Canadian Provincial Party Systems – Toward a New Comparative Framework

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ABSTRACT

Once a vibrant element of Canadian political science, the comparative study of provincial politics has waned considerably over time. Nowhere is this decline more noticeable than in the area of comparative party system analysis – a topic that has received little more than 'textbook' examination since the early 1980s. The effects of this neglect have been two-fold: not only has our knowledge of provincial party politics become dated, but, as a result, Canadian comparativists have missed a valuable opportunity to contribute to a burgeoning, global discussion of party system development. As a means of re-engagement, this paper reopens the Canadian federation as a laboratory for the comparative analysis of political party systems. Based on two key dimensions – conflict intensity and competitiveness – the proposed typology combines content analysis of party literature with secondary analysis of election data to explain differences in party systems across borders, and change within systems over time. In doing so, it marks one of the first, comprehensive attempts to compare provincial party systems from synchronic and diachronic perspectives, and invites debate over the proper methodological foundations for the analysis of party system development in the Canadian provinces and elsewhere.

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Introduction

The nature of party competition has preoccupied political scientists for generations. From the early days of formal "stasiology", to the discipline's focus on "political development" in the 1950s and 1960s, to more recent debates about "realignment" and "dealignment," analysts have long held party systems as crucial agents and artifacts of political life. Pioneers like Duverger, Sartori and Lipset laid the foundations for what remains one of the most vibrant sub-fields of political science, with the structure of party systems serving as key independent and dependent variables in comparative research today (Mair, 2002: 34).

Despite the importance attached to it as an analytical concept – and perhaps because of this emphasis – there remains contention over the proper methods to compare party systems. Precisely what factors distinguish one party system from another? How do we determine when a party system has undergone change? Responses have ranged from the depth, breadth, fragmentation, and fractionalization of party competition, to its direction, polarization, openness, and other attributes. This lack of consensus has kept a common typology elusive. In its place, there has been a proliferation of different schemas, confusion over operationalization, and a corresponding lack of attention to the explanatory factors related to party system development (Grieves, 1967: 910; Lovink, 1973: 356; Sartori, 1990)

These challenges are global, in that they affect the cross-national comparison of party systems. Yet, they also confront scholars seeking to compare party systems within a single country. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in Canada, where the comparison of ten provincial "worlds" continues to confound party researchers (Elkins and Simeon, 1980; Stewart and Carty, 2006). Whether deterred by their sheer diversity (Chandler and Chandler, 1979: 39-40), or attracted instead to the study of federal politics (Winn and Twiss, 1977: 290-291), few Canadian scholars have devoted attention to the comparative study of provincial party systems (Dunn, 2001).[1]

By necessity, questions as to *if* or *how* the provincial party systems differ, and *when* real 'change' has occurred, must precede any answers as to *why* the diversity exists. Thus, as a core element in the progress of any scientific discipline, the lack of a formal,

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[1] A comprehensive review of previous comparative studies of provincial party systems is beyond the scope of this paper, but appears as a separate chapter in my forthcoming dissertation.

accepted taxonomy has hindered the development of theories to explain the variety and evolution of party systems across Canada and over time.

This is disappointing for two important reasons. The dearth of knowledge about provincial politics is, in itself, discouraging (Lusztig et al., 1997: 60). As Carty and Stewart (1996: 65) note, there has been so little systematic comparison of provincial party politics that "it is only possible to sketch in a general fashion the variety that now marks them." Even then, Dunn (2001: 441) argues, "the literature in some areas is now so dated that any generalizations are becoming dangerous." Yet, the lack of concerted analysis of provincial party systems also means that students of Canadian politics have missed an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the global literature on party system comparison. In this sense, the Canadian federation represents an ideal, but underused, laboratory for the study of party system diversity and change. As Imbeau et al. (Imbeau et al., 2000: 803) explain, the provinces provide comparativists with several notable advantages:

> low variation on potentially disturbing variables; high variability on variables that are central to research questions; a number of cases sufficient to allow for potentially complimentary comparative analyses in any of the explanatory schemes used in social sciences; and relatively modest research costs than for international research. It is reasonable to envisage an important contribution, theoretical as well as empirical, from a comparative analysis of Canadian provinces…

That so little attention has been devoted to explaining provincial party system development, then, amounts to lost opportunities for both the Canadian and global research communities. Dunn (2001: 441) was correct: "it is time to ask more of the comparative provincial field" in Canada.

The paper begins with a discussion of the two core dimensions of political party systems: conflict intensity and competitiveness. In turn, each of these dimensions is explored, with each defined as consisting of two primary components. Conflict intensity – or the degree of adversarialism in the system – encompasses the extent to which parties agree on a common issue agenda and policy solutions, while competitiveness measures the uncertainty of typical elections in the system, including the overall balance of popular support among parties and the vulnerability of governments. Each of these components is used to create a series of typologies and indexes, which are then applied to several hypothetical examples. A concluding discussion establishes the value of this exercise, and suggests ways in which these indexes and typologies may be used as independent and dependent variables in future inquiries.

A NEW TYPOLOGY

The forgoing does not suggest that comparativists ought to strive to develop a single, universal typology of party systems – far from it. Different sets of cases may require different tools of comparison. A schema that compares the wide range of party systems cross-nationally is unlikely to provide scholars with the precision necessary to distinguish between the relatively similar systems within a single country, such as the Canadian provinces (Blondel, 1968).

As Elkins (1974: 700) noted in his review, "There cannot be, at this stage, one correct procedure for the measurement of a complex phenomenon like party competition; but there must be core concepts to which we can defer each operational definition." In other words, if a general model of party competition can be discerned, its principles could be applied across a wide range of cases, allowing for the comparison of party systems in terms of their patterns of interaction (Mair, 1989; Ware, 1996). The specific measurement of these party system properties may vary from context to context, with more fine-grained tools required for the comparison of more similar systems. Yet, the general dimensions of party competition would apply regardless of the cases under examination.

The key, then, is to uncover the core properties of party systems. As Gross and Sigelman (Gross and Sigelman, 1984: 473) suggest, "Analytically, the problem becomes one of summarizing the information in a party system profile in a manner that facilitates comparison" between systems and over time. Over the decades, solutions have emerged "in bewildering variety" (Lovink, 1973: 356), and a review of party system literature reveals no fewer than a dozen distinct attributes that have been used to classify party systems: the number of parties; the fractionalization of party support; the polarization of party positions; the social cleavages underlying party competition; the level of electoral volatility; the competitiveness of elections; the amount of ideological dialogue; the number of issue dimensions; the organizational structure of political parties; the level of inter-party cooperation; the nature of party strategies; the configuration of political opposition; the direction of party competition; the system's ideological 'tilt' or 'centre of gravity'; the 'reach' of the party system, or the extent to which it penetrates civil society; the level of anti-democratic opposition; the specific party families competing; and several others.[2] The sheer number of different party system properties points, some say, to a sort of methodological anarchism, preventing not only the development of a common typology of party systems, but theories to explain party behavior, as well (Sartori, 1990).

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[2] For excellent reviews of this literature, see: Pennings and Lane (1998); Wolinetz (2006); and Mair (2002).

Typologies and Indexes

This paper will develop a series of five (5) party system typologies and five (5) corresponding indexes. As tools in comparative analysis, both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses, most of which involve the trade-off between validity and reliability. Nonetheless, as Peter Mair (2006: 64) notes,

> Over the past three decades or so, the literature on party systems has tended to move away from the discussion of discrete categories and to rely more heavily on continuous variables. In part, this is because of a drift away from case-sensitive and thickly descriptive comparative case studies towards the analysis of more broad-ranging cross-national research questions. Categorical classifications of party systems do not easily lend themselves to quantitative research; or at least they are not likely to result in attractive correlation coefficients.

In general, typologies tend to be stronger than indexes in terms of validly measuring the concept under examination. This is because typologies are inherently multi-modal, a characteristic that, according to Bartolini (2002: 108), matches the complexity of political phenomena like inter-party competition:

> If the various conditions or dimensions of competition have complex relationships among themselves, this means that electoral or party competition cannot be conceived as a linear process going from zero or a minimum to a maximum, theoretically definable as 'perfect competition'. This appealing metaphor is not applicable in politics if we agree that the parallel maximization of all conditions of competition is not only impossible, but also detrimental. One cannot therefore speak of more or less competition, but rather of a different mix of contestability, availability, decidability, and vulnerability, without being able to incorporate them into a single dimension of competition.

By contrast, typologies tend to lack the reliability found in indexes. Discussed in greater detail below, typologies often rely on arbitrary thresholds between categories and, as a result, frequently involve subjective classification of cases into broad, 'ideal' types (Hempel, 1965b: 98-99; Sharman, 1990).

Rather than relying on a single approach and accepting the trade-offs involved in either, the following discussion proceeds by employing both typologies and indexes in tandem. This, it is hoped, leads to the development of a more robust comparative analysis of party systems by allowing for the study of the structure (typologies) and degree (index) of inter-party competition.

