–right positions and positions of party programmes. This will be elaborated upon in the next section, where the usefulness of the method is illustrated by some empirical examples.

Empirical examples

To illustrate the method I will present MDS analyses of party programmes from the Netherlands and Germany in the period 1986 till 1998.[3] In

Table 8.1 Schematic overview of research design to study party dynamics

	Election 1	*Election 2*	*Election 3*	*Election 4*	*Election 5*	*Election 6*
Analysis 1	*	*	*			
Analysis 2		*	*	*		
Analysis 3			*	*	*	
Analysis 4				*	*	*

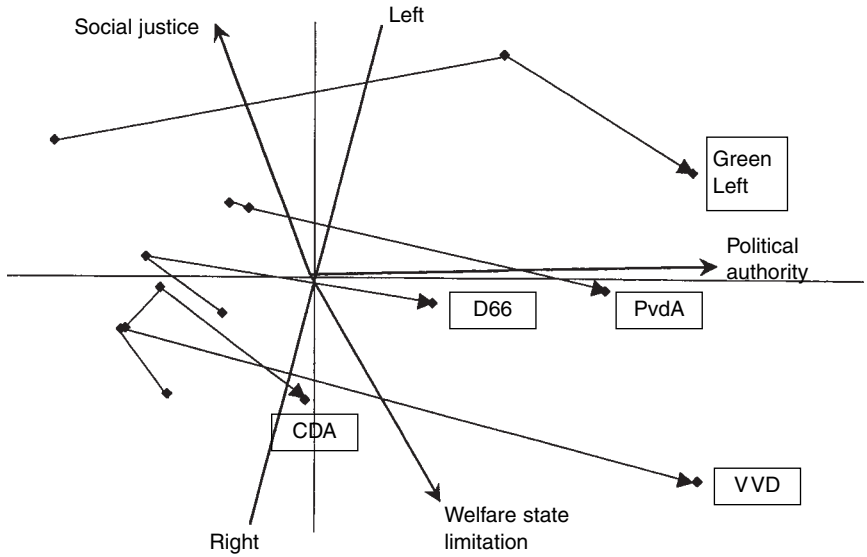
addition to these dynamical analyses, a cross-country comparative study was carried out for nine European countries in 1989. The link will be assessed between party programme positions and voters' perceptions of the left–right positions of parties. I focus on left–right because empirical research showed that this dimension structures electoral behaviour to a large extent. Information about voters' perceptions of positions of Dutch and German parties come from the Dutch and German National Election Studies.[4] Voters' perceptions used for the comparative analyses were taken from the European Election Study 1989. Contents of party programmes were coded by a special research group of the ECPR.[5]

Multidimensional scaling yields the 'best' representation of stimuli in a multi-dimensional space. A first decision to be made is about the dimensionality of the space in which a representation of the distances is sought. Kruskal and Wish (1978) propose a diagnostic to assess how many dimensions are needed adequately to represent (distances between) the parties. These diagnostics (for details, see Van der Brug 1999b) show that the party programmes involved in the separate country studies can be represented adequately in two dimensions. The comparative analysis demonstrated that even a four-dimensional space is not sufficiently large to adequately represent these party programmes. In the next section I will elaborate on the implications of this finding.

Party and voter dynamics in the Netherlands 1986–98

Figure 8.3 presents the two-dimensional solution of party programmes of the main Dutch parties in the election years 1986, 1989 and 1994.[6] Positions of parties are marked by dots. Each party is represented at three different positions, one for each election year. These positions are connected by lines, and positions in 1998 are marked by arrowheads. This allows one easily to inspect how a party's position changed over time. The movement of all parties in this plot is generally in the same direction, along the first coordinate axis.

In order to aid the substantive interpretation of the party programme space, a number of vectors are included in these graphs. The direction of these vectors was computed by regressing the MDS-coordinates of the parties on the issue variables. The dependent variables of these regressions are thus the emphases on each of the fifty-six issue categories, so that for each plot fifty-six regressions were carried out in total. In order to establish the linkage between contents of party programmes and voters' perceptions of left–right positions of parties, one additional regression was carried out in which the dependent variable contains the left–right positions of parties as they are perceived by voters. This information is derived from surveys, as explained in more detail in the section 'characteristics of the data used' (see also note 4). Table 8.2 presents the results of those regressions that yield an R^2 larger than 0.70. When these types of regressions explain less



CDA: Christian Democratic Alliance
D66: Democrats '66
PvdA: Labour Party
VVD: Liberals

Figure 8.3 Positions of Dutch political parties 1986–94

variance, little confidence can be placed in the accuracy of the direction of the associated vector (Kruskal and Wish 1978: 39).

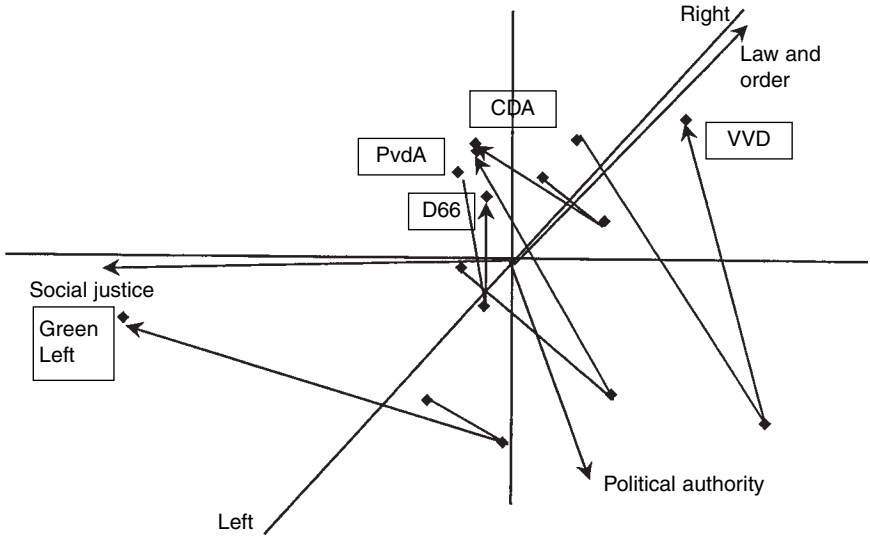
In the first MDS-analysis only five of the fifty-six issue categories are strongly linearly related to the coordinates axes of the graphs, and in the second analysis only four. So, rather few vectors can be used to interpret these spatial 'snapshots'. Moreover, different issue categories are related to the axes of the two graphs. Apparently, parties compete for votes in a space that is indeed variant over time. A striking phenomenon in Figure 8.3 is that all parties move generally in a similar direction. This direction probably reflects changes over time in political discourse, affecting all parties equally. In 1994 the issue category political authority – reflecting an emphasis on a party's problem-solving competence – reflects this change in discourse. At the same time, however, the graph displays considerable stability. The lines that connect positions of the same party at different times only seldom cross. In other words, parties do not leapfrog their positions *vis-à-vis* each other. When we project each of their positions perpendicularly onto the direction of the left–right dimension, relatively few changes can be observed. Changes in the political agenda and in political discourse are thus largely assimilated by the existing left–right dimension of conflict.

Table 8.2 Multiple regression of issue categories on coordinates in two-dimensional MDS-solutions; normalised regression coefficients and explained variance (R^2)*

MDS-plot	*item*	*label*	*1st dim.*	*2nd dim.*	R^2
	305	Political authority	0.994	0.110	0.75
	502	Culture	–0.847	0.532	0.74
1986–94	503	Social justice	–0.391	0.920	0.70
	505	Welfare state limitation	0.459	–0.889	0.70
	706	Non-economic demographic group	–0.480	0.877	0.84
		Perceived left–right positions	–0.243	–0.970	0.79
	305	Political authority	0.348	–0.938	0.88
1989–98	416	Anti-growth economy	–0.914	–0.406	0.82
	503	Social justice	–0.996	–0.091	0.83
	605	Law and order	0.697	0.717	0.79
		Perceived left–right positions	0.671	0.742	0.72

* The regression coefficients are normalised so that their sum of squares equals 1.00.

Figure 8.4 displays patterns similar to those in Figure 8.3. Between 1989 and 1994, all parties move towards a lower-right position in the graph, denoted by the vector political authority. Between 1994 and 1998 they all move upper-leftwards in the graph. Green Left and the VVD move to somewhat more distinct positions, whereas the PvdA, D66 and CDA compete for



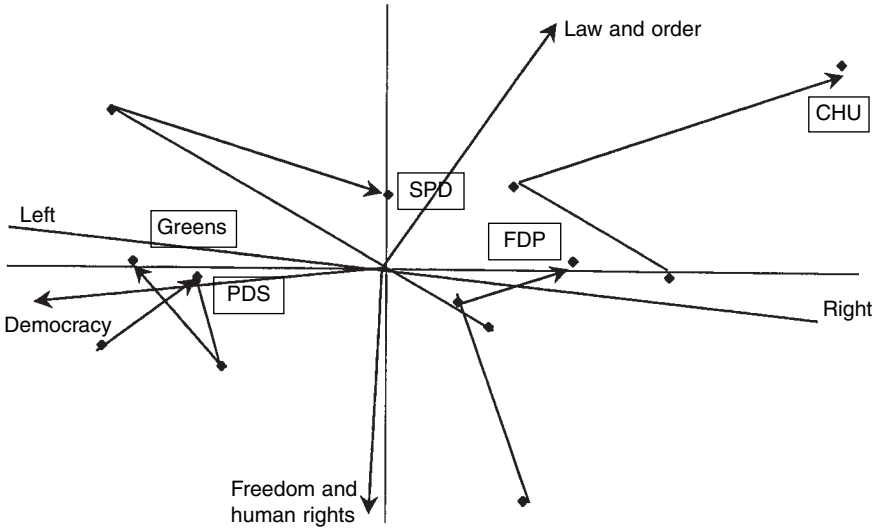
CDA: Christian Democratic Alliance
D66: Democrats '66
PvdA: Labour Party
VVD: Liberals

Figure 8.4 Positions of Dutch political parties 1989–98

the political centre. When projecting their positions onto the left–right dimension, D66 and PvdA even leap-frogged their positions. This does not come as a surprise. In the 1998 election the PvdA emphasised formerly right-wing issues such as law and order. According to one of its campaign leaders, this was a deliberate strategy to move towards the ideological centre (Anker 1998). So, the position of the PvdA in 1998, virtually indistinguishable from the CDA, realistically reflects how these parties presented themselves to the voters.

Party dynamics in Germany 1987–98

Figure 8.5 presents a two-dimensional plot of the German party programmes for the elections of 1987, 1990 and 1994. This graph displays similar broad movements over time to those in the Dutch analyses. However, we do not see the general movements of all parties in the same direction that we saw in the Netherlands. The two left-wing parties move within a very limited area of the party manifesto space and do not seem to respond to the same changes in discourse that affects the other parties. Moreover, note the position of the SPD in 1990 is an outlier. This may have to do with the parties' difficult opposition role in the period of German unification.



CHU: Christian Historical Union
FDP: Free Democrats
PDS: Party of Democratic Socialism
SPD: Social Democratic Party

Figure 8.5 Positions of German political parties 1987–94

Table 8.3 Regression of issue categories on coordinates in two-dimensional MDS-solutions in Western Germany; normalised regression coefficients and explained variance*

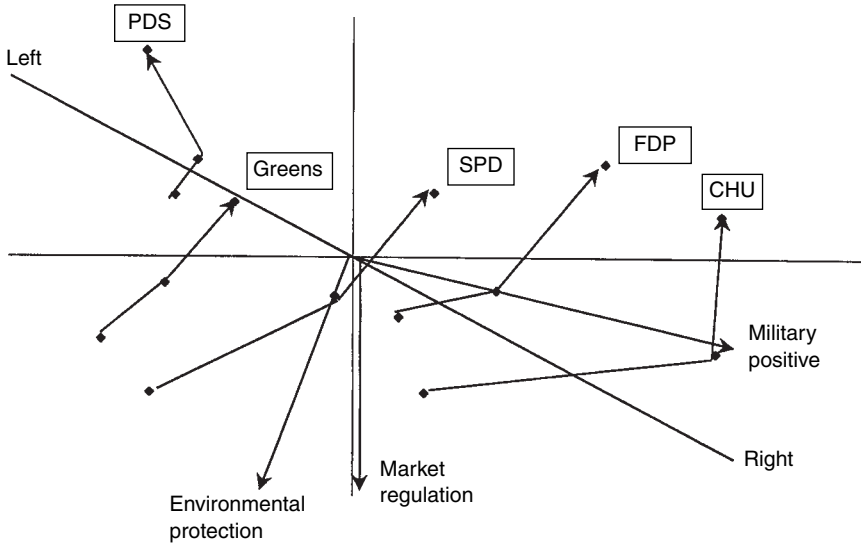
MDS-plot	*item*	*label*	*1st dim.*	*2nd dim.*	R^2
	201	freedom-human rights	–0.065	–0.998	0.82
1987–94	202	Democracy	–0.980	–0.199	0.73
	605	Law and order	0.588	0.809	0.73
		Perceived left–right positions	0.996	–0.088	0.61
	104	military positive	0.975	–0.223	0.69
1990–98	403	Market regulation	0.003	–1.000	0.69
	501	Environmental protection	–0.473	–0.881	0.79
		Perceived left–right positions	0.961	–0.276	0.63

* The regression coefficients are normalised so that their sum of squares equals 1.00.

Table 8.3 displays the results of the best fitting regressions to determine directions of vectors in the two German graphs. As with the Netherlands, quite different categories appear to be linearly related to the configuration in the two (overlapping) time periods. Moreover, the issue category 'social justice', so important for describing differences between Dutch parties, is not strongly related to the axes of the German plots. Thus the space in which parties compete is clearly context dependent. The strength of the linkage between party programme positions and voter perceptions of left–right positions is of approximately the same magnitude as in the Netherlands (0.73 in both analyses).

The analysis of German party programmes for the period 1990–98, shown in Figure 8.6, displays features also present in the Netherlands during this period. There are large general movements of all parties in the same direction and no instances of leap-frogging. In many cases the changes over time are even larger than the differences between parties at each moment in time. For instance, the FDP in 1998 is at that time closer to the CHU as well as to the SPD than it is to its own position in 1990. Apparently quite different types of theme dominate political debate in different election years. While the main German parties de-emphasised issues such as environmental protection and market regulation, their positions *vis-à-vis* each other (coinciding with their left–right positions) remained largely stable.

The German analyses thus display a rather similar phenomenon to that observed in the Dutch case. New political problems arise, to which parties react. Guided by their ideological predispositions, parties react differently to these new problems. But even if they do not all react in the same way, they do respond in the same terms. As a result, changes in the political agenda are reflected in movements of parties in similar directions. Yet, while reacting to the same problems, the positions of parties *vis-à-vis* each remain essentially unaltered.



CHU: Christian Historical Union
FDP: Free Democrats
PDS: Party of Democratic Socialism
SPD: Social Democratic Party

Figure 8.6 Positions of German political parties 1990–98

Conclusions

This chapter proposes a method to analyse the dynamics in the relationship of parties and voters on the basis of coded contents of party programmes on the one hand and survey data on the other. I argue that the most fruitful way to analyse this relationship is by focusing on *ideological positions* of both kinds of actors, instead of focusing on the social structural characteristics of party supporters or on separate issues. Three types of dynamics in ideological positions are distinguished: changes in positions on a stable ideological dimension; changes in the saliency of different ideological dimensions; and changes in the meaning of ideological dimensions due to changes in the party agenda and the discourse in which political problems are framed.

The chapter also discusses two alternative ways to analyse party manifestos in a spatial context. It is argued that factor analysis should never be used to analyse these kind of data. An alternative method is a direct operationalisation of one single ideological left–right dimension. Various such operationalisations are cross-validated with expert judgements in the previous chapter by Mendes and McDonald. Although left–right positions measured in this way correlate strongly with expert judgements, the

usefulness of these approaches is rather limited. In particular, it allows one to observe only the first kind of dynamic mentioned above, but not the other two.

The paper then presents an alternative approach that enables one to analyse all three types of dynamics simultaneously. As a first step, distances between parties are computed on the basis of the full content of party programmes. These distances are used to determine party positions on the basis of a mulitdimensional scaling. Subsequently a link is determined between these positions and how parties are perceived by voters. The method that I propose here is used to establish the linkage between contents of party programmes and voters' perceptions of left–right positions. Naturally, the method can be applied in any other kind of research which involves a spatial analysis of party programmes.

The separate country studies presented in this paper show that a left–right dimension structures the campaign promises of Dutch as well as of German parties, although in each election different kinds of issues dominate the agenda. In one election campaign the main issues may be housing policies and the environment, whereas another campaign is about refugees or about party competence. The left–right dimension structures the debate about current issues, but the issues are different in each country and in each election. These analyses thus show that the meaning of left and right is dependent upon the current social, political and historical context. As a result, in a comparative analysis no common party programme space could be constructed with the inductive method proposed in this paper. This makes me sceptical about deductive approaches in which left–right positions of parties are measured independently of context. Why, after all, should left and right be the same – and become visible in differential manifesto emphases on the same kinds of topics – in Sri Lanka, Lithuania, and Sweden?

Notes

1 An example of this is Krouwel's (1999: 138–9) conclusion on the basis of CMP data that after the 1950s inter-party distances increased in the Netherlands. In my earlier work (Van der Brug 1997: 52) I showed that this is not the case. Krouwel arrives at a different conclusion because he fails to take into account the religious–secular dimension which appeared prominent in the manifestos of the 1950s.

2 Although a 'city-block' metric reflects differences in emphases more closely, it was decided to use Euclidean distances instead. The ultimate purpose of these analyses is to develop a better understanding of party dynamics. Euclidean distances are to be preferred for this purpose, because these are commonly used to measure physical distance and therefore relate more closely to our intuitive understanding of distances.

3 The MDS-analyses presented in this paper were performed with Alscal. Vectors were plotted by PROFIT.

4 For the empirical examples various German and Dutch national election studies

were used, which are distributed by the Steinmetz Archive/NIWI, P.O. Box 95180, 1090 HD Amsterdam, The Netherlands and by the Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung, Bachemer Str.40, D-50931 Cologne, Germany.

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6 The results are slightly different than those presented in earlier work (Van der Brug 1999a, b), because Euclidean distances are used here, whereas city-block distances were used in previous work. Fortunately, both types of analyses yield the same substantive results.

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9 Estimating interparty policy distances from election programmes in Quebec, 1970–89

François Petry and Réjean Landry

Introduction

Estimating interparty policy distances from election programmes raises two important methodological debates. One debate opposes two conceptions of what the proper unit of analysis should be. Some scholars utilise the specific pledges that parties present in their programmes; others analyse all of the text in the party programmes. The other debate concerns the choice of variables, and attributes thereof, used to operationalise interparty distance. Some scholars argue that we should look at the substantive positions that the parties take on issues; others argue that we should be more concerned with party emphasis.

The positional method of estimating interparty policy distances from election programmes assumes that parties compete by offering different policies to the voters on the same issues. This is referred to as competition by direct confrontation. Accordingly, the traditional method operationalises party distance in terms of the substantive positions that political parties take on issues. Having determined these substantive positions, it is then possible to assess the extent to which parties agree or disagree on the issues at each election. Analysts who measure interparty policy distance using the positional method often chose to use specific party programme pledges as their units of analysis because these provide a substantive understanding of whether the parties agree, disagree, or take positions on issues that are not comparable.[1] We refer to this as the 'pledge/position' method.

An alternative method, used by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) among others, assumes that parties compete by emphasising the importance of different issues. This is referred to as competition by selective emphasis. The emphasis method operationalises interparty policy distances on the basis of the relative saliency of predetermined issue categories in party programmes.[2] Analysts who use this method are not primarily concerned with whether parties agree or disagree on issues, although the MRG coding scheme does also include several bipolar issue categories designed to tap this. Instead, they assess interparty policy distance by correlating shares of party programmes devoted to particular issue categories on the assumption that, the higher the correlation between issue emphases, the lower the distance between two parties.

Although it is in principle possible to estimate issue emphases on the basis of substantive pledges, in practice most researchers who use the emphasis method, including those from the MRG, prefer to use party programme statements (or quasi-sentences) as their units of analysis. We refer to this in what follows as the 'text/emphasis' method.

Is the 'text/emphasis' approach or the 'pledge/position' approach more valid for assessing interparty policy distances? We set out to offer an empirical contribution to this debate by using both methods to estimate party positioning in Quebec and then evaluating the face validity of the respective results.

The Quebec party system has undergone a profound transformation during the past decades. The old party system, dominated by the agrarian-conservative Union Nationale (UN) since the mid-1930s, disappeared in the 1970s under the combined pressures of the 'Quiet Revolution' and the 'New Nationalism'. This coincided with the development of a new party alignment between the right-of-centre federalist Parti libéral du Québec (PLQ) and the newly created left-of-centre anti-federalist Parti Québécois (PQ). This party realignment started with the election of 1970 in which the UN was thoroughly defeated by the PLQ and never recovered. The election of 1970 was the first of a series of three critical elections that culminated in 1976 with a PQ victory. The election of 1981 signalled the end of the critical period and the beginning of the mature phase of the new biparty alignment between the PLQ and the PQ that is, by all accounts, still under way.

Previous research has documented how the transformation of the Quebec party system in the 1970s and its subsequent stabilisation in the 1980s have affected voting (Lemieux *et al.* 1970; Pinard 1973; Ouellet 1989), political personnel (Pelletier and Crête 1988) and government policy (Saywell 1977; Fraser 1994). However, there is little empirical work on the effect of the transformation of the Quebec party system and its subsequent stabilisation on issue positioning by the parties. Our main objective in this chapter is to correct this oversight by examining how party system change has affected the partisan debate in Quebec. To achieve this, a series of estimates of interparty policy distance will be derived for each of the six successive elections from 1970 to 1989.

Research design

Research agenda

Because it is based explicitly on substance, the pledge/positional method provides more obviously valid indicators of interparty policy distance than the emphasis method. On the other hand, recording emphases is easier and faster in practice than recording substantive positions. The text/emphasis method thus requires less effort (and smaller research budgets) for data collection than the positional method. It is sometimes argued, furthermore, that counting quasi-sentences (or statements) in the full text of a manifesto is more bias-free than counting specific pledges, because everything that the parties say is then

used for the purpose of assessing interparty policy distances, not just specific pledges selected by the analyst. The first question we ask, therefore, is whether counting specific pledges, as opposed to analysing the full text of a programme, makes a difference for the purpose of assessing interparty policy distances.

Supporters of the emphasis approach also argue that measuring interparty distances in terms of direct confrontations between substantive party positions largely misses the real point of party competition, since parties rarely take specific and conflicting policy stands on issues. Rather, it is argued, they tend selectively to emphasise broad policy priorities that are consistent with their own ideology, and to de-emphasise the priorities consistent with their opponents' ideology. Relative issue emphasis, the argument goes, is a more valid indicator of interparty policy distance than substantive positions on issues. This raises the empirical question of knowing the extent of selective emphasis, as opposed to direct confrontation, in party competition. It is difficult to answer this question directly by simply counting statements (or quasi-sentences) because party programme statements are often too vague or ambiguous to be of much help in disentangling direct confrontation from selective emphasis. By contrast, when analysing specific pledges, we can keep a record of partisan discourse that is sufficiently detailed to allow us to distinguish cases in which two parties agree on an issue from those in which one party takes a position that is unique relative to that of some other party.

A final argument that is sometimes used in support of the text/emphasis method for estimating policy distances is that it provides more reliable and portable indicators than the pledge/position method. This is because the emphasis method calculates party positions on the basis of a priori defined issue categories that are invariant over time and stable across party systems. By contrast, the substantive issues used by the pledge method to calculate party positions are likely to vary with an issue agenda that changes both from one election to the next and across countries. This makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to construct stable spatial indicators of interparty policy distance based on coding party policy pledges. However there is nothing to prevent a researcher from reclassifying specific pledges into invariant issue categories, such as the categories developed by the MRG or any other coding scheme based on fixed issue categories. One of our objectives in this essay is to examine how reclassifying substantive party pledges into predetermined issue categories affects the measurement of interparty policy distances.

Data and method

The election programmes of the PLQ and the PQ from 1970 to 1989 were inspected for general policy statements. Virtually all statements were recorded, however vague or implicit their policy content. We only required that they were minimally policy related so as to eliminate purely rhetorical statements. From the set of statements, we then extracted a subset of specific party programme pledges, defined as commitments to carry out government action in the form

of legislation. A pledge does not need to contain an explicit commitment to passing a law but it must be specific enough to determine whether or not subsequent legislation complies with the terms of the pledge. Party programme statements that did not fulfil this criterion were not recorded as pledges. Each specific pledge in the data set was recorded in terms of three attributes: the object of the proposed action; a clause further defining the action (not all pledges contain such a clause); and a connecting verb that gives the direction of the proposed action.

Having recorded party statements and detailed pledges for the PLQ and the PQ at each election, the next step was to assign each observation in the data set to one and only one of thirty-seven issue categories drawn from a revised list of MRG issue categories. The revised MRG issue categories are listed in Table 9.1.

The pledge data were recorded using a closed-ended questionnaire somewhat analogous to that for an interview. These questionnaires were administered by four research assistants and checked by the project co-ordinator whose function it was to ensure the reliability of the coding. The validity of the analysis was also checked by a computer program designed to detect illogical answers and inconsistencies.[3]

Coding pledges versus coding statements

Recording party programme statements over six elections generated 7,113 observations, of which 2,184 (30.7 per cent) were also recorded as specific pledges. Table 9.2 compares the distribution of party programme statements and pledges by functional issue domains.

As Table 9.2 shows, the distributions of statements and pledges across the four policy domains do not differ substantially (Pearson r=0.87). This strong correlation between the distribution of pledges and statements reflects the way party programmes are constructed in Quebec. Both the PLQ and the PQ like to present their programmes by dividing the content into twenty or so functional themes such as health, education, environmental protection, and so on. Each theme is usually introduced with a few paragraphs containing general statements of intent that are often too vague to be recorded as specific pledges. This is followed by more detailed elaboration on the theme in the form of specific pledges. The way the party programmes are constructed in Quebec, and the high statistical correlation of the distributions of statements and pledges across issue domains, combine to suggest that both methods will tend to generate the same results and that studying pledges alone will provide valid estimates of interparty policy distances.

We see from Table 9.2 that the total number of party programme pledges increased steadily until 1981 and then stabilised. The PQ always offers substantially more statements and pledges in its programme than the PLQ (60 per cent more on average). The PQ had more to say than the PLQ at every election, irrespective of which party was the incumbent. As we will see, this has important implications for measuring interparty policy distances. The data in

Table 9.1 Revised MRG issue categories (used to analyse election programmes of the PLQ and the PQ 1970–89)

Functional domains	*Bipolar categories*	*Unipolar categories*
Government	Special foreign relations	Freedom and human rights
	Military	Democracy
	Constitutionalism	Government efficiency
	Decentralisation	Political corruption
	Quebec independence	Political authority
		Law and order
Economy	Protectionism	Incentives
	Free enterprise	Market regulation
		Corporatism
		Economic goals
		Keynsian demands
		Productivity
		Technology
		Nationalisation
		Economic orthodoxy
		Agriculture
		Middle class groups
Social welfare	Welfare state expansion	Social justice
	Labour groups	Minority groups
		Demographic groups
Education and culture	Education expansion	Environmental protection
	National way of life	Culture and leisure
	Traditional morality	Social harmony
	Multiculturalism	French lang. protection

Note
Two categories (Quebec Independence and French Language Protection) have been added to the original MRG coding categories to account for special Quebec circumstances. Several categories (such as European Community and Marxist Analysis) have been deleted from the original MRG coding scheme because they are irrelevant in the Quebec context.

Table 9.2 also suggest that selective emphasis occurs in Quebec. The PLQ and the PQ put equal stress on the 'government' and 'education and culture' policy domains. But the PLQ always paid more attention than the PQ to economic issues (38.1 per cent and 29.9 per cent on average respectively), and the PQ always paid more attention than the PLQ to social welfare issues (37.8 per cent and 28.7 per cent on average respectively).

Estimating policy distances using policy pledges

The next step was to assign each pledge at each election a different value depending upon whether it is (a) in direct agreement, (b) in direct disagreement with a pledge from the other party at the same election, or (c) unique (not comparable) relative to the pledges of the other party at that election. Pledges with the same object, the same defining clause (whenever there is

Table 9.2 Distribution of party programme statements and pledges by policy domain, Quebec 1970–89

Policy domain	*Party*	*1970 UN*	*1973 PLQ*	*1976 PLQ*	*1981 PQ*
Government	PLQ	13.9 (6.8)	18.0 (25.9)	18.2 (13.9)	16.7 (18.7)
	PQ	29.1 (34.8)	17.6 (22.5)	18.5 (19.5)	16.7 (15.6)
Economy	PLQ	41.7 (38.8)	36.5 (44.2)	38.2 (40.4)	32.7 (31.6)
	PQ	29.1 (27.3)	31.7 (32.0)	30.8 (30.5)	25.7 (26.7)
Social welfare	PLQ	30.9 (31.1)	26.5 (24.7)	27.3 (30.9)	29.2 (27.4)
	PQ	22.9 (21.3)	32.0 (28.4)	32.5 (33.1)	40.9 (41.6)
Education and culture	PLQ	13.5 (23.3)	19.0 (5.2)	16.2 (14.8)	21.4 (22.3)
	PQ	18.9 (16.5)	18.7 (17.1)	18.3 (16.9)	16.5 (16.1)
Total	PLQ n	259 (103)	389 (77)	450 (94)	893 (215)
	PQ n	354 (187)	584 (222)	656 (272)	1181 (269)

Policy domain	*Party*	*1985 PQ*	*1989 PLQ*	*Average*
Government	PLQ	21.3 (21.7)	20.0 (23.2)	18.0 (18.4)
	PQ	19.3 (20.0)	22.2 (24.0)	20.6 (22.7)
Economy	PLQ	41.4 (39.8)	38.3 (36.0)	38.1 (38.5)
	PQ	31.7 (32.7)	30.2 (30.2)	29.9 (29.9)
Social welfare	PLQ	27.5 (26.5)	30.5 (31.2)	28.7 (28.6)
	PQ	33.9 (34.2)	32.8 (34.1)	37.8 (32.2)
Education and culture	PLQ	9.8 (12.0)	11.2 (9.6)	15.2 (14.5)
	PQ	15.2 (13.1)	4.8 (11.7)	11.7 (15.2)
Total	PLQ n	367 (166)	430 (125)	465 (130)
	PQ n	910 (275)	640 (179)	721 (234)

Note
All entries except last two rows (Total) are percentages. The first entries in each cell are percentages of party programme statements; the entries in parentheses are percentages of party programme pledges. The party labels in the top row of the Table indicate the incumbent party at each election.

such a clause in the pledge) and the same direction of action are classified as being in direct agreement. Pledges with the same object (and the same defining clause whenever there is a defining clause in the pledge) but for which the proposed actions go in opposite directions are classified as in direct disagreement.[4] Pledges that are neither in direct agreement nor in direct disagreement with a pledge from the other party are deemed to be unique pledges. Pledges are unique either because their attribute is unique (in which case they share the same object with other pledges) or because they have a unique object (the latter being the more general case).

