AARHUS UNIVERSITY

Coversheet

This is the accepted manuscript (post-print version) of the article.

Contentwise, the post-print version is identical to the final published version, but there may be differences in typography and layout.

How to cite this publication

Please cite the final published version:

Bischof, D., & Senninger, R. (2018). Simple Politics for the People? Complexity in Campaign Messages and Political Knowledge. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2), 473-495.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12235>

Publication metadata

Title:	Simple Politics for the People? Complexity in Campaign Messages and Political Knowledge
Author(s):	Daniel Bischof, Roman Senninger
Journal:	<i>European Journal of Political Research</i> , 57(2), 473-495
DOI/Link:	https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12235
Document version:	Accepted manuscript (post-print)

General Rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Simple Politics for the People?

Complexity in Campaign Messages and Political Knowledge

Daniel Bischof, University of Zurich

&

Roman Senninger, Aarhus University

Abstract:

Which parties use simple language in their campaign messages and do simple campaign messages resonate with voters' information about parties? This study introduces a novel link between the language applied during election campaigns and citizens' ability to position parties in the ideological space. To this end, we investigate how complexity of campaign messages varies across parties and how it affects voters' knowledge about party positions. Theoretically, we suggest that populist parties are more likely to simplify their campaign messages to demarcate themselves from mainstream competitors. In turn, voters should perceive and process simpler campaign messages better and, therefore, have more knowledge about the position of parties that communicate simpler campaign messages. We present and validate a measure of complexity and use it to assess the language of manifestos in Austria and Germany (1945-2013). It shows that political parties, in general, use barely comprehensible language to communicate their policy positions. However, differences between parties exist and we find support for our conjecture about populist parties as they employ significantly less complex language in their manifestos. Second, we find evidence that individuals are better able to place parties in the ideological space if parties use less complex campaign messages. Our findings lead to greater understanding of mass-elite linkages during election campaigns and have important consequences for the future analysis of manifesto data.

Introduction

One of the key determinants driving democracy and elections is how political elites link themselves and their preferences to the people (Dahl 1971; Downs 1957). A burgeoning literature aims to understand the linkage between political elites and voters by analyzing party positions and voters' perceptions thereof (Adams 2001; Budge et al. 2001; Laver, Benoit & Garry 2003; Slapin & Proksch 2008; Somer-Topcu 2015). Parties routinely communicate with voters when giving speeches, when drafting campaign materials such as their manifestos or when dueling with each other in TV debates. Yet, current research mostly focuses on the positional adaptation of parties to voters and, in turn, how voters interpret such positional shifts. Thereby, the existing research largely neglects the style and tone politicians use when communicating with the masses (for notable exceptions, please see Spirling 2015; Young & Soroka 2012).

Yet, one of the key observations of political pundits is that in many ways, the styles of discourse seem to be changing radically in contemporary political campaigns. A case in point is Donald Trump's campaign during the 2016 US Presidential Campaign. Donald Trump applied a simple and repetitive style of speech throughout his campaign.¹ In turn, observers of the Presidential race quickly came to the conclusion that specifically Trump's simple style of speech-making was a key strategic tool to seduce the masses. Despite these widespread public allegations that his simple style of speech might be a strategic tool to communicate campaign messages to voters, little scholarly work has looked into *who* employs simple campaign messages. In addition, the question *how* simplicity might in turn affect voters has not been analyzed and discussed in the scholarly literature so far.

¹ Boston Globe: For presidential hopefuls, simpler language resonates – Trump tops GOP field while talking to voters at fourth-grade level, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2015/10/20/donald-trump-and-ben-carson-speak-grade-school-level-that-today-voters-can-quickly-grasp/LUCBY6uwQAxiLvXbVTSUN/story.html>;

Esquire: Donald Trump Woos Republicans By Speaking at a 4th Grade Level, <http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/news/a39031/trump-fourth-grade-level/>;

E. Schumacher and M. Eskenazi (2016): Most Presidential Candidates speak at grade 6-8 level – Trump Generally Scores Lowest; Lincoln Remains Benchmark. Add publication details

Following the idea that the complexity of language matters for voters' perceptions of political parties and their positions, we examine the linguistic complexity of manifestos in two Western European multiparty systems – Austria and Germany. Theoretically, we first suggest that populist parties are more likely to rely on a simpler style of language in their campaign messages. A key aspect of populist strategies is to appeal to the people while largely rejecting the interests of the elite by arguing that these interests are not compatible with the preferences of the *populus*. By relying on simple language, populists can denunciate mainstream politics as unnecessarily complex and as technical jargon which tends to correlate with complex language. In this sense, linguistic simplicity helps the populist to exhibit the aloofness of the political elite. Second, simpler language in campaign materials should, in turn, help the masses to better understand and perceive policy positions of political parties.

To measure the complexity of manifesto text, we validate and apply a generally accepted readability index (LIX) (Björnsson 1968). The text analysis of 175 party manifestos from 1945-2013 in Austria and Germany suggests that parties draft complex text loaded with technical jargon. We assume that this is because party elites are used to reading and discussing complex legislative text. Thus, they might themselves employ a style of writing that is full of technical jargon and low readability. However, we also uncover telling differences between parties. On average, populist parties write shorter sentences and words than other parties. Second, using voter and expert survey data from election studies, we provide a link between the complexity of campaign messages and political knowledge. We find that voters infer parties' general left-right placement more adequately if parties apply a simpler language in their campaign materials. In sum, we find strong evidence supporting our theoretical framework.

Our findings have important implications for understanding political discourse in modern democracies. First, we find that simplification of language helps parties to communicate their position to voters. Thus, in many ways, the current political discourse might be too difficult to grasp and process for several voter strata. Second, the rise of contemporary populism might also force mainstream competitors to simplify their campaign messages while still aiming to deliver meaningful and fact-based policy cues in an effort to secure office and votes in the future. This suggests that the increasing electoral success by populist parties could not only lead to changes of the policy content in political speech but also to a different type and tone of political discourse.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we review the literature on manifestos as well as the data and methods applied by scholars. Next, we present our hypotheses. Third, we discuss and validate our readability measurement. We then outline the model specifications, present our results and discuss how they relate to our theoretical expectations. The final section concludes.

Who produces simple messages and how it matters for voters

Contemporary research discusses a wide set of party strategies and their influence on the electoral success and failure of political parties. By far, the most scrutinized strategies in this context are ideological shifts by political parties (Adams 2012; Adams, Merrill III & Grofman 2005; Bischof & Wagner 2017; Downs 1957; Ezrow 2005; Ezrow, Homola & Tavits 2014; Kitschelt 1994). Also, the salience parties attach to different issues (Klüver & Spoon 2015) and the ownership of specific issues are shown to persuade voters (Bélanger & Meguid 2008; Petrocik 1996). In line with this, research also suggests that parties at times aim to blur their positions (Bräuninger & Giger 2016; Lo, Proksch & Slapin 2014; Rovny 2012a), a strategy that strives to present contradictory positions on the same policy issue.