Choice of Dimensions

While a detailed meta-analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, a careful review of the existing literature identifies two key, common dimensions upon which a new typology of provincial party systems may be constructed:

(1) the configuration of inter-party competition (or *conflict intensity*); and
(2) the uncertainty of its outcome (or *system competitiveness*).

In other words, we may compare systems based on how close parties are in terms of (1) their programmatic outlooks; and (2) their overall levels of popular support.[3]

The first dimension is adapted from Ginsberg (1972) and Blondel (1978), who define "conflict intensity" as the general level of antagonism present in a party system. It measures the extent to which parties engage each other ideologically or on policy (Sigelman and Buell, 2004), their overall "polarization" (Crepaz, 1990), the "temperature" of their conflict (Sartori, 1990: 326), the general level of "contestatation" in the system (Dahl, 1971), or the ratio of political disharmony to the level of political harmony (DiMaggio et al., 1996). In short, some party systems feature more heated competition, while others contain lower levels of confrontation.[4]

The second dimension draws on the notion that, as accountability lies at the heart of most theories of representative democracy, elections should produce (at least the reasonable prospect for) alternation in government. Thus the level of "uncertainty" associated with the outcome of an election – be it at the constituency-level, or at the overall state level – is a crucial property of democracies, and the competitiveness of party systems in particular. As Elkins (1974: 683-684) defines it, "the less certain we feel about our ability to predict (or postdict) the outcome of an election or vote, the more competitive we feel it to be. In a competitive situation, the outcome could go either

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[3] Archer (1989: 391) has explained, "Party systems range from those with a large number of parties with distinctive ideological perspectives, to those with a small number of parties each with a distinctive ideology, to those with few parties and little or no ideological coherence." This is by no means the only way to approach party system change or comparison. As Blondel (1968: 183) argued, "If undertaken on a world basis, the analysis of party systems would require a consideration of the number of parties, of their strength, of their place on the ideological spectrum, of the nature of their support, and of their organization and type of leadership." Indeed, as Carty, Cross and Young (2000: 7) note, "…a growth in the number of parties and the realignment of the partisan face of the country is not all there is to the transformation of the party system." Moreover, "a portrait of the party system as little more than the alignment of electoral forces misses much that is important and revealing about a country's democratic life" (4). While informative, their focus on *party* change (i.e., the nature of campaigns and campaigning, including how the functions, resources and strategies of Canadian parties have changed over time) is not the focus of this paper. Instead, I opt to focus on what Carty et al. (2000: 4) consider to be "the most obvious characteristic of a party system": the nature of inter-party competition.

[4] In this sense, 'intensity' reflects what Bartoloni (2002: 95) descirbes as the "decideability" factor: "In order to make a choice, voters must perceive differences among parties / candidates in terms of emphasis, priority or performance." This is a sentiment echoed by the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Finance, whose report called for Canadian parties to be "forums for the development of alternative policies and programs" (Clarke et al., 1996: 12).

way."[5]   By contrast, an uncompetitive system features dominance by one party (or a stable coalition of parties).   Dahl's (1966: 336) discussion draws a firm distinction between the 'intensity' of party conflict, one hand, and 'competititiveness, on the other. The latter, he argues, " does not refer to the psychological orientations of the political actors but to the way in which the gains and losses of political opponents in elections and parliament are related."

Together, these two dimensions represent the core of every political party system, regardless of its context. Both properties are inherently comparative, in that the 'conflict intensity' and 'competitiveness' of a given system may be higher or lower than in others, and may vary over time. And each component is independent of the other, as rivalries within a party system may be 'intense' and 'competitive', 'intense' but not 'competitive', 'competitive' but not 'intense', or neither 'competitive' or 'intense'.

While often conflated with one another, these two dimensions are conceptually distinct.   As Fiorina (2006:12-15) notes, a closely divided society (in terms of competitiveness) does not necessarily reflect a deeply divided society (in terms of intensity), nor vice versa:

> In sum, close elections may reflect equal numbers of voters who hate one candidate and love the other, voters who like or dislike both, voters who don't care much at all about either candidate, or various combinations of these conditions. *By themselves, close election outcomes cannot tell us whether half the electorate hates the other half or whether everyone is flipping coins* (Fiorina, 2006).

The selection of 'conflict intensity' and 'competitiveness' as the core attributes of party systems is well-grounded in both democratic theory and existing research. According to most models, the basic premise of democracy is the provision of elections that offer voters "choice" between competing visions for the future (Schattschneider, 1960: 140-141; Schumpeter, 1942). This "choice" is rooted in a variety of options on the ballot and, equally important, the ability to choose among feasibly electable alternatives. That is, for citizens to make meaningful democratic decisions, the options presented to them during elections must be both distinguishable and viable (Lovink, 1973: 342; Pempel, 1990: 9-10; Smiley, 1969: 68). In developed countries like Canada, the quality of electoral choice is determined primarily by "its politicians, its political parties, and its patterns of party competition" (Carty et al., 2000: 14), making the comparison of party systems according to their 'conflict intensity' and 'competitiveness' particularly appropriate.

Indeed, the two dimensions find support in Sartori's (1976) classic framework of party system analysis. In it, he defines "relevant parties" in terms of their ability to

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[5] In other words, uncertainty encompasses "the probability that *the most likely party* will replace the current winner" (Elkins, 1974: 692), or "the likelihood of being wrong if one bets on a party other than the current winner given the distribution of party identifications and loyalties and the vote differential in similar elections in the past" (698).

influence political outcomes through either forming part of government ("coalition potential") or otherwise affecting the ideological tenor of party competition ("blackmail potential"). Extending these concepts to the systemic level, a party system may be considered 'competitive' to the extent that more than one party has the potentia' to form government, and 'intense' to the extent that numerous parties influence the nature of debate. The more vulnerable the governing party is to replacement or 'blackmail', the more competitive or intense the party system becomes.[6]

In sum, as Gross and Sigelman (1984:464) argue, party systems must be considered structures of both representation and articulation, and their comparison must focus "not only upon the competition among various party organizations, but also upon competition among various ideological-programmatic outlooks." These are the foundations upon which the following typology is based. The question remains: How do we best measure 'conflict intensity' and 'competitiveness'?

MEASURING INTENSITY

> Above everything, *the people are powerless if the political enterprise is not competitive*. It is the competition of political organizations that provides the people with the opportunity to make a choice. Without this opportunity popular sovereignty amounts to nothing. *Democracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process* (Schattschneider, 1960: 140-141).

Following Schattschneider's classic definition, the measure of conflict intensity gauges the extent to which competition features 'different' political parties. This level of difference, in turn, depends largely upon the strategies and behaviour of the parties

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[6] Several other party system analysts implicitly recognize the importance of accounting for both 'intensity' and 'competitiveness' (Rakner and Svasand, 2004). Along these lines, several studies have investigated the relationship between the intensity and competitiveness of party conflict (Barrilleaux et al., 2002; Bartolini and Mair, 1990b; Dye, 1984; Kahn and Kenney, 1999; Kaplan et al., 2006; Sani and Sartori, 1983). For Sigelman and Yough (1978) , the overall polarization of a party system depends not only on the presence of ideologically distinct parties, but their relative strengths. A small, 'fringe' party has less of an impact on the polarization of a party system than a large, 'extreme party', for example. Similarly, Siaroff's (2003) discussion of "half" parties suggests that the significance of minor parties depends on their influence on the competitive *and* ideological nature of the system. And, as Strom (1990) noted, the effective comparison of party systems must account for the varied nature of party behavior. This means conceptualizing party competition in terms of parties pursuing vote- or office-seeking strategies – as incorporated into the 'competitiveness' dimension of the proposed typology – or purely policy-seeking ones – as associated with the 'intensity' dimension (see also: Keman, 1997; Pennings, 1998; Wolinetz, 2002).

themselves. In this vein, two major models of party competition are instructive: confrontation theory and saliency theory.[7]

According to confrontation theory, parties compete by taking opposing positions on questions of policy or ideology. Campaigns feature debate and dialogue, in that, "when one candidate raises a subject, his or her opponent responds by discussing the same subject" (Simon, 2002: 1). By contrast, saliency theory holds that parties compete by "talking past each other" (Budge, 1987: 24); instead of assuming divergent policy positions, parties engage each other by selectively emphasizing different issues, and manipulating the political agenda to their advantage (Riker, 1993a: 6-7) . As Carmines and Stimson (1989: 6) explain, "All successful politicians instinctively understand which issues benefit them and their party and which do not. The trick is to politicize the former and de-emphasize the latter." As a result, according to saliency theory, parties develop competing policy packages featuring distinct sets of *priorities* for the future, rather than specific, contrasting policy prescriptions (Klingemann et al., 1994: 26; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 2-3).[8]

Most analysts today recognize that parties compete both through direct confrontation and selective emphasis. Depending on the organization involved, and varying from time to time, parties may take opposing positions on the same issues or engage in competitive agenda-setting (Johnston et al., 1993; Laver, 2001; Meguid, 2005; Petry and Landry, 2001). In other words, parties compete not only in terms of their policy preferences, but in terms of their priorities and emphases (Bartolini, 2002: 95). Thus, measuring the intensity of party conflict requires attention to two key factors: the level of "issue divergence" – the extent to which parties differ in terms of the issues they discuss – and "policy divergence" – the extent to which parties differ on the solutions they propose (Sigelman and Buell, 2004; Zielinski, 2002).