Let us illustrate the coding procedure with concrete examples drawn from the 1976 election. In that election, the PLQ pledged that automobile insurance would continue to be managed by the private sector while the PQ announced it would nationalise automobile insurance if elected to power. These two pledges are in direct disagreement because they propose opposite actions on the same

object (automobile insurance). In the health policy area, the PLQ promised to expand dental care insurance to larger sectors of the population. The PQ made a virtually identical pledge. These pledges are deemed in direct agreement because they propose the same action (expansion) on the same object (dental care insurance). Many of the pledges proposed in 1976 are unique, that is they cannot be compared across parties. For example, the PQ had several detailed pledges about what a PQ government would do to implement independence for Quebec. These pledges are obviously unique because the PLQ never advocated independence for Quebec and chose to remain silent on this issue.

Recording party pledges in terms of detailed attributes allows us to calculate, for pairs of parties at each election, three distinct indicators of interparty policy distance. One is the proportion of cases in which party programmes are in direct disagreement plus the proportion of unique pledges: we call this a measure of *interparty divergence* for lack of a better term. Another is the proportion of cases in which party programmes directly agree and disagree: a measure of *direct confrontation*.[5] The last indicator is the proportion of unique pledges: a measure of *selective emphasis*. Table 9.3 reports these proportions at each Quebec election.

One technical point must be considered before we discuss the numbers in Table 9.3. There are by definition twice as many direct agreement *pledges* as there are direct agreement *objects* at each election. For example, there were twenty-seven PLQ pledges in direct agreement with twenty-seven PQ pledges in 1970, making a total of fifty-four direct agreement pledges on twenty-seven direct agreement objects at that election. The same goes for pledges in direct disagreement since, by definition, direct disagreement pledges share a same object. Thus there were thirty-six PLQ pledges in direct disagreement with thirty-six PQ pledges on thirty-six objects in 1970. This raises the question of whether to report direct agreement and direct disagreement pledges as pledges (and thus counting their objects twice) or as objects. This is a problem because counting pledges instead of objects overestimates the occurrence of direct confrontation relative to selective emphasis. Counting objects rather than pledges has the reverse effect: it overestimates the relative importance of selective emphasis at the expense of direct confrontation. Unique pledges do not face this dilemma since they each coincide with a distinct object (or a distinct clause if they share an object with another pledge). In the absence of any easy solution to this problem, it was decided to report the calculations based on pledges in Table 9.3 and only to report the results based on objects in the last column of the table where the average proportions are reported.

From Table 9.3 we see that, on average, selective emphasis occurs more often than direct confrontation (65.3 per cent v. 34.7 per cent) when the calculation is based on objects. But the occurrence of direct confrontation is slightly higher than the occurrence of selective emphasis (52.5 per cent v. 47.5 per cent) when the calculation is based on pledges. By either measure, however, selective emphasis is not the only mode of party competition in Quebec. The numbers in Table 9.3 also indicate that the balance between

Table 9.3 Distribution of party programme pledges by type, Quebec 1970–89

Pledge type	*1970*		*1973*		*1976*		*1981*	
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*
Direct agreement	18.6	(54)	22.1	(66)	16.9	(62)	32.6	(158)
Direct disagreement	24.8	(72)	18.7	(56)	12.6	(46)	35.1	(170)
Unique pledges	56.6	(164)	59.2	(177)	70.5	(258)	32.2	(156)
PLQ	13.8	(40)	5.4	(16)	10.9	(40)	10.5	(51)
PQ	42.8	(124)	53.8	(161)	59.6	(218)	21.7	(142)
Total	100	(290)	100	(299)	100	(366)	100	(484)
Selective emphasis	56.6		59.2		70.5		32.2	
Direct confrontation	43.4		40.8		29.5		67.7	
Interparty divergence	81.4		77.9		83.1		67.4	

Pledge type	*1985*		*1989*		*Average % pledges*	*Average % objects*
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*		
Direct agreement	20.4	(90)	25.0	(76)	23.2	15.3
Direct disagreement	39.9	(176)	39.5	(120)	29.3	19.4
Unique pledges	39.7	(175)	35.6	(108)	47.5	65.3
PLQ	7.5	(33)	9.9	(30)	9.7	
PQ	32.2	(142)	25.7	(78)	37.8	
Total	100	(441)	100	(304)	100	100
Selective emphasis	39.7		35.6		47.5	65.3
Direct confrontation	60.3		64.5		52.5	34.7
Interparty divergence	79.6		75.0		76.8	84.7

Note
N = Number of new pledges.

direct confrontation and selective emphasis has changed over the years: and that the change has been rather dramatic. Selective emphasis was clearly the dominant mode of party competition in the three elections of the 1970s, especially in 1976 where selective emphasis reached its highest point of the period at 70.5 per cent (based on pledges). However, direct confrontation was the dominant mode of party competition in the three elections of the 1980s. In fact, it appears that interparty disagreement was dominant in the 1980s. The contrast between the earlier era of selective emphasis and the later era of direct confrontation is apparent in the very sharp decline in the number of unique pledges between the elections of 1976 and 1981. This is accounted for by the sudden drop in both the number and proportion of unique pledges by the PQ from 1981 onward, and the associated increase in the numbers for direct disagreement.[6]

Recording election pledges in terms of detailed attributes also allows us to calculate, for each election, the proportion of new as opposed to old pledges. A new pledge is defined as a pledge by one or by both parties at one election

which is neither in direct agreement nor in direct disagreement with a pledge that was offered at the preceding election. In other words, a pledge is considered 'new' at one election when it is unique relative to all the pledges at the preceding election, including the pledges of the rival party.

Table 9.4 reports the occurrence of new pledges at each election and their distribution by type. We see that, on average, about half the content of Quebec party programmes is devoted to new pledges (49.6 per cent) or new objects (52.9 per cent). We also see that new pledges occurred more frequently in the elections of 1973 and 1976 than during the subsequent period. A comparison of the columns for average percentage of pledges in Table 9.3 and Table 9.4 reveals a certain similarity between the distribution of new pledges and the overall distribution of pledges. A plurality of pledges, new as well as old, come in the form of unique pledges; unique pledges, new as well as old, come predominantly from the programmes of the PQ. This is to be expected since the PQ has always offered more pledges overall than the PLQ. Table 9.4 also shows that the balance of new selective emphasis pledges, as opposed to new direct confrontation pledges, evolved over time. Selective emphasis was the dominant mode of introduction of new pledges in the elections of 1973 and

Table 9.4 Distribution of new party programme pledges/objects by type, Quebec 1973–89

Type of pledge/object	*1973*		*1976*		*1981*	
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*
Direct agreement	18.7	(32)	17.3	(42)	23.9	(58)
Direct disagreement	12.9	(22)	4.1	(10)	41.1	(100)
Unique pledges	68.4	(117)	78.6	(191)	35.0	(85)
PLQ	8.8	(15)	15.6	(38)	12.8	(31)
PQ	59.6	(102)	63.0	(153)	22.2	(54)
Total	100	(171)	100	(243)	100	(243)
New pledges in % of all pledges	57.2		66.4		50.2	
New objects in % of all objects	60.5		69.5		51.2	

Type of pledge/object	*1985*		*1989*		*Average pledges*	
	%	*N*	*%*	*N*		
Direct agreement	10.5	(22)	7.0	(8)	16.5	(32.4)
Direct disagreement	48.1	(101)	54.4	(62)	30.1	(59.0)
Unique pledges	41.4	(87)	38.6	(44)	53.4	(104.8)
PLQ	4.3	(9)	9.6	(11)	10.6	(20.8)
PQ	37.1	(78)	27.0	(33)	42.8	(84.0)
Total	100	(210)	100	(114)	100	(196.2)
New pledges in % of all pledges	47.6		37.5		49.6	
New objects in % of all objects	49.9		38.3		52.9	

Note
N = Number of new pledges.

1976, but direct confrontation (more precisely direct disagreement) was the dominant mode of introducing new pledges in the 1980s.

Although interparty distance (divergence) appears to have remained high throughout the period of analysis, Tables 9.3 and 9.4 strongly suggest that interparty distance during the critical period of the 1970s was the result of high levels of selective emphasis and a high rate of introduction of new issues into the Quebec political agenda. By contrast, the mature phase of the PLQ–PQ alignment during the 1980s has coincided with lower levels of selective emphasis, higher levels of direct confrontation, and a decrease in the rate of introduction of new issues.

Our evidence about the changing composition of interparty distance is consistent with the way in which the realignment of the Quebec party system of the 1970s, and its subsequent stabilisation in the 1980s, have been portrayed in the literature. The PQ sought to redefine the terms of political conflict in the 1970s by introducing new issues centred on the welfare state role of government and the new nationalism. The new issues that were brought into the agenda by the PQ during the 1970s often took the form of selective emphasis (Landry 1990) as the PQ had an incentive to de-emphasise the policy agenda of its rival and instead emphasise the issues that were to its own advantage. However, the political environment was less favourable to the development of new issues during the mature phase of the 1980s. The new alignment had become sufficiently salient for the voters in the 1980s that it dominated all other issue concerns. New issues were offered by the parties in the 1980s but they were less frequent than during the previous period and they tended to take the form of direct interparty disagreement rather than selective emphasis. The new issues offered by the parties in the 1980s represented for the most part the logical continuation of the ideas introduced during the 1970s (Fitzmaurice 1986).[7]

Estimating policy distances using issue emphases

As we saw in the introduction, the emphasis method does not rely on the substantive positions of parties to assess interparty policy distance. Instead, it focuses on the issue saliency differential between pairs of parties at each election, based on the relative frequency of programme statements dedicated to different pre-defined issue categories. Several methods may be used to estimate interparty policy distances on the basis of issue emphases. The instrument we use in this chapter is a 'differential issue saliency index' comparing the issue emphases of the PLQ and the PQ. For any issue category i, define a_i as the proportion of pledges dedicated to issue category i in the programme of party a, and b_i as the proportion of pledges dedicated to issue category i in the programme of party b. The overall differential saliency index for this pair of parties can be represented, at each election, as:

$$\text{Overall differential saliency index} = \sum_{i=1} \frac{|a_i - b_i|}{2}$$

The index varies between 0 (no differential) and 1 (maximum possible differential).

Table 9.5 reports, for each election, the values of the differential saliency index for the revised list of MRG issue categories set out in Table 9.1. From this we can see that the index remained relatively stable across all six elections. We know from our earlier estimates based on substantive policy pledges that interparty divergence was high throughout the period. The Pearson correlation between the saliency index in Table 9.5 and the corresponding values for interparty divergence in Table 9.3 is 0.78. From this we can infer that the saliency index corresponds rather closely to our measure interparty policy distance. On the other hand, the saliency index is less successful at capturing the change in selective emphasis that was so clearly shown by our analysis of substantive party policy pledges. This can be seen by comparing, for each election, the saliency index with our measure of selective emphasis: the Pearson correlation is 0.55.

These results present an intriguing puzzle. Why does the saliency index, based on selective emphasis of the revised MRG list of issue categories, fail to capture the sea-change in selective emphasis that was evident in Table 9.3? Why is it that the MRG issue categories – which were originally designed to capture selective emphasis – are not able to account for the *change* in the level of selective emphasis that occurred in Quebec? The reason may well be that, although originally designed to estimate selective policy emphasis, the MRG scheme as it has been modified over the years is actually better at measuring interparty policy divergence (that is selective emphasis plus direct disagreement, and not just selective emphasis).

This may be because the MRG coding scheme includes a number of bipolar categories that can be coded as either positive or negative. The effect of adding bipolar categories in the MRG list is to create a mixed scheme that captures elements of both policy emphasis and policy divergence. Pledges that are in direct disagreement are classified under different bipolar issue categories, where these exist in the scheme, but under the same unipolar issue categories, where there are no bipolar categories. For bipolar categories of pledges, direct policy disagreement between parties generates an increase in estimated policy distance. For unipolar categories of pledges, direct disagreement between parties generates no increase in estimated policy distance, as all parties are seen to be emphasising the main issue. In effect the MRG scheme involves a hybrid set of coding categories, which picks up elements of both selective emphasis and substantive policy disagreement, rather than focusing reliably upon selective emphasis.

Table 9.5 Overall issue saliency index compared with measures of interparty distance based on substantive party positions

	1970	*1973*	*1976*	*1981*	*1985*	*1989*
Selective emphasis from Table 9.3	57.6	59.2	70.5	32.2	39.7	35.6
Interparty divergence from Table 9.3	81.4	77.9	83.1	67.4	79.6	75.0
Saliency index from MRG categories	0.51	0.49	0.58	0.50	0.56	0.45

Conclusion

We asked two questions in the introduction. The first concerned how, if at all, the recent transformation of the Quebec party system affected interparty policy distances. The second concerned how we should estimate interparty policy distances. In response to the first question we find that, although the level of interparty divergence between the PLQ and the PQ remained more or less constant during the period 1970–89, the balance of interparty disagreement and selective emphasis shifted substantially midway during the period. Selective emphasis was the dominant mode of party competition during the elections of the 1970s, but the tendency was reversed in 1981. Direct confrontation was the dominant mode of party competition, with selective emphasis a distant second, during the elections of the 1980s.

In response to the second question, we find that an emphasis-based measure (the differential issue saliency index based on the MRG list of issue categories) and a measure based on substantive party positions give roughly similar pictures of interparty disagreement in Quebec. However, the emphasis-based measure is unable to account for the shift from selective emphasis to direct confrontation as the dominant mode of party competition, something that measures based on substantive party positions do rather well. We argue that this is because the emphasis-based MRG coding scheme is more a tool for measuring interparty disagreement in general, than one for measuring selective emphasis in particular.

This diagnosis supports the following recommendations for researchers who wish to record the contents of party programmes on the basis of the MRG coding scheme. First, it is not enough to record party emphases; one needs also to record substantive party positions on issues. Second, and by implication, it is not enough to record the general statements (or quasi-sentences) in party programmes; one needs to also record specific pledges. Recording specific pledges allows researchers to make the crucial distinction between what we call interparty disagreement on issues and selective emphasis, something that cannot be done by recording party emphasis on the basis of quasi-sentences, given the number of unipolar categories in the MRG coding scheme. Third, it would be useful to modify the MRG scheme to reflect more clearly the crucial distinction between direct disagreement and selective emphasis. One way of achieving this is to establish a much clearer analytical and operational distinction between bipolar coding categories that are designed to capture direct disagreement, and unipolar issue categories that are designed to capture selective emphasis.

Notes

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1 For a sample of empirical studies using the pledge approach, see Krukones (1984) and Pomper and Lederman (1982). Royed (1996) presents a strong plea in support of the pledge approach and a critique of the emphasis method.

2 The saliency theory of party competition on which the emphasis approach is based was first exposed by Budge and Farlie (1983). For empirical studies using the emphasis approach, see Budge, Robertson and Hearl (1987), Laver and Budge (1992) and Klingemann *et al.* (1994). An issue ownership variant of saliency theory is presented by Petrocic (1996).
3 A more detailed discussion of data collection and reliability checks can be found in Landry (1990 and 1991).
4 Pledges that were found to agree directly with each other in the same party programme were treated as one pledge. Pledges that were found to disagree directly with each other in the same party programme, a situation only encountered twice in this analysis, were eliminated from the data on the ground that they cancel each other out.
5 The definition of direct confrontation in terms of both party disagreement and party agreement on potentially contentious political objects is a bit misleading since confrontation hardly coincides with agreement. However, the definition perfectly corresponds with Downs' (1957) original idea and subsequent elaboration.
6 The shift away from selective emphasis in the PQ programme for the 1981 election was triggered in part by the poor performance of the Quebec sovereignty option in the referendum of 1980. Following popular rejection of Quebec sovereignty in the referendum of 1980, the PQ abandoned the selective emphasis strategy of stressing what it would do to implement Quebec independence and focused instead on a strategy of direct confrontation with the PLQ (see Fraser 1994, especially chapter 5).
7 We do not study the Quebec elections of 1994 and 1998 in this chapter. The PQ won both elections on a platform emphasising what a PQ government would do after Quebec independence. The PLQ has remained opposed to Quebec sovereignty in the 1990s. Assessing interparty distance in the 1990s might, therefore, lead to results comparable to the 1970s situation.

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Part III

Computer coded text analysis

10 A natural sentences approach to the computer coding of party manifestos

Leonard Ray

This chapter describes a technique for the computer-aided content analysis of political party manifestos. While conceived in the context of the problem of the analysis of party manifestos, this technique should be applicable to any area where large quantities of machine-readable text are to be coded for thematic content. The method described could be used to speed the coding of new manifestos using the existing Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) coding scheme, and to provide for relatively rapid recoding of the existing stock of machine-readable party manifestos using new or modified coding schemes. Such recoding could be desirable either to trace the emergence and evolution of novel issues not contained in the current coding scheme, or to extend the set of issues for which directional, as well as saliency measures are available. Applied to other types of political texts such as parliamentary speeches, proposed legislation, campaign materials and media reports, this technique would allow for a comparison of manifesto content with the thematic emphases of other actors, and the analysis of intra- as well as inter-party politics.

This research is intended to develop a technique for computerised content analysis. The goal is not to use computers as an aid in the management of information generated through manual coding, but rather to develop algorithms which permit computer coding of texts without having each text read and coded by human researchers. Manual coding is not, however, entirely eliminated. Manual coding of a subset of text(s) is employed to provide the 'seed' information needed to generate dictionaries of words related to specific issues. One of the objectives of this research is to determine the amount of human coding which is required in order to obtain reasonably accurate computer coding of virgin texts. For this reason, the existing stock of content-coded party manifestos is an invaluable resource.

The research project is at an early stage. This chapter describes the approach I intend to follow and indicates the problems and choices that will arise in the application of this method. Later research will evaluate the accuracy and feasibility of the method.

Units of analysis and content categories

Content analysis, however performed, is essentially a data reduction technique (Weber 1990: 15). A text provides a wealth of nuance and detail. The task of content analysis is to reduce this mountain of information to a much smaller, more manageable, set of indicators relevant to the theoretical concerns of the researcher. This is generally accomplished through the assignment of values on a set of variables to text units (words, sentences, paragraphs, or entire documents). Content analysis requires the identification of units to be coded, and the elaboration of a set of categories (coding scheme) that is to be applied to these units.

Researchers have tried several different approaches to the analysis of party positions using content analysis. One approach has been to attempt to code entire documents for their content. In the *Party Change Project* led by Janda, experts were asked to evaluate the positions taken by political parties on nineteen issues based upon a reading of those sections of the party manifesto relevant to each issue (Janda *et al.* 1995). This produces a set of ratings of the policy content of the manifesto as a whole. In an attempt to determine whether parties elected to government honour their electoral promises, Rallings (1987) studied the explicit pledges contained within party manifestos or speeches from the throne (in Canada and the UK). Much of the information contained in the texts is not used by this method, but this information is presumed to be relatively unimportant. Similar analyses have been carried out in the American context (David 1971; Pomper and Lederman 1980; Petry and Landry, Chapter 9 this volume).

Other approaches have considered all parts of these texts to be equally meaningful. Such approaches generally involve dividing the platform or manifesto into subunits, and then assigning codes to as many of these as possible. Overall evaluations of the content of the text are then derived from an aggregation across units. The most common approach is the assignment of categories to words. Word counts for each category then provide the data from which measures of the characteristics of the text as a whole are derived.

Namenwirth (1969) used words as the basic unit of analysis in his study of the theme of wealth in American party platforms from 1844 to 1964. This analysis counted words associated with the concept of 'wealth' using a pre-existing content analysis dictionary developed by Harold Lasswell. Namenwirth and Weber (1987) used the full set of value categories in Lasswell's typology to analyse US party platforms and 'Speeches from the Throne' in the UK. Counting the frequency of words associated with each of sixty-nine content categories, they produced a summary measure of the text emphasis on each value. Paddock (1998) used the paragraph as the basic unit of meaning in his content analysis of US state party platforms. Each paragraph was assigned a score from 1 to 5 according to how 'liberal'

or 'conservative' the content of the paragraph, assuming homogeneity in the thematic content of these. Aggregating across paragraphs, he derived a summary score for the ideological position of the state party.

The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) uses the sentence as the unit of analysis. The CMP approach consists of assigning each sentence (or quasi-sentence) to one of fifty-six policy themes. Manifesto level data is obtained by calculating the percentage of all coded sentences in each of the policy categories. The CMP coding scheme was adopted with a specific theory of political competition in mind. According to saliency theory, parties compete not by taking different positions on a common set of issues, but rather by stressing different sets of issues. It was thus more important to know how much emphasis parties place on each issue rather than their 'position' on each issue. As a result, many of the issue codes do not have a directional component, although a few directional categories were included as a check on saliency theory (see Budge 1987). It can be argued that the lack of directional tags makes the manifesto data an inappropriate tool for the estimation of party *positions*. Alternately, saliency theory suggests that the overwhelming majority of tags would be positive, and thus their inclusion would not be particularly illuminating, and the additional information is not worth the cost of obtaining it (Budge, Chapter 4 this volume). If an automated procedure for assigning tags could be deployed, then the cost of assigning directional tags would be low enough to make the exercise worthwhile even if most tags turn out to be positive.

The computer coding technique proposed in this chapter categorises texts according to issue content using a modified version of the CMP coding scheme. The analysis will apply coding at multiple levels. Words are the basic units of analysis, but the association between specific words and issue categories will then be used as a basis for categorising sentences. The categorisation at the level of sentences is then used to produce summary statistics for the entire text (in this case a party manifesto). In a departure from the existing CMP scheme, I propose the coding of all issue areas for directionality. This would entail a seventy-six category scheme, which could be reduced to the CMP coding scheme by combining the positive and negative categories for those issues which CMP only codes for saliency.

Problems of computer aided content analysis

Given their ability to process large volumes of information with relative speed, it is not surprising that computers were used for the analysis of text very shortly after their introduction into the social sciences. Computers soon turned out to be far more useful for data management and analysis than for the actual coding of texts. While a computer can infallibly recognise recurrences of a string of characters, associating that string with a specific meaning (assigning it to a category) is less straightforward.

Attempts to implement computerised text analysis reveal the extreme complexity of the process of reading, an act which most academics take for granted. The comprehension of a written text requires the evaluation of an extraordinarily large amount of information.

The task in computerised content analysis is to develop some algorithm(s) which, when applied by the computer, assign elements of a text to the correct content categories. One of the greatest difficulties is that the meaning of a text is not only a function of the individual words that compose the text. Individual words may have multiple literal meanings (the problem of *homography*). A given ordered set of alphabetic characters may have multiple meanings or senses. For instance, the character string 'lead' could refer to the act of giving direction or impulsion to an organisation or society, or it could refer to a heavy ductile metal. For a further discussion of this problem see Kelly and Stone 1975. There are also contingency problems, where the theoretical (rather than literal) meaning of a word will be altered by the presence or absence of other words (the problem of *context*). Even if the technical definition of a term is quite clear, its 'meaning' in terms of the categories used for a particular content analysis may be uncertain. For instance, is the term 'interest rates' used as part of a condemnation of the single European currency? Or is it part of a criticism of inflationary government spending? The sequence of the words in a text can also change its meaning dramatically (the problem of *order*). If content coding a Labour Party manifesto, we would surely desire an algorithm which could distinguish between 'The Labour Party opposes the Conservative Party proposal to join EMU' and 'The Conservative Party opposes the Labour Party proposal to join EMU'. These problems present a number of impediments to computerised content analysis. Any computer analysis of text will solve, finesse, or ignore these issues of context dependence. The approach described in this paper finesses the problem of the ambiguity of individual words by assigning words to multiple categories of meaning. It finesses the issue of context dependence by coding entire sentences rather than individual words. This is particularly important in the assignment of valence to party positions. The approach offers no resolution of the problem of word order.

Selected applications of computer coding in political science

A number of research projects have used computerised coding of text. Most of the research surveyed below deals with the analysis of political parties. However, one of the most productive applications of computer coding has been the analysis of media reports in international relations.

Content analysis has long been used to create data sets tracking the nature and timing of interactions between nations. The Kansas Event Data System (KEDS) (Schrodt and Gerner 1994) is a set of computer programs

written by a team of researchers at the University of Kansas. KEDS is used to extract event data directly from one line summaries of Reuters news stories. By automating the process of gathering event data, KEDS dramatically lowered the cost of this type of dataset, and allows for almost real time monitoring of interstate relations. The very specific task and specialised text to which KEDS is applied may partially account for its success. Even within this specialised application, the task of automatically compiling an event dataset is not simple. The computer is first required to parse the summary sentences and extract the subject, verb and object of the sentence. Then the subject and object (the actor, and the nation being acted upon) are assigned codes from a 400 word dictionary of international actors. This dictionary is manually updated as diplomatic and political personnel change. Finally, the verb is coded into one of the WEIS action categories using a dictionary of verbal phrases.

The verb and actor dictionaries were constructed through a long process of trial and error ('training') during which human coders supervised the automated scoring of events and intervened to edit or add dictionary entries when the program miscoded an event. While there is not explicit correction for the problem of homography, the context problem described above is resolved on a word by word basis as human researchers edit the verb dictionary to clarify any ambiguities in theoretical meaning which are revealed during the 'training' process. For example, 'accept' receives one code when followed by 'diplomatic credentials,' and receives another when followed by 'formulation' or 'invitation' (Gerner, Schrodt, Francisco, and Weddle 1994: 8). Problems of word order are addressed by using the dictionary of verbs to reverse the subject and object of the sentence when the verb is in the passive case. While an impressively successful solution to the problem of generating event data, KEDS is tailored to the identification of the subjects and objects of sentences. Because of this, it is not suited to the analysis of the *thematic* content of party manifestos.

Namenwirth and Weber (1987) are concerned with the value content of party manifestos and speeches from the throne. This brings them closer to the substantive concern of the project described in this paper. They deploy a set of computer programs developed as part of the General Inquirer textual analysis package. The General Inquirer attacks the problem of homography in a very direct fashion. The program contains a routine for 'disambiguation' which applies a rigid set of rules to determine the meaning of an ambiguous word given the surrounding words. A number is then appended onto the word to indicate which meaning applies. Subsequent textual analysis is then based upon this new 'word' (for example, 'lead1', or 'lead2', replaces 'lead.') This approach involves a painstaking analysis of all appearances of a given word. The word must be assigned to one of a set of specific meanings, and then a rule devised to classify similar occurrences of the word to that meaning. The rules are based upon the presence, absence, or location of other words in the

sentence. Fortunately, this painstaking work had been done by others (Kelly and Stone 1975; Weber 1990, 29–30).

Namenwirth and Weber disambiguate only high frequency words in their texts. Once the text has been disambiguated, it is coded for thematic content. This process consists of searching for each word in the text in a 'dictionary' file that indicates the value category with which that particular word is associated. Finally, by summing within the categories, and dividing by the total number of classified words, relative frequencies for each category are obtained. These researchers use the Lasswell Value Dictionary (LVD) which was elaborated in the 1960s to operationalise Lasswell's theories of political communication. Each word is associated with at most one of the categories. (Some words are unclassifiable either because they are too rare to be useful, or too frequent to discriminate across categories.) For instance, the category 'Wealth Transactions' is associated with words such as 'auction', 'buy', 'loan', 'repaid'. This method of dictionary creation does raise the issue of context dependence. Namenwirth and Weber implicitly assume that every occurrence of a word refers to the same thematic category. They explicitly consider and reject the alternative of allowing words to be associated with more than one category, arguing that such an approach would require the elaboration of a system of weights indicating the strength of the association between each word and each category. I propose the association of words with multiple thematic categories as a partial solution to the problem of context dependence. There is no attempt to deal with the problem of word order beyond the disambiguation routines.

Laver and Garry (2000) have proposed a method for the computer coding of party manifestos. Their method is similar to that of Namenwirth and Weber in the use of a dictionary linking specific words to categories, and coding the entire document on the basis of word counts, skipping over any intervening semantic units. However, the Laver and Garry dictionary is purpose-built for coding the ideological positions of parties. The dictionary construction technique they describe is inductive, but with a dose of researcher intervention. They compute frequency counts of the words in manifestos written by ideologically distant parties, in this case, Labour and Conservative in 1992. From these word counts, they identify those words that distinguish the two parties. These words, with their high discriminatory power, are then used in the creation of dictionaries. Laver and Garry use these dictionaries to code 'virgin' texts by obtaining a word count for the text to be coded. Each time a word from one of their policy dictionaries appears in a text, the score of that text for the policy area increases by one. The result is a count of the frequency with which words from each policy dictionary appear in the text. The relative frequencies are then used to characterise the content of the text. This approach makes no attempt to correct for homography, context, or word order effects. However, it has proven robust for the placement of parties on a left–right ideological

continuum, at positions validated against independent expert surveys. (See Garry, Chapter 12 this volume; De Vries, Giannetti and Mansergh, Chapter 13 this volume, for an extension of this technique to the analysis of non-English language texts.)

A natural sentences approach to content analysis of manifestos

The 'natural sentences' approach proposed differs from the approach of Namenwirth and Weber, and of Laver and Garry in that words in a text will be assigned to multiple thematic categories in a content analysis dictionary. These dictionaries are then applied to sentences so that the assignment of theoretical meaning to ambiguous words can be aided by reference to the meaning of the surrounding words. The coded sentences are then used to produce summary statistics for the entire text. This approach mitigates the problems of homography and context dependence, although it does not allow for word order effects. The reliance on sentences as the basic unit of meaning in a manifesto brings a number of advantages. The resulting content data will be directly comparable to the CMP data. This allows for rigorous testing of the validity of the approach using the CMP data as a benchmark. The problem of homography and context dependence is finessed by borrowing information about the policy content of a word from the other words in the sentence. Because of the reliance upon sentences, a time consuming procedure such as disambiguation may not be necessary. Instead, the meanings of all of the words in a sentence are combined to produce a code for that sentence. In this approach, the ambiguity of individual words is recognised, and the meaning of a sentence is derived from the overlap of meaning of its constituent words. I suggest assigning a positive or negative valence to each policy reference using a multiplicative valence algorithm, an approach that only makes sense at the sentence or phrase level.