Scholars increasingly aim to understand not only which strategies parties pursue but also how voters' perceptions of parties are affected by these strategies. In general, studies suggest that voters adapt their perceptions of political parties in line with their positional shifts (Adams, Ezrow & Somer-Topcu 2011; Fernández-Vázquez 2014; Fernández-Vázquez & Somer-Topcu 2016; Somer-Topcu 2016). Also later studies emphasize that other strategies by political parties such as broadening their issue appeals, have tangible consequences for voters' perceptions of parties. For instance, Somer-Topcu (2015) finds that parties gain votes if they broaden their issue appeal since voters perceive broadly appealing parties as ideologically closer to their own ideology.

However, considerably less effort has been made to scrutinize the style of language used in campaign messages. A growing body of literature has begun to investigate the type of language employed in campaign materials such as, for instance, the tone or sentiment in campaign messages (Haselmayer & Jenny 2016; Young & Soroka 2012). In addition, recent research from the UK finds that representatives adapted the complexity of their speeches to appeal to new electors after the Great Reform Act in the UK (Spirling 2015). Unfortunately, this strand of literature largely neglects

patterns of variation between parties' campaign messages and whether and how the style of language affects voters' perceptions of political parties.

Yet, the style of language employed in campaign materials might have important consequences for voters' perceptions of party positions. A simpler style of writing should ensure that policy messages are easier to detect, interpret and process both for voters and the media. Specifically, the media might pay more attention to policy messages that are simpler to communicate to the masses. Oftentimes, the media is more inclined to incorporate simple, catchy phrases instead of debating the meaning of lengthy and complex jargon. Hence, the coverage of political campaigns is likely to follow a media logic that means that the focus is on compelling stories that adjust style and grammar to the needs and wants of newsworthiness (Strömbäck & Dimitrova 2011; Takens et al. 2013). Parties themselves might also have an interest in differing in the communicational styles they employ in their manifestos. Numerous empirical examples suggest that some parties and candidates communicate their policy positions in a simpler manner than others. For instance, the campaign materials produced by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) usually rely on clear rhetoric and easy-to-grasp messages (Wodak & Pelinka 2002).

We suggest that populist parties have a particular interest in simplifying their campaign messages. At the core of a populist communication strategy lies the idea of splitting societies into 'the elite' and 'the people' (Jagers & Walgrave 2007: 323; Mudde 2004: 543;). Hence, a key aspect of populist strategies is to appeal to the people while largely rejecting the interests of the elite by suggesting that these interests are not compatible with the interests of the *populus*. Rather, these interests are the evil products of parasitic elites (Oliver & Rahn 2016, 190). In contrast, the populist vocalizes the interests of ordinary and decent people (Canovan 1999, 5). Thus, appealing to the people is a necessary condition for populist strategies. Numerous definitions of populism explicitly mention the idea that populists aim to simplify the political discourse to authenticate their representational efforts (Canovan 1999; Moffitt & Tormey 2014, 385–86; Oliver & Rahn 2016). Yet, as Mudde (2004, 542) notes, simplification is 'highly problematic to put into operation in empirical studies' and, hence, has often been neglected by previous research on populism. This might have led many scholars to drop the idea that linguistic simplification is a core strategy of populists. In this paper, we attempt to reanimate this idea. We suggest that in order to fulfill their core strategy to split the 'the elite' and the 'decent people', populist parties tend to simplify politics and policy decision making.

First, using simple messages allows populist parties to demarcate themselves more clearly from mainstream competitors. The aforementioned illustration of Trump's strategy in the US is just one of numerous examples underlining this argument. Populists try to simplify political discourses. Simple messages are at the core of their campaign strategies. As Taggart (2002, 76) correctly annotates: 'This means that populism, in what it says and the way it says it, strives for clarity, directness and simplicity; [...].' By employing simple language, populists can denunciate mainstream politics as unnecessarily complex and as mostly relying on technical jargon which tends to correlate with complex language. Thus, linguistic simplicity is a valuable tool for exhibiting the aloofness of the remaining political elite and fosters the impression of a strong bond between the populist and ordinary people. Thereby, simple language should suggest that populists understand the struggle and problems of 'ordinary' people's everyday life.

Second, using simple language ensures both that policy messages are clearer in positional terms for voters and that they are accessible to a larger fraction of the public (Spirling 2015, 122–23). Thus, given that populists' aim is to represent the interests of 'the people', they are keen to guarantee the accessibility of their arguments to the entire population. Hence, being simple reinforces the populist's authenticity as a representative of the '*populus*'.

In contrast, mainstream parties and their leaders might pursue 'catch-all' strategies, as suggested by Kirchheimer (1966). While a catch-all strategy aims to maximize voter turnout across all social strata, the goal of 'catch-all' strategies is not to unit these strata against the elites. On the contrary, the core of such a strategy is to offer a wide set of policies seemingly interesting to all the different strata. As a result, mainstream parties have been characterized as acting as a cartel and converging ideologically (Katz & Mair 1995; Katz & Mair 2009). This cartelization leads parties to become engaged in a discourse using similar jargon and technical terms to ensure their survival. In this sense, mainstream parties construct hurdles hampering the possibilities for newcomers to become engaged in political discourses. Hence, we formulate the following hypothesis:

Populism Hypothesis: Populist parties are more likely to simplify the language of their campaign messages.

Of course, this hypothesis immediately raises the question if and how simplicity of campaign messages affects voters and their decision making at the polls. In fact, the assumptions leading us to formulate the 'populism hypothesis' implicitly suggest that simplicity affects how external actors

– such as the media or voters – process the information provided by political parties. Indeed, based on research in communication and education, we have good reason to assume that textual complexity hampers the processing of information. For instance, research in linguistics shows that with increasing textual complexity, human beings are less likely to comprehend and memorize information from texts (Anderson 1983; Pitler & Nenkova 2008).

Translated into a political context, we have reason to assume that voters’ political knowledge might be affected by the linguistic complexity of campaign materials. Prior to elections, parties draft and share a range of campaign materials aiming to increase the popularity of candidates and the voters’ knowledge about party goals (van der Meer, Walter, & Aelst 2015). During campaigns parties compete for voters’ attention. Given that voters have limited resources they will not invest much time and effort in understanding campaign materials by political parties. Thus, parties have to make sure that their messages stand out and stick with voters. Using simple language seems to be a straightforward tool for achieving a competitive advantage towards other parties.

Thus, *ceteris paribus*, simplicity should ensure that more voters are treated by campaign information, and along with it, these voters should be able to memorize information better. Furthermore, the media is also interested in repeating and discussing simple and catchy campaign messages. An excellent example is Trump’s statement to build a wall at the Mexican border in order to stop illegal immigration. His messages on the matter were always based on simple language employing catchy phrases, and the media repeated these statements again and again. In turn, this message also stuck with his voters and was repeated in chorus by voters during his campaign events. Simple language should therefore facilitate voters’ comprehension of the issues, policies and positions offered in an election campaign. As voters’ possibilities to understand the policies offered in election campaigns increase so should their capability to correctly place a party within the ideological spectrum.