These two elements are independent of one another, in that a party system may feature high or low levels of issue and policy divergence. There are obviously limits to the relationship between the two dimensions, however. While parties may converge on both issues and policy, perfect issue divergence cannot coincide with complete policy divergence, as there must be some level of agreement on key societal problems in order for there to be a disagreement on specific policy solutions. Nonetheless, the general rule applies: the more distinct parties are in terms of offering conflicting visions for the future

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[7] For reviews of the relationship between these two theories, see: Adams et al. (2005); Sigelman and Buell (2004: 650-651); Petrocik et al. (2003); Simon (2002: Chapters 2 and 4); van der Brug (2004); and Robertson (1976).

[8] As a whole, saliency theory blends a wide range of different models of strategic party behavior, including: issue emphasis (Budge, 1987; Carmines and Stimson, 1989; Klingemann et al., 1994; Robertson, 1976), strategic ambiguity (Glazer, 1990; Meirowitz, 2005), issue ownership (Belanger, 2003; Damore, 2004; Petrocik et al., 2003), heresthetics (Riker, 1993b; 1996), and priming (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Johnston et al., 1992; Soroka, 2002).

of society – whether in terms of the issues they present or the policies they propose – the more 'intense' their conflict.[9]

In general, there are two angles from which to approach the study of party system intensity: from the behavior of the parties, themselves, or from the perspective of other political actors. The latter often involves surveying the attitudes and preferences of party voters (Blais et al., 2002; Kim and Fording, 1998; Lambert et al., 1986; Nevitte et al., 1989), members (Cross and Young, 2002), activists (Archer and Whitehorn, 2001; Blake, 1988; Blake et al., 1991; Clarke, 1978; Cross and Young, 2002; Ellis and Archer, ; Goldfarb and Axworthy, 1988; Perlin, 1988; Stewart and Archer, 2000; Stewart and Stewart, 1997), candidates (Wesley, 2004), legislators (Clarke, 1978; Kornberg, 1967; Winn and Twiss, 1977), or party experts (Castles and Mair, ; Huber and Inglehart, ; Laver and Hunt). By contrast, the former is often based on content analyses of party artifacts, including government legislation (Klingman and Lammers, 1984) or expenditures (Barrilleaux et al., 2002; Chandler, 1977; Goot, 2004; Hofferbert and Budge, 1992; Imbeau et al., 2001; Kim and Fording, 2002; Klingemann et al., 1994; Lijphart, 1990; McAllister, 1989; Petry, 1995; Petry et al., 1999; Simeon and Miller, 1980); leaders' speeches (Coffey, 2005; DeClercy, 2005; Goot, 2004; Laver et al., 2006; Petrocik et al., 2003; Soroka, 2002); campaign advertising (Epstein and Segal, 2000; Holian, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2006; Petrocik et al., 2003; Sigelman and Buell, 2004; Simon, 2002); or party platforms (Budge and Farlie, 1983a; Budge et al., 2001; Budge et al., 1987; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Janda et al., 1995; Klingemann et al., 2007; Petry and Landry, 2001; Sides, 2006; Smith and Smith, 2000; Warwick, 2002).[10]

While there are benefits to both approaches, the present study pursues the latter, focusing on the "supply side" of campaign politics (Damore, 2004).[11] Specifically, provincial election platforms are viewed as an ideal source of historical data on party strategy and behavior (Finegold and Swift, 2001: 103; Laver and Garry, 2000: 620; Volkens, 2001: 34). Platforms amount to "the only authoritative statement of the party policy for an election" and are available for most political parties for most campaigns in Western democracies, including Canada (Budge, 1994: 455). A pioneer of this approach, Robertson (1976: 72) has argued that platforms are crucial documents "because they are the background for any mass media discussion of party policy, they are discussed and represented by the speeches of party leaders, and they are… the basic source for the campaigns of the constituency candidates."[12] In sum,

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[9] Sigelman and Buell (2004: 650) note that "In a 'textbook' political campaign – one that maximizes citizens' opportunities to make informed and meaningful choices between candidates who were vying for their support – the candidates would focus on the same issues."

[10] For a review of these various approaches, see: Mair (2001).

[11] As Bara and Budge (2001: 602-603) note, "Most assessments of elections base themselves on only half the evidence – on how voters reacted to parties rather than what the parties themselves were doing. The proper analytic question to ask is how electors reacted to the cues parties were sending out, rather than trying to infer indirectly, from the electors' responses, what these cues were in the first place." (See also: Bartolini and Mair, 1990a: 196; Cole, 2005: 204; Dittrich, 1983: 266; Jackman, 1972: 517; Siavelis, 2006: 368; Wolinetz, 1988: 4.).

[12] For reviews of the platform analysis approach, and the work of the Manifesto Research Group of the European Consortium for Political Research (the Comparative Manifesto Project), in particular, see: Budge (2001); Klingemann et al. (2007: Chapter 1); and Volkens (2001).

Platform statements will be taken to represent an amalgamation and distillation of the principles, attitudes, appeals and concerns of the party as a whole, or at least of its dominant factions. Changes in the character of platform statements over time are, thus, likely to reflect changes within the party and/or changes in the segment of the electorate to which the party appeals. In the absence of survey data, we must infer, given such evidence as the periodic committee and convention fights over platform statements, that the content of these statements is important enough to party leaders to warrant changes in the content of party platforms as valid indicators of party changes (Ginsberg, 1972: 607).[13]

Within the platform literature, several measures have been proposed to gauge the intensity of party conflict according to *either* confrontation theory (Fauli-Oller et al., 2003; Gross and Sigelman, 1984; Paddock, 1992) *or* saliency theory (Budge and Farlie, 1983a; Budge et al., 1987; Klingemann et al., 2007; Sigelman and Yough, 1978). Others have compared the validity of each model of party behavior (Budge and Farlie, 1983b; Landry, 1991; Petry and Landry, 2001). Yet, few have attempted to measure 'intensity' in a fashion that takes both variants of competition into account. In this context, Ginsberg's (1972) model of "conflict intensity" is most instructive.[14]

The basic premise behind Ginsberg's measure is the following notion: the more parties engage with each other during elections by offering conflicting policy positions, and the wider the range of disputed issues, the more heated the debate will be. In this way, his calculation takes into account both the amount of *mutual concern* and *polarization*, in that the higher the level of issue convergence and policy divergence, the greater the "intensity" of the party system.[15]

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[13] By necessity, using party platforms as indicators of party positions implies treating parties as unitary campaign actors. While this assumption has drawn criticism, with some arguing that parties embody more internal debate and encompass a greater ideological variety than the platform reflects (Clarke, 1978: 618-619; Laver and Garry, 2000; Strom, 1990), there are notable advantages.[13] The platform is officially endorsed as the authoritative statement for the entire party, and serves as an accurate reflection of the balance of forces within the party during a given campaign (Vassallo and Wilcox, 2006; Volkens, 2001; Winn and Twiss, 1977). In no way does this imply that a party's position is equivalent to those of its followers, nor vice versa (Bartolini and Mair, 1990a: 199; Fiorina, 2006: 25-31; Lijphart, 1981: 28). It also does not conflate a party's *actual* position with its image as *portrayed* by the media, or as *perceived* by other political actors. Indeed, the relationships between the position of the party, its followers, its perception, and its portrayal are all empirical questions. As such, the proposed approach avoids a critical methodological fallacy by focusing on the party's own behavior as a campaign actor.

[14] For a similar measure, see Sigelman and Buell (2004).

[15] The terms "mutual concern" and "issue convergence" may be used interchangeably, as may "polarization" and "policy divergence". However, in the following discussion, the terms "mutual concern" and "polarization" will apply to specific political issues, while "issue convergence" and "policy divergence" are seen as system-level properties. In other words, parties may be 'polarized' in terms of a particular issue like tax relief; the system, itself, may feature a high level of 'policy divergence' if parties are polarized on a significant number of issues.