Constructing the dictionaries

Any automated content analysis procedure requires the elaboration of a set of dictionaries which associate specific strings of characters (words) with the thematic content categories of interest to the researcher. Dictionary creation is generally described as a deductive process whereby dictionaries are created based upon researcher's expectations before the analysis is conducted. In practice, dictionary compilation is often an iterative procedure where word lists are modified during the course of the analysis. Laver and Garry propose a partially inductive method in which word counts of documents are used to identify potentially useful words. These words are then assigned to policy categories based upon the researcher's intuition.

I propose a formal and inductive method of dictionary creation that

would make the creation of dictionaries more easily replicable and reduce the role of researcher's intuitions or expectations. The method does not fully automate dictionary creation, because it does rely on the human coding of a certain number of 'seed' texts. The first step in this procedure would be the selection of a number of texts to be coded by hand. Each sentence in these 'seed' texts will be assigned to a policy category by a human coder. Presumably, the greater the quantity of 'seed' text coded, the more accurate the eventual computer coding will be. One of the goals of this project is to determine the quantity of human coding that is needed to obtain reasonably valid data. The second step is to sort all of the sentences by policy theme, and perform separate word counts on the sentences in each category. Because a raw word count will generate separate tallies for the same word if its form changes with its grammatical use, the usefulness of the policy-specific word counts could be enhanced by automated procedures for lemmatisation (Holsti 1969). Thus 'benefit' and 'benefits' would appear as a single entry. Philip Stone (Stone *et al.* 1966, 89; Stone 1968: 25–9) describes a simple procedure for reducing such occurrences of a word to its root form. A second automated procedure which would improve the ability of the dictionaries to discriminate between policy areas is the deletion of commonly used words with little substantive content such as articles, forms of the verb to be, and so on. A final step in improving the quality of these dictionaries is the deletion of very low frequency words. If a word appears very infrequently, then it is hazardous to assume that it is systematically associated with a given policy area. The deletion of words appearing fewer than four or five times would help to mitigate this source of error.

This procedure will generate a list of words for each policy area, and each word will be associated with a numeric value indicating its frequency in sentences referring to that policy area. In order to move to the next step, coding sentences in virgin texts, these frequencies must be transformed into weights. A number of statistical techniques could be applied here. (For an early discussion of this problem, see Stone *et al.* 1966: 154. For a critical view on weighting techniques, see Namenwirth and Weber 1987: 39). I propose using the simplest procedure, the division of raw frequencies of each word in each policy area by the total number of occurrences of that word. The resulting proportion would correspond to the proportion of occurrences of the word which refer to a given policy area, and by implication to the probability that a sentence including that word refers to a certain policy area.

Assigning sentences to policy areas

Once a set of policy dictionaries listing words and the respective weights has been constructed, it can be used to assign codes to new texts that have not been hand coded. Using the dictionary creation procedure described

previously, some words would be assigned to multiple categories, along with weights reflecting the strength of the association between a word and each issue category. In order to assign codes to sentences, the weights of each word in the sentence must be aggregated, and some formula applied to determine to which category the sentence corresponds. The weights for each policy code are then summed over the words in the sentence. This provides, for each policy code, an indicator of the likelihood that the sentence refers to that policy area. The sentence is assigned to that policy code with the highest sum of weights. The result should be analogous to the raw CMP data: a set of sentences coded according to their policy content.

Valence: an additive or multiplicative approach?

As discussed earlier, the originators of the CMP coded manifestos for the salience of issues. According to saliency theory (Budge 1987) parties compete by emphasising different issues rather than by taking contrasting positions on the same issues. While there are a number of issue areas coded for direction in the CMP data, the procedure I have described above would produce a pure saliency coding scheme, recognising the policy area to which a sentence refers, but not the orientation of the party.

There are a number of possible approaches to the identification of the valence of a policy reference. Two will be mentioned here. The first approach involves creating separate policy dictionaries for positive and for negative references to a policy. I refer to this approach as an additive one. The additive approach is based upon the creation of two separate policy dictionaries for each policy area. One dictionary would list words associated with positive references to the policy area, and the other words associated with negative references. The advantage of this approach is its simplicity. Because it can be incorporated into the creation of policy dictionaries, it eliminates any extra steps in the coding procedure. However, there are practical and logical flaws to such a procedure.

A practical disadvantage of such a procedure involves the automated identification of words for inclusion into policy dictionaries. If a statistical technique is applied to determine which words have the greatest power to discriminate across categories, the importance of two types of words risk being downgraded. Any generic valence words that are often employed to indicate opposition or support ('advocates', rejects', 'espouses', 'condemns') may appear in a number of policy categories, and thus will be ranked as words with low discriminatory power. Likewise, words often associated with a specific policy area ('European Union') risk being downgraded if they fail to discriminate between positive and negative policy references. Another serious drawback to the additive approach is the inherently multiplicative nature of directional references. The additive approach would assign a positional value to a sentence based upon the sum of the words which compose the

sentence. For example, imagine that a policy dictionary for negative references to the EU includes the words 'European Union' 'opposes' and 'reduce'. Applying this dictionary to the phrases 'Our party opposes the European Union' or 'We advocate the reduction of the powers of the European Union' would yield a negative, and thus correct coding. Applying the dictionary to the phrase 'Our party opposes the reduction of the powers of the European Union' would also yield a negative valence code, one that is patently incorrect. I feel that the additive approach is unlikely to yield valid categorisations of sentences, and propose an alternative multiplicative approach where valence tags are assigned to sentences in a second procedure once policy tags have been assigned.

The anomalous outcome above results from the inherently multiplicative nature of directional statements. A negative statement 'opposes' combined with another negative statement 'reduced' yields a positive (or at least neutral) statement 'opposes reductions'. Past efforts at content analysis have recognised this aspect of valence by using multiplication as the function to aggregate across the codes in a sentence (Osgood 1959: 47; Holsti 1969: 124). I propose a multiplicative algorithm to assign valence tags to sentences. The first step in such a procedure is the identification of a set of 'valence words' which generally express positive or negative orientations.[1] In the example above, the word 'reduce' would be coded –1, as well as the word 'oppose'. The valance of the sentence 'Our party *opposes* the *reduction* of the powers of the European Union' would not be the sum of the two codes (–2) but rather the product (+1). Such an algorithm would permit the reconstitution of the valence categories of the CMP coding scheme, which affords a test of the validity of the results.

Content analysis and confidence levels

In order to assess the success of this enterprise, one must be able to measure the resulting data against some standard to test its validity. In addition, given the cost involved in human coding, it would be desirable to know with some specificity the payoff obtained from larger 'seed' texts. One of the advantages of survey research over content analysis is the applicability of sampling theory to the problem of statistical inference. With computerised content analysis, uncertainty may be introduced both through the sampling of texts to analyse, and through the algorithms used to content code texts. It seems reasonable to suppose that the validity of the procedure described above will depend upon the quantity of text used as 'seed' text for the creation of the dictionaries. If very few texts are hand coded, then it is likely that important words will be omitted from the dictionaries. It is also possible that the seed texts use certain words in an idiosyncratic way, and this then introduces error into the weights in the dictionaries. For any given amount of seed text, there will also be differences across policy categories in the frequency of reference

to that category. It is probable that the computer coding of infrequent content categories will be less accurate. Accuracy may also be improved by processing texts to remove commonly used words, to reduce words to root forms, and to apply disambiguation filters. Given the extra cost and inconvenience of this processing, it would be desirable to know the extent to which these procedures increase accuracy.

The validity of the data obtained by this procedure could be tested by comparing computer coding of manifestos with the hand coding from the Comparative Manifesto Project. This would require that a certain number of randomly selected manifestos be omitted from the 'seed' texts, and held as test texts. These test texts would then be coded by computer, and each sentence in the test text would be tagged with two codes: the original hand coding from the CMP, and the code assigned by computer. The percentage of correctly coded texts would serve as a rough benchmark of the accuracy of the computer coding. Repeating this process with different amounts of text would indicate the level of accuracy that corresponds to a given amount of manually coded 'seed' text. The discriminatory power of the content analysis dictionary also relies on the strength of the association between individual words and policy areas, which could be measured with a simple chi square statistic. The significance level of the chi square (calculated from the cross-tabulation of words and thematic categories) increases both with the number of observations (words) in the seed text, and with the distinctiveness of the dictionaries for each category. The accuracy of the computer coding should be a function of the significance level of the chi square statistic for the overall thematic dictionary.

Of course valid coding may be easier to obtain for some policy areas than for others. This would be the case if certain policy areas were distinguished by a very specialised vocabulary while other areas used more general and common terms. A partial chi square can be calculated for each category, comparing the frequency with which words appear in that category versus all other categories. This statistic should indicate which categories are being coded with particularly high or low reliability. The usefulness of a number of steps described above could also be evaluated. Thus one could determine the gain in validity associated with the deletion of frequent or infrequent words from policy dictionaries, or with the automated removal of suffixes.

This approach to testing could also help to establish the distribution of estimates over repeated iterations of the algorithm. With some notion of the mean and variance of the computer coded output, a rough rule of thumb regarding 'significance' could be constructed. Given a rough idea of the variability of output for a given amount of seed text, and dictionaries of known discriminatory power, rules of thumb for descriptive inference could be established. One could, for example, determine the conditions under which two computer coded texts could be said to differ 'significantly' in the frequency of references to a given policy area.

Conclusion

The technological advances in computing power, optical character recognition, and data storage mean that social scientists now have at their disposal the technical means for very sophisticated types of automated content analysis. Unfortunately, in political science the theory and methodology of computer coding has not kept pace with the technology, and researchers often seem to invent procedures *de novo* which reflect the idiosyncrasies of their specific applications. The intention of this research project is to design, implement, and most importantly test a relatively general procedure for automating content analysis. The CMP has produced an ideal set of data that could be used to elaborate and test the procedure described above. These data permit the quantitative evaluation of the overall validity of this procedure, and an optimisation of the procedure by determining the method that yields the greatest validity at the lowest cost. The goal of content analysis is the making of inferences from texts. This research project should allow future scholars to apply a technique for content analysis that has known characteristics in terms of validity. As a result, they will be able to identify with some confidence the inferences that are supported by their data, and those that may be artefacts of the procedure. If this goal can be attained, content analysis will become a much more useful tool, not only for the study of political parties, but also for social science in general.

Note

1 A valence dictionary could be built *de novo*, or could be based on the Stanford Political Dictionary, which contains sets of words associated with positive and negative affect (Stone *et al.* 1966: 189). In the Stanford Political Dictionary, words are assigned a magnitude as well as a valence. Thus a strongly positive word such as 'earnestly' may be assigned a +3, while a less strongly negative one such as 'reduce' would receive a –2. If the word 'oppose' was also considered moderately negative (coded –2), then the example sentence is coded +4 due to the conjunction of two moderately negative modifiers. This approach, while suggestive, could not be tested by comparison to the CMP data.

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11 Measurement of party positions on the basis of party programmes, media coverage and voter perceptions

Jan Kleinnijenhuis and Paul Pennings

Introduction

A policy position is more or less important, intense and prioritised. A policy position also has also a direction: parties are more or less pro- or contra-specific solutions. We label the emphasis on a specific topic/theme/issue as issue *saliency*. The positive or negative tenor of the viewpoint on the issue is labelled as the *direction* of an issue position. The direction of an issue position is simply labelled as the 'issue position' when confusion is unlikely. Policy positions resemble physical forces, which have to be represented also as vectors with both a length (saliency) and an angle (direction).

Measurement of policy positions can be based on party manifestos (Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987; Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994). Party positions can also be estimated on the basis of a content analysis of media coverage of the political news (Van Cuilenburg 1977). Perceptions of party positions can also be based on survey research, for example using national election surveys. This chapter compares policy positions of parties according to party manifestos, to the media, and to the public. The estimation of policy positions of parties will be confined to recent election campaigns (1989, 1994 and 1998) in the Netherlands because of the availability of data.

In order to allow us to evaluate the face validity of our estimates we should specify, before we begin the process of estimation, which political facts should be accounted for by a valid spatial representation of policy positions in the Netherlands. For the first time since the First World War a government without Christian Democrats came into being in 1994: this was the first 'purple' cabinet comprising VVD (Liberals), PvdA (Social Democrats) and D66 (Liberal Democrats). This coalition was extended after the 1998 election. If party programmes reflect the ambitions of the parties that produce them, then an estimation of the salience and direction of party positions using party programmes should reveal why the CDA (Christian Democratic Alliance) was excluded from government. Note that an estimation of the salience and direction of party positions based on

expert judgements indicated that 'any government excluding the CDA is likely to be out of equilibrium' (Laver 1995).

A valid spatial representation of the direction and salience of party positions according to *the media* should also reveal clues about the attractiveness to the voters of the policy bids of the various parties. Measurement of policy positions of parties should reveal why the CDA lost enormously in 1994 and why it lost further in 1998 (see Table 11.1). Why did the VVD win at both elections? Why were inconsistent results obtained by the Social Democrats (PvdA down from forty-nine to thirty-seven seats in 1994 and back to forty-five seats in 1998) and the Liberal Democrats (D66 from 12 seats in 1989 up to twenty-four seats in 1994 and back to fourteen in 1998)? Political parties are assumed to respond to shifts in the salience of issues for voters, and to shifts in the perceived party positions of parties by voters. Voter beliefs and their consequences for party programmes will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Measurement of party positions on the basis of party programmes

The MRG approach to the estimation of policy positions

In the literature on party manifestos the Manifesto Research Group (for example, Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge, Hearl and Robertson 1987; Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994) is dominant. The MRG method is to categorise each sentence in a party programme as belonging to one out of fifty-six themes. In this way the *saliency* of these fifty-six themes is measured. Therefore this approach can be characterised as *thematic content analysis* rather than as *relational content analysis*, since the focus of research is on the frequency of issues or themes rather than the direction of their relationships with other actors and themes (Roberts 1997).

The data resulting from the MRG approach have been shown to be suitable for estimating policy positions on many dimensions for various countries, parties and years (Laver and Budge 1992; Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987;

Table 11.1 Recent electoral fortunes of parties and party families in the Netherlands

Party	*Party family*	*Seats in Parliament (150 seats)*		
		1989	*1994*	*1998*
GroenLinks	New Left/ecologists	6	5	11
PvdA	Social-Democrats	49	37	45
D66	Libertarians	12	24	14
CDA	Christian-Democrats	54	34	29
VVD	Conservative Liberals	22	31	38
SGP, GPV, RPF	Orthodox Christians	6	7	8
CD, CP86	Extreme right (near racist)	1	3	0
Others		0	9	5

Pennings and Keman 1994), although policy positions based on the MRG data are typically based on left–right scales. The selection of left and right issues in several publications is quite arbitrary, however. Not much attention is paid to the reliability (or scalability) of left and right issues. In most cases no scalability analysis is applied (e.g. Budge and Laver 1992; Klingemann *et al.* 1994). In other publications factor analysis is used (e.g. Budge *et al.* 1987), although this technique will produce erroneous results when the scale is not strictly bipolar (left versus right) (Van Schuur and Kiers 1994).

This chapter uses the Pennings–Keman (1994) left–right scale. Pennings and Keman selected items for their scale in terms of the extent to which parties deemed leftist by experts (Castles and Mair 1984) consistently favoured leftist issues from the MRG data, whereas parties deemed rightist favoured rightist issues. The scale that they derived satisfied a Likert scalability analysis., and the MRG variables included in it can be seen in Table 11.2. Figure 11.1 shows that Dutch parties do not 'leapfrog' each other's positions on the Pennings–Keman left–right scale.

The probabilistic keyword-approach to estimating policy positions

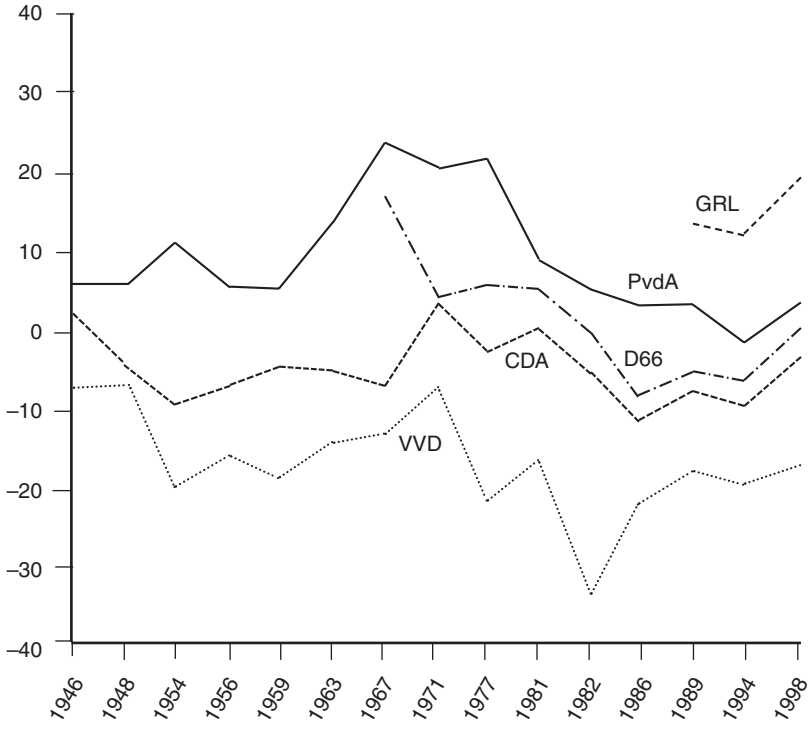
The manual coding of text into policy categories is time consuming, boring and potentially unreliable. Instead of manually categorising sentences into pre-defined categories, in the manner of the MRG, keywords assumed to be associated with these categories can be counted automatically. 'Automatic content analysis' is often equated with keyword counts based on thematic content analysis, rather than a 'relational' content analysis based on a syntactic and semantic analysis of sentences (e.g. Roberts 1997). In this chapter we show how party manifestos can be coded using a probabilistic keyword approach. These codings are kept completely 'MRG compatible' by coding the electronic documents into the same categories as are present in the MRG project. This is done to assess the validity of our own computer codings by comparing them with existing codings of the same texts.

Probabilistic coding gives us an opportunity to preserve the ambiguity of words. Since words do not uniquely point towards one category, probabilistic

Table 11.2 Composition of the Pennings–Keman left–right scale

Left emphases: sum of % for		*Right emphases: sum of % for*
105 Anti-military		104 Pro-military
106 Peace		303 Government efficiency
202 Democracy	Minus	505 Anti-social services
413 Nationalisation		401 Free enterprise
503 Social justice		402 Economic incentives
701 Pro-labour		414 Economic orthodoxy
		605 Law and order

Source: Pennings and Keman 1994: 40; Cronbach's alpha = 0.56.



Legend: PvdA = social democrat
VVD = conservative liberal
CDA = christian democrat
D66 = social liberal
GRL = ecologist and socialist

Figure 11.1 Left–right movements based on the manual codings with the MRG coding scheme

coding uses the probability of their presence in various categories – derived from a 'calibration set' of manifestos – to establish the likelihood that these categories occur in new texts being analysed. This process comprises four steps:

1 The original MRG codes (101 through 706) assigned by human coders to the separate (quasi)-*sentences* in a set of party programmes, labelled as the 'calibrating set', serve as the point of departure. Each sentence is connected with one MRG category.
2 A set of fifty-six probabilities is assigned to each *word (stem)* occurring in the calibrating set: one probability for each of the fifty-six categories of the MRG scheme. The result is a *probabilistic dictionary*. In this, the extent to which a given word is an indicator of a given MRG category depends on the empirical probability of it being linked to the fifty-six MRG categories in the calibrating set. This circumvents the arbitrary

binary decisions that sometimes determine whether or not a word (stem) is an indicator of a specific category.

3 A manual refinement of the probabilistic dictionary can be applied. In our case, words that occurred less than five times were removed from the dictionary. Words that occurred extremely often but did not discriminate between the categories were removed also, for example, function words like 'the'.

4 The probabilistic dictionary derived in this way is applied to the 'application set' of party programmes to be coded. For a complete party programme the 'frequency' of a specific MRG category in that party programme can be computed as the sum of the frequencies of the word stems from the calibrating set in the application set, weighted by their respective probabilities of pointing towards the MRG category under review.

The calibrating set in this paper consists of three of the five party programmes of 1998 (PvdA, VVD, CDA). The application set consists of all other Dutch party programmes in the period 1946–98. The approach can, however, be applied to any language. Another way to proceed would be to apply the method to documents translated into English, so that one and the same dictionary could be applied. The keyword approach is robust to subtle translation errors since translation of words is much easier than translation of sentences.

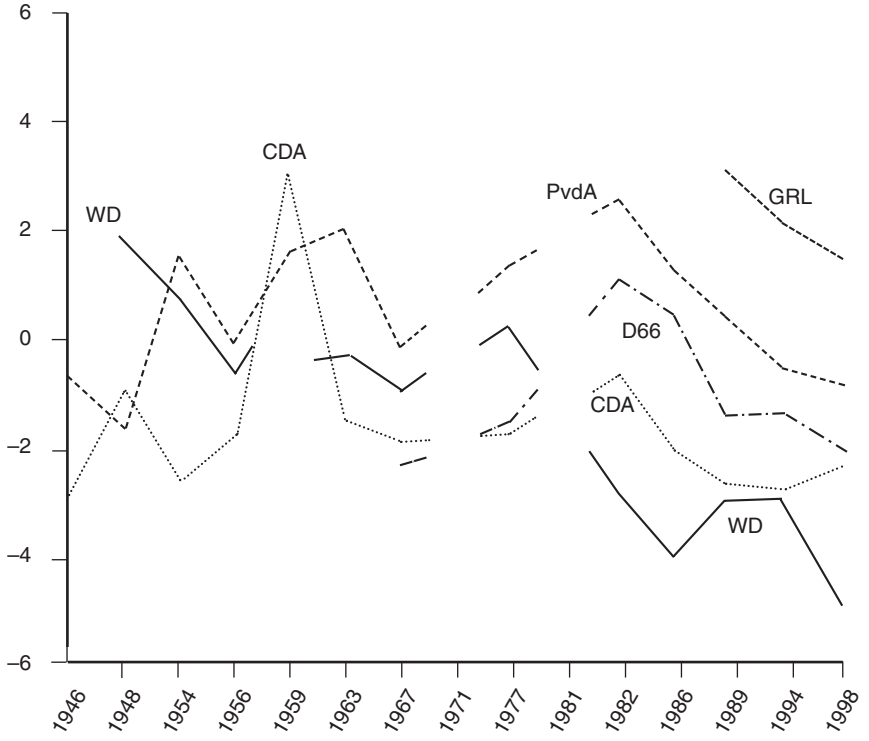
Figure 11.2 shows party movements in the Netherlands estimated applying the word count approach to the Pennings-Keman left–right scales. The most important result is the broad similarity in the positioning of the five established parties. Both the manually coded MRG scale and the scale based on automatic coding do come up with the same rank order of parties on the left–right scale. Most expert scales also confirm this rank order (see: Laver and Schofield 1990 for an overview). There are, however, also some striking differences between the two types of coding:

1 In the early period, D66 is placed much more to the right on the automated scale.

2 In 1998 all parties, except the CDA, would move to the right, whereas the MRG scales suggest that all parties moved to the left.

3 Probabilistic word coding apparently does not work well for small documents, say less than ten pages. This conclusion is based on observing the volatile movements on the left–right scale before 1967, when party programmes typically consisted of less then ten pages (for example, the CDA is implausibly estimated to be the most left-wing party in 1959).

These discrepancies suggest that probabilistic coding, although promising, is still fairly crude in its present form. In the remaining part of the chapter we therefore rely on manual MRG coding of manifestos.



(Based on Pennings–Keman 1994)

Legend: PvdA = social democrat
VVD = conservative liberal
CDA = christian democrat
D66 = social liberal
GRL = ecologist and socialist

Figure 11.2 Left–right movements based on the automated codings with the MRG coding scheme

Policy positions and government formation: the question of predictive validity

In this section we show that the estimation of policy positions contributes to the explanation of government formation, although this explanation is far from complete. We focus on the formation of a 'purple coalition' without the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA) in 1994 and 1998.

The realisation of a purple coalition cannot be explained on the basis of a one dimensional left–right scale, since the CDA is located firmly in between D66 and VVD on the left–right axis in 1989, 1994 and 1998 (Figure 11.3). A two dimensional representation of policy positions is therefore required. An obvious second dimension, in the context of the Netherlands, is clerical orthodoxy (based on orthodox Calvinism) versus libertarian permissiveness

(e.g. Laver and Hunt 1992). The permissiveness scale can be operationalised in a similar vein as the left–right scale (Pennings and Keman 1984). We correlated all fifty-six MRG variables with the mean expert scores of parties on two dimensions in the Laver and Hunt (1992) survey: 'permissive social policies' and 'clericalism'. Only one MRG coding category was strongly related to these expert scales: 'Traditional morality: positive'. The conservatism-liberalism scale was thus computed by subtracting 'Traditional morality: positive' from 'Traditional morality: negative' in the MRG data. A positive score on the left–right scale means 'left' and on the conservative-progressive scale it means 'permissive'.

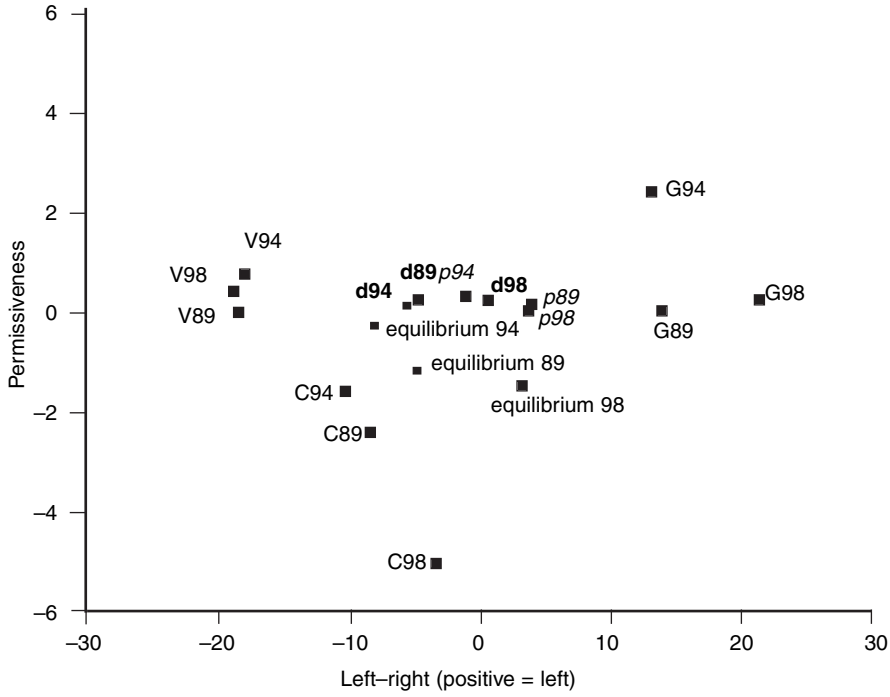
The weighted centroid in a two dimensional representation of policy positions is the mean of the policy positions of the five main parties on the two dimensions weighted by the number of seats in parliament controlled by each party and the saliency attached to the two dimensions (derived from expert judgements of Laver and Hunt 1992). Given the highly proportional electoral system and the weighting procedure, this centroid approximates the centroid *of voters* in party space. The centroid of a government coalition will of course typically deviate from the centroid of voters in party space, since not all parties are included in the government.

Figure 11.3 shows the development of party policy positions and centroids of voters over time. This figure suggests that 1994 is indeed special because the centroid combines relatively rightist socio-economic positions with permissive positions on the liberal–conservatism scale. This enables the cooperation of PvdA and VVD and the exclusion of the CDA. In 1998 the centroid of voters moved more to the left on the left–right dimension and to the conservative side of the liberalism–conservatism dimension. If this situation had occurred in 1994, then a 'purple' cabinet would have been less likely. Actually the second 'purple' coalition is less stable than the first. In May 1999, D66 left the 'purple' coalition, which could only be repaired by new concessions to D66. The media reported many other near-crises during the first year of the second 'purple' cabinet, but the cabinet was reconciled by the economic boom that enabled the simultaneous reduction of taxes and increase of expenditure on education, health and social welfare. Estimates of policy positions using MRG data in a two dimensional space do thus give meaningful insights into the origin of the first-ever Dutch coalition without the CDA in 1994.

Measurement of party positions according to the media

News sources and content analysis method

The results reported below are based on the analysis of political news from five national newspapers in the Netherlands (*De Telegraaf*, *Algemeen Dagblad*, *de Volkskrant*, *NRC/Handelsblad* and *Trouw*) and from two prime time television news bulletins (*NOS*, *RTL4*), between 24 January 1994 and election day on 3 May. Political news from the same media for the period between



Legend: The 1989 cabinet = P + C, 1994 cabinet = P + V + D, 1998 cabinet = P + V + D. *p* = Pvda, V = VVD, **d** = D66, C = CDA, G = Green Left. A high score on both dimensions means left c.q. permissive.

Figure 11.3 Two-dimensional representation of policy positions plus equilibria since 1989

15 September 1997 and 6 May 1998 (election day) was also analyzed. These newspapers and television news bulletins were selected as a general representation of the national news 'climate'.

The headlines and the introductory paragraph of newspaper stories and entire political items in television news were coded *sentence by sentence* using the Network Analysis of Texts system, which is supported by the CETA2-programme (Van Cuilenburg *et al.* 1986; De Ridder 1994a, 1994b; Kleinnijenhuis, De Ridder and Rietberg 1997). Each sentence was split into 'nuclear sentences' that link one subject to one object with a predicate. Roughly a quarter of the original nuclear sentences dealt with the issue positions of parties. The issue position retrieved from a nuclear sentence can be quantified on a scale with a number ranging from +1 (pro) to –1 (contra). Subjects and objects were recoded for the purpose of this chapter to a limited set of party families and issue groups (see the rows of Table 11.3 below).