Certainly, we are by no means suggesting that simplicity is the only or a necessary condition for voters to hold more knowledge about the content of party campaigns. Obviously, other factors such as blurring positions (Rovny 2012a; Rovny 2012b) and the number of policies addressed (Bischof 2017; Greene 2015; Senninger 2017) should affect voters’ knowledge as well.² Yet, we argue that

² Indeed, an interaction effect might be thinkable: Two messages with the same positional clarity might resonate differently with voters depending on linguistic complexity. Such an interaction effect is not directly testable with our design for several reasons; for one, because we do not observe two parties in our data using the same positional clarity

if we hold such factors constant, simplicity should affect voters' knowledge on the overall ideological position of a party.

Party Placement Hypothesis: *Ceteris paribus* simplification of campaign messages increases the likelihood that voters can correctly position parties in the ideological space.

Data and methods

Our primary data sources are election manifestos from all major political parties in Austria and Germany in the period from 1945 to 2013. In total, we collected, validated and cleaned party manifestos of 27 parties across 39 elections, giving us a total of 175 manifestos to be analyzed. Yet, since most of our analysis also employs information from external datasets, we rely on the manifestos from ten major parties represented in parliament throughout most of their existence.³

We rely on manifestos for seven reasons. First and most importantly, manifestos ensure that we can cover all relevant parties since 1945 for both countries. All parties in Austria and Germany draft manifestos for each election, making party manifestos a well-suited resource covering all major campaign messages of political parties in both countries since 1945. Second, experts describe how parties take the process of drafting manifestos very seriously, investing time and resources to ensure completeness and quality of the manifestos (Adams, Ezrow & Somer-Topcu 2011, 373). Lately, this expert knowledge was supported by an MP survey in Austria (Eder, Jenny & Müller 2017). Third, unlike speeches, manifestos are drafted at the party level and, thus, outline the key policy proposals to structure the campaign and positions of leading members of the party. As such, manifestos also guide the content and positions of the personalized campaigns by their candidates (Eder, Jenny & Müller 2017). Especially given that parties are increasingly understood to be leadership based and censored, party manifestos constitute an important tool for holding candidates accountable for the party line. Fourth, a minimal length is required to judge the complexity of the language employed. Many other campaign messages shared, for example, through social networks

while employing different linguistic complexities. Yet, using the existing measure for blurring based on the Chapel Hill data (Rovny 2012 a, Rovny 2012 b), we do not find support for such an interaction effect. Thus, such an interaction effect could constitute an interesting starting point for a survey experimental design. Including this design and a theoretical discussion of it in our manuscript would, however, go beyond the scope of this manuscript.

³ Please consult Table 3 in the appendix for a detailed overview of the parties and elections covered in our analysis.

such as Twitter are too short to have their linguistic complexity evaluated. Fifth, previous research finds high correlations between manifestos and other campaign messages (e.g. speeches) both with regard to policy messages (Hofferbert & Budge 1992) and the style of language (Hawkins and Castanho Silva 2015). Especially for our analysis, the latter finding is of utmost importance as it highlights the fact that not only content but also the tone and style used in speeches seem to be correlated with the texts parties produce (Hawkins & Castanho Silva 2015). Sixth, both anecdotal and empirical evidence (presented in the appendix), shows that manifesto positions are actively debated in the media in both countries. During the last election in Germany (2013), the so called ‘veggie day’ was infamously picked up by the media from the manifesto of the Green party. Yet, the idea of a ‘veggie day’ in German canteens was neither prominently placed in the Green’s manifesto nor a major topic in their campaign efforts. Seventh, previous research suggests rather than empirically proves that voters are not actively seeking information from manifestos. In the appendix, we provide evidence based on Google trend data highlighting that at times voters indeed actively search for a party’s manifesto rather than for information about the candidate of a party.⁴

We decided to analyze Austria and Germany for three reasons. First, both countries are multi-party systems, sharing comparable trends and tendencies across time. Second, the official language in Germany and Austria is German. As we will explain in detail below, the reliability of our complexity measure crucially depends on the usage of the same language in our sample. Third and most importantly, both countries have experienced variation in populism throughout the last centuries. Thus, the key concept we theorize on is subject to change both across time and across political parties.

Measuring complexity

We use a readability measurement that can be applied to the German language to evaluate linguistic complexity: Björnsson’s readability index (LIX) (Anderson 1981; 1983; Björnsson 1968). The

⁴ The critical reader might still note the fact that we have reason to assume that voters are mainly affected by party communication through the media. Thus, instead of analyzing manifestos, one would be better off analyzing party cues as presented in the media. However, our theoretical link leading to our ‘party placement’ hypothesis suggests that just like voters the media will be affected by the complexity of campaign messages. If this assumption holds true, party cues in the media will partly be selected based on the complexity of campaign messages. Thus, relying on media data would lead to a biased sample of information that over-represents simple and catchy party cues such as the Green party’s ‘veggie day’. In fact, previous research provides evidence that the salience of party positions is not validly covered by the media (Helbling and Tresch 2011).

measurement and similar readability measures have been frequently used in other disciplines – especially in educational and linguistic studies. We decided to use LIX because previous research has shown that it generates reliable and valid evaluations of text complexity, specifically for the German language (Anderson 1983). Correlations with other indexes, such as the also commonly used Flesch-Kincaid score, have proven to be high (correlations ≈ 0.80) and we found similar correlations for our sample. Since LIX directly captures the complexity of language used in text, the measure is empirically and conceptually congruent with our theoretical concept of simplicity. Educational literature also agrees that the complexity of texts matters for educational development of school pupils in school (Anderson 1981; 1983; Björnsson 1968). This research shows that the comprehensibility of texts depends severely on the readability (complexity) of the sentence structure and the words used in the given text.

The first step when conducting quantitative research on text documents is to divide the text into units of analysis (*unitization*). We decided to use the entire manifesto as the unit of analysis since the reliability of readability indexes hinges on a minimal requirement of text length. Using the entire manifesto as the unit of analysis ensures that we make use of as much information for each party and election year as possible. In a second step, we cleaned the manifesto texts.⁵ Finally, we evaluated the readability (*complexity*) of each manifesto.⁶ As introduced above, we relied on LIX:

$$\text{LIX} = \frac{W}{St} + \frac{100 * W_{7c}}{W}$$

with W being the number of words in the manifesto, St the number of sentences and W_{7c} the number of words with seven or more letters. Higher values on the LIX scale represent a higher level of complexity. In most instances, values between 25 and 70 are reasonable empirical outcomes for the German language. Texts with a $\text{LIX} < 25$ are considered very easy, around 40 normal and > 55 very difficult to read. One advantage of LIX is that it is based on characters within a sentence and not syllables. In particular, it is easier and more reliable to capture characters – also

⁵ We collected most manifesto texts as PDF documents, transformed them to TXT documents and cleaned the texts. Cleaning is especially tedious for the German language because of the *Umlaute*, which are usually misinterpreted by most automated text transformation tools. Some older manifesto texts needed to be typeset manually (at least partially). The last step of the cleaning process was composed of a careful inspection of the sentence structures. We also treated headings as sentences in all manifestos.