Figure 1: Party System Intensity
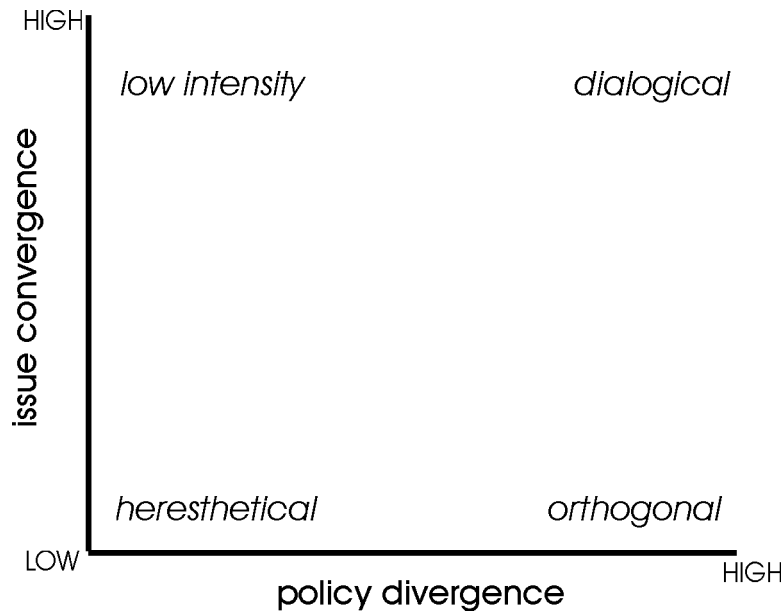
Using this framework, party systems may be classified as:
  (i)   *low intensity*, with low levels of policy divergence and high levels of issue convergence;
  (ii)   *heresthetical*, with low levels of policy divergence and issue convergence;
  (iii)   *dialogical*, with high levels of policy divergence and issue convergence; and
  (iv)   *orthogonal*, with high levels of policy divergence and little issue convergence.

     "Low intensity" systems correspond most closely with what American scholars have termed "irresponsible" party politics, wherein parties appear to be Tweedledum and Tweedledee, offering little in the way of competing programmatic outlooks (Katz, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 1971; Wray, 1981). "Dialogical" systems, by contrast, feature "responsible" party behaviour, with parties offering competing policy solutions to common sets of issues; this type of party politics resembles the confrontation model envisioned by Downs (1957) and his followers. Competition in "heresthetical" systems takes place between parties who agree generally on most policy positions; as a result, they pursue issue emphasis as a primary election strategy, priming the electorate to make their 'owned' issues most salient. An "orthogonal" party system features little inter-party agreement on either policy or the basic issue agenda. The resulting campaigns feature competing monologues, as parties behave like 'two ships passing in the night', seldom if ever engaging each other on the same issues or coming to consensus on policy.

     To use an over-simplified example, imagine a campaign that featured only two "relevant" parties, whose platforms made mention of four (and only four) issues: language rights, expansion of the welfare state, private education, and tax relief. The Liberals make 175 positive mentions of language rights in their platform (e.g., a pledge to implement a language rights charter or create a bilingual civil service), and only 25

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negative mentions of language rights (e.g., closing down an immersion school or repealing a law on bilingual signage). Imagine further that the Conservatives – not wishing to politicize an issue they do not 'own' – mention language rights only 50 times in their platform, 40 of the references being negative and 10 positive. Similar breakdowns for other issues are illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Hypothetical Election #1

	Party						
	Liberals			Conservatives			
issue	positive mentions	negative mentions	*total mentions**	positive mentions	negative mentions	*total mentions**	overall mentions*
language rights	175	25	*200 (.33)*	10	40	*50 (.06)*	250 (.17)
welfare expansion	300	0	*300 (.50)*	125	75	*200 (.22)*	500 (.33)
private education	10	40	*50 (.08)*	400	0	*400 (.44)*	450 (.30)
tax relief	45	5	*50 (.08)*	240	10	*250 (.28)*	300 (.20)
			N=600 (100.00)			*N=900 (100.00)*	N=1500 (100.00)

*Proportions of total issue mentions by party given in parentheses.
Figures may not sum to 1 due to rounding.

Several features of inter-party competition are evident from this hypothetical example. First, with 600 total issue mentions, the Liberal platform is one-third shorter than the Republican platform (900 mentions). Second, some issues are more *salient* than others. With 500 of 150 total mentions (33.3 percent), welfare expansion was the most popular topic of inter-party debate during the campaign, whereas language rights (16.7 percent) was the least talked-about issue. Third, each party appears to own two issues: the Liberals place most of their emphasis on welfare and language rights; the Conservatives, on private education and tax relief. This is evidence of some level of *issue divergence*. This said, both parties do place at least some emphasis on each issue, demonstrating some level of *mutual concern*.[16] Fourth, there appears to be some level of *polarization* on some issues. The parties take different positions on questions of language rights and private education, with both issues featuring considerable *policy divergence*. The other two topics appear to be "valence issues" (Stokes, 1963), however, with both parties tending to be of the same mind in expanding the welfare state and reducing taxes, expressing their differences in terms of emphasis and priority, not policy.

While the number of parties and issues in provincial party politics are likely to exceed those mentioned in this hypothetical example, in general, the calculation of party system intensity proceeds along the same lines. The following discussion is an adaptation of Ginsberg's model to the Canadian context.

Mutual Concern & Issue Convergence

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[16] This may be due to the relatively high salience of each subject in the media or in the minds of some swing voters, or in the interests of offering a relatively comprehensive plan for the future, for example.

First, consider the measurement of mutual concern (M) over a given issue (*s*):

$$M_s = 1 - |L_s - C_s|$$

where
L*s* equals the proportion of Liberal mentions of a given issue (*s*); and
C*s* equals the proportion of Conservative mentions of a given issue (*s*).

This index of mutual concern ranges from 0 (where one party is responsible for the entire emphasis placed on an issue) to 1 (where parties' relative emphases on the issue are identical). In this way, the index measures the proportion of "overlap" between parties' emphases of the issue.[17] For example, the level of mutual concern over the issue of language rights (M_R):

$$M_R = 1 - |.33 - .06| = 1 - .278 = .722$$

For welfare spending ($_W$), private education ($_E$) and tax relief ($_T$), levels of mutual concern are as follows:

$$M_W = .722$$
$$M_E = .638$$
$$M_T = .806$$

We can see from these figures that parties have expressed the most mutual concern over tax relief, with an overlap of over 80 percent in terms of their relative emphasis on the issue. The disparity in emphasis was greatest on the topic of private education, which – as discussed earlier – was an issue 'owned' by the Conservatives.

The mean level of mutual concern across all issues marks the total level of *issue convergence* (U) in the party system:

$$U = \frac{\sum M_s}{n}$$

where
M*s* is the level of mutual concern over an issue; and
n equals the total number of issues.

In our hypothetical example, U = .722.[18] As in the case of the index of mutual concern, this measure ranges from 0 (where parties emphasize entirely different issues during a campaign, never engaging in dialogue) to 1 (where parties emphasize issues to precisely the same extent, engaging in perfect dialogue).

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[17] This formula is an adaptation of Sigelman and Buell's (2004) "issue convergence index" and Ginsberg's (1972) measure of "differential salience".
[18] This is calculated using the following equation: $(M_R + M_W + M_E + M_T) / 4 = .722$.

Polarization & Policy Divergence

By contrast, *polarization* (P*s*) measures the extent to which parties diverge in their policy preferences on a specific issue:

$$P_s = \left| \frac{S_{(+L)}}{S_{(+L)} + S_{(-L)}} - \frac{S_{(+C)}}{S_{(+C)} + S_{(-C)}} \right|$$

or

$$\left| \frac{S_{(+L)}S_{(-C)} - S_{(-L)}S_{(+C)}}{(S_{(+L)} + S_{(-L)})(S_{(+C)} + S_{(-C)})} \right|$$

where
$S_{(+L)}$ equals the proportion of issue mentions coded as positive references to a given issue (S) in the Liberal platform;
$S_{(-L)}$ equals the proportion of issue mentions coded as negative references to a given issue in the Liberal platform;
$S_{(+C)}$ equals the proportion of issue mentions coded as positive references to a given issue in the Conservative platform; and
$S_{(-C)}$ equals the proportion of issue mentions coded as negative references to a given issue in the Conservative platform.

This polarization index ranges from 0 (where both parties agree entirely on a policy position related to the given issue) to 1 (where the parties differ entirely on a policy position).

Returning to our example, the level of polarization on the issue of language rights is:

$$P_R = \left| \frac{(175/200)(40/50) - (25/200)(10/50)}{(175/200 + 25/200)(10/50 + 40/50)} \right| = \left| \frac{(.875)(.800) - (.125)(.200)}{1} \right| = .675$$

For welfare spending (w), private education (E) and tax relief (T), levels of polarization are as follows:

$$P_W = .375$$
$$P_E = .800$$
$$P_T = .060$$

These figures reveal that the parties are most polarized on the issue of private education, and most in agreement when it comes to tax relief.

As before, the overall level of *policy divergence* (*W*) in a party system is calculated by averaging the level of polarization across all issue areas.

14

$$W = \frac{\sum Ps}{n}$$

where
Ps is the level of polarization of an issue; and
n equals the total number of issues.