The *saliency* of an issue (group) for a party according to the news can be operationalised as the percentage of all issue-statements by all parties that

Table 11.3 Saliency and direction of issue positions of Dutch parties in 1994 and 1998 according to the media

1994	*Social Democrats PvdA*		*Libertarians D66*		*Christian Democrats CDA*	
	Saliency (%)	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*
Left	10.3	0.32	3.1	0.19	16.2	–0.05
Right	8.4	0.24	3.0	0.51	9.2	0.44
Valence	4.2	0.47	1.0	0.51	3.7	0.23
Asylum seekers	5.8	–0.08	0.1	–0.25	4.2	–0.25
Christian ethics	0.0	0.00	0.3	–0.30	1.3	0.05
Environment	2.5	0.12	1.8	0.54	1.4	–0.37
Democracy	0.8	0.88	0.9	1.00	0.0	0.00
Europe	0.3	0.13	0.1	–0.75	0.4	1.00
Other	1.5	0.80	0.0	0.00	0.7	0.59
1998	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*
Left	5.4	0.77	1.1	0.19	1.5	0.62
Right	5.7	–0.14	6.2	0.20	1.5	0.43
Valence	4.6	0.65	3.8	0.51	1.2	0.19
Asylum seekers	2.4	0.23	0.7	0.50	0.6	–0.36
Christian ethics	0.8	–0.41	1.3	–0.51	1.2	0.66
Environment	6.0	0.60	3.8	0.35	1.5	–0.07
Democracy	1.8	0.11	0.9	0.70	0.1	0.33
Europe	1.4	0.25	0.9	0.17	0.1	0.17
Other	2.4	–0.11	5.4	–0.45	0.5	0.37

Saliency = percentage of total attention for issue position of parties devoted to specific issue position of specific party (*table* percentage).
Direction = mean value of the positions of a specific party on a specific issue according to separate nuclear sentences.

Reading example: In 1994 a larger proportion of the news was devoted to the issue position of the PvdA (Social Democrats) than in 1998 (10.3% as compared to 5.4%). According to the media the PvdA took a more moderate pro-leftist viewpoint on these issues in 1994 than in 1998 (+0.32 in 1994 as compared to +0.77 in 1998).

deal with the position of that party on that issue. The *direction* of the position of a party on an issue can be computed as the mean of the signed values of the sentences dealing with that party's position on that issue.

Issue positions of parties: changes from 1994 to 1998

Table 11.3 presents the saliences and directions of the issue positions of Dutch parties in 1994 and 1998. Issue news is split up into ten issue groups,

Table 11.3 (continued)

1994	*Conservative Liberals VVD*		*Ecologists GroenLinks*		*Orthodox Christians SGP GPV RPF*	
	Saliency (%)	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency %*	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*
Left	4.1	–0.52	0.3	0.75	0.00	0.00
Right	3.5	0.57	0.8	–0.13	0.26	0.13
Valence	2.1	0.50	0.4	0.50	0.00	0.00
Asylum seekers	4.1	–0.52	0.3	0.88	0.00	0.00
Christian ethics	0.3	0.70	0.0	0.00	0.13	1.00
Environment	0.5	0.01	0.8	0.96	0.39	0.08
Democracy	0.0	0.00	0.1	0.50	0.00	0.00
Europe	0.1	1.00	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	0.1	1.00	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1998	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction (Mean)*	*Saliency (%)*	*Direction Mean*
Left	3.6	–0.14	0.7	0.73	0.11	0.75
Right	6.0	0.35	0.3	–0.27	0.14	0.50
Valence	2.0	0.37	0.5	0.69	0.18	0.65
Asylum seekers	2.6	–0.52	0.2	0.85	0.00	0.00
Christian ethics	0.8	–0.01	0.0	0.00	0.77	0.97
Environment	6.6	–0.02	1.7	0.80	0.84	0.22
Democracy	1.3	0.10	0.3	0.44	0.21	–0.08
Europe	3.2	–0.26	0.0	–0.75	0.11	–0.92
Other	2.9	0.41	0.1	–0.90	0.07	0.13

which constitute the rows of the table. We discuss these figures in depth because they reveal the main developments in Dutch politics between 1994 and 1998.

Leftist issues deal with social security, wage guarantees, and so on. As compared to 1994 the saliency of leftist issues diminished considerably (for the PvdA, for example, from 10.3 to 5.4, for the CDA from 16.2 to 1.5). All parties shifted towards more pro-leftist issue positions (PvdA from +0.32 to +0.77, CDA from –0.05 to +0.62). The economic prosperity of 1997–8 as compared to the small economic dip of 1991–3 may have made leftist measures less controversial, and therefore less newsworthy, in 1998. A further explanation has to do with the bizarre political manoeuvres of the Christian Democrats (CDA). In 1993 the Christian Democrats launched the draft of their party programme earlier than other parties so as to set a rightist tone for the 1994 campaign. The CDA pledged a 'watershed' in post-war history to end soft (that is, leftist) policies that would lead to a

growing financial deficit. Consequently, journalists began to direct their questions on cuts in social security primarily to CDA politicians. When the amount of proposed savings was doubled in the final CDA programme, a party official announced that a freeze of pensions for the elderly would be necessary. This statement shocked the entire country. As a result the political debate shifted from rightist issues such as the desirability of cuts in government spending, towards leftist issues such as the desirability of pensions and other social welfare provisions. In order to compensate for this error, the CDA tried to shift leftwards as the elections came close, but it had already lost credibility. The CDA lost the elections and was kept out of government.

Shortly after the 1994 elections an internal CDA strategy committee advised a shift to present the 'social face' of the CDA more clearly and, according to all measures, the 1998 CDA programme marked a significant shift to the left indeed. The media data on the direction of policy viewpoints in 1998 suggest that other parties reacted to the shift to the left of the Christian-Democrats by moving to the left also. As a result the fairly leftist CDA orientation of 1998 was not controversial and therefore not newsworthy and was useless in bringing back the voters who deserted in 1994.

The news on rightist issues (finance deficit, taxes, crime) shows similar tendencies to that on leftist issues. Total media attention dropped as compared to 1994. With the exception of the CDA, parties became less rightist in 1994 (the PvdA position shifted from +0.24 to –0.13, D66 from +0.51 to +0.20, VVD from +0.57 to +0.30). Whereas the VVD was the most right wing party in 1994, the CDA occupied this position in 1998. The CDA wanted to be tougher on crime than the VVD, but a CDA plan to allow the criminal prosecution of ten-year old juveniles was deemed ludicrous in the media. The VVD could easily argue that ten-year old juveniles should be punished within their own family, thereby undermining the role of the CDA as the 'family' party.

With respect to valence issues (employment, health care) the PvdA clearly came out ahead in 1998 (+0.65), whereas D66 did so in 1994 (+0.51). The remarkably low score of the CDA in 1998 (+0.19) was the result of media hype surrounding the economic forecasts of the Dutch central planning agency (CPB), indicating that the CDA programme would result in less employment than the programmes of the other parties.

The issue of asylum seekers was the big shock of the 1994 campaign. This issue had been taboo for established parties, but the VVD launched a tough policy two months before the elections (saliency 4.1 per cent, position –0.52). By 1998, the issue of asylum seekers had almost lost its power because, amongst other things, the issue was soured for the VVD by some reckless remarks by VVD backbenchers in the early phases of the campaign. Moreover, some media hype arose because the VVD campaign manager was accused of SS-sympathies.

Media representation of issue positions and success at elections

As compared to the 1994 campaign, the PvdA did even better in 1998. The amount of attention devoted to leftist issues diminished, but attention to rightist issues diminished also. As compared to 1994, a pro-leftist trend in issue positions could clearly be seen. The relative position of the PvdA as compared to other parties was maintained. Moreover the PvdA was more in favour of valence issues than the other parties.

D66 performed poorly as compared to 1994. In 1994 D66 was an ecologist alternative for the PvdA (+0.54 for D66 as compared to +0.12 for the PvdA in 1994). In 1998 the roles were reversed. D66 was included in the government but the PvdA controlled the ministry of the environment. The PvdA used this ministry to stress its ecological viewpoints (+0.35 for D66 as compared to +0.60 for the PvdA in 1998).

The CDA performed badly in both elections. Issues such as euthanasia, that had figured in previous elections, did not gain momentum. On other issues, moderate CDA proposals were always outshone by more trenchant proposals from other parties, as predicted by the directional theory of issue voting (Rabinowitz and McDonald 1989).

The CDA surpassed its competitors only with regard to rightist issues, but the CDA position on the prosecution of juvenile criminals also exceeded the 'boundaries of acceptability'.

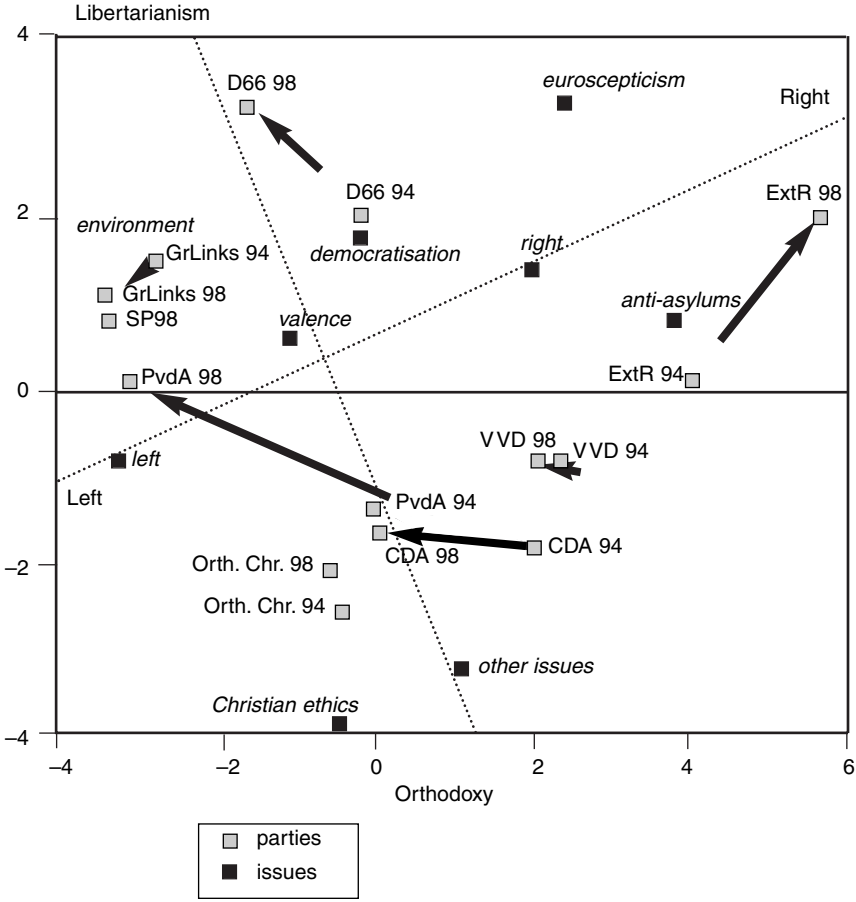
The VVD performed better in the 1994 campaign than in 1998. In 1994 the VVD had a clear profile with respect to asylum seekers (saliency 4 per cent, direction –0.52), rightist issues (saliency 3.5 per cent, direction +0.57) and leftist issues (saliency 4 per cent, direction –0.52). In 1998 the policy viewpoints of the VVD were less clear cut (saliency asylum seekers 2.1 per cent, pro-rightist position +0.35, anti-leftist position –0.14). Green Left performed well as compared to 1994 because ecologist issues gained much more momentum in 1998 than in 1994. The orthodox Christian parties were almost excluded from media attention.

Thus the data in Table 11.3 on media coverage of issues are consistent with electoral outcomes. A party usually wins elections when trenchant viewpoints on issues that it 'owns' attract a lot of media attention. A detailed time series analysis of the impact of weekly shifts in the issue news upon party performance in weekly panel-surveys shows that shifts in the issue-news are important predictors of changes in party preferences (Kleinnijenhuis *et al.* 1995, 1998; Kleinnijenhuis and De Ridder 1998).

Towards a parsimonious representation of the party-issue space according to the media

Although the data reported in Table 11.3 allow an easy interpretation of vote seeking by issue positions, a low-dimensional representation is needed to compare issue positions derived from the media with those derived from

party manifestos. The appropriate technique to reduce the dimensionality of a policy space of parties that accord both position and salience to an issue is *Weighted Metric Multidimensional Scaling* (WMMDS). The con-pro issue scales of Table 11.3 can be linearly transformed into distances, and the idea of WMMDS is that issue positions of parties can be conceived as



Abbreviations of party names:
'GrLinks': GroenLinks; 'ExtR': Extreme Right anti-immigration parties CD and CP86; Orth Chr: orthodox Christian parties RPF, GPV and SGP.

Abbreviations of issues:
left: leftist issues such as social security; right: rightist issues such as low taxes; valence: issues that are not controversial, e.g. employment; anti-asylums: against (more) asylum seekers; Christian ethics, e.g. against euthanasia; environment: ecologist viewpoints, e.g. limitations to growth of the national airport Schiphol; democratisation: e.g. election of mayor; euroscepticism: e.g. hesitations against a 'French' or 'Italian' monetary policy of the EU; other issues, especially international intervention in Yugoslavia in 1994.

Figure 11.4 Two-dimensional WMMDS reduction of the party-issue space according to the media

distances between parties and issues in a space where each issue represents a dimension (Heiser 1982; Borg and Groenen 1997).[1]

Figure 11.4 represents the results of an WMMDS analysis when the issue space is reduced to two dimensions. To interpret the two dimensional issue space easily, a new set of axes have been added. The first is the left–right axis, which is defined as the straight line connecting the positions of 'leftist issues' and 'rightist issues'. The second is orthogonal to this and is labeled 'libertarianism versus orthodoxy' (equivalent to permissiveness versus clericalism). Figure 11.4 can be compared with Figure 11.3, which was derived from party programmes, and shows that Euroscepticism and anti-immigrant policies can be considered as extreme rightist policies. Anti-immigrant parties (CD, CP86, etc., 'ExtR94 and ExtR98' in the Figure) are parties of the extreme right. On the left–right axis the ordering of parties is roughly SP, GroenLinks, PvdA, Orthodox Christians, CDA+D66, VVD, parties of the extreme right. The second orthogonal axis separates issues such as democratisation from Christian ethics, and D66 from CDA.

Figure 11.4 sets out the vote seeking strategies of parties in a straightforward way. The VVD position in 1998 is close to the VVD position in 1994. The position of CDA in 1994 was close to the position of the VVD in 1994, but in 1998 CDA shifted to the 1994 position of the PvdA in order to compete for leftist voters with the PvdA. The PvdA also shifted to the left, however. More weight was now given by the PvdA to environmental issues, so as to compete with SP and GroenLinks for the votes of dissatisfied left-wing voters. D66 shifted to more radical libertarian positions on the libertarianism–orthodoxy axis. D66 made proposals to further liberalise the euthanasia practices of the Netherlands. D66 fiercely defended the idea of a 24-hour economy against protests of churches and labour unions against seven-day, 24-hour activity for reasons of economic interests. However, despite D66 provocations, the CDA did not shift towards a more orthodox position.

Measurement of party positions according to voters

Perceptions of issue positions of parties

Issue questions dealing with both the left–right and the orthodoxy–libertarianism dimensions can be found in the Dutch National Election Studies each election year (Anker and Oppenhuis 1993, 1995; Aarts and Van der Kolk 1999). The question on 'income differences' represents the left–right dimension, whereas those on 'abortion' or 'euthanasia' represent the libertarianism–orthodoxy dimension. From 1994 onwards, the issue of ethnic minorities, which can be considered as a dimension in its own (cf. Laver 1995) was also addressed. Respondents are asked to rate their personal preferences as well as the perceived preferences of parties with regard to

these issues on a seven-point scale. In Table 11.4 these scales are linearly transformed into con–pro scales. According to the 1998 voters, the three issues represented in this table are equally important.[2]

In 1994 voters were less in favour of *income differences* (+0.18) than in 1989 (+0.27) or 1998 (+0.32). Voters believed that in 1994 the differences in party positions on income differences decreased as compared to 1989. In 1998 the voters perceived a shift to the left as compared to 1994. This was especially marked for the CDA (shifting from –0.13 to +0.09).

The perceptions of the positions of the parties regarding *abortion* or *euthanasia* did not change very much. Table 11.4 indicates that the gap between the CDA and D66 on these issues widened between 1994 and 1998 (+0.66 to -0.51 as compared to +0.05 to –0.30). This may have been due to the discussion of a proposed D66 amendment to the law on euthanasia, excluding euthanasia completely from criminal law. Voters did perceive a more radical viewpoint on the part of the CDA in 1998, but failed to see a change in the D66 position. The preferences of voters shifted slightly towards less libertarian attitudes. This shift may have been caused by the media treatment of doctors and nurses who caused the death of old patients without having honoured the required procedures for euthanasia, or by societal unrest over young victims of ecstasy drug abuse in the period 1994–8. Remarkably enough, all parties with the exception of D66 picked up the opinion shift towards less permissiveness in their party programmes (see Figure 11.4).

Voters perceived tougher issue positions on *ethnic minorities* in 1998 than in 1994, and did not recognise that the other parties followed the VVD in favour of tougher measures in 1994. In 1998 voters were slightly less in favour of tough measures than in 1994 (–0.23 as compared to –0.30). This might have been affected by the sympathetic media coverage of the Gümüs family, which was sent back to Turkey after their residence permits were found clearly deficient. If Table 11.4 is compared with the previous tables on party positions according to the media, then the general conclusion is that voters are fairly sensitive to changes in the media account of issue positions of parties.

Table 11.4 Voter preferences and perceptions of issue positions of parties

	Left-right			*Orthodoxy–permissiveness*				
	Income differences			*Euthanasia (1989)*			*Ethnic minorities*	
	[–1 to +1], con to pro			*Abortion (1994, 1998)*			*[–1 to +1]*	
				[–1 to +1], con to pro			*con to pro*	
	1989	*1994*	*1998*	*1989*	*1994*	*1998*	*1994*	*1998*
PvdA	0.63	0.48	0.50	0.50	0.33	0.32	0.27	0.20
D66	0.28	0.15	0.17	0.44	0.43	0.41	0.06	0.05
CDA	–0.16	–0.13	0.09	–0.45	–0.38	–0.46	0.03	–0.03
VVD	–0.49	–0.47	–0.42	0.32	0.32	0.34	–0.36	–0.44
Voters	0.27	0.18	0.32	0.33	0.45	0.39	–0.30	–0.23

Towards combined measures of perceptions of issue positions and issue saliency

Table 11.4 leaves shifts in the party preferences of voters largely unexplained. It is hard to understand, for example, why in 1998 the 'leftist' PvdA won by a large margin, whereas the CDA lost, although the voters recognised the CDA's shift to the left. The most likely answer is that the issue weights are dependent on the parties involved. The Social Democrats are the 'owners' of leftist issues. Leftist voters will stay with the PvdA even when Christian-Democrats shift to the left. The policy on income levelling is salient for the PvdA – the issue 'owner' – but is not for the CDA. This is the backbone of the 'issue saliency theory' or 'issue ownership theory' (Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocic 1996).

A few attempts have been made to include the saliency approach in survey research. The most frequently used method is to pose questions of the type 'Which of the following parties is in your opinion best suited to handle the problems with respect to [issue]?' The answers to these questions are ambiguous, however, since a party that is *not* chosen is either too inconspicuous or conspicuously incompetent. A party's issue emphasis is not measured independently of the direction of a party's issue position.

A rigorous attempt to measure fully both issue positions and issue saliency was made by Laver and Hunt (1992). They asked 'experts' to rate both the perceived issue positions of parties as well as the perceived salience of issues for these parties. This method is fairly time consuming, however. A short cut approach is provided by Trouw/NIPO research (Kleinnijenhuis *et al.* 1998: 111ff., n=1,065 respondents). Respondents were asked with which issue (out of a fairly long list of issues) a party was primarily and secondly associated. With respect to only two of these issues the question was asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with that party. Asking for agreement with party positions instead of asking respondents to rate party positions themselves circumvents the problem of whether respondents agree with a party according to the proximity the directional models of voting (Rabinowitz and McDonald 1989). Instead of the direction of party positions the extent of agreement between respondent and party is obtained from this type of question.

The results of this type of analysis are shown in Table 11.5 and confirm the conventional wisdom regarding issue ownership. Social Democrats are associated primarily with leftist issues (37 per cent) and equal access (42 per cent). Due to the 'Kanzlerbonus' and economic prosperity the PvdA also captured ownership of valence issues such as employment, health care, and education (52 per cent). The Kanzlerbonus effect is clearly in line with Petrocic's (1996) version of issue ownership theory. Moreover the PvdA policy on valence issues was found to be more positive than the policy of

the other parties (+0.29). The fact that health care was associated with the PvdA and not with D66, despite the fact that D66 leader Els Borst held the ministerial portfolio on health care, may be explained by the strikes of nurses and other health care workers against Borst. These were settled by PvdA prime minister Wim Kok, who seized the opportunity to announce that health care workers were entitled to a pay rise.

In the final count, D66 ranked lower than the PvdA in every respect with the exception of environmental care but, as compared to 1994, the lead of D66 on environmental issues had almost disappeared. D66 had a very strong reputation as an opposition party in 1994 on the environment. The party protested against infrastructural megaprojects that would occupy the last green parts of Holland, but the PvdA held the environmental portfolio in the 'purple' cabinet, whereas GroenLinks took over the role of D66 as a strong 'green' opposition party. Only nine per cent of voters associated D66 with the environment in 1998, while 62 per cent associated GroenLinks with the environment. The 'pilfering' of issues formerly owned by D66, when the party entered a coalition government, may explain why D66 increased its vote when in opposition, but lost votes on entering a coalition government (as in 1977, 1982 and 1998).

Table 11. 5 shows that the CDA is still perceived as the single issue owner of traditional Christian values (85 per cent). The advice of the CDA evaluation committee (committee Gardeniers) to show a more social, leftist, face did not bring back voters who deserted the party in 1994. Leftist issues were dominant in the 1994 campaign due to the CDA proposal to freeze all salaries, including pensions for the elderly, but they were simply not newsworthy in the 1998 campaign. Only a minority of voters (8 per cent) considered leftist issues a major CDA concern. The shift to the left was perceived by these voters (+0.25), but in the campaign as a whole the shift to the left yielded no benefits.

The economic liberals (VVD) owned rightist issues (finance deficit, crime: 44 per cent) and asylum seekers (33 per cent). Most voters agreed more with the tougher VVD position on asylum seekers than with the more diplomatic approaches of the other parties. The VVD could not use this issue in a crucial phase of the campaign, however, because VVD campaign leader Van Baalen had to resign because of accusations of Nazi sympathies.

The combined data on voter perceptions of the salience and direction of issue positions enable a neat explanation of the election outcome. The winning parties – PvdA, VVD and GroenLinks – were associated with issues on which they had a good reputation. The losing parties – D66 and CDA – were not associated with promising issues. D66 ranked second in every relevant aspect. The CDA was associated primarily with traditional orthodoxy, but not with its new 'social face'. The CDA did not profit from its association with traditional orthodoxy. When D66 provoked the CDA during the campaign with its proposal to remove euthanasia completely

Table 11.5 Issue saliency and agreement with issue positions according to voters

	Social Democrats PvdA		*Libertarians D66*		*Christian Democr CDA*		*Conservative Lib. VVD*		*Ecologists GroenLinks*	
	Saliency %	*Agreement [-1 to +1]*	*Saliency %*	*Agreement [-1 to +1]*	*Saliency %*	*Agreement [-1 to +1]*	*Saliency %*	*Agreement [-1 to +1]*	*Saliency %*	*Agreement [-1 to +1]*
Left (social security)	37	+0.22	7	+0.13	8	+0.25	7	–0.12	19	+0.17
Right (crime, finance deficit)	13	+0.14	8	+0.04	15	+0.27	44	+0.20	4	+0.20
Valence (employment, health care, education)	52	+0.29	30	+0.14	17	+0.24	16	+0.24	13	+0.28
Asylum seekers	5	–0.23	4	–0.24	3	+0.01	33	+0.10	12	–0.18
Christian ethics (family, values)	6	+0.30	4	+0.29	85	+0.20	9	+0.28	6	+0.14
Environment, infrastructure	4	+0.07	9	+0.07	3	+0.12	8	+0.11	62	+0.16
Democracy (part time work)	42	+0.29	6	+0.21	8	+0.20	10	+0.28	7	+0.25

Reading example: 13% of the respondents associated the PvdA with rightist issues (crime and/or finance deficit). The average agreement with the PvdA-position was +0.14. For the VVD these figures were 44%, which indicates that rightist issues are 'owned' by the VVD. Moreover the VVD position is slightly more positive (+0.20).

from criminal law, the party hesitated because of its fear that the CDA would be perceived as a reactionary party. As a result of the absence of political confict there was almost no news on the libertarianism–orthodoxy axis during the last month of the campaign.

Discussion

A key assumption of this chapter is that political positions can be represented as having both *saliency* and *direction*. The paper shows that refined measurement of the salience and direction of party issue positions, using party manifestos, media coverage and voter surveys, offers new insights into the cyclical process of politics. Party manifestos tap the office seeking and policy seeking positions of parties, whereas media coverage taps the vote seeking positions of parties. Data for the Netherlands are consistent with a cyclical model of symbolic democracy (Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg 1995). Parties seem to influence media and media appear to have an influence on voters. Party programmes, in turn, clearly reflect changes in public opinion.

As a methodological innovation, this chapter also presents a simple method for automated probabilistic content analysis. Results are promising but not completely satisfactory. Hopefully, semi-automatic content analysis to measure party positions based on thesauri with syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information on word forms and sentence structures will become available in the next decades.

Notes

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1 The programme PROXSCAL, included in SPSS 10.0, supports WMMDS.

2 If the data are data transformed into a [0 to 1] saliency scale, the mean scores on issue importance questions in National Election Study 1998 for income differences, euthanasia and ethnic minorities were, respectively 0.67, 0.70 and 0.67.

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12 The computer coding of political texts

Results from Britain, Germany, Ireland and Norway

John Garry

Introduction

An ever-increasing volume of politically relevant text is now available in electronic form, including party manifestos, speeches, legislative debates, newspaper editorials and political statements of one kind or another. This is beginning to open up exciting new possibilities for both computer-assisted and fully computerised analyses of political texts, including analyses that seek to estimate the policy positions of political actors in order to elaborate models of political competition.

As can be seen from several of the chapters in this book, there has been considerable and influential qualitative content analysis of political texts, including party election manifestos, designed to tap the policy concerns of political actors. (See, for example, the work of the Manifesto Research Group reported in Budge *et al.* 1987; Klingemann *et al.* 1994.) There are many advantages to content analysis based on qualitative coding, also referred to as 'expert' or 'hand' coding. One key limitation, however, relates to the quantity of text that can be analysed. Imagine, to take an extreme example, that we wished to analyse the universe of post-war parliamentary debates in all European countries. It would take many years for even a small army of researchers to hand code the text involved. However, if the relevant texts could be easily assembled in electronic form, a single researcher could computer code the entire body of text in a relatively short period. For the same practical reasons, a researcher can use a computer to code and recode a more limited body of text over and over again, at very little cost, if he or she wants to engage in a careful methodological investigation of the impact of various alternative coding strategies.

This short chapter seeks to demonstrate that it is feasible to computer code vast amounts of politically relevant text in different languages in order to estimate the policy concerns of political actors. Obviously the computer coding of text is very different from hand coding. The next section elaborates these differences. The third section briefly describes a technique developed by Laver and Garry (2000) for the computer coding of political text, a technique tested by them on Irish and UK manifestos.

The main aim of this chapter is to apply this computer coding technique – which we refer to as computer coded content analysis (CCCA) – to foreign language texts, more specifically to texts written in languages that are unknown to the researcher conducting the analysis. The final section reports the results of analysing both German manifestos and Norwegian party manifestos in this way. The implication of these results is that the technique of computer coding text to infer policy positions can be applied in a variety of different language environments, with exciting implications for comparative research.

Comparing qualitative and quantitative text analysis

Generally, in the qualitative hand coding of text, a coder uses a predefined coding frame consisting of different substantive categories relating to a particular research topic. The coder also has a text that he or she breaks down into 'text units', such as sentences or paragraphs. He or she reads through the text and judges to which category in the coding frame each text unit should be allocated. The Manifesto Research Group (MRG) project is a good example of qualitative content analysis of this type. The coders used in qualitative content analysis are typically chosen because they are familiar with the substantive research area being studied. Because they are, in this sense, 'expert' and read the text very carefully during coding they are well equipped to take account of the *context* of the text units that that they are coding.

In contrast, the computer coding of text is based on frequency counts of key words. These may be coded in or out of their textual context, but this coding can take no account of the external political or social context in which the text appears. In coding words out of their textual context, furthermore, computer coding techniques simply count the frequency of key words, that have been identified prior to the analysis as part of a coding 'dictionary'. Coding words out of their textual context may initially seem to be a significant drawback because there are many words that have very different meanings in different contexts. The words 'race' or 'state' for example can mean different things in different contexts. 'The state of the country', 'increase state intervention' and 'reduce state intervention' are three very different phrases all containing the word 'state', for example. However, as Laver and Garry (2000) argue, the problems of ambiguous meaning when taking words out of context may not in practice be as great as they seem at first sight. The words 'taxes' and 'choice', for example, are words that can obviously be used in different contexts to mean different things. In the texts analysed by Laver and Garry (2000), however, both of these words were in practice used predominantly by actors identified by independent sources as being from the economic right rather than the economic left. Associating such words empirically with right-wing economic policies, therefore, allows computer coded text analysis to add

valuable systematic information about the economic policy positions of 'virgin' texts.

Obviously, computer coding is far more reliable than hand coding. Once the dictionary of key words has been defined and the text is in electronic form, the computer will generate identical coding results for identical texts, regardless of the analyst, timing or social context involved. In contrast, when reliability checks are in fact conducted (and this is far from always the case) hand coding often leads to high levels of disagreement between different coders and also between the same coder at two time points.[1]

Even in terms of validity, computer coding may have certain advantages. Computer coding is mechanical and taken out of any larger social context, removing any role for human judgement. This may reduce the potential for bias in the coding of a given document from a source known to the coder. A coder may, for example, know that the document she is coding comes from a left-wing party and this may predispose her to code ambiguous text units into more left-wing categories – even if the party has changed its policies in a rightwards direction in recent times. A computer coding text out of social context is not susceptible to these biases (Laver and Garry 2000).