⁶ We used the KoRpus package in R to estimate the complexity.

when using computer software. As such, LIX can be computed fairly quickly depending on computational powers – roughly one hour for the 145 manifestos we analyze.

For our sample, complexity ranges from 43.4 to 63.4 ($\mu=54.7$; $\sigma=3.9$). The least complex manifesto was drafted by the Austrian People's Party (OEVp) in 1983. In contrast, the German Free Democrats (FDP) wrote the most complex manifesto in 1980. Table 1 presents extracts from both manifestos.

Table 1 about here

The OEVP's manifesto relies on very short sentences, and most of the words used are short as well. In the extract, the OEVP uses on average nine words per sentence, while the FDP uses 35. In general, the German language relies on longer sentences than the English language, but 35 words per sentence is long, also for a sentence written in German. Furthermore, the FDP uses many words with a high number of characters, while the OEVP sticks to shorter words. As can be seen in Table 1, the two formulas utilized by the LIX index capture these stark differences in the complexity of language well.⁷

Validation

Figure 1 about here

Figure 1 shows that the complexity of manifestos in Germany and Austria is (approximately) normally distributed. Interestingly, most manifestos are difficult to understand. The most common

⁷ Notice that the OEVP manifesto begins with a personal statement by the party leader. Thus, we did not mistakenly use a speech instead of the manifesto. This practice is common in the Austrian case.

values are between 52 and 58. Thus, parties often use complex language to communicate their campaign messages.

To validate our measure, we compared the results for our manifesto corpus with different types of texts. We tried to select texts for which the German-speaking public holds strong priors about the complexity of the texts. We collected texts from two newspapers, three literature examples and one science example.⁸ The dotplot at the bottom in Figure 1 reports the complexity of these examples and facilitates a comparison with our manifesto corpus. The ‘Bild’ is a daily tabloid that relies on simple and often lurid language. In contrast, the ‘Zeit’ is a weekly news outlet, which enjoys a high reputation for substantiated and high-quality journalism. The LIX scores for both outlets support the priors showing lower complexity for the ‘Bild’. The literature examples further underline the validity of the measure. While the fairy tale (‘Cinderella’) is very easy to understand, Thomas Mann’s ‘Death in Venice’ is more complex. Franz Kafka’s book ‘The Trial’ lies in between these two classics. Many readers of Kafka’s work would suggest that reading and understanding Kafka is oftentimes cumbersome. However, this is truly not the case because Kafka uses a complex style of writing, but because the plots and interpretation of Kafka’s work is challenging. Thus, Kafka is a perfect example to further underpin the validity of the complexity measure since the simplicity of Kafka’s language is well captured by the LIX. Finally, we include a political essay by the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas. which is the most complex text in our sample, as expected. The complexity of our sample of manifestos is slightly more complex than Mann’s ‘Death in Venice’ but still easier to read and process than Habermas’ work. In sum, LIX supports our prior understanding about the complexity of these selected texts. Readers tend to struggle more with a political text about the future of democracy by Habermas than with a tabloid. Overall, manifestos are difficult to comprehend.

Independent variables

Our first hypothesis states that populist parties are more likely to simplify the language of their campaign messages. Building on definitions provided by Mudde (2004, 543), we suggest that populism perceives the society to be split into two homogeneous and opposing groups – the people and the elite. In line with Mudde (2004), we define populism as consisting of two components:

⁸ Regarding the newspapers, we collected three texts on different topics (politics, sports and random choice).

anti-elitism and people centrism. We then follow Pauwels (2011; Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011) and rely on the populism measure they use and validate in their studies. More specifically, we utilized quantitative text analysis, namely, a dictionary approach to measure populism (Grimmer & Stewart 2013, 268–69): We counted how often a set of pre-defined words were used in each party manifesto (please consult Table 4 in the appendix for an overview of the keywords and Table 5 for an overview of the mean populism score for each party included in our study). Then, we divided the number of populist words in a manifesto by the total number of words to account for the varying lengths of party manifestos. Since this results in a heavily right-skewed variable, we log standardized the variable (Gelman 2008).⁹ Higher values indicate that political parties are more populist according to the language they use in their manifestos. The measure has been extensively validated and proved to be a consistent method to measure populism; particularly for the German case (Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011, 1276–9).¹⁰

We also used a set of controls. First, previous research suggests that party organization might drive the style and tone of how party manifestos are written (Harmel 2016). Some political parties give activists more influence on the programmatic development of the party (activist dominated), while others largely exclude activists from substantial decisions (leadership dominated). Activist-dominated parties tend to be policy-seekers (Adams et al. 2006; G. Schumacher, de Vries & Vis 2013; Lehrer 2012; Strøm 1990). Putting more weight to the programmatic and ideological development of a party should also lead to a more careful drafting of party manifestos (Dolezal et al. 2012). Activists, then, are less likely to rely on technical jargon. They tend to be less informed about the particularities of specific policies and are therefore more likely to frame policies in a simpler and clearer manner.

We employ two measurements to account for the fact that party organization might influence the complexity of manifesto messages. First, we make use of the most recent expert survey data on party organization from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project conducted by Herbert

⁹ We added ‘1’ as a constant to ensure that ‘0’ is not undefined, since ‘log(0)=undefined’.

¹⁰ We note that we employ a continuous measure of the populist discourse while our theoretical section differentiates between populist and mainstream parties. A defining feature of populism is populist discourse by which parties aim to appeal to the people. Yet, all parties attempt to appeal to the people and thus potentially apply a populist strategy. We thus believe that a continuous measure best captures our theoretical conjecture. Nevertheless, we address the conceptual mismatch and also employ a binary measure in our robustness test to provide evidence that our findings do not hinge on using a continuous classification. Furthermore, the use of the term “populist party” significantly increases the readability of our theory section.

Kitschelt (Kitschelt & Freeze 2011). The measure relies on a question specifically asking about the activists' influence on the programmatic development of the party. In addition, we use the Laver/Hunt expert survey on party organization (Laver & Hunt 1992). We provide more detailed information about the two measures in the appendix. In both instances, a higher value on the variable indicates a more activist-dominated party, while lower values indicate a more leadership-based party. Similar measures have been used in several recent studies as well (G. Schumacher, de Vries & Vis 2013; Meyer 2013).¹¹

Second, incumbency usually increases the resources a party has at its disposal. Subsequently, this might lead to a professionalization of party organization. Incumbent parties might use their resources to hire media and communication agencies that support them with expertise when drafting campaign material (Dolezal et al. 2012). Such a professionalization of campaigning should lead to a higher readability of campaign texts, and therefore, we use a dummy variable to control for incumbency.¹² A similar argument can be made for the experience of political parties, which is why we decided to control for party age in years. Third, the votes a party achieves at Election Day matter. In fact, in Austria and Germany, the number of votes achieved directly translates into financial resources a party receives as funding from the state. Thus, we also control for party size by using a party's vote share from the previous election. Fourth, we control for parties' left-right placement to account for potential systematic differences in the drafting process of manifestos between left-wing and right-wing parties. We use the rile scale from the MARPOR data.¹³ The rile scale is a general measure of parties' left-right ideology capturing 26 positional issue codes from the MARPOR data and has been extensively used and validated (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2012). Finally, early elections and longer manifestos should both lead to

¹¹ The variable from Kitschelt's data ranges from 1 to 1.6 with a mean of 1.26. The variable based on the Laver and Hunt expert survey ranges from 7.44 to 24.05 and has a mean of 14.28. Expert surveys come with several issues, such as the uncertainty about the information experts use to answer survey questions (Bakker et al. 2015; Benoit & Laver 2006). However, expert surveys still picture the most reliable and valid measure for party organization up until today. On top of this, expert surveys are stagnant over time, while parties' organizational structures might very well have changed over time. Yet, we address this issue already by employing two different measures taken at two different points in time (1990 and 2008-09). Furthermore, we undertook robustness tests by restricting the sample to different time periods employing both measures.