In this case, the mean level of polarization was .478.

Examined separately, mutual concern (issue convergence) and polarization (policy divergence) are useful indexes for measuring the components of conflict within a party system.

When combined, they offer us a summary measure of the "intensity" of conflict over specific issues, and in the system as a whole. The calculation of *issue conflict intensity* involves multiplying the level of mutual concern by the level of polarization surrounding a particular issue:

intensity = (mutual concern) (polarization)

or

$$Is = MsPs$$

or

$$Is = \left(1 - \left|Ls - Cs\right|\right)\left(\left|\frac{S_{(+L)}S_{(-C)} - S_{(-L)}S_{(+C)}}{(S_{(+L)} + S_{(-L)}) \, (S_{(+C)} + S_{(-C)})}\right|\right)$$

Logically, this index also ranges from 0 (no intensity) to 1 (high intensity of party conflict).

The total level of *party system conflict intensity* is the average level of intensity across all issue areas. It, too, ranges from 0 to 1:

$$I = \frac{\sum MsPs}{n}$$

or

$$I = UW$$

where
I is the overall level of party system intensity;
U is the overall level of issue convergence; and
W is the overall level of policy divergence.

It is crucial to note: while an intensity index score of "1" is theoretically possible – in instances when the parties converge on a series of issues, devote precisely the same

proportion of attention to those respective subjects, and differ entirely in terms of policy solutions – such cases are rarely, if ever, met in practice. An intensity index score of "0" is just as rare, meaning that most intensity scores will fall within these two extremes.

Table 2 illustrates these figures as they apply to our hypothetical party system:

Table 2: Intensity of Hypothetical Election #1

issue	mutual concern index	polarization index	intensity index
language rights	$M_R =$ .722	$P_R =$ .675	$I_R =$ .487
welfare expansion	$M_W =$ .722	$P_W =$ .375	$I_W =$ .271
private education	$M_E =$ .638	$P_E =$ .800	$I_E =$ .510
tax relief	$M_T =$ .806	$P_T =$ .060	$I_T =$ .048
system mean	.722 (issue convergence)	.478 (policy divergence)	.329 (conflict intensity)

These figures may be compared with those from other party systems; aggregated with other elections over time; and/or compared with similar statistics from previous elections.

Consider a second example, involving the same two parties in a second (subsequent) election campaign. For simplicity's sake, we will assume that the list of issues remains identical. We will also assume that the Liberal Party made absolutely no changes to its platform, releasing an identical document in this second campaign. Meanwhile, although adjusting their emphases and positions, the Conservatives kept their platform the same length as previously. The table below demonstrates how the Conservative platform changed:

Table 3: Hypothetical Election #2

	Party						
	Liberals			Conservatives			
issue	positive mentions	negative mentions	*total mentions**	positive mentions	negative mentions	*total mentions**	overall mentions*
language rights	175	25	*200 (.33)*	100	25	*125 (.14)*	325 (.22)
welfare expansion	300	0	*300 (.50)*	125	75	*200 (.22)*	500 (.33)
private education	10	40	*50 (.08)*	125	75	*200 (.22)*	250 (.17)
tax relief	45	5	*50 (.08)*	250	125	*375 (.42)*	425 (.28)
			N=600 (100.00)			*N=900 (100.00)*	N=1500 (100.00)

*Proportions of total issue mentions by party given in parentheses.
Figures may not sum to 1 due to rounding.

Notice that the Conservatives continue to "own" private education and tax relief, but that they have shifted the bulk of their attention from the former to the latter. In addition, they now place equal emphasis on welfare and education. Notice, as well, that the Conservatives have 'softened' their positions on their "owned" issues to a considerable extent. Whereas 100 percent of their focus on private education was positive in the previous election, only 62.5 percent of their mentions were positive in this

second campaign; a similar shift occurred on the topic of tax relief (from 96 percent positive to 66.7 percent positive). Most notably, the Conservatives switched positions entirely on the issue of language rights. This 'flip-flop' saw them shift from an 80 percent negative position to 80 percent positive. Dramatic changes such as these ought to be reflected in our measures of conflict intensity.

They are, as Table 4 illustrates:

Table 4: Intensity of Hypothetical Election #2

issue	mutual concern index	polarization index	intensity index
language rights	$M_R =$ .810	$P_R =$ .075	$I_R =$ .061
welfare expansion	$M_W =$ .722	$P_W =$ .375	$I_W =$ .271
private education	$M_E =$ .860	$P_E =$ .425	$I_E =$ .366
tax relief	$M_T =$ .660	$P_T =$ .570	$I_T =$ .376
system mean	.763 (issue convergence)	.361 (policy divergence)	.269 (conflict intensity)

The level of issue convergence in the party system increased (from .722 to .763), while the level of policy divergence decreased (from .478 to .361).[19] This meant that, overall, the Conservatives shifted their agenda and changed their policy stances to be more in-tune with those of the Liberals. As a result, the "intensity" of party conflict declined from .329 to .269.

Application to Multiparty Systems

The comparison of provincial party systems will not be as simplistic as these examples suggest. The entry of new issues and new parties, in particular, will pose challenges. However, the general principles, assumptions and calculations behind concepts like "issue convergence", "policy divergence", and "conflict intensity" are valid, and can be applied to any party system analysis.

The key to applying this model lies in its examination of "interaction streams", a concept first introduced by Sartori (1976). In one of his foremost contributions to the study of party competition, he asserts that party systems consist of "streams of reciprocal interaction," and that the character of these interaction streams were integral to the identity of the system, itself (1976: 120).[20]

Strangely, most scholars have overlooked this core principle in their measurement of party system diversity. Even Sartori's own discussion of party systems mentions "interaction streams" only in passing. In measuring the overall 'intensity' of conflict and 'competitiveness' among parties, the following discussion treats each interaction stream

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[19] The one notable exception to this trend was in the area of tax relief, where the Conservatives' choice to soften their position – becoming less positive of tax relief – actually ended up increasing the polarization of debate on the issue (from .060 to .570).

[20] Sartori cites Sjoblom (1968) as an influence on the topic of 'interaction streams'.

as a defining characteristic of a party system. In short, the number of streams and their character define the party system's image, and allow us to compare systems across time and space.

As in the example above, a classic two-party system features a single interaction stream (between Party A and Party B). The nature of inter-party competition in the system is captured in that single stream, making the calculation of issue convergence, policy divergence, and conflict intensity rather straightforward.

While instructive for modeling purposes, few party systems consist of only two relevant parties. This is especially true of provincial party politics, which, while often featuring systems with two major parties, also contain significant minor parties (Carty and Stewart, 1996: 72-73; McCormick, 1996: 351). These parties are considered "relevant" actors in that they have the potential to form government and/or influence the nature of political debate (blackmail potential). In this context, it is inappropriate to simply apply the conflict intensity model to the two largest parties in the system, neglecting the role of minor parties entirely.[21] Rather, we must account for the intensity of conflict in the entire party system, including the levels of issue convergence and policy divergence that exist between each of the parties. In short, this requires calculating the average level of intensity across all interaction streams.

Expanding upon our example above, imagine that a minor competitor, the New Democratic Party (NDP), enters the system in a third election. For the sake of simplicity, assume also that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals alter their platforms as a result of this entry. The emergence of a third "relevant" party establishes two additional interaction streams, bringing the total to three:

<div align="center">

Liberal – Conservative
New Democrat – Liberal
New Democrat – Conservative

</div>

Recall that the relationships between the Liberals and Conservatives were such that:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\text{issue convergence} \quad &= X_{\text{(LIB-CON)}} \quad &= .763 \\
\text{policy divergence} \quad &= Y_{\text{(LIB-CON)}} \quad &= .361 \\
\text{conflict intensity} \quad &= Z_{\text{(LIB-CON)}} \quad &= .269
\end{aligned}
$$

Imagine further that analysis of the hypothetical New Democratic platform reveals the following relationships between the NDP and the two major parties:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\text{issue convergence} \quad &= X_{\text{(NDP-LIB)}} \quad &= .875 \\
\text{policy divergence} \quad &= Y_{\text{(NDP-LIB)}} \quad &= .202 \\
\text{conflict intensity} \quad &= Z_{\text{(NDP-LIB)}} \quad &= .181
\end{aligned}
$$

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[21] Rasmussen (1967) committed this error in his application of Schlesinger's (1955) two-party model to the comparison of Canadian party systems.

$$\text{issue convergence} \quad = X_{(NDP\text{-}CON)} \quad = .562$$
$$\text{policy divergence} \quad = Y_{(NDP\text{-}CON)} \quad = .558$$
$$\text{conflict intensity} \quad = Z_{(NDP\text{-}CON)} \quad = .318$$

The results from this example conform to the traditional structure of party politics in Canada, where the largest differences exist between the New Democrats and the Conservatives, with the Liberals in the centre (Whitehorn, 2002). That is, the lowest level of issue convergence and highest level of policy divergence lie between the NDP and Conservatives, while the Liberals and New Democrats form the most similar pair in the system.