Another obvious difference between hand and computer coding is that hand coders have to be fluent in the language in which the document is written. As we shall see, the key aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that computer coding can generate valid and reliable estimates of party policy positions from texts written in languages not spoken by the analyst. Before doing this, however, we first describe the development of the computer coding with reference to English language texts.

Computer coded content analysis: an application to British and Irish party manifestos

Laver and Garry (2000) describe a method that they used for the computer coding of British and Irish party manifestos from the elections of 1992 and 1997 in each country. The first crucial stage in the computer coding of text is the generation of lists of key words associated with particular coding categories: a 'dictionary'. Laver and Garry generated an English language dictionary for estimating policy positions using a mixture of a priori and empirical reasoning. They used as reference texts the British Conservative and Labour manifestos of 1992. These two documents were taken, on the basis of quite independent estimates, to be very different in terms of the policy positions they espoused.

Words appearing at least twice as frequently in one manifesto as in the other were taken potentially to discriminate between the two texts. Words appearing at least twice as frequently in the Labour manifesto were taken to be potential 'left-wing' words; those appearing at least twice as frequently

in the Conservative manifesto were taken to be potential 'right-wing' words. Within the group of left (or right) wing words Laver and Garry assigned words that they took to relate to economic policy to the 'left (or right)-wing economics' coding category. Word lists for other coding categories were generated in a similar way. (See http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/Michael.Laver/ for full listings of the words in the policy dictionary.)

Obviously, since the two reference texts were used to generate the coding dictionary, the computer coding of these texts adds no new information about party policy positions. Laver and Garry used this dictionary, however, to code a range of other English language texts from the same periods: the British and Irish party manifestos from the 1992 and 1997 elections. For each text the total frequency of 'economic left' and 'economic right' words was calculated. These data were then used to generate estimates of the economic policy of the parties involved, using the following simple ratio scale:

$$(R - L) \; / \; (R + L)$$

where L was the frequency of 'economic left' words in the text and R the frequency of 'economic right' words (See Laver and Garry 2000).

The estimates based on computer coding were cross-validated against estimated positions for the same parties, at the same time points, generated by a range of independent techniques. These included expert surveys, hand coding of manifestos using the MRG coding scheme and hand coding of manifestos using an explicitly positional coding scheme developed by Laver and Garry themselves. The correlations between the policy positions generated by computer coding and the other techniques ranged – as reported in Table 12.1 – from 0.84 to 0.92. Laver and Garry concluded from this that the computer coding of British and Irish manifestos yielded valid estimates of the economic policy positions of the political parties.

The computer coding of non-English political texts

In this section the computer coded content analysis (CCCA) procedure is applied to German and Norwegian party manifestos, with a view to estimating the economic policy positions of the respective parties.

German political texts

Two German reference texts were used as a source of vocabulary from which a German economic policy 'dictionary' could be drawn. These were the 1990 election manifestos of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). These manifestos were known from external sources to differ significantly on economic policy. The frequencies of words

Table 12.1 Pearson correlations between alternative estimates of economic left–right scale positions, Britain and Ireland 1992–7

	Computer codings	*Revised expert codings*	*Original MRG codings*	*Expert surveys*
1992				
Computer codings	1.00			
Revised expert codings	0.91	1.00		
Original MRG codings	0.84	0.94	1.00	
Expert surveys	0.87	0.95	0.99	1.00
1997				
Computer codings	1.00			
Revised expert codings	0.92	1.00		
Expert surveys	0.89	0.95	N/A	1.00

Source: Table 5 in Laver and Garry 2000.

used in these manifestos were compared. After controlling for manifesto length, words which appeared more in the left-wing (SPD) text than the right-wing (FDP) text, and which were judged, upon translation, to have a substantive meaning in terms of economic policy, were allocated to the 'economic left-wing' section of the German dictionary. Similarly, words appearing more in the FDP text than in the SPD text and which were judged, upon translation, to have a meaning in terms of economic policy debate, were allocated to the 'economic right-wing' section of the German dictionary. The content of the German dictionary is reported in http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/John.Garry/.

The German economic policy dictionary can now be used to code the manifestos of all major German parties in the 1980s and 1990s: the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, the Greens and the PDS. The frequencies of the economic left- and right-wing words were used to generate estimates of party policy position on economics using the scale defined above. These policy positions are reported in standardised form in rows 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Table 12.2. These findings are cross-validated against independent estimates of the economic policy positions of German parties generated by an expert survey conducted in 1989 by Laver and Hunt (1992). The Laver/Hunt survey asked experts on German party politics to locate German parties on a range of policy dimensions. Two of these relate to economic matters: preferred levels of public ownership and the trade-off between taxation and government spending. For each party the mean of its positions on the two Laver/Hunt scales was calculated. The resulting scores are reported in standardised form in rows 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 in Table 12.2. Also reported are Pearson correlations between computer coded and expert survey estimates in each year.

We see from Table 12.2 that computer coding replicates the quite independent expert survey estimates remarkably closely, with correlations ranging

Table 12.2 Standardised scores of computer coded and expert survey estimates of the economic policy positions of German parties, 1983–97

		Green	*SPD*	*CDU*	*FDP*	*Pearson correlation*
1983	computer	–0.84	–0.37	–0.24	1.45	0.86 *
1989	expert survey	–0.95	–0.72	0.54	1.14	
1987	computer	–0.63	–0.87	0.16	1.35	0.95 **
1989	expert survey	–0.95	–0.72	0.54	1.14	
1990	computer	–0.57	–0.89	0.09	1.37	0.93 **
1989	expert survey	–0.95	–0.72	0.54	1.14	
1994	computer	–0.53	–0.75	–0.18	1.46	0.87 *
1989	expert survey	–0.95	–0.72	0.54	1.14	
1998	computer	–0.46	–0.64	–0.39	1.49	0.79 *
1989	expert survey	–0.95	–0.72	0.54	1.14	
Average of 5 correlations						0.88

Note:
Care should be taken in interpreting the figures for the SDP and the FDP in 1990 as they are to an extent artefacts of the dictionary generation process which was based on the 1990 manifestos of these two parties.
* = sig. at 0.10, ** = sig. at 0.05, ***=sig. at 0.01, ****=sig. at 0.001.

from 0.79 in 1998 to 0.95 in 1987.[2] As with the expert survey, the computer analysis distinguishes the FDP as the most economically right-wing party at all five time points. Also in line with the expert survey, computer coding positions the Christian Democrats (CDU) between the SPD and the FDP for all five time points. The SPD are positioned by the expert survey to the left of the CDU. Computer coding replicates this for all elections. The Greens, in line with the expert survey, are positioned on the left side of the party system. The expert survey puts the party somewhat to the left of the SDP. The computer approach puts the Green party firmly on the left in 1983 and positions the party as the second most left-wing in later elections. The Greens merged with the East German Green Party in 1990 (post-expert survey), a party that was noted for being more economically right-wing. This could explain the Greens' apparent rightward movement over the time period of the computer analysis.[3]

Overall, the results reported in Table 12.2 show that computer coding of text substantially replicates estimated policy positions derived from expert surveys.

Norwegian political texts

The same computer approach is now applied to party manifestos for eight Norwegian parties: the Socialist Left Party, the Labour Party, the Liberals, the Christian People's Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal People's Party, the Conservative Party, and the Progress Party. Two Norwegian party manifestos were selected to act as reference texts from which to construct a

Norwegian coding dictionary. These were the 1989 Progress and Labour party manifestos, considered on the basis of independent estimates to be very different on economic matters. Precisely the same approach to dictionary generation was adopted as that for the German dictionary. This is reported in full at http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/John.Garry/.

Following the same process as described for the German case, standardised scores, and related correlation scores, were generated for the computer coding and Laver/Hunt estimates of party positions. When the positions generated by the computer coding of the Norwegian manifestos were compared to those generated by the expert survey, the correlation scores turned out not to be as high as in the German case, ranging from 0.73 in 1985 to 0.90 in 1997. The average of the five Norwegian correlation scores is .80, compared to an average of 0.88 in the German case and an average correlation score of 0.88 for the UK/Irish case. One might say that correlations around the 0.80 level appear fairly strong. However, in the present exercise we are not simply looking for evidence of a *relationship* between the two sets of data. We ideally want one approach (positions estimated using computer coding) to *replicate* the other (positions estimated using expert surveys). Thus high correlations (around 0.90) are probably the minimum required if we are to argue plausibly that computer coding has 'replicated' the expert surveys and can therefore be applied in a valid way to extract policy positions from 'virgin' Norwegian texts.

In an attempt to refine and improve the Norwegian dictionary, I extended the set of reference texts to all 1989 party manifestos and dispensed with words that discriminated least well between the parties. For example, a discriminating 'left-wing' word in the dictionary would, after controlling for manifesto length, appear most frequently in the most left-wing party according to independent sources (Socialist Left), next most frequently in the second most left-wing party (Labour), third most frequently in the third most left-wing party (Liberals), and so on. It would appear least in the least left-wing of the eight parties (Progress). A highly discriminating 'right-wing' word would do the same job in the opposite direction. A smaller and more discriminating dictionary emerged from this weeding out process (see http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/John.Garry/). It should be kept firmly in mind that, since all 1989 Norwegian manifestos are now being used as reference texts, no independent estimates of 1989 party positions can be derived from the computer coding.

Standardised scores for the policy positions generated using the refined Norwegian dictionary and for the Laver/Hunt expert surveys are reported in Table 12.3. The correlations are now very respectable, ranging from 0.81 to 0.92 for the four elections of 1981, 1985, 1993 and 1997. Policy positions generated from the expert survey suggest that there are clearly two parties on the left: Labour and, further left, the Socialist Left. There are clearly two

Table 12.3 Standardised scores of computer coded and expert survey estimates of the economic policy positions of Norwegian parties, 1981–97

	Soc L	*Lab*	*Libs*	*Christ*	*Centre*	*Libs P*	*Cons*	*Pro*	*Corr*
1981 CCCA	–0.51	–0.81	–0.78	–0.16	–0.33	–0.16	0.49	2.26	0.86 ***
1989 Expert	–1.49	–0.91	–0.24	–0.17	–0.04	0.23	0.89	1.74	
1985 CCCA	–0.39	–0.71	–0.36	–0.31	–0.39	–0.59	0.41	2.34	0.81 ***
1989 Expert	–1.49	–0.91	–0.24	–0.17	–0.04	0.23	0.89	1.74	
1989 CCCA	–0.60	–0.72	–0.24	–0.46	–0.72	–0.14	0.69	2.20	0.87 ***
1989 Expert	–1.49	–0.91	–0.24	–0.17	–0.04	0.23	0.89	1.74	
1993 CCCA	–0.59	–1.05	0.19	–0.59	–0.65	–0.24	1.00	1.92	0.87 ***
1989 Expert	–1.49	–0.91	–0.24	–0.17	–0.04	0.23	0.89	1.74	
1997 CCCA	–1.07	–0.77	0.46	–0.64	–0.48	n/a	0.84	1.65	0.92 ***
1989 Expert	–1.36	–0.82	–0.19	–0.13	–0.01	n/a	0.86	1.64	
Average of 5 correlations									0.87

Notes:
Care should be taken in interpreting the CCCA figures for the parties in 1989 as they are to an extent artefacts of the dictionary generation process which was based on the 1989 manifestos of all 8 parties.
* = sig. at 0.10, ** = sig. at 0.05, ***=sig. at 0.01, ****=sig. at 0.001.
Key to parties: Socialist Left Party (Soc L), Labour Party (Lab), Liberals (Libs), Christian People's Party (Christ), Centre Party (Centre), Liberal Peoples' Party (Libs P), Conservative Party (Cons), Progress Party (Progress).

parties on the right: the Conservatives and, further right, the Progress Party. Three parties cluster very closely together in the centre – the Liberals, the Christian People's Party and the Centre Party – and the Liberal People's party are positioned between the cluster of centre parties and the Conservatives on the right. Considering the computer coded estimates for 1997, the Progress Party are clearly the most right-wing of the seven parties studied in this election. The Conservatives are clearly the next most right-wing. The Socialist Left are where the expert surveys led us to expect to find them, firmly on the left, while Labour are clearly the second most left-wing party. The remaining parties are, also as expected from the expert surveys, positioned somewhere in the centre of these two blocks.

At all of the five time points, furthermore, computer coding places the Progress Party as clearly the most right-wing party with the Conservatives as clearly the second most right-wing. At all time points Labour and the Socialist Left are among the three most left-wing parties, with Labour being usually further left than the Socialist Left. The Liberal Peoples' party, which we expect to be the third most right-wing party, is indeed the third most right-wing in 1981 and 1989, and fourth most right-wing in 1993. The party does, however, deviate, strongly to the left in 1985. The three centre parties do, by and large, appear as expected in the centre ground between the left and right blocks. The Liberals, however, do on the basis of computer

coding appear to be quite far to the left in 1981, as do the Liberal Peoples' party in 1985 and the Centre Party in 1989 and 1993. Computer coding using the revised Norwegian dictionary yielded average correlations with expert survey estimates of 0.87, almost identical to average correlations of 0.88 for the German and English language cases.

Conclusion

Analysing party manifestos by computer coding the frequency of key words has generated estimates of the economic policy positions of British, Irish, German and Norwegian political parties that can clearly be cross-validated against quite independent estimates derived from expert surveys. This implies that the computer coding techniques described by Laver and Garry (2000) can be extended from English language texts to texts written in languages not spoken by the analyst.

In the present study, English–German and English–Norwegian language dictionaries were used by the analyst to translate key words, for the sole purpose of deciding whether these could be considered to deal with economic policy. In future, the availability of on-line lexicons of words in particular languages dealing with 'economic policy', 'social policy' and so on would enable dictionary generation to be fully automated. Statistical analysis of the frequencies of key words in reference texts would identify discriminating words. Cross references of these word lists with on-line lexicons would assign discriminating words to coding categories and in this way generate the dictionary. The empirical results reported here and these future possibilities combine to suggest that there is considerable scope for using the computer coding of political texts to estimate the policy positions of a wide range of political actors.

Notes

1 The first full published reliability analysis of the Manifesto Research Group coding project appears in Chapter 3 of this volume, fourteen years after the publication of the first major MRG book.

2 To set these figures in context, note that, for the bulk of human coders in the Manifesto Research Group project, the level of correlation between two human coders coding exactly the same text was between 0.60 and 0.90 and the average correlation was 0.72 (Volkens, Chapter 3 this volume).

3 I also analysed the election platforms of the former communist PDS in 1990, 1994 and 1998. Because this party was not included in the Laver/Hunt expert survey I do not discuss them in the text. However, one might uncontroversially expect the PDS to be firmly on the left of the German party system in the 1990s. In line with this expectation, the positions generated by CCCA of the PDS manifestos place the party at the extreme left of the five-party system in 1994 and 1998, although they are somewhat to the right of this placing in 1990. (For full tables on all results including the PDS please go to http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/John.Garry/).

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13 Estimating policy positions from the computer coding of political texts

Results from Italy, the Netherlands and Ireland

Miranda de Vries, Daniela Giannetti and Lucy Mansergh

Introduction

The study of politics and the testing of models of government formation or party competition often require multi-dimensional data on the policy or ideological positions of political parties. It is therefore important to develop a range of techniques for deriving good data on party positions. In this chapter we suggest that computerised content analysis (CCA) is one way to do this.

For the computer coding of political texts, the following basic steps need to be taken. First, the raw data, the documents to be coded, have to be selected. In the three country studies in this chapter, three types of political document are analysed. Party manifestos are used in all three cases. In the case of Ireland, government programmes were also studied. In the generation of the Italian dictionaries, proxy manifesto documents such as party congressional motions were used. Second, the coding unit of text must be defined. In all applications of CCA in this chapter, the basic coding unit is a word. Third, the categories for the coding dictionary must be designed. Finally, the analysis is performed.

Designing dictionaries of words that are relevant for a particular policy domain is an important step in content analysis. For CCA the following procedure is suggested. In order to create a dictionary, two documents that are known a priori to be ideologically distinct are selected. The dictionary is then generated by selecting relevant and meaningful words for the category under consideration (for instance 'economic policy') from the two documents. Of all meaningful words, words that occur twice as much in one document as in the other are included in the dictionary. (See Laver and Garry 2000; Garry, Chapter 12 this volume, for a more extensive description of this type of procedure.) This allows us to comply with the following requirements for a word to be added to a CCA dictionary:

- it should have substantive meaning for a category (validity)
- it should be interpreted the same in all texts; there should be little room for ambiguity about the meaning of the word
- it should be discriminating between parties; the frequencies of word use should differ significantly between parties.

Once the coding dictionaries have been set up, the computer analyses the texts word by word, and counts the numbers of words associated with each coding category. With this information it is easy to calculate party positions on scales derived from the coding categories. The numbers of words that are counted on each side of the scale (for example, left versus right), determine the position of a party on that scale.

In the present chapter, this technique for computer coding, developed by Laver and Garry (2000), is first applied to Italy. An Italian dictionary is developed and computerised content analysis is applied to the 1996 election manifestos of the Italian political parties. Next, similar steps are taken for the Netherlands; dictionaries are developed and the manifestos of the political parties are analysed. For both Italy and the Netherlands the results of the analyses are cross-validated. In the former case, this is done against expert and manifesto-based estimates of policy positions; in the latter case, against results from an expert survey. After Italy and the Netherlands, the application is extended from analysing party positions to analysing the positions of coalition governments in Ireland.

Computerised content analysis of party policy positions in Italy

Background

The political documents that have been used to derive party policy positions in Italy are electoral manifestos and parliamentary speeches delivered by party leaders immediately after the 1996 elections. Existing estimates of Italian party positions on the left–right dimension may be used to analyse Italian politics before 1993, and are useful in permitting the cross-validation of our own estimates. (See Laver and Schofield 1990; Laver and Hunt 1992; Inglehart and Huber 1995; Knutsen 1998; and Kim and Fording 1998.) However, they have practical limitations because of the dramatic changes in the Italian party system since 1991. Consequently, there is now a need to examine more closely how Italian party policy positions have been transformed, as this transformation has significant implications for the understanding of party competition and coalition formation in Italy. After a short introduction to Italian politics in the 1990s, the following two sections will deal with the application and results of computer coding of the Italian party positions, correlating these with the results of an expert survey undertaken by the author and with a scale derived from Manifesto

Research Group data for the same year. The analysis will be restricted to one policy dimension: the economic left–right dimension.

In the early 1990s, Italy experienced dramatic changes in three areas. First, change at party system level resulted in the disappearance of old parties, party-splitting and the birth of new parties. Between 1991 and 1996, some of the most notable changes were:

- The transformation of the former Communist Party (PCI) into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), and the emergence of the extreme left splinter, RC.
- The dismemberment of the former Christian Democrats (DC), which split into three parties: the center-left faction, PPI, the center-right factions, CCD and CDU.
- The disappearance of the PSI and other centre parties (PRI, PSDI, PLI) which, along with the DC, had been the basis of the 'pentapartito' coalition governments that ruled Italy in the 1980s.
- The entry of a new party, Forza Italia (FI), formed by the media magnate Berlusconi, a few months before the 1994 general and European Parliament elections.
- The transformation of the former fascist party MSI, into Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and the birth of an extreme right splinter party, MSFT.

A massive realignment of voters produced substantial change in the electoral and legislative weight of parties between 1987 and 1996. The elections of April 1992 are commonly regarded as a turning point. The DC fell below the 30 per cent threshold. The PSI dropped from a vote share of 14 per cent in the 1992 election to 2 per cent in the 1994 election. The main beneficiary of shifting voter choice was the Northern League, a federation of regionalist movements that gained 8.7 per cent of the national vote.

The available evidence suggests that party policy positions also changed significantly. Indications of this trend are given by phenomena such as the former PCI and MSI changing their names and generating splinter parties on their left or right. Perhaps the most notable change that took place during this period was the reformulation of the issue agenda that defined Italian politics from both elite and mass perspectives. One of the most important features in this process has been the evolution of the north–south issue (Carmines and Stimson 1989). More specifically, the Northern League was able to reverse what had been traditionally called 'the southern issue' (*questione meridionale*) into a kind of 'northern issue' under the banner of federalism. In so doing, it was able to redefine fundamentally the space of political competition by introducing what Giannetti and Sened (1999) refer to as the 'north–south' or 'institutional' dimension.

Second, since 1991, the Italian system has undergone a major revolution at the institutional level. Following a successful mobilisation of support for electoral reform, Parliament approved a new national electoral law in 1993.

After almost fifty years of pure proportional representation (PR), Italy shifted to a mixed system according to which 475 of the seats in the Chamber are allocated by plurality (SMP) while the remaining 155 are allocated by PR. In the Senate, 232 seats are elected by SMP and 83 by PR. The approval of this new electoral system was a major turning point in the process of institutional change.

Equally important to electoral and political institutional reform processes have been the two parliamentary elections held under the electoral system approved in 1993. In 1994, the Chamber and Senate elections were contested by three major pre-electoral coalitions. On the right there was an alliance of the Northern League, AN and FI; in the centre there was an alliance of PPI and Patto Segni; and on the left an alliance of PDS, RC, the Greens and other minor parties.

The right-wing coalition won the election and the new government led by Berlusconi lasted from May to December 1994. Subsequently, a caretaker government led by Dini held office until the general elections of 1996. These elections were contested by two competing coalitions: on the centre right *Polo della libertà* composed of FI, AN, CCD, CDU; and *Ulivo* on the centre left, composed of the PDS, the Greens, the PPI, the newcomer RI and other minor parties. The Northern League contested the elections on its own. The RC party reached an electoral deal with the *Ulivo* coalition according to which they avoided contesting the same plurality seats. The *Ulivo* coalition won the election and the government led by Prodi lasted from May 1996 to October 1998. Prodi's cabinet was subsequently replaced by a government led by the former PDS secretary D'Alema.

Changes at the level of party system, institutions and elections highlight the fact that the contemporary Italian party system is operating in a complex and evolving environment. Consequently, any attempt to estimate party policy positions using an economic left–right scale will inevitably encounter some difficulties due to the impact of overlapping domains such as the north–south institutional dimension. In methodological terms, this implies that the estimation of party positions will to have to be robust in order to be able to deal with this contextual complexity. This is an issue that will now be addressed in terms of content analysis.

Analysis

The focus of the present analysis is on the Italian national elections of 1996. This election has been chosen for two reasons. First, there is machine-readable data for the 1996 election which greatly facilitates content analysis, while such resources are not at present accessible for earlier elections. Second, the 1996 election allows for the comparison of computer-generated scales with independent estimates of party policy positions. It seems appropriate at this stage to illustrate how the dictionary of

political terms was generated and discuss which documents have been selected for analysis.

Two texts were used to generate a dictionary of political terms in order to analyse Italian party documents. The first text is the party congressional document of the right-wing party AN issued in 1995, and the second is the party congressional motion of the left-wing party PDS presented in 1996.[1] Given the uneven length of the two documents, the frequencies of words have been weighted accordingly. For the purpose of this analysis the dictionary includes only economic left–right words. The two documents were judged to be different in terms of policy positions on the economic left–right dimension on the basis of a priori knowledge and information about the political system. This assumption seems to be justified as words such as work (*lavoro*), employment (*occupazione*), unemployment (*disoccupazione*), equality (*egualianza*) or welfare were consistently used by the left more than by the right. Alternatively, words typically associated with the right such as tax related words (*fisc-, imposte, tassazione* and so on) were consistently used more by the right. For instance, the word welfare was used about forty-six times in the PDS document and never used at all in the AN document, while the term private enterprise (*imprese*) was used thirty-three times in the AN document and never used in the PDS text. As suggested by Laver and Garry (2000), from the subset of words associated substantively with the left–right dimension, those used twice as often in the left-wing text were associated with the 'left-wing economics' coding category, and words used twice as often in the right-wing text were added to the 'right-wing economics' category.

The dictionary was applied to the coding of Italian political texts. Only a few electoral manifestos were available for the April 1996 general election. While the PR part of the new electoral system makes it possible for parties to maintain distinct identities, the plurality part has created incentives for the formation of pre-electoral coalitions. Consequently, in 1996 most parties, except the Northern League and RC, for the first time did not issue their own electoral manifestos, but formed pre-electoral coalitions and subscribed to a joint platform.[2] The dictionary was applied first to the available manifestos, treating the two main coalitions as party-like groupings. In short, four electoral manifestos were coded – those of the *Polo*, *Ulivo*, Northern League and RC. This research strategy may be justified for two reasons. First, in methodological terms, these particular documents are the only sources that yield information on the research question being examined. Second, in theoretical terms, the whole concept of treating pre-electoral coalitions as party-like groupings has stimulated debate among both political commentators and the political actors themselves.

As documents from pre-electoral coalitions were used, this initial analysis did not permit the estimation of each party's independent policy position. None the less, estimation of each party's policy position is also required as parties are still the pre-eminent political actors within Italy.

Consequently, a further investigation was undertaken using parliamentary documents. Use of parliamentary documents for establishing party policy positions is not unproblematic. The strategic context of electoral and parliamentary declarations is significantly different. However, for the Italian election of 1996 the only comparable measure of *each* party's position is provided by the post-election parliamentary debate on the investiture of the centre-left coalition government.

These declarations refer to the sessions of the parliamentary debate on the investiture of the Prodi government, which took place in late May 1996. The documents are relatively similar in terms of their purpose: debate on government policy. The documents' lengths vary according to the time allocated to each party, which, in turn, is proportional to its electoral strength.[3] For the sake of this analysis, the declarations of each party's spokesmen – including the party leader – were unified into a single document. In other words, parties were treated as unitary actors.[4]

Results

The results of coding Italian party documents are shown in Tables 13.1 to 13.5. Tables 13.1 and 13.2 report the results obtained from the analysis of electoral manifestos for the 1996 election, showing the frequency of economic 'left' and 'right' words in each manifesto and computer generated positions on the economic left–right dimension, giving raw and standardised scores. The computer generated standardised scale places the RC party solidly on the left (–1.50) and the Northern League on the right (0.57). The *Ulivo* coalition is consistently placed more on the left (0.44) than the *Polo* coalition (0.48).

The two coalitions are placed very close to each other. This might seem surprising as many commentators would not consider the *Ulivo* and *Polo* coalitions as being as close to each other as these results suggest. However, it may be contended that this finding provides some evidence of a convergence

Table 13.1 Frequency of economic left- and right-wing words in election manifestos, Italy 1996

	RC	*Ulivo*	*Polo*	*Northern League*
Left	126	312	313	105
Right	109	994	1,033	364

Table 13.2 Computer generated positions on the economic left–right dimension in election manifestos, Italy 1996

	RC	*Ulivo*	*Polo*	*Northern League*
Raw scores	–0.07	0.52	0.53	0.55
Standardised scores	–1.50	0.44	0.48	0.57

toward the centre. From a rational choice perspective, it seems legitimate to argue that parties that join electoral coalitions in order to contest SMP districts are behaving predominantly as office-seeking agents or Downsian parties. If one takes for instance the formation of the *Ulivo* coalition, then this interpretation seems plausible. It should be remembered that the leftist alliance, which included the extreme leftist RC party, lost the 1994 election. Subsequently the PDS – the main party in the leftist alliance – developed a new strategy of 'moving to the centre'. This change in electoral strategy parallels an analogous change in PDS ideology. Many observers would agree that, since 1989, the PDS has been committing itself to a more moderate leftist posture, changing its attitude towards the market and capitalism, a trend that is especially evident in the second congress of the party held in 1997 (see Vignati in Bardi and Rhodes 1998).

Tables 13.3 and 13.4 present results derived from the analysis of parliamentary documents. Table 13.3 shows the frequency of economic left- and right-wing words in each document and Table 13.4 shows raw and standardised scores of party policy positions on the economic left–right scale generated by these. All parties are located on the appropriate side of the left–right dimension, yielding some confidence in the face validity of the method.

Table 13.3 Frequency of economic left- and right-wing words in parliamentary documents, Italy 1996

	Left	*Right*
RC	230	108
PPI	118	118
Greens	41	45
PDS	252	292
CCD-CDU	75	127
RI	85	145
AN	46	119
FI	79	253
Northern League	79	308

Table 13.4 Computer generated economic left–right policy positions in parliamentary documents, Italy 1996

	Raw scores	*Standardised scores*
RC	–0.36	–1.88
PPI	0.00	–0.67
Greens	0.04	–0.54
PDS	0.07	–0.43
CCD–CDU	0.25	0.16
RI	0.26	0.20
AN	0.44	0.80
FI	0.52	1.07
Northern League	0.59	1.30

Starting from the extreme political right, the standardised computer generated scale places the NL at 1.30, FI at 1.07 and AN at 0.80. This particular ordering of parties on a strictly economic left–right dimension may be said to have face validity: AN can be seen as a populist rather than a Thatcherite party of the right, while the Northern League is committed to libertarian free-market economic policies. RI, the party list formed just before the election by the former prime minister Dini that joined the left wing coalition, is placed more to the right (0.20) than CCD and CDU, the two splinters of the former DC that joined the right wing coalition (0.16). This finding makes sense, if it is considered that the RI leader was formerly treasury minister in the Berlusconi right-wing government.

Taking the left-wing parties, RC has been placed consistently on the extreme left of the scale (–1.88). In this case the counter intuitive result is the placement of the PPI (–0.67) to the left of the PDS (–0.43). It might be argued that the PPI and the PDS have roughly similar policy positions on the strictly economic left–right dimension as they share a conception of solidaristic welfare. In addition, the PDS score could be considered to be 'deflated' because of its current participation in government for the first time in more than forty years.

Cross-validating the results

In Table 13.5, the computerised coding results are compared with estimates of party policy positions derived from independent sources. The first source is an expert survey undertaken by the author. The expert survey, whose questions were taken from two mass surveys carried out by two different research institutes (Abacus and ISPO), was administered to a number of experts in Italian politics (political scientists and journalists).[5] Experts were asked to give the answer that, according to their opin-

Table 13.5 Standardised economic left–right scores for parliamentary documents and standardised scores on comparable expert surveys, Italy 1996

Party	*Computer coding*	*Ispo survey economic L–R*	*Abacus survey economic L–R*	*MRG data based estimates economic L–R*
	Std scores	*Std scores*	*Std scores*	*Std scores*
RC	–1.88	–1.84	–1.82	–1.71
PPI	–0.67	–0.38	–0.32	0.39
Greens	–0.54	–1.29	–1.17	–1.52
PDS	–0.43	–0.52	–0.67	–0.16
CCD	0.16	0.34	0.45	0.99
CDU	0.16	0.40	0.50	0.99
RI	0.20	0.87	0.65	0.99
AN	0.80	0.20	–0.02	–0.66
FI	1.07	1.10	1.33	0.99
NL	1.30	1.12	1.07	0.34

ion, an hypothetical representative of each party would have given to a number of questions covering a wide range of policy issues. The final number of respondents was sixteen. The questions which related to economic policy were selected and combined in order to derive an additive score for each party on the economic left–right scale. The scores were then standardised.