¹² As correctly pointed out by one of the reviewers, the opposite assumption could also be made: Incumbents may have more complex positions, which might require more space to communicate and translate into more complex messages.

¹³ We divided the rile scale by ten to ease interpretation.

less comprehensible manifestos. Regarding the former, political parties will enjoy less time to re-draft and fine-tune the language used in manifestos. Thus, we control for the total length of manifestos as well as whether the manifesto was drafted for an early election.

Model specifications

We estimate a model in which the complexity of manifestos is the dependent variable. Populist rhetoric on the party level is our main independent variable. In addition, we include several control variables, such that:

$$\text{Complexity}_{it} = b_0 + b_1 \text{populist}_i + b_2 \zeta_i + \epsilon_{it}$$

with i indexing parties and t election years, respectively; ζ_i being the remaining controls and ϵ_{it} the error term.

Since the data are time-series cross-sectional – each party being observed over a maximum of 21 elections – the Gauss Markov assumptions of standard OLS regression analysis are violated. Yet, autocorrelation tests reveal that the null hypothesis of no serial correlation cannot be rejected.¹⁴ Further test statistics show that the data are homoscedastic and stationary.¹⁵ We decided to run models with clustered standard errors for each country-election combination. Furthermore, as unobserved heterogeneity potentially infringes the results, we include a country fixed effect for Austria in our models. This also helps to control for the marginal differences in the German language between Germany and Austria. We also report a model that adds a lagged dependent variable to the model as well as a model with party fixed-effects. To test for robustness, we run models with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE) combined with a Prais-Winsten transformation to address potential issues of heteroscedasticity, serial correlation within party $_i$ and contemporaneous correlation (correlation of the errors of party $_i$ and party $_j$ at time t respectively).

¹⁴ To be precise, a pooled Wooldridge test (Wooldridge 2013) is not significant, and thus the null hypothesis of no autocorrelation cannot be rejected. Since H_0 tests for no autocorrelation, not rejecting H_0 does not entitle us to accept H_A . We decided to proceed with caution and to also control for an AR-1 autocorrelation structure in our robustness test. The standard errors of these models are also more conservative when compared to models not controlling for autocorrelation, even though the p -values do not extensively differ from each other.

¹⁵ Breusch-Pagan and Cook-Weisberg tests for heteroscedasticity were employed and cannot reject the null hypothesis of constant variance. Significant unit-roots tests (Fisher-type test based on ADF test) reveal that the data are stationary.

Results

Table 2 presents our regression results, showing the relationship between populist rhetoric and manifesto language complexity. The model presented in the first column is our baseline model without any control variables. It shows that populist rhetoric has a negative and statistically significant coefficient estimate. Hence, parties that apply a more populist rhetoric tend to have lower scores on the manifesto complexity measure. This finding supports our first hypothesis and is robust across several model specifications. Column 2 shows coefficient estimates from a model with the full set of control variables. Please note that from this model onwards the number of observations becomes smaller as we restrict our sample to all parties included in the CMP data and covered by Kitschelt's expert survey data (please consult Table 3 in the appendix for a full list of parties included). Party organization also has a statistically significant negative effect on complexity in manifesto measures. This implies that parties that are more activist centered apply less complex language. While most control variables are in line with our expectations, the estimated coefficient for incumbency is positive but indifferent from zero across all model specifications. In fact, incumbency might lead parties to engage with more and new topics. This might then lead parties to be less precise and simple in their language. However, similar to our assumptions in the last section, party age has a significant decreasing effect on complexity. Similarly, we find that the vote share at the last election has a negative coefficient, which suggests that increases in resources across all parties do impact on the complexity of language in manifestos. Thus, the results underpin the suggestion that more resources lead to simpler language. Furthermore, left-right positions based on the MARPOR measurement have a negative effect. This suggests that the more right a party is placed on the left-right scale the less complex its manifesto will be. Yet, this effect is small in size and not significant across all the model specifications we estimated. The model in column 3 adds country fixed effects. Column 4 presents results from a model that introduces a lagged dependent variable. Finally, in column 5, we control for party confounders that are time invariant by using the fixed effects estimator. Even when we employ this rather conservative test, we find support for our hypothesis that populist parties are more likely to rely on a simpler language in their manifestos.

Table 2 about here

We conducted several robustness tests to further investigate the stability of the estimated populism effect (robustness tests are reported in Table 6 in the appendix). First, instead of relying on a populism measure based on textual analysis, we constructed a dummy variable based on qualitative evaluations of populism from Kessel (2015). Second, the literature partly suggests that the drafting and writing of manifestos underwent significant changes from the 1970s onwards (Hansen 2008; Harmel 2016). Therefore, we re-estimated our models using only manifestos drafted after 1970. Third, instead of using Kitschelt's expert survey to judge party organizations, we used the Laver and Hunt expert survey. Finally, we included a squared measure of the rile score that accounts for the possibility that especially extreme parties on the fringes of the political spectrum apply simple language. In all instances, our key findings that populism correlates with more simplicity remains significant and comparable in size of the coefficient.

Figure 2 about here

To better understand the significance of our central finding, Figure 2 illustrates the marginal effect of populist rhetoric on manifesto complexity based on Model 2. It shows how the mean predicted value of manifesto complexity decreases with increasing values of populist rhetoric while keeping all other independent variables constant at their means. On average, a party with no populist rhetoric at all has a manifesto complexity score of around 55, while parties with high values of populist rhetoric score significantly lower on manifesto complexity. This result holds true when we use a third-order polynomial fit to the data (see Figure 5 in the appendix).

Coefficient estimates and the certainty around them dependent highly on sample size. Since the first part of our analysis deals with a relatively small number of observations, we decided to further substantiate our findings by building on statistical simulation techniques (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). We simulated our outcome variable by taking 1000 random draws from a multivariate normal distribution defined by the model coefficients and covariance matrix of our regression estimates reported in Table 2. Then, we changed the values of our populism rhetoric

measure into three different counterfactual scenarios (the 10% and 90% percentiles and the mean).¹⁶ The results of the simulations are presented by plotting the distribution of the simulated expected values in the bottom panel in Figure 2. The distributions of expected values based on simulation techniques lend further support for our previous findings: Populist parties are significantly more likely to apply simpler language in their manifestos. The distributions of the 10 percent percentile (green, dashed line in Figure 2) and 90 percent percentile (blue line in Figure 2) are significantly different from each other.