The overall level of conflict intensity in this three-party system equals the mean of the intensity found along all three interaction streams:

$$\text{issue convergence} \quad = X_{(NDP\text{-}LIB\text{-}CON)} = (.763 + .875 + .562) / 3 = \quad .733$$
$$\text{policy divergence} \quad = Y_{(NDP\text{-}LIB\text{-}CON)} = (.361 + .202 + .558) / 3 = \quad .374$$
$$\text{conflict intensity} \quad = Z_{(NDP\text{-}LIB\text{-}CON)} = (.269 + .181 + .318) / 3 = \quad .256$$

According to these calculations, the entry of the New Democrats decreased the level of issue convergence in the system (from .763 to .733), while increasing the level policy divergence in the system (from .361 to .374). The overall net effect was a slight decrease in the system's conflict intensity (from .269 to .256), a reflection of the fact that, while polarizing debate in terms of policy, the amount of inter-party dialogue decreased, with parties having a greater tendency to 'talk past' each other by emphasizing different issues. Since it varies directly with the extent to which parties disagree over common sets of issues, the overall level of conflict intensity decreased.[22]

This method of calculating conflict intensity in a multiparty system treats each relevant party as an equal participant. Some analysts will disagree, preferring to weight each interaction stream based on the electoral strength of each party (Sigelman and

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[22] This measure of conflict intensity gauges the distinctiveness of the parties in terms of the issues they emphasize and the policy positions they stake. This may or may not involve rating parties in terms of a left-right spectrum. Several studies have pursued this latter approach. Applying saliency theory, some researchers have positioned parties according to their issue priorities, with parties emphasizing 'conservative' issues like tax relief or law and order being labeled 'right-wing', while those stressing 'liberal' or 'socialist' issues like universal health care or public ownership ranked 'left-wing' (see: Budge, 2001). Other analysts have used confrontation theory to analyze specific party positions, discerning patterns of policy preferences as being 'left' or 'right' (see: Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Mellos, 1970). There is heuristic value in these approaches. Provided a valid coding scheme could be developed through a combination of factor analysis and induction – a left-right spectrum technique may be incorporated into the study of provincial party systems. However, the approach encounters difficulty when the party systems under study involve issues that do not conform to the traditional left-right spectrum (Huber and Inglehart, 1995). Some analysts have side-stepped this challenge by excluding all such issues and focusing solely on the economic dimension of party competition. This is problematic in party systems like those in Canada, however, where non-left-right issues like federalism, populism, environmentalism, and cultural rights feature prominently (Elkins, 1980; Irvine, 1987; Lambert et al., 1986; Nevitte et al., 1989; Pelletier and Guérin, 1996). In such systems, the intensity of party conflict is not captured by reference to left and right. As such, while left-right differences may be subsumed under a broader measure of conflict intensity, they need not form the entire definition.

Yough, 1978). Doing so runs the risk of conflating the "conflict intensity" of the party system with its "competitiveness", however. In considering each party "relevant" – to the extent that it has governing or blackmail potential – the proposed measure of conflict intensity analyzes political debate as a competition of *ideas*, placing more emphasis on the priorities and policies being voiced, rather than the voice itself. By contrast, the following measure of 'competitiveness' shifts the focus to the conflict among *organizations*, whose positions are determined by their levels of support, versus their levels of distinctiveness.

MEASURING COMPETITIVENESS

> Electoral competition plays a central role in… politics. Besides the importance of competition to studies of policy, participation, and other political phenomena, it is important on purely normative grounds. Simply put, in the absence of competition, accountability suffers. Given its centrality to… politics, it is vitally important that quantitative studies be based on valid, accurate indicators of competition. The findings of such studies are, in large part, only as good as the indicators they use (Holbrook and Van Dunk, 1993: 960).

A second dimension of inter-party competition involves measuring the 'competitiveness' of the system, or the extent to which electoral support is distributed among the competing organizations. As mentioned earlier, the definition of 'competitiveness' is rooted in what Elkins (1974) calls "uncertainty": the less 'predictable' the outcome of an 'average' election, the more competitive the party system.

If the study of 'conflict intensity' is a hallmark of European party research, the analysis of 'system competitiveness' finds its roots in American political science – in particular, a vast literature comparing the party systems in the fifty states. In this vein, V.O. Key's (1949) pioneering work on one-party dominance in the American South motivated an entire generation of party researchers, whose work sought to uncover the sources and consequences of inter-party competitiveness.[23]

Key's approach – and the "responsible party school" that it spawned – contained a distinct normative component. Rooted in "the Manchester liberal faith in the public advantages of rivalry" (Lovink, 1973: 342), many of these students contend that competitiveness is an essential element of democracy. Competitiveness, they argue, forces ruling groups to defend the source of their authority by seeking popular support (APSA, 1950; Kenney and Rice, 1985; Kirkpatrick, 1971). Furthermore, the competitiveness of a party system is a key element in determining the amount of "genuine choice" provided to voters. In systems where election results are "pre-ordained", many voters are denied the opportunity to voice legitimate dissent, and the "effective choice, the true political power" lies, instead, within the dominant party

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[23] For a review of this literature, see: Brown and Bruce (2002).

organization (Rasmussen, 1966: 527-528). As Jones (1964: 461) surmised, "It may be fair to say that in the game of politics, as in football, we believe that the best results for all concerned, spectators and players alike, obtain when there is a rather high level of competition."[24]

While there is near unanimity on the normative importance of competitiveness, researchers are far from consensus on how best to measure the concept. Like 'conflict intensity', researchers have developed a wide range of indicators.[25] A careful review of the literature reveals two general dimensions, however:

(1) *"Balance"* denotes the extent to which electoral support is evenly distributed among relevant parties in the system. The relative strength of a given party may be gauged either in terms of its share of the popular vote or its proportion of seats in the legislature; for reasons detailed below, the former is preferred as a direct measure of the party's strength.[26] A perfectly balanced system is one in which each relevant party shares an equal share of electoral support, whereas a relatively unbalanced system features a dominant party (or parties) whose popularity dwarfs its competitors'. In this sense, 'balance' may be measured election-by-election, or aggregated over a period of time.

(2) *"Government Vulnerability"* accounts for the likelihood of alternation in government. It measures the overall level of volatility in terms of who controls government. Party systems range from those with little or no potential for change in governing party to those whose governments are vulnerable.[27]

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[24] Jones (1964: 462) also lists a number of advantages of low levels of party competition, including: policy continuity and predictability; the propensity for longer-term planning and visionary leadership; and the accumulation of expertise and experience in government. Furthermore, as Rasmussen (1966: 528) contends: "…one-party electoral domination of an area eliminates only one democratic essential; it does not automatically destroy democracy entirely. If dissent can be expressed freely and alternative choices, however futile, legally are available to the electorate, the system can be characterized as democratic. Democracy does not require alternation of governing groups as much as it does the possibility of alternation." For similar arguments, see Lovink's (1973) discussion: "Is Canadian Politics Too Competitive?"

[25] Among the indicators not used in the proposed measure of competitiveness, the most prominent are "electoral volatility" (Bartolini and Mair, 1990b; Elkins, 1974) and "turnout" (Dye, 1984). These have been excluded because they are better conceptualized as *causes*, *consequences* or *correlates* of party system competitiveness – not indicators. Moreover, while changes in electoral volatility or voter participation rates may precede, follow or coincide with changes in the competitiveness of a system, the direction of these relationships is not certain. For example, is dealignment positively correlated with competitiveness, or does competitiveness increase as electorates become more volatile? Similar questions may be raised about the relationship between turnout and competitiveness: are they positively correlated, and does one precede the other? These are empirical questions that require empirical and theoretical support before either volatility or turnout can be used as an indicator of competitiveness.

[26] In bicameral systems, conventional practice is to measure seats in the lower house.

[27]As part of a broader typology, McCormick (1996) measured the "competitiveness" of Canadian provincial party systems according to similar criteria: (1) the ratio of popular vote attained by the governing party compared to the opposition; and (2) the frequency with which government changed hands. Stewart and Carty (2006) and Chandler and Chandler (1979) employed measures of dominance in their analyses of Canadian party systems, as well. In loose terms, these elements also formed the basis of two seminal studies of inter-party competitiveness – Ranney and Kendall (1954) and Schlesinger (1955).

These two component measures are independent of one another, in that a party system may be balanced or unbalanced, and have the potential for alternation or not. Party systems thus range from those that are:

(v)   *uncompetitive*, with low levels of balance and little prospect for alternation in government;

(vi)   *elastic*, with low levels of balance but greater chance of experiencing government turnover;

(vii)   *stable-competitive*, with high levels of balance but little potential for alternation in government; and

(viii)   *vulnerable-competitive*, with high levels of balance and better likelihood of alternations in government.