Another comparable estimate was derived from Manifesto Research Group (MRG) data for Italy 1996.[6] Because the coding scheme developed by MRG coders is meant to provide emphasis or salience scores and not positional scores, the following procedure was used to derive party policy positions on the economic left–right scale from MRG data. (See also Garry and Mansergh in Marsh and Mitchell 1999.) Policy categories relating to the left-wing and to the right-wing economic policy were selected, and the percentages of manifesto text devoted to the left-wing and to the right-wing categories were calculated. The formula used to generate the economic left–right position for each party is analogous to the formula used to derive party positions from computer codings, subtracting left-wing scores from right-wing scores and dividing by their sum. The scores thus obtained were standardised.

Finally, the various estimates of party positions were correlated with each other: see Table 13.6 for a summary of the results. There was considerable overall agreement between CCA and the expert survey estimates, with correlations of 0.90 and 0.91. In addition, the correlation between the CCA and expert-based measures is higher than the correlation between the estimates obtained from MRG data and from the expert survey (0.85 and 0.87). These findings cross-validate the computer coding against an independent data source, giving confidence in the overall validity of the computerised content analysis procedure.

The correlation between CCA and the MRG data based estimates is significantly lower (0.60). The most notable discrepancies refer first to the PDS party and, second, to the estimates of the Northern League, AN and RI policy positions. The MRG based estimates place the PDS to the left of the PPI, which is consistent with the expert-based estimates. Much less

Table 13.6 Correlations between computer, experts survey and MRG data based estimates of economic left–right scale positions, Italy 1996

	Computer coding	*Ispo survey economic L–R*	*Abacus survey economic L–R*	*MRG data based economic L–R*
Computer coding	1.00			
Ispo survey economic L–R	0.91	1.00		
Abacus survey economic L–R	0.90	0.99	1.00	
MRG data based economic L–R	0.60	0.85	0.87	1.00

plausible is the placement of AN (–0. 66) to the left of the PDS (–0.16), and the placement of the Northern League (0.34) to the left of the PPI (0.39). Finally, MRG data-based estimates do not seem capable of discriminating between the policy positions of FI, CCD, CDU and RI (0.99).

Despite the limitations pointed out by Laver and Hunt (1992: 31) and Laver and Garry (2000), MRG data is especially valuable as it provides the only comparable means of estimating party policy positions in a wide range of democracies over a long time span. However, different techniques for extracting party positions from MRG data may be used, yielding different results. In addition, estimates from MRG data for Italy have been found to be systematically less accurate (see Gabel and Huber 2000). This might, at least partially, explain the lower correlation between MRG and CCA or, to a lesser extent, MRG and expert-based measures. Clearly, additional work is required to evaluate the computer coding method relative to other approaches in calculating policy positions, but the good results obtained for estimating Italian party positions in 1996 would encourage us to extend and refine the method further.

Computerised content analysis applied to political parties in the Netherlands

Background

This part of the chapter reports the results of computer coded content analysis of the party platforms of Dutch political parties in 1998. This leads to policy positions for the five main parties on three ideological dimensions. Their positions on 'left–right', 'values' and 'environmental protection' dimensions are determined. This analysis is performed for the purpose of studying coalition formation in the Netherlands. Therefore the distances between the party positions and expected coalition positions – derived with CCA – will also be referred to.

Before computing the positions of the parties on these scales, a short introduction to Dutch political parties and politics will be given. In the next section the analysis is made and coalition formation is discussed, while in the last section, the results of our computer coding of the Dutch political party positions are correlated with the results of the Laver and Mair expert survey (Laver and Mair 1999) of these parties in the same year.

In 1989, three small left-wing parties – the Progressive Party, the Pacifist Socialist Party and the Communist Party – merged into Green Left, GL. GL is a left-wing alternative for voters who find the social democrats (PvdA) too moderate. The average support for this party is about 3 to 4 per cent of the electorate, but this support has been growing and reached approximately 7 per cent in 1998.

The second party, the PvdA, which has its roots in the labour movement, is the largest left-wing party in the Netherlands. This social democratic

party usually gains almost one-third of the votes and has been a partner in nine out of sixteen cabinets since 1946.

Democrats66 were named after the year of their founding. This is a moderate left-wing liberal party that originated as a party proposing constitutional reform. It now refers to itself as a 'social liberal' party. Its support ranges from 4 per cent to 16 per cent of the votes.

Three religious parties officially merged into the CDA in 1980. These parties are the KVP (Catholic People's Party, the largest of the three), the ARP, and the CHU (both Protestant parties). The CDA is a centre party and was a member of every cabinet until 1994. Its support ranges from approximately 20 per cent to 35 per cent of the vote.

The VVD is a right-wing secular liberal party and is the main opponent of the PvdA on social and economic issues. For much of the period, PvdA and VVD were alternating coalition partners for the main Christian Democratic Party (CDA). The average support for the VVD is 15 per cent.

The electorate seems to have rewarded rather than punished the ruling coalition in the 1998 Dutch elections. The number of seats controlled by the outgoing Kok government, consisting of PvdA, D66 and the VVD, increased from 92 to 97 out of a total of 150. The parties of the 'purple coalition' announced their willingness to continue governing together in 1998 and this is what happened. We will check whether the policy positions of these parties are close to each other, proximity being estimated from the results of the content analysis. If so, this could well be a reason for their willingness to govern together (De Vries 1999a: 249–52).

Analysis

Computerised content analysis was used to obtain the 1998 policy positions of the main political parties. The first step was to choose the documents to be analysed. The five largest parties – CDA, D66, GL, PvdA, and VVD – are included in this analysis and the documents analysed are their 1998 manifestos. In designing the dictionaries, we used the policy domains distinguished by Laver and Garry (2000). They applied the following categories for both a refined hand coding of party manifestos and for computer coding:

- economic policy
- social values
- political reform
- law and order
- environmental policy.

The next step is to allocate words to these categories in order to build a coding dictionary. The dictionaries made by Laver and Garry were used as reference dictionaries. A combination of these reference dictionaries, the

manifestos, and common sense was used to design the dictionaries for the Netherlands. It is preferable to use other manifestos than those to be analysed when developing the dictionaries. In this way, using the same texts for designing the word lists and performing the analysis is avoided, improving the validity of the results. In this analysis for the Netherlands, the same texts were used for both, however. This is not the best option, but limited resources and lack of available alternative machine-readable reference documents led to this.

For the categories above, bipolar word lists were designed and content analysis was performed. The categories of 'law and order' and 'political reform' were later removed from the analysis because the parties' positions were not sufficiently different in these areas. For environmental policy, the word list is unipolar, since references to environment are made with reference only to 'protection' sense. No sane party would actually state that it wants to destroy the environment. Even if a party is not willing to spend a lot of money on environmental protection, it will only make positive references. The difference in the extent to which parties aim for environmental protection is measured by comparing the percentage of words dedicated to environmental protection with the total number of words in the manifesto. The ecological commitment dictionary is very large, since environmental words are usually not ambiguous. All words with 'energy', 'soil' or 'resources' or even the term 'environment' itself, are taken to refer to environmental protection. The word lists are available from the author upon request and can also be found in De Vries (1999b: 261–6).

The word list for left-wing words for the economic left–right dimension consists of typical left-wing words like 'care', 'state', 'insurance', 'health' and 'social security'. Words on the other side of the left–right dimension are 'growth', 'budget deficit', 'individual', and 'stimulate'. These words have substantive left- or right-wing meaning, and the frequency of use differs between the parties. The social value word list provides a list of 'liberal' and 'conservative' words. Parties distinguish themselves on this scale and the words are relevant for each category. On this dimension, liberal words are 'emancipation', 'equality', 'self-determination', 'freedom' and 'ethnicity', whereas conservative words are 'value', 'traditional', 'religion', and 'family'.

The frequencies of words from the word lists occurring in the documents – obtained with the computer program KWALITAN – are given in Table 13.7. The next step is to calculate the party positions on the ideological scales. The position of a manifesto on the left–right scale depends on the proportion of left-wing as compared to right-wing statements. For example, the position of GrLi on the left–right policy scale is the number of words coded right, minus the number of words coded left, divided by the total number of hits on left and right; 93 – 590/683 = –0.73. The score for D66 is 279 – 656/935 = –0.40. The same formula works for the value scale. The position on the ecological scale is computed differently. Here, parties always score positive. The position

Table 13.7 Counts of coded words in the party manifestos in the Netherlands, 1998

Party	*Left*	*Right*	*Liberal*	*Conservative*	*Environment*	*Total no.words*
GrLi	590	93	109	114	319	23,025
PvdA	738	186	110	106	325	34,275
D66	656	279	176	177	502	50,744
CDA	636	176	153	267	239	33,832
VVD	212	212	64	69	101	15,959

is therefore the proportion of words dedicated to environmental protection relative to the total amount of words in a document.

The ranges of these positions differ radically, because the number of words in the dictionaries vary considerably for social values and left–right economics. For instance, the list of hits for left-wing words is larger than for right-wing words, which means that all scores are below zero. The raw scores for environment are also very small since they are related to the total number of words in the document. The scores were transformed to make the positions on different scales easy to compare. For each scale, the largest score receives the value one and the lowest, zero. The other scores on the scale receive their normalised score, which is the raw score divided by the range of the scores on the scale. If differences in the size of the dictionaries induce a smaller range of scores on a particular scale than on another, and if at the same time these scales are perceived as equally important, this could lead to the wrong conclusion that parties are more alike on one scale than on another. This could influence the party policy positions, and thus cause problems when testing party competition or coalition formation theories in 1998. The normalised scores of the Dutch manifestos in 1998 for left–right, social values and environmental protection can be found in Table 13.8. For illustrative purposes, we also present a plot of party positions on the scales left–right versus conservative–progressive, and left–right versus environmental protection, in Figures 13.1 and 13.2.

The figures in Table 13.8 – and thus the results of the analysis of the party platforms – show two striking tendencies. The first is the position of the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) on the economic left–right scale. The position of the CDA is in contradiction to the 'standard' left–right placement, to the left side of the position of the Social Liberals (D66). This is exceptional, but it does confirm impressions held by political scientists and

Table 13.8 Standardised party positions on three dimensions in the Netherlands, 1998

Party	*Seats*	*Left–right*	*Environment*	*Social values*
GrLi	11	0	1	0.85
PvdA	45	0.18	0.42	1
D66	14	0.45	0.47	0.93
CDA	29	0.22	0.10	0
VVD	38	1	0	0.81

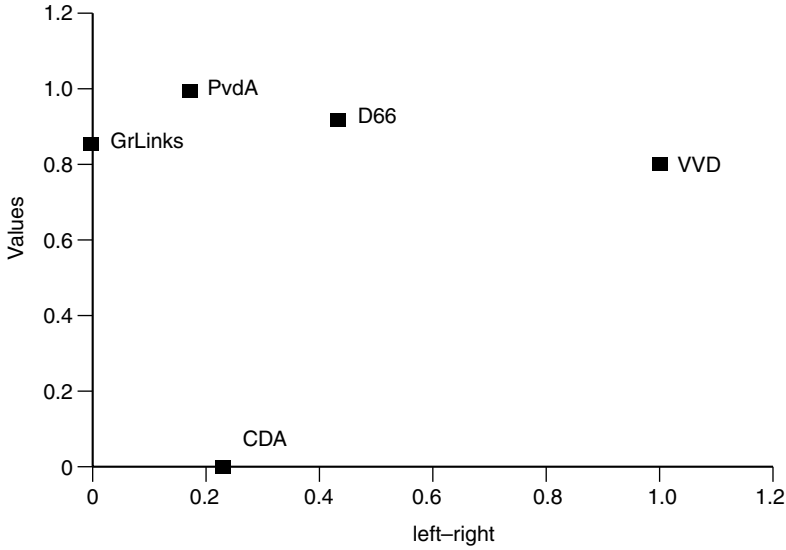

Figure 13.1 Left–right versus conservative–progressive values, the Netherlands 1998

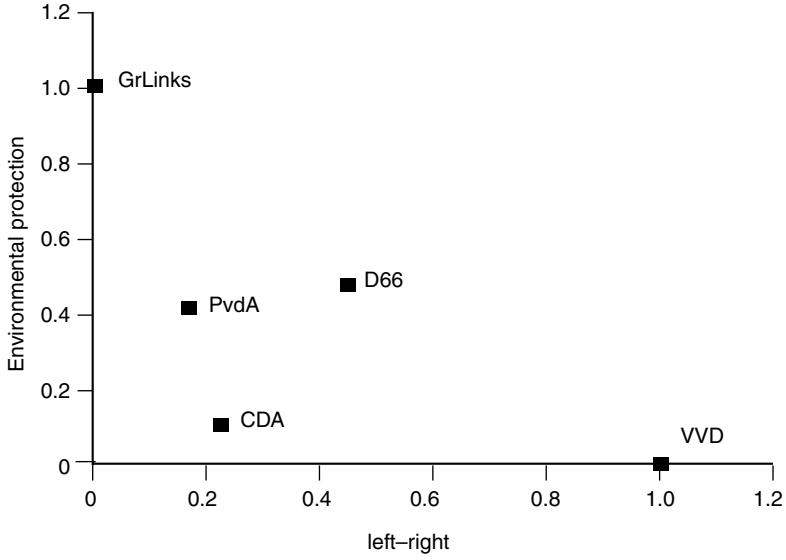

Figure 13.2 Left–right versus environmental protection, the Netherlands 1998

journalists after the platform was published, namely that this CDA manifesto was rather left-wing in economic terms. The second interesting feature is the relatively moderate position of the Green Left party. Only its position on environmental protection differentiates it from the other parties, and its position on left–right and social values is not exceptional. This might imply that it is moving towards a 'governmental' position, whereas it never used to be considered as a potential coalition partner.

Using the party positions and the number of seats in parliament it is possible to analyse anticipated coalitional positions. Here, we expect that coalition policy will be located at the weighted mean of the policy positions of the government members (see also Kleinnijenhuis and Pennings, Chapter 11 this volume). With this information we can determine the coalition of the parties with the smallest mean inter-party distances between its members. In coalition formation research, it is often assumed that parties prefer a coalition that is close to them in policy or ideological space to one that is further away. Identifying the coalition with the smallest average distance is an extension of that idea. The 'purple' coalition that formed in 1998 is actually the coalition with the smallest average inter-party distance between members (see also De Vries 1999a).

Cross-validating the results

Researchers from the Free University of Amsterdam have also been working on the 1998 Dutch party positions. Kleinnijenhuis and De Ridder have performed expert content analysis on media, newspapers and television programmes in the months preceding election day in 1994 and in 1998 (Kleinnijenhuis and De Ridder 1998; Kleinnijenhuis *et al.* 1998). The emphasis of these studies is on issue ownership by the parties, and less on issue positions as in our analysis. However, it is interesting to examine these results and see whether or not they comply with our own. Issues analysed in this research that are closely related to our scales include environment, social values (in this study denoted as Christian ethics) and left and right. The placement of the parties in relation to each other on the first two issues – which we denote as environmental protection and social values – is similar but not identical.

On the value dimension, the positions of the parties changed between 1994 and 1998. In both studies, the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) is positioned far away from the other parties, and the remaining parties lie close to each other. However, on Kleinnijenhuis' scale, the PvdA is the most liberal party, whereas on our scale it is D66. Of course, these analyses were done with different word lists, different documents and for different purposes, but since the same parties were analysed the same positions should have been found.

It is, however, encouraging that in the economic policy domain both analyses locate the Christian Democratic Party farther to the left on the

left–right scale – to the extent of being on the left of D66 – than its traditional position. In most studies before 1998, the CDA is positioned to the right of D66, and the fact that both studies show the same deviance from the CDA's traditional position increases our confidence in the scaling method. Also, based on face validity, the CDA manifesto of 1998 does seem to be more 'social' (left-wing) than the manifesto of D66. Finding this shift of the CDA in both analyses underlines the high reliability of computerised content analysis (CCA).

A criterion used by Laver and Garry (2000) to validate their results is to study the correlation between scales constructed by different methods. Laver and Mair (1999) performed an expert survey on Dutch policy positions in 1998. The results of cross-validation against this seem very promising. The lowest correlation coefficient found is between left–right based on CCA and general left–right position in the expert survey: this is .865. If we average party positions in the expert survey on this general left–right issue with those on the other left–right issue in data set – taxes vs. public spending – the average correlation between the expert survey and CCA methods increases to 0.93. The correlation between the Laver and Mair expert survey of environmental party positions, and the CCA environmental party positions is 0.97. The social values dimension also provides promising results. The correlation between the CCA social value positions and social values in the Laver and Mair expert survey is 0 .937; whereas the CCA social values dimension and the Laver and Mair clerical dimension correlate at 0.956. A summary of these results can be found in Table 13.9.

Computerised content analysis (CCA) has thus been successfully applied to estimating the policy positions of the Dutch political parties of 1998, with good cross-validation against completely independent sources. The results reported here offer considerable hope that with more resources, fully inde-

Table 13.9 Cross-validating party positions: computer-coding versus expert data

Correlation coefficients	*Taxes vs. services*	*Left-wing vs. right-wing*	*Average position on left–right*
Left–right CCA	0.97	0.87	0.93
Correlation coefficients	*Perm. policies on abortion and homosexuality*	*Clerical*	*Average position on social values*
Social values CCA	0.94	0.96	0.95
Correlation coefficients	*Environmental protection*		
Environmental protection CCA	0.97		

pendent reference texts, and a more fully automated dictionary generation procedure, CCA has real potential as a technique for estimating the policy positions of political actors.

A comparison of party and coalition policy in Ireland using expert coding and computerised content analysis

Background

Coalition politics in Ireland before 1989 was a question of finding some alternative to a single-party Fianna Fáil minority government (Laver and Budge 1992: 41). 'In the period 1948–1987, [Fianna Fáil] won an average of 46% of the vote and 49% of all seats in the legislature' (ibid.) and up until 1977, it managed on a number of occasions to secure an overall majority. The party was vehemently opposed to the notion that it could ever be part of anything short of a single-party government. This attitude was to change in 1989, when Fianna Fáil, in pursuit of another overall majority in the Dáil, prematurely called an election. Not only did the Fianna Fáil party fail to win that majority, they actually suffered a loss of seats. Rather than abandoning office in a period of economic growth, Fianna Fáil made an historic pact with the Progressive Democrats after the election, and entered into coalition with them (O'Reilly in Nealon 1997: 170).

Three years later the Progressive Democrats ended the pact, triggering the election of 1992 in which Fianna Fáil garnered sixty-eight seats, Fine Gael forty-five, Labour thirty-three and the Progressive Democrats ten. The Labour Party had been riding high in the opinion polls prior to the election and had refused to announce a preferred coalition partner in the hope of maximising transfers. The party was wooed into negotiations by both Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Labour officials on entering negotiations with Fianna Fáil (FF) were amazed by FF's opening presentation of a proposed government agreement for the two parties, and further surprised by how far FF had gone in accepting Labour policies. One of the negotiators on the Labour side later wrote of the document, 'it was all there, in the document we received. A third banking force, reform of confessional legislation, significant investment in social services. Anything that we were likely to find contentious in their policy position was simply dropped' (Finlay 1998: 136). An agreement was struck.

Yet despite Fianna Fáil's elaborate preparations for government, the coalition government fell within eighteen months. A series of revelations exhibiting the lack of openness and exchange of information between Fianna Fáil and its partner caused Labour to pull out of government. The then leader of Fianna Fáil, Albert Reynolds, took the brunt of the blame and resigned. The parties in the Dáil, reluctant to endure another election, set about negotiating a new government. Under the new Fianna Fáil leader, Bertie Ahern, approaches were again made to Labour to return to coalition, but further

revelations about the conduct of Fianna Fáil in the 1992 Government put paid to these. Negotiations between Fine Gael, Labour and the Democratic Left were successful.

The circumstances of the 1997 election were more salubrious than those surrounding government formation in 1994. The three parties, Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left, felt that they had worked well together and set about campaigning as the next coalition. Their competition was Fianna Fáil plus the Progressive Democrats, who also announced an electoral pact. The 1997 election therefore produced a choice of government for the electorate prior to the election. Both groups published joint programmes for government. Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats won eighty-one seats between them; the other block won seventy-five seats (O'Reilly in Nealon 1997: 172). Labour, which had been pivotal in the previous two sets of negotiations, denied itself the same possibility at this election. It performed disastrously, winning only seventeen seats, sixteen less than in the previous election. The Progressive Democrats, who were to go into Government with Fianna Fáil after the 1997 election, lost 60 per cent of their seats as compared with the previous election, and went into government with Fianna Fáil with only four seats. Policy blunders in the Progressive Democrat's manifesto, in both the economic and social policy spheres, undoubtedly contributed to this result (ibid.).

Setting up the hypothesis

All of the Irish political parties, in or out of office, produce policy documents from time to time. Their number is generally greater when out of office, and the frequency of their publication tends to accelerate as the election draws closer (Garry and Mansergh 1999: 84, 87). A definitive statement of the party's policy positions, the manifesto, is published during the campaign period and is often the compilation of previously published policy documents and those as-yet undisclosed. Interviews conducted by Garry and Mansergh (ibid.) with the people who wrote the manifestos of the five main Irish political parties in 1997, reveal that 'party policy formulation in Ireland in the 1990s is an ongoing process and manifestos are not produced on an *ad hoc* basis but rather in a carefully organised and pre-meditated manner'.

Debate at election time centres on these manifestos. Many of the shots fired at rival parties rely on inadequacies or inconsistencies in their documents. While few voters ever read the manifesto, it may act as a sop to the party faithful to get them out onto the doorsteps, and is certain to be disseminated by the media (ibid.). More importantly though, in the Irish context, the manifestos are the basic ingredients of the coalition policy document, the programme for government. The manifestos act as bargaining chips in negotiations and as such, 'can fairly be seen as simply detailed shopping lists for government' (Garry and Mansergh 1999: 84).

If manifestos are bargaining chips in coalition negotiations, one obvious

question concerns us: which party manages to get more of its manifesto endorsed and in which policy areas? Using the Laver and Garry (2000) computer and expert coding schemes, detailed and explained for Ireland in the previous chapter, the estimated policy positions of the political parties in 1992 and 1997 will now be compared with those of the government programmes in 1992, 1994 and 1997. The circumstances surrounding the government formations that are being studied are distinct; in 1992 and 1997 respectively, Fianna Fáil and Labour and Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats went into government together after a process of post-electoral bargaining. In each case, both parties knew how many seats each had in the Dáil. In 1994 bargaining again took place in a situation in which the exact number of seats each party held in the Dáil was known by all of the parties to the Rainbow Agreement. (Four by-elections were held in the period up to December 1994 when the new government was formed. Changes in the number of seats held by each party over that period have been taken into account for the purpose of testing the hypothesis on the 1994 government formation.) However, no election preceded this coalition formation process. Therefore the policy positions of the parties to that agreement are those of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left as measured by their 1992 party manifestos. The fact that no new manifestos were issued for the bargaining occasion means that we must still take their 1992 documents as the best official indicators of party policy.

Assuming that parties care enough about policy not to be bought off with dubious promises of cabinet seats, then we might suppose a reasonable approximation of the individual bargaining powers of each party going into the coalition negotiations to reflect their relative Dáil seat shares. Hence we might expect

> coalition policy [to be] located at the weighted mean of the policy positions of government members; each member's policy position being weighted by the share that it controls of the total number of legislative seats controlled by all government members taken together.
>
> (Laver and Budge 1992: 426, based on Schofield 1993)

The justification for such a supposition rests on the premise that the larger party is the more powerful in negotiations. Unfortunately, due to the limited number of cases being analysed, 'testing' these hypotheses in a statistical sense is not possible. This paper thus look for patterns and hypotheses that may form the basis of future testing when additional data become available.

Results

Table 13.10 shows the economic and social policy scales scales derived from the coding of each of the documents, standardised from raw scores for each election. Each raw score on 'economic policy' was derived from the

Table 13.10 Standardised economic 'left–right' and social values 'liberal–conservative' scores for the 1992, 1994 and 1997 Irish party manifestos/government programmes

	Economic policy		*Social policy*	
	Computer	*Revised expert*	*Computer*	*Revised expert*
Irl DL 1992	–1.53	–1.34	–1.37	–1.02
Irl Lab 1992	0.03	–0.59	–0.82	–0.33
Irl FF 1992	–0.02	0.26	0.79	1.88
Irl FG 1992	0.07	0.85	1.14	–0.18
Irl PD 1992	1.62	1.34	0.63	–0.27
Irl Gov 1992	–0.17	–0.51	–0.37	–0.44
Irl Gov 1994	1.21	0.04	0.12	–0.04
Irl DL 1997	–1.20	–1.14	–1.20	–1.28
Irl Lab 1997	–0.66	–0.73	–1.23	–0.73
Irl FF 1997	0.34	0.05	1.03	1.63
Irl FG 1997	–0.14	0.49	0.03	0.16
Irl PD 1997	1.72	1.68	0.57	0.32
Irl Gov 1997	–0.06	–0.35	0.81	–0.09

total of text units coded in the 'economic left' category subtracted from the total coded 'economic right' divided by the sum of these two figures. The social policy scores were similarly derived.

The results in Table 13.10 show that the relationship between party and government scores on both the left–right and values dimensions is varied. On the economic scale, the programme for government in 1994 has a radically different policy position depending on whether you take the computer coding results or the expert coding as valid. The experts systematically rate Fine Gael as being more right-wing than does the computer. The Labour position in 1992, also varies greatly according to method of measurement used: left-wing by expert coding and centrist by computer.

Fianna Fáil shows up as mildly centrist for both elections when coded by either method, the Progressive Democrats score as very right-wing, Democratic Left as most extreme left. The economic policy position of the government programme for 1992, as estimated by expert coding, seems to lie very close to the Labour Party economic policy position, but by computer bears closer relation to that of Fianna Fáil. The 1994 programme for government, on the other hand, bears no relation to any of its constituent parties' economic positions, by either measurement method. The 1997 results on the economic scale show a very high association between each party's policy positions, as estimated by the two alternative methods, with the exception, as mentioned earlier, of Fine Gael. The government position in 1997 is mildly left-wing, and certainly to the left of both of its constituent parties, Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats.

As regards the liberal–conservative scale, the results were less dependent upon the coding method used. By whatever method, Fianna Fáil were

estimated to be conservative in both election years; Labour, Democratic Left and the government programme of 1992 were estimated to be liberal. The government programme of 1994 scores socially centrist. It appears that, in 1992, the Labour party also had a strong influence over the government programme's social policy.

Assessing the hypothesis

We want to throw some light on the hypothesis that 'coalition policy is located at the weighted mean of the policy positions of government members; each member's policy position being weighted by the share that it controls of the total number of seats in the legislature' (Laver and Budge 1992: 426). Table 13.11 gives the policy positions for each government on the basis of the weighted means of their member parties and compares this with their measured government positions as estimated using both coding methods.

The weighted mean of the government members' policy positions approximates that of the government document in less than half of the cases. In 1992 the weighted policy positions of Labour and Fianna Fáil on the economic scale, as determined by computer coding, correspond quite well to its coded programme, but not when determined by expert coding. In 1994 the economic policy positions of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left when expert coded lie close to that of their government programme, but not when computer coded. But in 1997, there is no correspondence between the 1997 economic positions as determined by either method and the weighted means of the government parties' positions.

Table 13.11 Coalition policy: the weighted means of the policy positions of the government members compared with their coded programme positions

	1992	*1994*	*1997*
Economic policy			
Expert coding			
Weighted mean	–0.02	0.16	0.13
Actual gov. pos.	–0.51	0.04	–0.35
Computer coding			
Weighted mean	0.00	0.16	0.41
Actual gov. pos.	–0.17	1.21	–0.06
Social policy			
Expert coding			
Weighted mean	1.17	–0.10	1.56
Actual gov. pos.	–0.44	–0.04	–0.09
Computer coding			
Weighted mean	0.26	0.22	1.01
Actual gov. pos.	–0.37	0.12	0.81

It is on the social policy dimension that the hypothesis seems to work best. The expert coding and computer coding scores for the 1994 coalition programme of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left closely approximate the coalition position as determined by the weighted mean of their manifestos. Further, the social policy position of the 1997 Government, as estimated by computer coding, mirrors closely its parties' weighted mean positions.

Overall the results can best be described as varied. What seems to have happened in 1992 (see Table 13.11) is that Labour managed to secure a disproportionate number of its social policy positions in the government programme. By the expert coding score, Labour also did better than Fianna Fáil in the economic sphere. Anecdotally, as we have seen, this is what the Labour Party claimed (Finlay 1998: 136). In 1994 both the computer coding and expert coding scores place the weighted mean social policy position close to that of the recorded government's position, as does the expert coding score with regard to economic policy. The situation in 1997 (see Table 13.3) is that the economic policy position of the government is far closer to that of Fianna Fáil than the Progressive Democrats, but further left than that of Fianna Fáil, while the Government's social policy position seems to be unrelated to either of the coalition's constituent parties. The answer to this puzzle lies in the fact that, for the government formation of 1992, Labour was not merely the pivotal party, but had won a phenomenal number of seats as compared with its earlier electoral performances. While Labour had gained sixteen seats, Fianna Fáil had lost nine. In 1997, the smaller party, the Progressive Democrats, was promised partnership in government by Fianna Fáil prior to the election. Fianna Fáil kept this promise. However the Progressive Democrat's weak performance at the election seriously weakened their bargaining position. Fianna Fáil had performed well, returning seventy-seven deputies, a gain of nine seats. Of course in 1994, the absence of an election prior to coalition bargaining meant that the immediacy of a good electoral performance was not carried into the negotiations. This perhaps explains why coalition policy was located at the weighted mean of the positions of the government parties.

Conclusion

In the present chapter we have been concerned with applications of computer coding to estimate party policy position in three different political contexts. Party manifestos, parliamentary speeches and government declarations were coded and party positions were derived using the technique developed and applied by Laver and Garry (2000).