To further underpin our results, we decided to investigate populist rhetoric and language complexity developments of the party that is considered the most populist in our sample: the Austrian Freedom Party. The literature broadly agrees that the party became increasingly populist under the leadership of Jörg Haider (Knight 1992). According to our theoretical conjecture we should see that the party decreases the complexity of its manifestos during the Haider period, and at the same time, applies more populist language. Figure 3 plots the mean standardized measures of populist rhetoric and manifesto complexity. Indeed, we find the expected pattern. The first manifesto after Haider became party leader in 1986 clearly marks a positive shift in populist rhetoric. At the same time, the manifesto complexity decreases substantially compared to 1983. In the following years, the manifesto complexity decreases even more while the number of populist key terms in the manifestos of the FPÖ remains on a high level until Haider leaves the party after an internal disagreement.

Figure 3 about here

¹⁶ The 10 percent percentile represents a share of 0 percent populist terms in the manifesto, while the 90 percent percentile states 0.31 percent populist terms. Other covariates are fixed at their mean. Please note that both panels in figure 2 use the absolute values of populism and not the logarithm to ease interpretation.

Individual-level analysis

The second step of our analysis links manifesto complexity with the ability of voters to locate parties within the ideological space. We compiled a dataset that combines election survey and expert survey data. Election survey data stem from the CSES (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems). To test the robustness of our individual-level analysis we use expert survey data from two different sources, the CSES and the CHES (Chapel Hill Expert Survey). CSES data for Germany covers the period from 1998 to 2009, that is, four elections in the years 1998, 2002, 2005 and 2009. Data for Austria are only available for the elections in 2008 and 2013. To link election survey data and CHES data we use the most recent CHES data before each election.

The dependent variable is the absolute distance between survey participants' left-right placement of each party and the expert placements of the same parties. Thus, party placements from political experts are considered 'true' party positions. Both individuals and experts are asked to position political parties on a scale ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right). The question on positioning parties in the CSES reads as follows: 'In politics, people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [party name] on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?' Similarly, the CHES expert survey asks participants: 'We now turn to a few questions on the ideological positions of political parties in [country]. Please tick the box that best describes each party's overall ideology on a scale ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right)'. Mass and expert survey questions ask for the exact same tasks, and we should therefore see similar results using distances between CSES respondents and CSES experts and CSES respondents and CHES experts.

Each survey respondent enters the dataset as many times as the number of parties included in the given election study.¹⁷ This means that we look at distances between respondents and experts for each individual party and not the aggregated disagreement between the two. The resulting data have a dyadic structure with voter-party pairs. Furthermore, the dyad-level data have a hierarchical structure because the main variables are measured at different levels. While the dependent variable is measured at the voter level, the main independent variable – that is, parties' manifesto complexity

¹⁷ The parties included in the first and second parts of the analysis are not identical, as smaller parties in Austria (i.e. the Liberals and Liste Hans-Peter Martin) are not included in the CSES study.

score – is measured at the party level. We use multi-level analysis with random intercepts for the party and party-election levels of the data to account for the hierarchical structure. In addition, we control for respondents’ education, political knowledge and self-placement on the left-right scale. Education is an ordinal variable that differentiates between eight levels of education from primary school (1) to doctoral degree (8). The variable that measures individuals’ levels of political knowledge contains answers to three different political information survey items. The questions concern the name of ministers or the current level of unemployment. The variable ranges from 0 to 3 depending on how many correct answers the individual respondent was able to give. In addition, we include two important control variables measured on the party level. First, ‘portfolio diversity’ measures the number of issues that a party is addressing in its campaign communication. It might be that the ideological position of niche and populist parties that usually campaign on a smaller number of issues is easier to identify than the position of other parties that campaign on a larger set of issues. The variable is based on the entropy index Shannon’s H and represents the effective number of issues addressed in a party manifesto (ENMI) (Greene 2015). On average, parties have an ENMI score of 9.01. Second, we also present results from a model that accounts for government experience of political parties. We measure government experience for each year and party by dividing the sum of all previous incumbency years by the total number of years. The variable has a continuous measurement and ranges from 0 (never in government) to 1 (always in government). We believe that government experience matters to respondents’ knowledge about political parties as members of government receive much more media attention than the opposition. All models also include country fixed effects.¹⁸

Figure 4 about here

¹⁸ Table 7 in the appendix provides results from further model specifications. In models 3 and 6, we account for party extremism as respondents might have a more accurate knowledge of party placements if a party is more extreme.

Do voters find it easier to position parties that apply less complex language? Table 7 in the appendix presents detailed results for our multi-level models. The models in columns 1-3 use the distance between party placements from CSES respondents and party placements from CSES experts as the dependent variable. The results in columns 4-6 are based on the distance between CSES respondents and CHES experts. Figure 4 zooms in on the coefficient estimates of our main independent variable, that is manifesto complexity. It shows that manifesto complexity has a statistically significant positive coefficient. This implies that higher values of manifesto complexity are associated with greater distances between party placements from respondents and party placements from experts. Hence, we find support for our second hypothesis. Individuals are better able to position political parties correctly if they apply less complex language in their campaign messages. In addition, we see that the results are robust for most model specifications, such as using alternative expert survey data or including measures for portfolio diversity and the government experience of political parties. Only in model 6 does the coefficient estimate of the complexity variable not reach a conventional level of statistical significance.

In sum, the finding suggests that voters' perceptions of ideological party positions not only depends on individual level factors, such as the level of education or political knowledge, but also on a diverse range of party-level factors. In addition to established explanations, we provide new evidence that parties themselves can partly influence how voters perceive party positions by employing a different style and tone in their campaign messages. Thus, our findings add substance to the findings of earlier studies suggesting that voters' can perceive and correctly interpret the positional movements of political parties (Adams, Ezrow & Somer-Topcu 2011; Somer-Topcu 2015). In fact, these findings might at least partly depend on how parties communicate their positional shifts to voters.

Conclusion

Language is arguably the most important transmitter between political elites and the masses. Politicians use natural language to convince citizens of their proposals and ideas. They hold speeches at rallies, argue in TV debates or express their policies in written materials such as electoral manifestos and informational leaflets. While social science research has used the content of these party messages to make sense of parties' positions in the ideological space, we have relatively little knowledge about the language applied by politicians and parties. However, choice

of language seems to matter. Followers of the recent 2016 US election campaign witnessed that the style of political messages tends to influence the degree to which citizens become aware of the policy ideas of the two candidates.

This article provides a first insight into how the linguistic style employed by political parties might affect voters' perceptions of parties. Our ambition in this study is to analyze the complexity of political messages at full volume. First, we want to know whether we can actually observe interesting differences in the complexity of language between political parties in a multi-party setting. We therefore theorize about the incentives for political parties to apply simple language in their campaign messages. We identify populist parties as the most obvious actors to make strategic use of simple language, as it fits their aspiration to address the common people and differentiate themselves from the elite. To test our conjecture, we validate and apply a readability measurement to determine the complexity of electoral manifestos from political parties in Austria and Germany over a time period of more than 50 years. Our results from time-series cross-sectional regression analysis and simulations reveal a robust negative effect of populism rhetoric on the complexity of campaign messages.