Figure 2: Party System Competitiveness
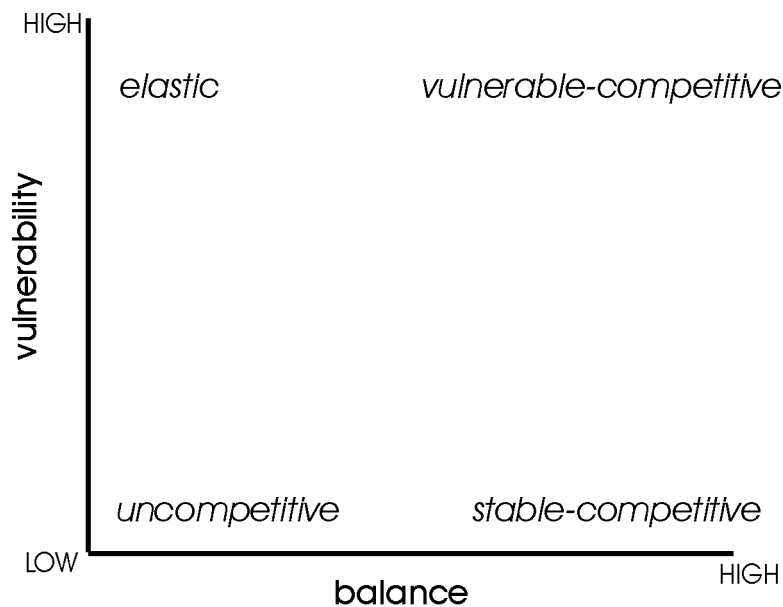
"Uncompetitive" – or one-party dominant systems – are those that feature the lowest level of uncertainty about the outcome of 'typical elections': the governing party seldom, if ever, loses. Alberta is often labeled in this regard (Stewart and Carty, 2006). An "elastic" party system is a spasmodic one, lurching frequently from government to government with large swings in the popular vote. New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, in the early twentieth century, come closest to fitting this description (Rasmussen, 1967). By contrast, a "stable-competitive" system features a relatively even distribution of support among the parties, but one party consistently maintains control over government. The Ontario party system resembled this description for much of the last century (LeDuc and White, 1974). Lastly, a "competitive" system is one in which the popular vote is spread relatively evenly among parties and there is frequent alternation in government. Since the 1960s, Manitoba fits well under this category (Wesley, 2004).

Thus, 'competitiveness' is defined as the level of contestation among parties for votes and control of government (Dahl, 1971). "Competitiveness" will be measured through the use of an index, the elements of which will be calculated using official provincial election data.

Balance

The first component of this "competitiveness" index is the 'balance' of the system, which is calculated as the average vote disparity among all parties the system. As in the measurement of "intensity", this calculation relies on Sartori's (1976) concept of "interaction streams" and assumes that the character of the party system depends on the nature of the relationships between all relevant parties. The measure has the advantage of comparing party systems regardless of the number of relevant parties in competition; whether dominated by one-, two-, three-, or more major parties, the system's level of 'balance' is calculable by examining the competitiveness of each party relative to its opponents.

As such, 'balance' (*B*) is measured by averaging the proportional differences among each pair of relevant parties in the system, divided by the total number of relevant parties in the system. This figure is subtracted from one to produce a measure of balance (versus imbalance):

$$B = 1 - \frac{\text{the sum of proportional differences among each pair of parties}}{\text{the number of interaction streams}}$$

or

$$B = 1 - \frac{\sum (|x_i - x_j|)}{\left(\dfrac{n}{2}\right)(n-1)}$$

where

i...j are relevant parties in the system;
i > j;
x equals the proportion of popular vote; and
n equals the number of relevant parties in the system.

This 'balance index' ranges from 0 (a party system in which one party earns the support of the entire electorate)[28] to 1 (a system in which the popular vote is divided equally among all relevant parties in the system).

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[28] It is theoretically possible for a party system's 'balance index' to equal 0, provided at least one relevant party fails to receive a single vote.

This measurement of party system 'balance' strays considerably from other measures of competitiveness, many of which rely on vote (or seat) ratios between the first- and second-place parties in the system, or the overall vote or seat concentration among the top two parties (e.g., McCormick, 1996). Measurements such as these are based primarily on the relationship between the government and opposition – or the overall level of 'dominance'; they are less sensitive to the inter-party relationships among opposition parties, however, many of which can be considered crucial to the identity of the system. For example, there may exist a large gap in support between the governing party and the Official Opposition (as was the case in Canada, federally, from 1993 to 2004), but this does not necessarily mean there is a low level of 'balance' in the system, overall. Close competition within the right, between the Progressive Conservatives and Reform or Canadian Alliance, was a defining characteristic of the party system; yet the balance *within* the right is ignored by simple measures of one-party dominance or two-partyism (as in: Chandler and Chandler, 1979; Sharman, 1990).

This same formula may be used to assess the 'legislative balance' of a party system, by substituting vote with seat shares. However, the decision to use vote share as an indicator of party system balance is a conscious one, based on the principle that popular vote is a more direct measure of a party's electoral support. Although often divided into a series of constituencies, electoral competition is, fundamentally, competition over votes; public opinion polls published during campaigns only help to reinforce this perception among voters. Electoral competition is only – and often imperfectly – translated into seats through electoral institutions (Cairns, 1968: 74-75; Holbrook and Van Dunk, 1993; Smith, 1989: 352). Given that several Canadian provinces have experimented with different forms of proportional representation in the past, and may do so in the future, the use of seats as a measure of competitivneess is even more problematic (Jansen, 2004). As Sigelman and Yough (1978: 366) have suggested,

> focusing on seats could greatly distort the distribution of popular support, because of the impact different electoral systems have on the allocation of legislative seats. Of course, electoral systems can affect votes as well as seats, in a manner specified by Duverger (1954) as the 'psychological factor', but this impact is apt to be far more subtle than that of the 'mechanical factor' on legislative seats.

Indeed, the number of seats may be viewed as a function of the number of votes a party receives, thus making the analysis of both seats and votes somewhat redundant (Pfeiffer, 1967: 457).[29] Moreover, the decision not to incorporate seat shares into the calculation of 'balance' is grounded in the notion that 'vulnerability' – at least indirectly – provides a decent proxy for the parties' relative levels of legislative support.

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[29] Huo (2006: 746) offers some argument in favor of using both seats and votes to measure party system domination. Several notable studies have incorporated both seat and vote shares to measure inter-party competitiveness, but with little theoretical justification for doing so (see: Blais, 1973; Chandler and Chandler, 1979; Laakso and Taagepera, 1979; Sharman, 1990).

Table 5 lists seven hypothetical party systems. Details include the proportions of the popular vote won by each of the three relevant parties, and their respective 'balance index' scores as calculated from the formula above. Also included are figures indicating the margin of victory separating the first- and second-place parties (expressed in terms of percentage-points, "v1-2"), the two-party vote concentration (the percentage of votes won by the top two parties combined, "2PVC"), and "effective number of parties" ("ENEP")[30] for each system.

Table 5: Comparing Party System 'Balance' Measures

Party System	Liberal Party*	Conservative Party*	New Democratic Party*	'balance index'	v1-2*	2PVC*	ENEP
I	.90	.05	.05	.433	.85	.95	1.22
II	.75	.20	.05	.533	.55	.95	1.65
III	.60	.35	.05	.633	.25	.95	2.06
IV	.60	.20	.20	.733	.40	.80	2.27
V	.50	.25	.25	.833	.35	.75	2.67
VI	.40	.30	.30	.933	.10	.70	2.94
VII	.34	.33	.33	.993	.01	.67	3.00

*Cell figures represent proportions of the popular vote

The party systems are arranged in order of least to most balanced, with Party System I scoring .433 on the 'balance index', compared to .993 for Party System VII. Of note, the index is sensitive not only to shifts in the margin of victory (v1-2) and two-party vote concentration (2PVC), but also to changes in the relative strengths of the two opposition parties (Conservatives and New Democrats). According to the margin of victory measure, for instance, Party System III is actually *more* competitive than Systems IV and V. While true in terms of the competition between the first- and second-place parties, the competition between the Conservatives and New Democrats increased dramatically in Systems IV and V, as compared to System III. On the other hand, the 2PVC measure is completely insensitive to changes in the relationship between the top two parties, as is evident in its comparison of Party Systems I, II and III (all = .95). In short, if one views the entirety of the party system, with all its interaction streams, the 'balance index' is preferable to either of these other measures exclusively.