This contribution had two aims. Firstly, it set out to to derive party positions in order to allow the testing of coalition theories in situations, such as Italy 1996 and the Netherlands 1998, where other estimates were not easily available. In the case of Ireland, the testing of a specific hypothesis

required data about both parties and government positions. Second, the more general aim of the paper has been to generalise and test the computer coding approach. This has been done by constructing new dictionaries for Italy and the Netherlands, and extending the application of the existing dictionary for the UK and Ireland to other kinds of political declarations.

The analysis has yielded successful results, because it has allowed us to infer meaningful party policy positions for the three countries under consideration and to cross-validate these against independent estimates such as those derived from expert coding of manifestos, expert surveys and Manifesto Research Group data. This gives us confidence in the validity of the computerised content analysis. It suggests that the general approach should be capable of being refined and extended to good effect.

Notes

1 The PDS party document used here was originally formulated in 1996 and was discussed later at the Second Party Congress in 1997.
2 The RI party also issued its own electoral platform even though it joined the left wing coalition. The available RI manifesto has not been coded because it is extremely brief.
3 The PDS had 2 hours and 54 minutes; FI, 2 hours and 21 minutes; AN, 2 hours and 1 minute; PPI, 1 hour and 44 minutes; NL, 1 hour and 39 minutes; RC, 1 hour and 23 minutes; CCD-CDU, 1 hour and 21 minutes; RI, 1 hour and 19 minutes; all the other minor parties, 1 hour and 18 minutes.
4 It is worth noting here that these documents might be analysed disjointly as declarations of individual politicians, thereby yielding some insights into the study of intraparty politics.
5 Abacus and ISPO are two national public opinion research institutes operating in Italy. They kindly made available to the author, Daniela Giannetti, mass survey data which have not been used in this study. The mass surveys were carried out in April and June 1996. The questions were later used by Daniela Giannetti to collect expert survey data for a research paper about coalition politics in Italy. See Giannetti and Sened (1999).
6 We are grateful to Andrea Volkens, Social Science Center, Berlin, for providing the MRG data for Italy 1996.

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14 Tracking estimates of public opinion and party policy intentions in Britain and the USA

Judith Bara

Parties, public opinion and democracy

It is arguable that the study of 'preferences' is at the heart of rational choice theories of democracy (Downs 1957). How public concerns are formed and who is responsible for their genesis is indeed the stuff of many disputes both within and outside the academic community. A volume edited by Riker (1993) sought to bring together a series of essays on the specification, origin and manipulation of issues. Data was lacking at that point, however, for a systematic comparison of party and public concerns. The study reported here begins to address this problem by focusing on a new content analysis of party manifestos and platforms, based upon the concerns of the public as expressed in responses to opinion polling. This enables us to begin the process of inferring the degree to which parties directly reflect issues that the public regard as important.

It is also important to develop the methodology of content analysis and especially to harness the power of computers in constructing reliable and valid coding schemes. In the present study, both fully computerised and computer-assisted manual coding techniques were applied to policy documents, providing an opportunity to compare the two and assess the validity of the fully computerised analysis. This chapter shows that it is possible to carry out an analysis using fully computerised coding and produce results with good face validity.

Categorising party programmes in terms of electors' and parties' concerns

Adapting the public opinion coding categories

Given the ultimate objective of comparing public opinion with party policy, we need to code party programmes in the same terms as public opinion responses derived from surveys. We centre on responses to the survey question: 'What is the most important issue facing the country today?' Answers

to such a question clearly reflect popular policy concerns and have advantages for our purpose. The question is direct and simple. It allows for the construction of a coding scheme that is straightforward, easy to code and thus decreases the chances of error or subjectivity on the part of manual coders. It therefore offers a plain and understandable basis for coding. The question also has the advantages of having been used in virtually every Gallup poll in each country being investigated and of having consistently appeared over the whole post-war period.

When reporting the results of opinion polls, responses are coded by Gallup into a scheme comprising a substantial number of categories. The scheme also allows respondents themselves to extend the range, as additional categories may be established if sufficient numbers have referred to them. Decisions are then made by polling organisations as to whether or not to add them to the coding scheme for future surveys. In this way, new issues may be easily incorporated into overall analysis of results (Budge, Hofferbert and Pennings 1996). For our purposes, this generates a set of thirty-five issue categories that represent the most recurrent issues or policy areas.

If we were to use the full range of these answers, however, the coding scheme would become unwieldy, there would be a very low level of coding 'hits' in many categories and the validity of the estimates derived would be dubious. There are several ways in which this can be avoided. One is to aggregate categories into a smaller number of functional domains. Another is to select only those categories that account for a mean of, say, 5 per cent or more of programme content across all elections for at least one party in each country. Any such cut-off seems arbitrary, however, and it was decided to examine responses and sentences aggregated into four functional policy areas: foreign policy, government, economic policy and social policy. These are important and central policy areas where we could expect to see covariation of party and electoral policy concerns if this occurs anywhere. These four areas encompass two-thirds of the original thirty-five categories and collectively represent about 82 per cent of all coded categories in both manual and computer codings described here (see Table 14.1).

Manual coding

The categories used for the analysis of UK and US party platforms are the same as the broader groupings developed for the opinion poll responses. The sentences of each text were each assigned uniquely to one category and the resulting totals expressed as a percentage of the total number of sentences in the text.

The original MRG study (Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987) found that a strictly grammatical definition of the sentence as the unit of analysis proved to be a dubious basis for quantification. This was because many

Table 14.1 Original Gallup category and aggregations based on answers to the question 'What is the most important issue facing the country?'

Approximate wording of responses	*Original category*	*First consolidation*	*New consolidation for this study*
1 European Community	European Community	Foreign affairs/ defence	Foreign policy
2 Foreign affairs/ relationships/peace/ /aid	Foreign affairs/ relations/peace/aid		
3 Military alliances/ defence	Military alliances/ defence		
4 Nuclear/tests/war	Nuclear/tests/war		
5 Government/size/ domestic politics	Government/size/ domestic politics	Government	Government
6 Taxes	Taxes		
7 Elections	Elections		
8 Regions	Regions		
9 Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Economic policy
10 Financial situation/ interest rates/budget	Financial situation/ interest rates/budget		
11 Inflation/promote business	Inflation	Inflation	
12 Prices/cost of living/ wages/standard of living	Standard of living/ wages		
13 Economy/growth	Economy/growth	Economy	
14 Public sector/ privatisation	Public sector/ privatisation		
15 Energy/crisis	Energy/crisis		
16 Communications/ traffic/highways	Communications/ traffic/highways	Infrastructure	
17 Overseas trade	—		
18 Environment/ pollution	Environment	Environment	Social policy
19 Education/culture	Education	Education	
20 Health issues	Health	Welfare	
21 Housing	Housing		
22 Pensions	Pensions		
23 Social policy/ poverty/welfare	Social policy/ poverty/welfare		
24 Social justice/ equality	Social justice/ equality		

/continued overleaf

Table 14.1 continued

Approximate wording of responses	*Original category*	*First consolidation*	*New consolidation for this study*
25 Youth	Youth	Family and morals	Youth issues
26 Family/family issues	Family issues		Family issues
27 Religious/moral issues	Religious and moral issues		Moral issues
28 Drugs/alcohol	Drugs, alcohol	Social order	Drugs and alcohol issues
29 Protests/terrorism/ communism	Protests, terrorism		Protest issues
30 Law & order	Law and order	issues	Law and order
31 Unions/strikes/ industrial relations	Unions, strikes		Industrial relations issues
32 Racial problem/ immigration	Racial problems, immigration		Race issues
33 National unity	National unity	National unity	National unity
34 Agriculture/farms	Agriculture, farms, farmers	Agriculture	Agriculture
35 Women	Women	—	Women

statements, rather than representing cogent declarations of intent, were actually strings of assertions separated by semi-colons or bullet points and concerned very different sets of intentions. Since each assertion is only coded once, treating each of these strings as a single sentence would mean that large amounts of relevant data would be lost and the analysis would be skewed. Thus the unit of analysis is the 'quasi-sentence': a cogent statement possibly separated by grammatical symbols other than a full stop. This simple procedure should provide a good indication of the concern of the parties with various policy areas and provide a good match with the corresponding categories into which the Gallup responses have been grouped. Two parallel coding exercises were undertaken, one essentially manual and the other essentially computerised. Both were based on categories derived from answers to the Gallup question cited earlier.

Manual coding was undertaken with texts that had been divided into 'quasi-sentences' and presented in spreadsheet form for use with a computer. This enabled much easier access to the data, a better ability to record and reconsider manual codings, and facilitated reliability checks. Coding was carried out by four coders. They were trained to familiarise themselves with both the coding scheme and the computer registration of decisions, after which they were assigned the same sample of

documents for independent coding over a five-day period. At the end of each day their work was examined and correlated. The average inter-coder correlation rose from 0.60 to 0.93 over the period. The coders were then assigned individual texts, two working on British and two on US texts. They were encouraged to note any difficulties and concerns, which were communicated to the investigators. Any decisions on general coding points were then passed to all coders. Random checks on all coders were made regularly. Coders were also monitored very strictly in terms of time spent on the work to guard against overload, error and so on resulting from tiredness.

Computer coding

New technology now makes possible the computer analysis of huge volumes of political text. This is of course not a new idea. Stone *et al.* undertook pioneering work in the 1960s, exemplified by the publication of *The General Inquirer* in 1966. Despite a number of valiant efforts to develop software more appropriate to the analysis of a broader range of data than that susceptible to analysis by *The General Inquirer*, including earlier versions of the content analysis program TEXTPACK, results were somewhat inconclusive (Klingemann 1983). Today, however, with better computers and software, combined with the widespread availability of machine-readable text, there are virtually unlimited possibilities for the coding and analysis of politically relevant material. This suggests that, although manual coding will probably never be dispensed with completely, it will be used at a much lower level of coverage, for micro-analysis and checking the reliability and validity of computer techniques (Alexa 1997; Bara 1998; Bara 1999; Zuell *et al.* 1996). While computerised coding is certainly not trouble free, it has vast potential for further development in terms of application to content analysis of documents (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara and Tanenbaum 2001).

There are many advantages of using computerised coding. Given the centrality of documents to the operation of the democratic process, there are many categorisations that can be used to develop estimates and indices of preferences and outputs (see, *inter alia,* Riffe, Lacy and Fico 1998; Roberts 1997). Party manifestos and platforms represent only one data source for this type of analysis. Others include throne speeches, 'state of the union' addresses, parliamentary reports such as Hansard, and so on. The pioneering work of the Manifesto Research Group in the 1980s demonstrated that this approach could be extended across a broad range of political and governmental activity (see, *inter alia*, Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987; Laver and Budge 1992; Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994). To extend this type of study on the basis of traditional manual coding would be very time consuming, however, as well as being very expensive and open to problems of reliability and validity. The original

MRG project took a relatively large group of researchers more than a decade to complete and is in constant need of updating.

In the present study, the set of a priori categories constructed for the manual coding was also used as the basis for a computer dictionary. Each category in the manual scheme represented a coding category, augmented by additional words, word strings and alternative signifiers to aid in contextualisation. Hence, for example, 'armed services' was used to distinguish the use of the term 'services' from 'social services' or 'educational services'. Similar distinctions can be made in terms of 'rights': 'welfare rights', 'human rights', 'civil rights' and so on. It is conceivable that, by this means, hits might be lost, but the greater degree of accuracy and correspondence with human coders' contextual skills makes this a worthwhile exercise. The fully computerised dictionary was applied using TEXTPACK 7.0 software in order to generate a computer coded data set. Although other packages were assessed, it was felt that TEXTPACK was especially suited to this application as it provides for construction of dedicated dictionaries, 'key word in context' checks and interfaces with readily available statistical packages such as SPSS. It also allows for construction of a similar basic unit of analysis to that employed by the manual coders.

In applying the original thirty-five issue-based clusters, the computer dictionary requires inclusion of American spelling in order to maximise the use of contextual signifiers, synonyms or alternative words that produce the same meaning. Sources for these additions were the documents themselves, other coding schemes, for example that developed in an ESRC-sponsored project using different coding schemes and extensive use of thesauri (Budge, Tanenbaum and Bara 1999). The dictionary was refined twice in this way and the version used in this particular study consists of about 850 entries representing single words, word strings, word stems and common abbreviations.

Data sources and preliminary observations

The texts analysed in this study were British Conservative and Labour Party manifestos and American Democrat and Republican presidential party platforms across the entire post-war period. The justification for using these documents is widely accepted. Despite debate and some disagreement as to the precise methods of analysing these documents, it is agreed by all concerned that 'manifestos (and platforms) are a core source of information about party policy positions' (Laver and Garry 2000; see also Fairclough 2000). Such election programmes also form a vital link in helping to establish government accountability and obviously provide an opportunity for the construction of estimates of political preferences (Budge, Tanenbaum and Bara 1999). This is especially relevant in terms of the link between issues perceived to be important by the public, political parties and the government.

The salience of policy domains

Average levels of salience for the four policy domains as estimated by manual and computer coding as a percentage of the total manifesto, are given in Table 14.2. The clearest feature of this table is that there is a very high degree of similarity between major parties in each country in the emphasis given to the four policy domains. Most interesting in the current context, however, is the fact that there is such little variation between the manual and computer coding. Overall, for all parties in both countries, the average variation between manual and computer codes is below 3 per cent. This suggests at a general level that computerised codings of emphasis stand up well when validated against manual codings. We now turn to the relationship between manual and computer coded estimates of the saliency of each policy domain.

Foreign policy

Figure 14.1 compares manual and computer coded estimates of foreign policy salience in the USA and UK over the post-war period. This was a question of great concern to electors in the early part of the post-war period and to a lesser extent in the early 1980s. Overall, the graphs in Figure 14.1 show a high level of similarity between manual and computer codings. Although there are obviously greater discrepancies between the two techniques for some individual documents, as with the US Democrats in 1966, the general indication is that the two coding techniques produce similar results.

The face validity of these codings is also good. For example, our common understanding would lead us to expect that foreign policy would be more salient in the US, given its greater global concerns, than in the United Kingdom. We would also expect this to be especially the case during the first half of the post-war period, corresponding to the height of the Cold War era. We might also expect to see a rise in foreign policy concerns in the late 1980s and early 1990s reflecting the period of the Gulf War. Figure 14.1 shows precisely these patterns. There is also an indication of a

Table 14.2 Average platform/manifesto emphasis on policy domains (%) for the post-war period: UK 1945–97 and USA 1948–96

Party	*Policy domain*							
	Foreign policy		*Government*		*Economic policy*		*Social policy*	
	M	*C*	*M*	*C*	*M*	*C*	*M*	*C*
UK Conservative	14	18	18	20	27	22	24	24
UK Labour	16	19	18	19	27	23	25	22
US Democrat	25	23	12	16	22	19	26	23
US Republican	31	25	13	20	20	19	19	19

M = Average scores based on manual coding; C = Average scores based on computer coding.

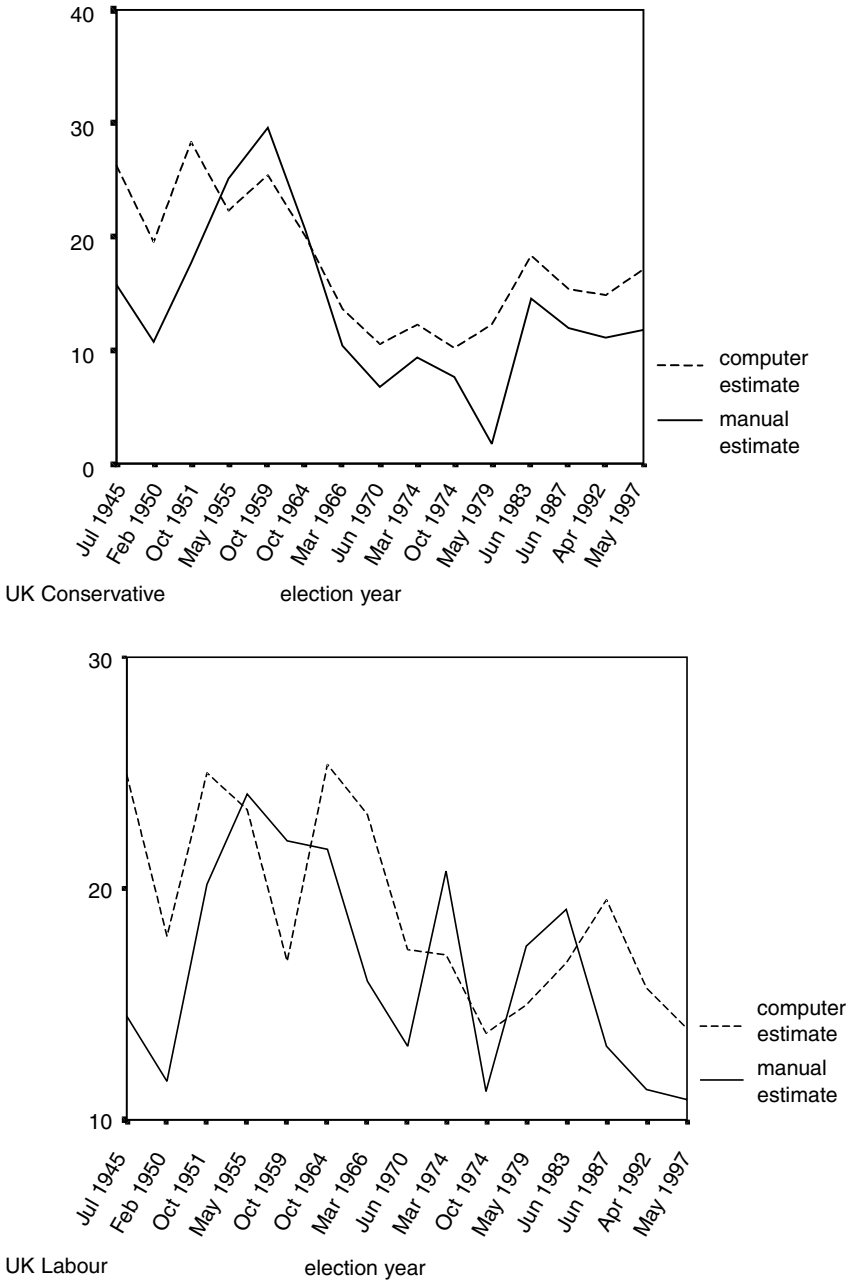
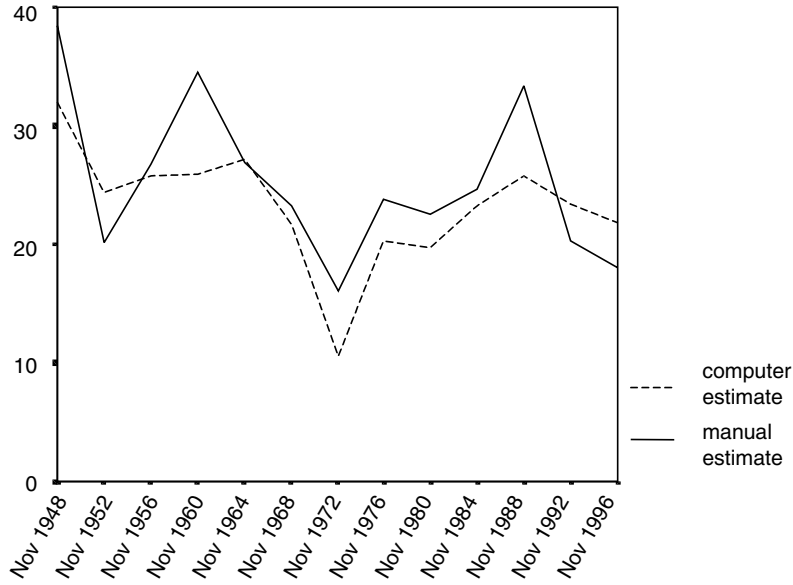
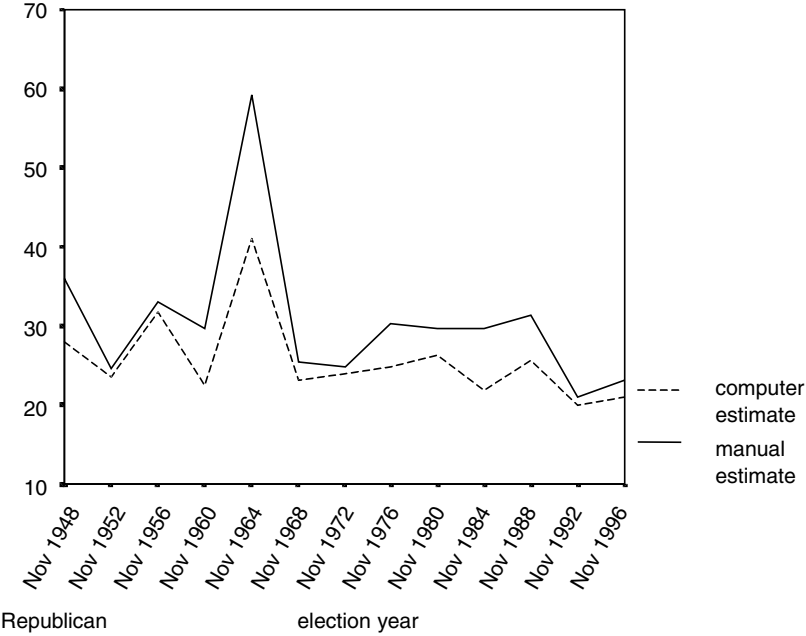


Figure 14.1 UK and US party platforms: manual and computer estimates of foreign policy salience


40
30
20
10
0
Nov 1948
Nov 1952
Nov 1956
Nov 1960
Nov 1964
Nov 1968
Nov 1972
Nov 1976
Nov 1980
Nov 1984
Nov 1988
Nov 1992
Nov 1996
computer estimate
manual estimate
US Democrat
election year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more bi-partisan approach to foreign policy in Britain than in the United States, where foreign policy is often seen as being of greater salience in Republican than in Democrat documents. The patterns in the data thus suggest good face validity for both manual and computerised codings.

The correspondence between manual and computer coded estimates of the salience of foreign policy is confirmed in a more systematic way by the correlations between the two sets of estimates, reported in Table 14.3. These correlations are quite high, with the exception of that for UK Labour, although even this proves not to be completely insignificant. In the case of foreign policy, therefore, the 'goodness of fit' between manual and computer coded estimates of policy saliency suggest that computer coding is a worthwhile path to pursue in the domain of foreign affairs.

Economic policy

Figure 14.2 (overleaf) compares manual and computer coded estimates of the salience of economic policy in the USA and Britain. Table 14.3 confirms that, with the exception of the British Conservatives, the correspondence between the manual and computer codings is again quite high. It is interesting to note, however, that computer coded estimates are more stable than manually coded ones for all four sets of documents.

In terms of face validity, the British case should be more likely to show concern for economic policy, given that ideological differences between Conservative and Labour have been seen as relating essentially to the economic sphere. Thus, just as we expect foreign policy to figure more prominently in US programmes, so we expect economic policy to be more prominent in British programmes. This is indeed largely born out by both sets of codings, with salience levels between 20 and 40 per cent for the British manifestos as compared with between 15 and 30 per cent for the US programmes. Additionally, if we compare Labour with the Conservatives in Britain, there is greater divergence between the individual programme scores, until the 1980s at least, than between Democrat and Republican in the USA. These patterns reflect the greater ideological affinity between the two main parties in the USA.

Table 14.3 Correlations between manual and computer coded estimates of the salience of different policy domains

Party	*Foreign policy*	*Economic policy*	*Government-related issues*	*Social policy*	*N*
UK Conservative	0.777***	0.273	0.222	0.594**	15
UK Labour	0.472*	0.817***	0.356	0.811***	15
US Democrat	0.771***	0.771***	0.322	0.708***	13
US Republican	0.937***	0.738***	0.804***	0.900***	13

*** Significant at 0.01(two tailed); ** at 0.05 (two tailed); * at 0.05 (one tailed).

Thus, given the face validity of the trends shown in Figure 14.2, and the high correlations reported in Table 14.3, computer coding is producing promising results in the economic policy domain. As in the case of the foreign policy estimates, the 'goodness of fit' might be improved by further refinements to the computer dictionary.

Government-related issues

Table 14.3 shows that the results for this policy domain are less robust than those for the others. Although there is a reasonably high proportion of text devoted to this area in most programmes, it is less cohesive than other domains and contains a variety of generalised inputs, such as 'domestic politics', 'elections' and 'regions'. In many cases, the policies discussed in the different party documents would not be especially distinguishable, although there may be certain periods when such issues are at the forefront of public debate. It could be said, for example, that the issue of 'devolution' in the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s and late 1990s is reflected to some extent in the patterns produced for the British parties in Figure 14.3. Similarly, we may also observe the impact of US Republican concerns about 'big government' during the Reagan-Bush era in the 1980s. Otherwise, the 'government' domain as presently constituted appears to be too diffuse, quite possibly because it reflects a larger number of 'smaller' concerns than the other domains. It is clearly in need of further refinement.

Social policy

Figure 14.4 compares manual- and computer coded estimates of the salience of 'social' policy in the USA and Britain, showing a close fit between the two. This is confirmed systematically by the relevant correlations in Table 14.3. It is also interesting that the patterns for all parties reflect those obtained for economic policy both in terms of direction and proportion of content. Social policy is of course another area which is often said to account for ideological differences between parties (see for example Laver and Budge 1992). In the present context, there is no intention to construct a left–right or any other scale, but it is interesting to note that concern with social policy seems to have grown for all parties across the post-war period. Overall, the face validity of manual and computer coded estimates of the salience of social policy, and the correlations between the two, indicate promising results for computer coding in the social policy domain.

Conclusions

The relationship between public opinion and party intention is central to any attempt to understand the mechanics of liberal democratic systems and

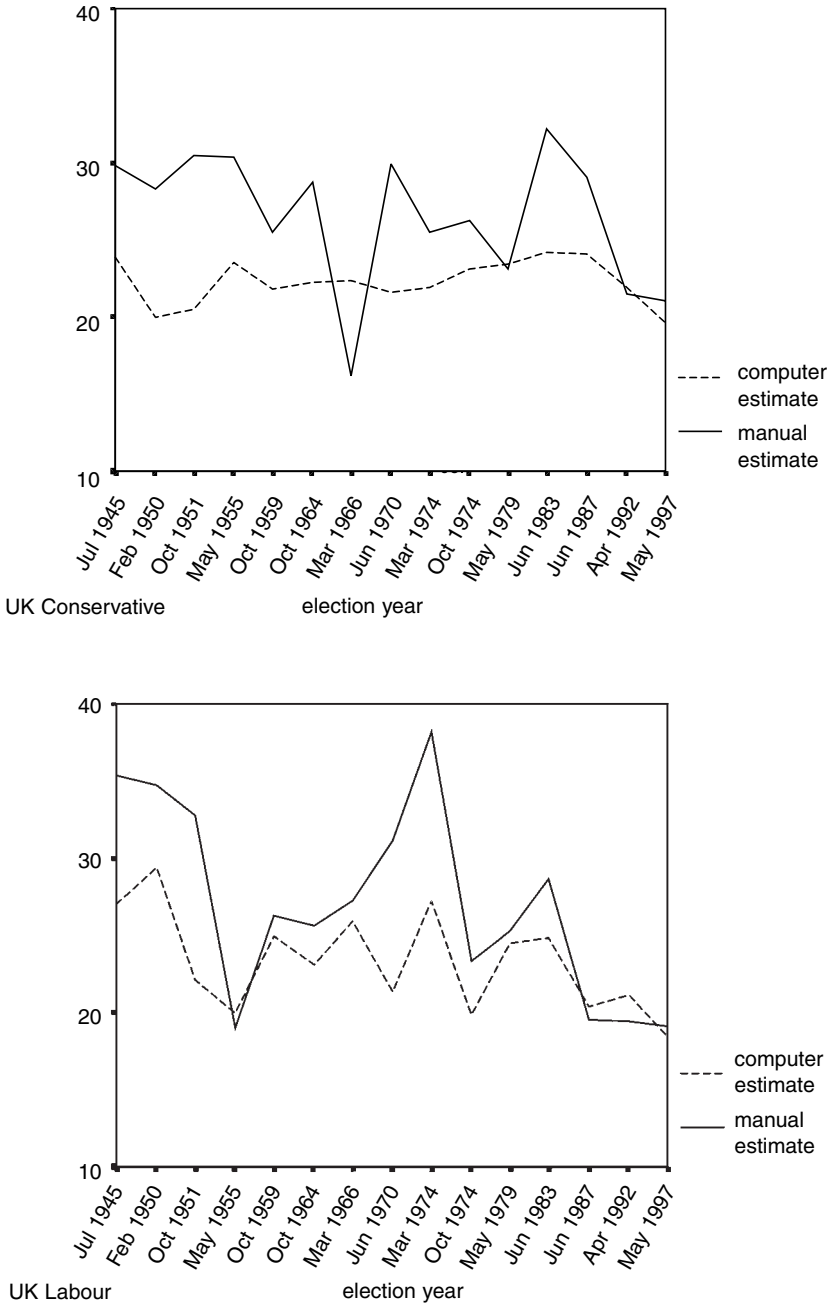
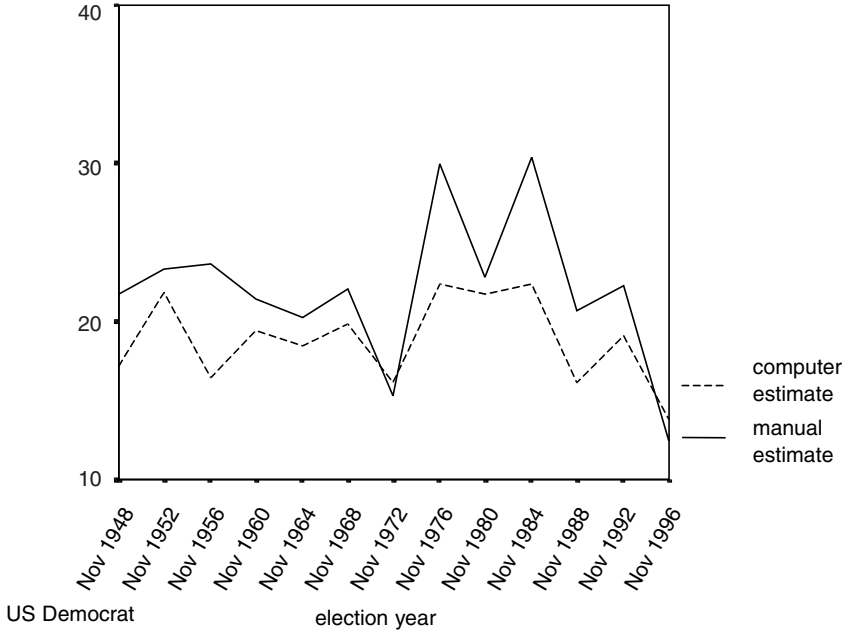