In a second step, we want to know whether this difference in linguistic complexity is of any meaning for citizens. We use mass and expert surveys to study whether citizens are better able to judge the positions of political parties that apply more simple campaign messages. Indeed, we find support for this link. The language used by parties to express their policies resonates with voters' political knowledge about these policy positions. Clearly, future research should invest in further analyzing the effects of simplicity for voters' perception and knowledge about political parties; specifically, the causal relationship between the two, which we cannot capture in our observational analysis presented here. For instance, in a randomized survey experiment researchers might hold party positions constant while varying the simplicity of campaign messages (Fernández-Vázquez 2016). Using such a research strategy, one could carefully carve out the interactions between positional contents and linguistic complexity. This is an interesting aspect of the theoretical puzzle that our analysis was not able to address in its entirety. In addition, relying on alternative campaign materials, such as leadership speeches, future research could test if relying on other campaign materials would bring us to similar conclusions. In contrast to manifestos, speeches are given by individual politicians. Politicians might adapt their tone of speech to their audience (Spirling 2015). Using speeches could then give us larger variations of tone and style within the same party. Thus,

our reported party effects might indeed vary depending on the coherency of the speeches given by the party leadership before an election.

Our findings also have important implications for research linking citizens' political knowledge with party behavior. Following our results, the tone and style of language employed by political parties is a frequently neglected determinant affecting how parties and voters communicate with each other. Populism is on the rise in many advanced democracies and so is the simplification of campaign messages. Campaign strategies by the United Kingdom Independence Party during the BREXIT campaign, Donald Trump's run for President-elect in the US, the upcoming Presidential race between the Front National and the Republicans all show similarities; the rise of populist mobilization seems to challenge mainstream politics. Specifically, the threat of rising populism in Europe might force mainstream parties to balance their policy content more carefully with the style and tone they are using to communicate their positions effectively to the masses.

Acknowledgements

This paper profited tremendously from comments by Nick Lin, Christian Rauh, Nicolas Merz and all participants of the Comparative Manifesto Project Workshop at the WZB in Berlin (2016). Also, Julian Garritzman and all participants at the Pre-Publication Seminar of the IPZ at the University of Zurich gave insightful feedback. The feedback provided during a talk in Aarhus by Martin Bisgaard, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, Tobias Rommel and Henrik Seeberg helped us to streamline our work. Thank you all very much for your thoughts, ideas and feedback. We also would like to thank Pablo Fernandez-Vazquez, Saskia Ruth, Arthur Spirling, Stefanie Walter and Markus Wagner who gave us helpful feedback during our revisions. We are grateful to Thomas Meyer and Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik (AUTNES) as well as Jirka Lewandowski (MARPOR) for sharing data with us. Finally, we thank the anonymous reviewers and the editor for their feedback during the review process. All errors remain our own.

References

Adams, J. (2001). A theory of spatial competition with biased voters: Party policies viewed temporally and comparatively. *British Journal of Political Science* 31(1): 121–158.

———. (2012). Causes and electoral consequences of party policy shifts in multiparty elections: Theoretical results and empirical evidence. *Annual Review of Political Science* 15(1): 401–419.

Adams, J., Clark, M., Ezrow, L. & Glasgow, G. (2006). Are niche parties fundamentally different from mainstream parties? The causes and the electoral consequences of Western European parties' policy shifts, 1976–1998. *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 513–529.

Adams, J., Ezrow, L. & Somer-Topcu, Z. (2011). Is anybody listening? Evidence that voters do not respond to European parties' policy statements during elections. *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 370–382.

Adams, J., Merrill, S. III & Grofman, B. (2005). *A unified theory of party competition – a cross-national analysis integrating spatial and behavioral factors*. Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, J. (1981). Analysing the readability of English and non-English texts in the classroom with Lix. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Australian Reading Association (Darwin, Australia, August 1981).

———. (1983). Lix and Rix: Variations on a little-known readability index. *Journal of Reading* 26(6): 490–496.

- Bakker, R., de Vries, C.E.?, Edwards, E., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., Marks, G., Polk, J., Rovny, J., Steenbergen, M.R. & Vachudova, M.A. (2015). Measuring party positions in Europe: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File, 1999–2010. *Party Politics* 21(1): 143–152.
- Benoit, K. & Laver, M. (2006). *Party policy in modern democracies*. London: Routledge.
http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/laver/PPMD_draft.pdf.
- Bélanger, É. & Meguid, B.M. (2008). Issue salience, issue ownership, and issue-based vote choice. *Electoral Studies* 27(3): 477–491. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2008.01.001.
- Bischof, D. (2017). Towards a renewal of the niche party concept: Parties, market shares and condensed offers. *Party Politics* 23(3): 220–235.
- Bischof, D. & Wagner, M. (2017). What makes parties adapt to voter preferences? The role of party organisation, goals and ideology. *British Journal of Political Science*: accepted for publication.
- Björnsson, C.H. (1968). *Läsbarhet*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Liber.
- Bräuninger, T. & Giger, N. (2016). Strategic ambiguity of party positions in multi-party competition. *Political Science and Research Methods*. FirstView: 1–22.
- Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J. & Tanenbaum, E. (2001). *Mapping policy preferences: Estimates for parties, electors, and governments, 1945–1998*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy. *Political Studies* 47(1): 2–16.
- Dahl, R. (1971). *Polyarchy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Dolezal, M., Ennser-Jedenastik, L., Müller, W.C. & Winkler, A.K. (2012). The life cycle of party manifestos: The Austrian case. *West European Politics* 35(4): 869–895.

Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper; Row.

Eder, N., Jenny, M. & Müller, W.C. (2017). Manifesto functions: How party candidates view and use their party's central policy document. *Electoral Studies* 45: 75–87.

Ezrow, L. (2005). Are moderate parties rewarded in multiparty systems? A pooled analysis of Western European elections, 1984–1998. *European Journal of Political Research* 44(6): 881–898.

Ezrow, L., Homola, J. & Tavits, M. (2014). When extremism pays: Policy positions, voter certainty, and party support in postcommunist Europe. *Journal of Politics* 76(2): 535–547.

Fernàndez-Vàzquez, P. (2014). And yet it moves: The effect of election platforms on party policy images. *Comparative Political Studies* 47(14): 1919–1944.

———. (2016). The credibility of party policy rhetoric survey experimental evidence.

[Http://pablofernandezvazquez.com/wp-](http://pablofernandezvazquez.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/fernandez_credibility_SurveyExperiment.pdf)

[Content/uploads/2016/07/fernandez_credibility_SurveyExperiment.pdf](http://pablofernandezvazquez.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/fernandez_credibility_SurveyExperiment.pdf).

Fernàndez-Vàzquez, P. & Somer-Topcu, Z. (2016). The informational role of party leader changes on voter perceptions of party positions. *British Journal of Political Science*. Forthcoming.

Gelman, A. (2008). Scaling regression inputs by dividing by two standard deviations. *Statistics in Medicine* 27(15): 2865–2873.

