

Online Appendices

Applying Wordfish

Although Wordfish does present a straightforward model to analyse political text, applying the method is sometimes less so (Proksch and Slapin 2009). Two particular aspects of the Wordfish estimation in the Dutch and UK cases should be mentioned. Firstly, to increase the robustness of the analyses, for each analysis of a set of manifestos from a given year I included the manifestos of the previous and subsequent elections in the analysis (cf. Slapin and Proksch 2009). For the estimation of the parliamentary competition, I split the parliamentary speeches per year. This does *not* directly affect the estimate of the documents of interests, but only serves to increase the robustness of the estimation, because the number of documents in the analysis increases (assuming that the ‘meaning’ of words does not change over this relatively short period of time). For example, the Wordfish analysis of the 1983 British manifesto includes nine documents (the 1979, 1983 and 1987 manifestos of each of the parties) and thus produces nine party position estimates (one for each party in each election). I only use the estimation of the 1983 manifestos in the subsequent analysis. This is in fact the way in which Slapin and Proksch (2008) have analyzed German manifesto in their original article on Wordfish. However, when estimating multiple party positions over a time, with parliamentary debates or manifestos from different years, the Wordfish algorithm may pick up on differences in word usage between years rather than between parties. This is particularly the case with Foreign Affairs, which might be dominated by the war in Bosnia in one year and a crisis in Cyprus in the next. When this effect was apparent (parties showing very similar positions in specific years, but very different positions between years) words that discriminated well between years but not between parties were removed. Specifically, I calculated a Gini coefficient indicating how different word usage between years was and one

indicating how different word usage between parties was. If the between-years coefficient was higher than the between-parties coefficient, that particular word was exempted from the analysis. The procedure described above resulted in a dataset with parties' issue position estimates concerning both their manifesto as well as their parliamentary debate position. The parliamentary position is based on a weighted average of the individual-year estimates obtained with Wordfish.

A second issue concerns the position of the government in the United Kingdom parliament. The government represent the party line of the governing party. However, the government have a constitutionally different position from other groups in parliament (i.e., the government party backbenchers and the opposition parties). The government have to defend proposals, rather than criticize them, they have to answer questions rather than ask them. This translates into a rather different usage of words. This problem is tackled by excluding the government from the initial Wordfish analysis. Its position is estimated in a second stage, using the word parameters of the initial stage. As the initial analysis does contain the government backbenchers, it is likely that words relating to policy differences have high *informativeness* scores, while words that tell apart the government from all other groups (including backbenchers) have low informativeness scores. Some caution is warranted for the interpretation of these government positions, for its estimate might be biased towards being moderate. This does not imply that the governments' positions are depicted entirely incorrect. A similar procedure has been applied for the estimation of minor parties (not included in this paper), and these are in many cases found to be rather extreme, even if their position is estimated via the 'ex-post' procedure outlined here. The issue did not come up in the Netherlands, where there is a difference between the ministers of a governing party and the (leadership of) the parliamentary party. In the analyses of the Dutch cases, however, I did

remove words that were used solely by the small orthodox protestant parties (mostly religious words) – had I not done this, they would have formed one extreme on almost all policy scales.

Appendix Tables

Table 3: Explaining parties' issue saliency in parliament: history

| | All cases | United Kingdom | Netherlands |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| (Intercept) | 0.030*** (0.003) | 0.027*** (0.005) | 0.031*** (0.004) |
| Manifesto issue saliency | 0.414*** (0.040) | 0.491*** (0.073) | 0.385*** (0.047) |
| 1960s | 0.004 (0.004) | -0.005 (0.008) | 0.005 (0.005) |
| 1970s | -0.010* (0.004) | -0.008 (0.008) | -0.010* (0.005) |
| 1980s | -0.003 (0.004) | -0.009 (0.008) | -0.002 (0.005) |
| 1990s | -0.011** (0.004) | -0.008 (0.008) | -0.012* (0.005) |
| 2000s | -0.015** (0.004) | -0.006 (0.008) | -0.018*** (0.005) |
| Manifesto issue saliency * 1960s | -0.069 (0.052) | 0.100 (0.103) | -0.102† (0.060) |
| Manifesto issue saliency * 1970s | 0.185*** (0.053) | 0.146 (0.097) | 0.199** (0.062) |
| Manifesto issue saliency * 1980s | 0.052 (0.053) | 0.176 (0.114) | 0.046 (0.060) |
| Manifesto issue saliency * 1990s | 0.215*** (0.057) | 0.157 (0.118) | 0.240*** (0.065) |
| Manifesto issue saliency * 2000s | 0.289*** (0.064) | 0.109 (0.112) | 0.366*** (0.077) |
| <i>N</i> | 1502 | 342 | 1160 |
| <i>R</i> ² | 0.429 | 0.527 | 0.408 |
| adj. <i>R</i> ² | 0.425 | 0.511 | 0.402 |
| Resid. sd | 0.031 | 0.030 | 0.031 |

Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates. Standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Reference category for time period dummy variables: 1950s

Table 4: Explaining parties' issue positions in parliament: history

| | All cases | United Kingdom | Netherlands |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| (Intercept) | -0.009 (0.115) | -0.000 (0.156) | -0.022 (0.179) |
| Manifesto issue position | 0.546*** (0.135) | 0.535** (0.176) | 0.564* (0.218) |
| 1960s | 0.009 (0.168) | 0.000 (0.220) | 0.022 (0.271) |
| 1970s | 0.009 (0.146) | 0.000 (0.216) | 0.022 (0.212) |
| 1980s | -0.002 (0.137) | 0.000 (0.216) | 0.007 (0.198) |
| 1990s | 0.015 (0.136) | 0.000 (0.216) | 0.031 (0.198) |
| 2000s | 0.009 (0.137) | 0.000 (0.216) | 0.022 (0.199) |
| Manifesto issue position * 1960s | -0.046 (0.195) | -0.059 (0.249) | -0.014 (0.328) |
| Manifesto issue position * 1970s | -0.149 (0.165) | -0.157 (0.243) | -0.157 (0.248) |
| Manifesto issue position * 1980s | 0.064 (0.156) | 0.152 (0.243) | 0.023 (0.236) |
| Manifesto issue position * 1990s | 0.207 (0.155) | 0.289 (0.243) | 0.168 (0.235) |
| Manifesto issue position * 2000s | 0.121 (0.157) | 0.024 (0.243) | 0.137 (0.237) |
| <i>N</i> | 440 | 146 | 294 |
| <i>R</i> ² | 0.388 | 0.356 | 0.405 |
| adj. <i>R</i> ² | 0.373 | 0.304 | 0.382 |
| Resid. sd | 0.730 | 0.746 | 0.736 |

Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates. Standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Reference category for time period dummy variables: 1950s