Figure 14.2 UK and US party platforms: manual and computer estimates of economic policy salience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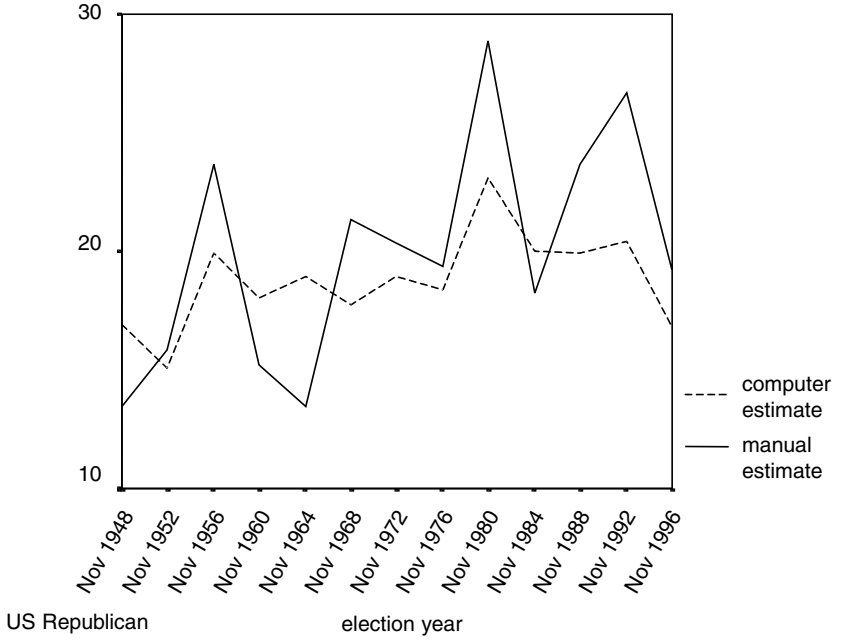
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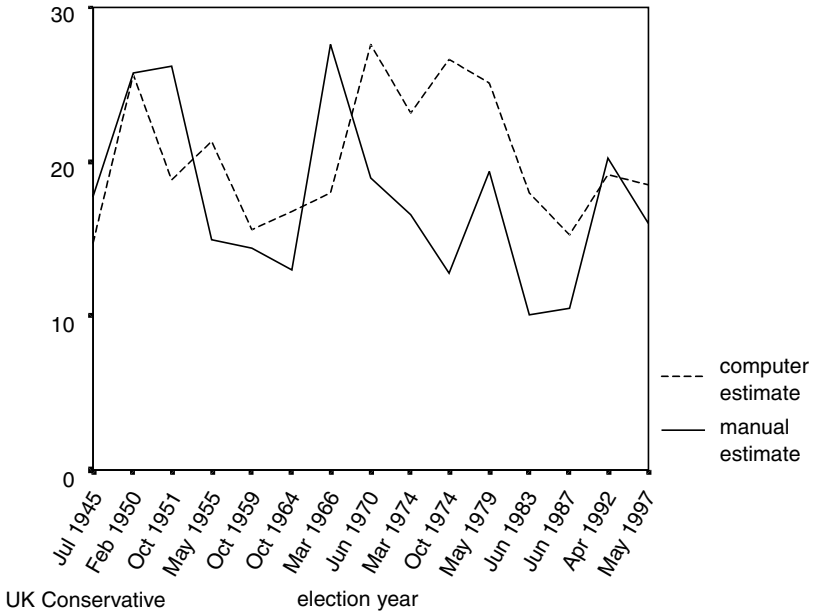


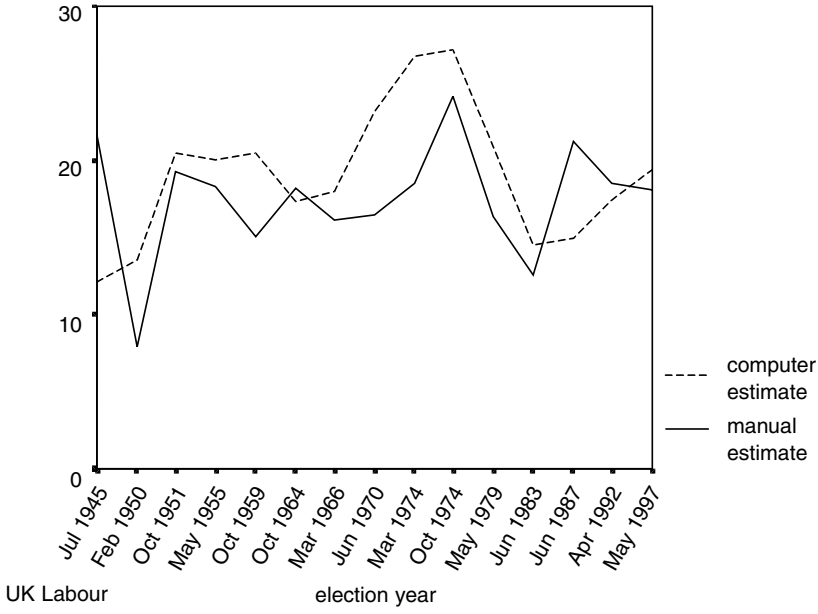
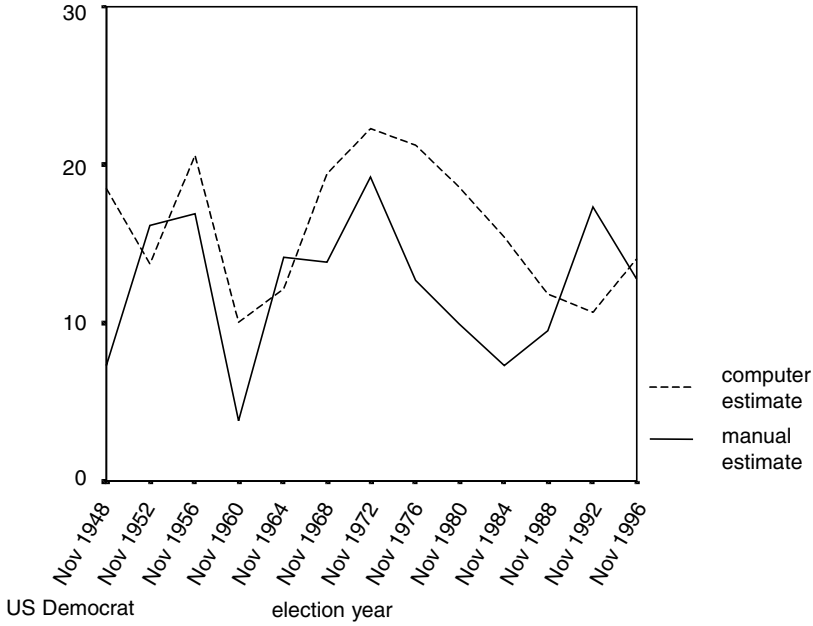


Figure 14.3 UK and US party platforms: manual and computer estimates of the salience of government-related issues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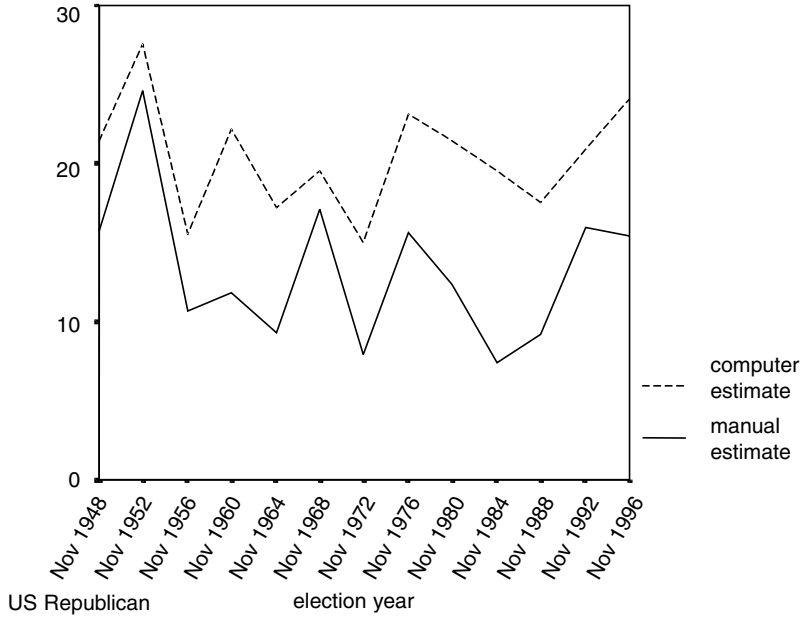
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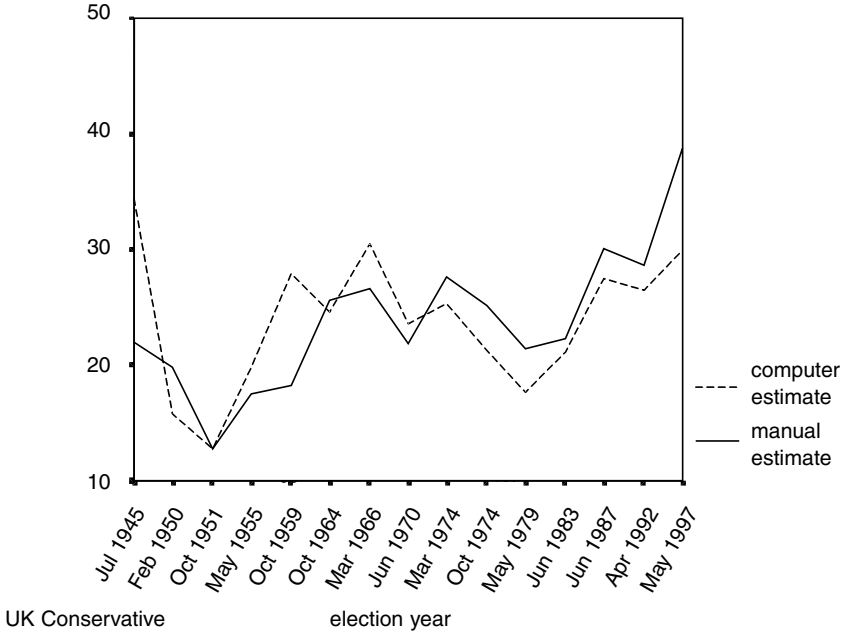


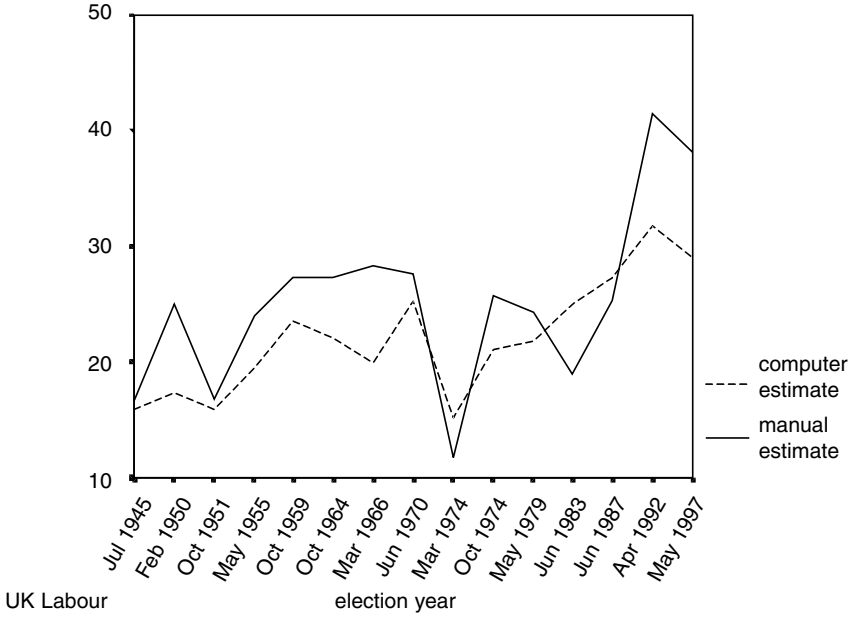
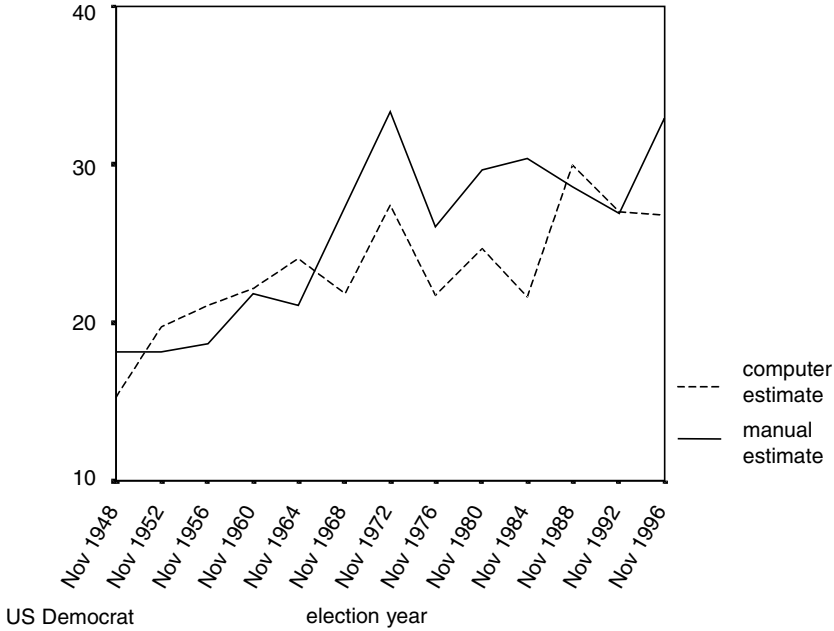


Figure 14.4 UK and US party platforms: manual and computer estimates of the salience of social policy issues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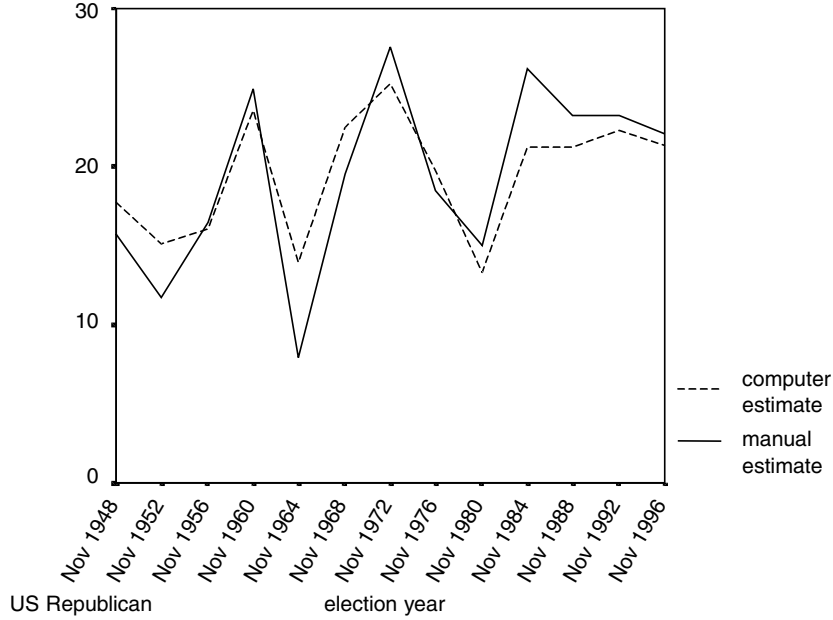
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the behaviour of their citizens. Party election programmes are used increasingly as benchmarks of government accountability, while public opinion is increasingly sought by parties wanting to inform their views of how people feel about particular policy options.

This preliminary investigation of the correspondence between manual and computer coded estimates of the content of British and US election programmes has provided a firm basis for suggesting that it will be possible to develop computer coding techniques to generate valid estimates of policy salience. Certainly, as far as three of the four general policy domains investigated here are concerned, the overall patterns produced suggest that computer coding is sufficiently robust to provide valid alternative estimates to those generated by traditional manual coding methods. However, we should remain cautious about applying the substantive policy dictionary used in this chapter as a fully-fledged investigative aid. The fact that not all policy domains yielded significant comparisons between manual and computer coding suggests that considerable work remains to be done, and examination of individual issue areas might well reveal ways in which these general results could be improved.

The question of whether we can construct a viable computer coding method also goes beyond generating estimates of general *saliency*. We may wish to generate estimates of policy *positions*, for example constructing coding dictionaries to help estimate party positions on a left–right dimension (Laver and Garry 2000; Garry, Chapter 12 this volume; de Vries *et al.* this volume). Tests carried out on a pilot basis, using a computerised coding scheme which attempts to replicate the Laver–Budge 'left–right' index (1992), have so far not been as successful, largely because of difficulties in establishing computerised alternatives for negative connotations (Budge, Tanenbaum and Bara 1999). Current attempts at refinement seem promising, however.

The parallel manual and computer coding schemes outlined in this chapter generate estimates of policy salience that do show surprisingly close degrees of correspondence. There are several reasons why this might be the case. If we compare the scheme used in this chapter with the original MRG coding scheme, the current scheme is much simpler. The MRG scheme consists of fifty-seven categories (ignoring any sub-categorisation), whereas the present scheme consists of thirty-five categories. Second, the MRG scheme is complex in that it attempts to capture the *direction* of content in some policy areas, not simply policy *saliency*. Each MRG coding category, furthermore, needs considerable explanation. In the present scheme, the definition of coding categories is essentially unambiguous in terms of the generally monosyllabic responses to a clearly defined question, 'What is the most important issue?' This has greatly facilitated construction of a computer dictionary based on plain language.

This study has demonstrated that, at least for a full range of the election programmes of the major parties in two countries, computer coding can

produce estimates that appear to be largely as valid as those produced by manual coding. At this stage in its evolution, computer coding cannot replace manual coding across the full range of activities for which this is used in political science. Our findings however suggest that, at least for some of the less complex types of content analysis tasks, it does offer a valid alternative, and could facilitate further types of analysis.

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Part IV

Conclusion

15 How should we estimate the policy positions of political actors?

Michael Laver

Although rarely dealt with explicitly in any of them, two inter-related themes have run through many of the chapters in this book. The first has to do with cause and effect. The second has to do with the choice between a priori and inductive techniques for constructing and interpreting policy spaces.

Problems of cause and effect

It is obvious that data must be causally prior to the effects they are used to explain. The acute data famine in certain areas of the field, however, has sometimes led to a somewhat relaxed interpretation of this methodological canon. A straightforward example concerns the use of legislative roll-call voting patterns. It is possible to apply techniques of dimensional analysis, such as multidimensional scaling or factor analysis, to observed patterns of roll-call voting in a legislature. The result may be a set of policy dimensions upon which the positions of key actors can be estimated. But legislative voting patterns are the *outputs* of a sophisticated political process and data derived from them should not be used as *inputs* to models explaining behaviours (whether relating to government formation or other aspects of party competition) that are prior to, or synchronous with, that process. Estimates of policy positions derived from roll-call voting in Legislature L_1 could in principle be used in a valid way to explain behaviours in a subsequent Legislature, L_2. Even then, however, very subtle causal modelling will be needed to extract from the explanation of behaviour in L_2 the effect of factors that led to behaviours in L_1 and which 'carry over' into L_2. For this reason, as well as the difficulty of decoding the substantive meaning of a sophisticated legislative vote, legislative roll-calls are rarely used these days as a basis for estimating party policy positions. When they are indeed used, special attention needs to be given to the precise use of such data in causal inference.

A more insidious problem of cause and effect arises with the use of 'experts' to generate data. This arises quite clearly with the use of 'expert surveys' to estimate party policy positions. The problem, discussed by Mair in Chapter 2, is that it is more or less impossible to disentangle expert judgements of the policy positions of political actors from the very behaviours

these judgements are used to explain. Imagine we want to explain government formation, for example, in a situation in which the incumbent government in Legislature L_1 forms again in Legislature L_2, after an election has taken place. Even if experts are surveyed before the government re-forms, the fact that two parties have just been in government together in L_1 may lead to a preconception on the part of the expert, possibly quite unconscious, that these two parties have similar policy positions in L_2. The resulting expert judgements will place the parties close together in the L_2 policy space and may lead to policy-based predictions of the L_2 government that have a strong whiff of tautology about them. The 'policy-based' predictions may amount to no more than saying that the two governments were the same because they were the same. (In 'reality' this might have been for no better reason than that the two party leaders enjoyed disagreeing violently with each other over policy during late-night drinking sessions.)

The case against expert surveys in this regard, which is also argued by Budge (2000), applies with equal if not greater force to the more informal policy judgements made by authors in order to operationalise models of political competition. (See, for example, the collection of policy spaces used by the authors of the well-known collection of country studies edited by Browne and Dreijmanis 1982.) When an author assumes a substantive policy space as an 'empirical' input to the evaluation of some model, most of us need a lot of convincing before we accept that the result of the evaluation has not also been assumed in the process.

It is not generally recognised that a somewhat less obvious, but potentially no less potent, version of this problem arises with the use of expert coders in the content analysis of political texts which are, as we have seen from many of the preceding chapters, one of the main sources of data on policy positions. The human beings chosen to code political texts are typically picked because they have some expertise in the politics of the country under investigation. This allows them to set the text being coded 'in context'. Coding text in context is typically seen as the great advantage of human as opposed to computer coding. Developing algorithms for the valid computer coding of text in context is an extraordinarily complex and difficult matter, while people feel instinctively uneasy about coding text out of context. However, the 'context' applied by a human coder to a particular text unit under investigation can obviously range from the immediately surrounding text, to a preconception about the ideological standpoint of the author of the text (see also Laver and Garry 2000).[1] This opens up the possibility that a given piece of text found in a British Conservative manifesto of the 1960s, for example, might be coded in a different way, leading to a different inference about policy position, from an *identical piece of text* found in the manifesto of the Workers' Revolutionary Party. This could happen *precisely because* the coder set the text in context, in effect assuming in advance the very result that the data was to be used to infer.

In this regard, a computer's apparently doltish inability to appreciate the

subtleties of the broader political context when coding a text may even be a scientific virtue. The key point to bear in mind, however, is that whenever 'experts' are used to generate data – whether by answering expert surveys or by coding texts – we must be alert to the possibility that the results of the analysis are being assumed in advance, however inadvertently, by those who are generating the data.

Inductive versus a priori interpretations of policy spaces

We have already implicitly seen, when looking at the spatial representation of simple matrices of policy distances, that estimating the policy positions of political actors involves two processes that are analytically quite distinct, although often confused in practice. The first involves *locating the relative positions* of political actors in a policy space; the second involves *interpreting the substantive meaning* of that space. Thus, in our simple one-dimensional example, we were able to locate the position of the ideal point of individual, I, in relation to the status quo, SQ, and some alternative, A. We were able to predict that I would choose SQ over A but we had no substantive idea whether this was because I was a revolutionary and A was more conservative than SQ, or completely the opposite.

This example shows that we can rotate and flip a policy space, holding all inter-point distances constant, to give it different substantive meanings. More precisely, the interpretation of a policy space depends upon the relationship between the configuration of points and a set of 'basis vectors' (or 'axes') to which we can attach substantive meaning.

There are two fundamentally different methods of interpreting the meaning of a policy space by inserting substantive axes into it. One is inductive and relies largely on statistical procedures, interpreted by the analyst. The other, fundamentally different approach involves a priori assumptions. Both are represented in the preceding chapters. The inductive approach is represented by the original Manifesto Research Group analyses, discussed in Chapters 3 (Volkens) and 4 (Budge), and by a number of developments and extensions of this such as those found in Chapters 6 (Agasøster), 8 (van der Brug), 9 (Petry and Landry) and 14 (Bara). The a priori approach is very clearly represented by the expert survey technique, discussed by Peter Mair in Chapter 2. It also forms the point of departure for the technique developed by Laver and Garry (2000), and implemented here in Chapters 12 (Garry) and 13 (De Vries, Giannetti and Mansergh).

The inductive approach in effect sees spatial analysis as a data reduction problem. The objective is to generate a robust low-dimensional representation of a high-dimensional data set: to take the policy positions of lots of actors on lots of issues, and generate a plausible one- two- or three-dimensional map of these, for example. The basis vectors of the low dimensional policy space may be identified on purely statistical grounds, using

explained variance. Thus the most important axis can be taken to be the one explaining the most variance using a given data reduction technique (such as factor analysis or multidimensional scaling). The most explicit recent version of this statistical approach has been proposed by Gabel and Huber (1999), who *define* the main left–right dimension as being the dimension that maximises explained variance in their data reduction process, regardless of the variables that contribute to its construction and the configuration of political parties that it generates.

More commonly, however, analysts take the results of a data reduction process and attempt to provide some substantive interpretation of axes in terms of the configuration of points on them and the variables that went into their construction.[2] They do this from their own 'expert' knowledge of the politics of the situation being analysed, typically on the basis of the 'face validity' of patterns that are generated: there is thus an inevitable element of 'reading the tealeaves' in such interpretations.[3] This type of spatial interpretation is quite common. It formed the basis of the original interpretations of the factor analyses of content analysis data by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG), for example (Budge *et al.* 1987), together with a variety of policy spaces derived using the technique of multidimensional scaling.

A completely different methodological approach is to view the core empirical task as one of estimating policy positions on predetermined policy scales, the interpretations of which are set out a priori. This approach is most explicit in expert surveys that supply respondents with predefined scales that have explicit interpretations and ask the experts to locate political actors on each scale. Laver and Hunt (1992), for example, estimated the policy positions of political parties in twenty-five countries on the same eight policy scales with precisely defined endpoints. This approach has the advantage of generating policy scales with unambiguous interpretations. The main disadvantage is the other side of the same coin; the explicit interpretations imposed upon the estimated scales may not match the actual policy concerns that underlie the main dimensions of the policy space under investigation. The expert survey technique will assemble a data set on a predefined set of policy dimensions come hell or high water, whether or not these correspond to the real world politics of the country being studied.

Content analysis data can also be used to estimate the positions of political actors on policy scales that have been defined a priori. An early attempt to do this using the MRG data can be seen in Laver and Budge (1992), who set out to estimate party positions on a general left–right socio-economic policy scale by constructing an additive index built from MRG coding categories. (For an evaluation of this and other attempts to estimate socio-economic left–right scales, see McDonald and Mendes, Chapter 7 this volume.) This approach was extended, using a ratio scale, to new computer and expert coded manifesto data by Laver and Garry (2000), and it is this technique that is implemented in Chapters 12 and 13.

The relative merits of the inductive and a priori approaches to estimating the policy positions of political actors need to be weighed carefully and explicitly by the analyst. The inductive approach is more suitable in an environment in which the analyst is uncertain about the identity and substantive content of the key policy dimensions. In such cases, patterns in the data can be allowed to determine the dimensional structure of the policy space that is derived, although a certain amount of *ad hoc* substantive interpretation will be required of the analyst. The a priori approach is better suited to well-researched environments where the identity and substance of key policy dimensions is not the key issue, but where the main point of the research is to track the position and movement of different political actors on specific dimensions.

Where do we go from here?

If we consider the potential sources of data on the policy positions of political actors, the analysis of text clearly offers by far the greatest potential – reflected in the sustained interest in this matter shown by many of the chapters in this book. The use of expert surveys, while it provides quick and convenient data, can be criticised for imposing a particular interpretation on the policy dimensions analysed, while at the same time being somewhat ambiguous about what, precisely, experts are locating, and at which time point. Quite apart from this, expert surveys can only be repeated so often without exhausting the goodwill of the experts involved, and cannot sensibly locate very large numbers of actors at different time points in the same space. Surveys of political elites are subject to pretty much the same constraints as surveys of experts. Analyses of roll-call voting fall victim to the problems, noted earlier in this chapter, of separating cause from effect when observing behaviour in a complex strategic environment. With the exception of text and roll-call analysis, furthermore, most other techniques for estimating party policy positions cannot be applied retrospectively.

In contrast to these problems, text is produced in great volumes by politicians. A fair proportion of this is recorded for posterity, increasingly in electronic form. It is easily possible to retrieve and process texts from the past, and all texts can be analysed and reanalysed more or less infinitely, without becoming exhausted.

Huge strides have been made in the analysis of political texts by the Manifesto Research Group, as can be seen from the wide variety of contexts in which their data is used and reanalysed, and their method reapplied, which are illustrated in some of the early chapters in this book. The hand coding of text is a costly and potentially unreliable process, however, and it is clear that one of the futures of text analysis lies with the computer. As the chapters in this book show, there are all sorts of theoretical and methodological issues to be confronted and the computer coding of text no doubt has a long way to go before it can convince the sceptics. As the later chapters

in this book also indicate, however, early results from simple computer applications are surprisingly promising, yielding high levels of cross-validation against independent sources. These results are more than enough encouragement for those who are interested to seek ways of refining and improving computer analysis techniques.

Once the policy positions of political actors can reliably and validly be estimated from computer coded text, this will unlock a number of exciting opportunities for the empirical elaboration of theoretical models. The study of party manifestos can be broadened to include policy statements from any and every politician at any point of time, for example, since the sheer volume of text to be coded will no longer be a constraint on the analysis. This will open up the way for the systematic empirical analysis of intraparty politics, of the inter-electoral dynamics of party politics, and of much more besides. The possibilities are simply enormous.

Notes

1 The identity of the author of the text under investigation is never to my knowledge concealed from human coders who, if they were in any sense experts, would anyway quickly guess the authorship if it was indeed concealed from them.
2 Thus a factor analysis may generate a dimension on which economic variables have high loadings, and which places the Communist Party on the left and the Conservatives on the right. It would then be interpreted, inductively, as an 'economic left–right' dimension. If it placed the Communists on the right and the Conservaties on the left, it would be flipped and once more interpreted as an 'economic left–right' dimension.
3 Within the profession there are hilarious anecdotes of 'experts' who have given solemn interpretations of 'policy spaces' generated, as a result of data formatting errors, from effectively random numbers.

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