Greene, Z. (2015). Competing on the issues: How experience in government and economic conditions influence the scope of parties' policy messages. *Party Politics*. Forthcoming.

- Grimmer, J. & Stewart, B.M. (2013). Text as data: The promise and pitfalls of automatic content analysis methods for political texts. *Political Analysis* 21(3): 267–297.
- Hansen, M.E. (2008). Back to the archives? A critique of the Danish part of the manifesto dataset. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 31(2): 201–216.
- Harmel, R. (2016). The hows and whys of party manifestos: Some guidance for a cross-national research agenda. *Party Politics*. Forthcoming.
- Haselmayer, M. & Jenny, M. (2016). Sentiment analysis of political communication: Combining a dictionary approach with crowdcoding. *Quality & Quantity*. Springer Netherlands, 1–24.
- Hawkins, K.A. & Silva, B.C. (2015). Mapping populist parties in Europe and the Americas. Paper presented at the 115 APSA Annual Meeting, San Franci, 1–37.
- Helbling, M. & Tresch, A. (2011). Measuring party positions and issue salience from media coverage: Discussing and cross-validating new indicators. *Electoral Studies* 30(1): 174–183.
- Hofferbert, R.I. & Budge, I. (1992). The party mandate and the Westminster model: Election programmes and government spending in Britain, 1948–85. *British Journal of Political Science* 22(2): 151–182.
- Jagers, J. & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research* 46(3): 319–345.
- Katz, R.S. & Mair, P. (1995). Changing models of party organization and party democracy. *Party Politics* 1(1): 5–28.
- . (2009). The cartel party thesis: A restatement. *Perspectives on Politics* 7(4): 753–766.

- Kessel, S. van. (2015). *Populist parties in Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- King, G., Tomz, M. & Wittenberg, J. (2000). Making the most of statistical analyses: Improving interpretation and presentation. *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 347–361.
- Kirchheimer, O. (1966). The transformation of Western European party systems. In *Political parties and political development*, edited by J. Lapalombara & M. Weiner, 177–200. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Kitschelt, H.P. (1994). *The transformation of European social democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitschelt, H.P. & Freeze, K. (2011). Programmatic party system structuration: Developing and comparing cross-national and cross-party measures with a new global data set, Duke University May 18–19.
- Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J.L., Budge, I. & McDonald, M.D. (2006). *Mapping policy preferences II – Estimates for parties, electors, and governments in Eastern Europe, European Union, and OECD 1990-2003*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Klüver, H. & Spoon, J.-J. (2015). Bringing salience back in: Explaining voting defection in the European Parliament. *Party Politics* 21(4): 553–564.
- Knight, R. (1992). Haider, the Freedom Party and the extreme right in Austria. *Parliamentary Affairs* 45(3): 285–299.
- Laver, M. & Hunt, W.B. (1992). *Policy and party competition*. London: Routledge.
- Laver, M., Benoit, K. & Garry, J. (2003). Extracting policy positions from political texts using words as data. *American Political Science Review* 97(2). Cambridge Univ Press: 311–331.

- Lehrer, R. (2012). Intra-Party democracy and party responsiveness. *West European Politics* 35(6): 1295–1319.
- Lo, J., Proksch, S.-O. & Slapin, J.B. (2014). Ideological clarity in multiparty competition: A new measure and test using election manifestos. *British Journal of Political Science* 46(3): 591–610.
- Meyer, T.M. (2013). *Constraints on party policy change*. Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.
- Moffitt, B. & Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking populism: Politics, mediatisation and political style. *Political Studies* 62(2): 381–397.
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 542–563.
- Oliver, J.E. & Rahn, W.M. (2016). Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 election. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667(1): 189–206.
- Pauwels, T. (2011). Measuring populism: A quantitative text analysis of party literature in Belgium. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties* 21(1): 97–119.
- Petrocik, J.R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American Journal of Political Science* 40(3): 825–850.
- Pitler, E. & Nenkova, A. (2008). Revisiting readability: A unified framework for predicting text quality. *Proceedings of the Conference on Empirical ...*, no. October: 186–195.
- Rooduijn, M. & Pauwels, T. (2011). Measuring populism: Comparing two methods of content analysis. *West European Politics* 34(6): 1272–1283.
- Rovny, J. (2012a). Who emphasizes and who blurs? Party strategies in multidimensional competition. *European Union Politics* 13(2): 269–292.

- Rovny, J. (2012b). Where do radical right parties stand? Position blurring in multidimensional competition. *European Political Science Review* 5(1): 1–26.
- Schumacher, E. & Eskenazi, M. (2016). A readability analysis of campaign speeches from the 2016 US presidential campaign. [Http://arxiv.org/abs/1603.05739](http://arxiv.org/abs/1603.05739).
- Schumacher, G., de Vries, C.E. & Vis, B. (2013). Why do parties change position? Party organization and environmental incentives. *Journal of Politics* 75(2): 464–477.
- Senninger, R. (2017). Issue expansion and selective scrutiny – How opposition parties used parliamentary questions about the European Union in the national arena from 1973 to 2013. *European Union Politics* 18(2), 283–306.
- Slapin, J.B. & Proksch, S.-O. (2008). A scaling model for estimating time-series party positions from texts. *American Journal of Political Science* 1(3): 323–344.
- Somer-Topcu, Z. (2015). Everything to everyone: The electoral consequences of the broad-appeal strategy in Europe. *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 841–854.
- . (2016). Agree or disagree: How do party leader changes affect the distribution of voters' perceptions. *Party Politics*, no. May.
- Spirling, A. (2015). Democratization and linguistic complexity: The effect of franchise extension on parliamentary discourse, 1832–1915. *Journal of Politics* 77(1): 235–248.
- Strøm, K. (1990). A behavioral theory of competitive political parties. *American Journal of Political Science* 34(2): 565–598.

- Strömbäck, J. & Dimitrova, D.V. (2011). Mediatization and media interventionism: A comparative analysis of Sweden and the United States. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16(1): 30–49.
- Taggart, P. (2002). Populism and the pathology of representative politics. In *Democracies and the populist challenge*, edited by Y. Meny & Y. Surel. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Takens, J., van Atteveldt, W., van Hoof, A. & Kleinnijenhuis, J. (2013). Media logic in election campaign coverage. *European Journal of Communication* 28(3): 277–293.
- van der Meer, T.W.G., Walter, A. & Van Aelst, P. (2015). The contingency of voter learning: How election debates influenced voters' ability and accuracy to position parties in the 2010 Dutch election campaign. *Political Communication* 46(9): 1–22.
- Volgens, A., Lacewell, O., Lehmann, P.R., Schultze, S. & Werner, A.H. (2012). The manifesto data collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR) Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin Für Sozialforschung (WZB).
- Wodak, R. & Pelinka, A. (2002). *The Haider phenomenon*. London: Transaction.
- Wooldridge, J.M. (2013). *Introductory econometrics: A modern approach*. Mason, OH: South-Western.
- Young, L. & Soroka, S.N. (2012). Affective news: The automated coding of sentiment in political texts. *Political Communication* 29(2): 205–231.