Note also that the 'balance index' scores, even for highly dominated systems, seldom approach zero. This is because, provided at least two parties gain a portion of the popular vote, there is at least some level of competition in the system. Unlike measures of one- or two-party vote concentration, the 'balance index' considers the competition between minor parties to be as integral to determining the overall 'balance' of the system as the relationship between the major parties and minor ones. In this sense, the larger the number of parties in a system – and, thus, the greater the number of interaction streams –

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[30] The formula for calculating the effective number of electoral parties is provided by Laakso and Taagepera (1979: 4).

the greater the possibility that minor parties will be relatively competitive with one another. In Party System I, for example, the Liberals are clearly dominant; yet the Conservatives and New Democrats are identical in terms of their proportions of the popular vote, meaning that the relative level of competition between them is very close. As relevant parties in the system, their inter-relationships are crucial in determining the overall identity of the system and must not be dismissed.

For this reason, 'balance index' scores appear directly related to the effective number of parties, in that – as the ENEP increases, so, too does the balance of the system. While this is valid in the above example, the proposed 'balance index' holds an advantage over ENEP, in that it measures "competitiveness", not simply the number of parties.

Consider the following comparison of party systems:

Table 6: Closely Comparing Party System 'Balance' Measures

Party System	Liberal Party*	Conservative Party*	New Democratic Party*	Labour Party*	Socialist Party*	'balance index'	v1-2*	2PVC*	ENEP
VII	.34	.33	.33	--	--	.993	.01	.67	3.00
VIIa	.34	.25	.25	.16	--	.910	.09	.59	3.76
VIIb	.34	.22	.22	.22	--	.940	.12	.56	3.83
VIIc	.34	.17	.17	.16	.16	.910	.17	.51	4.45

*Cell figures represent proportions of the popular vote

Party System VII is borrowed from Table 5 above, with three permutations (a, b, c). A glance at the vote breakdowns and ENEP figures reveals that Party System VII is a classic 3-party system, while VIIa and VIIb more closely resemble 4-party systems; Party System VIIc borders on a rare 5-party (or one-party dominant) system.

Notice how the ENEP measure, while taking into account the effective number of competitors in each system, is unable to compare the balance of competition within three- and four-party systems; this is a common critique of its usefulness as an indicator of party system diversity and change (Bogaards, 2004; Molinar, 1991; Ordeshook and Shvetsova, 1994; Sartori, 1976; Sharman, 1990; Sorauf, 1964; Wolinetz, 2004). According to the 'balance index', Party Systems VIIa and VIIc are relatively evenly balanced (both score .910). The effective number of parties for each (VIIa = 3.76; VIIc = 4.45) tells us little about how the two systems compare in terms of the distribution of popular support among parties; it only reveals the number of parties among whom the vote is divided.

For these reasons, the 'balance index' is believed preferable to existing measures of inter-party competition.[31]

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[31] One shortcoming to this measurement approach is that it does not take partisan identity into account when gauging the competitiveness of a system. As McCormick (1996: 369) explains, "Treating party systems as a collection of slots to be filled by it matters not which party is useful to a point, but pays the price of assuming away aspects of the political game that are far from trivial" For example, assume that in

Vulnerability

This brings us to the measurement of the second component of 'competitiveness' – the likelihood of alternation in government. An inferior method would be to create a dichotomous variable, defined as "government turnover" or "no government turnover", and label each election accordingly. This is overly simplistic, however, and does not really capture the definition of 'vulnerability' outlined above: "the overall level of volatility in terms of who controls government."

As a proxy, this study will measure vulnerability using the proportion of "safe seats" in each election. This is based on the premise that the share of seats 'in play' during a given campaign is an excellent predictor of the likelihood that a government will be ousted from power. The smaller the ratio of 'safe seats' to those 'up for grabs', the greater the chance that an opposition party will take control of government.

The analysis of safe seats incorporates a constituency-level dimension to the study of party system competitiveness, an addition that is likely welcomed by several students of party politics in Canada (Carty et al., 2003; Carty and Eagles, 2003; Sayers, 1999) and elsewhere (Agasoster, 2001; Jenkins et al., 2004). As Aistrup (1993: 434) argues, the examination of constituency-level campaigns has the potential to reveal internal, regional patterns that are often obscured by aggregate state-level analysis. In this vein, the "safeness" level is independent of the concept of 'balance', as measured by proportion of popular vote at the aggregate, general (provincial / state / national) level.

Essentially, a "safe seat" is one that features one-party dominance at the constituency level (Bartolini, 2002; White, 1973). Thus, we may accurately gauge the 'safeness' of each constituency using a measure of one-party vote concentration, i.e., the proportion of the vote collected by the victorious party (1PVC). The greater the concentration of electoral strength in the hands of one party, the safer is the seat.[32]

a two-party system, Party A gained 60 percent of the popular vote, and Party B, 40 percent. In a subsequent election, these proportions were reversed, with Party A earning 40 percent, and Party B, 60 percent. There has obviously been a change in the nature of party competition. Yet, using the measure outlined above, the party system's 'balance index' score would have remained constant (.800). While it is possible to add an element of partisan direction to two-party systems – by calibrating the index to range from –1.00 (complete dominance by Party A) to +1.00 (complete dominance by Party B) (Coulter and Gordon, 1968: 286; Kenney and Rice, 1985: 338-341; Pedersen, 1980) – the same adjustments cannot be made in systems with more than one interaction stream. As such, in the analysis of multiparty systems like those in the Canadian provinces, researchers are forced to pay a price for employing a summary statistic to measure competitiveness. Through careful attention to the input variables and adequate description in their analyses, researchers may mitigate the effects of these challenges.

[32] One of the challenges in analyzing safe seats lies in the fact that the boundaries of many constituencies change through periodic redistricting (Rasmussen, 1966). This prevents researchers from measuring the 'safeness' of a seat in terms of repeated victory by the same party, or "standpattism" (e.g., Jones, 1964; Lovink, 1973). As Rasmussen (1966: 518-519) argues, "Investigating repeated victory by a party in a given constituency provides useful information on the degree of fluctuation in constituency control; as a criterion for distinguishing safe seats, however, it is questionable. Its utility as an index also is limited by the need to know a seat's past electoral history before it can be classified and by the problem of determining how much electoral experience is necessary to provide reliable information for classification. Are only two elections insufficient experience? Are four elections enough?" Yet, while posing problems

Determining the threshold for "safeness" is a challenge, as discussed more fully below. At this point, a review of the literature indicates that 'two-thirds vote share' is a suitable, common cut-off point (Cohen, 1984: 366). The selection of a two-thirds threshold is somewhat arbitrary, but is based on the principle that an effective opposition requires at least 33 percent of the vote in order to be a viable alternative to government in subsequent elections (Cairns, 1968: 57; Pinard, 1967: 359). As such, constituency-level races in which one party receives over 66 percent of the vote will be defined as "safe" in our analysis.[33] For simplicity's sake, a constituency in which the victorious party wins between 50 and 66 percent of the vote will be considered "marginal", while those in which the victor received less than half of the vote will be considered "swing seats".

In sum, the proportion of "unsafe" (i.e., "marginal" and "swing") seats will form the basis of our measure of "vulnerability" (*V*) for individual elections. The higher this proportion – or the lower the share of "safe seats" – the more likely the party system will experience alternation in government:

$$V = 1 - \text{the proportion of safe seats}$$

or

$$V = 1 - \frac{Q_s}{Q_n}$$

where
Qs equals the number of safe seats; and
Qn equals the total number of seats.

Just as levels of issue convergence and policy divergence may be used separately to gauge the various components of a party system's intensity, so, too, may 'balance' and 'vulnerability' be used to describe the two dimensions of 'competitiveness':

The overall 'competitiveness' of the party system (*C*), then, is the product of its 'balance' and 'vulnerability':

or

$$C = \frac{B + V}{2}$$

where
C is the overall level of competitiveness;
B is the overall level of balance; and

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in terms of comparing competitiveness in a given constituency over time, redistricting does not affect the calculation of 'safeness' outlined in this study as the concept is measured in terms of *proportion of seats*.
[33] An alternative measure is to measure the standard deviation of the vote for the victorious party in a given constituency across several elections; if that vote minus two standard deviations exceeds 50 per cent, then the seat is considered 'safe' (Bartolini, 2002). For reasons discussed above, I prefer the proposed measure as it focuses on the safeness of the seat on an election-by-election basis.

V is the overall level of government vulnerability.

This competitiveness index ranges from "0" (not competitive) to "1" (extremely competitive).

Continuing from the example above, consider Table 7:

Table 7: Measures of Party System Competitiveness

Party System	Liberal Party*	Conservative Party*	New Democratic Party*	'balance' *B*	'vulnerability' *V*	'competitiveness' *C*
IIIa	.60	.35	.05	.633	1.00	.633
IIIb	.60	.35	.05	.633	.75	.475
IIIc	.60	.35	.05	.633	.67	.418
IIId	.60	.35	.05	.633	.50	.317
IIIe	.60	.35	.05	.633	.33	.209
IIIe	.60	.35	.05	.633	.25	.158
IIIf	.60	.35	.05	.633	0.00	.000

From this example, it becomes clear that as the proportion of unsafe seats decreases, so, too, does the overall competitiveness of the system. This is a reflection of the fact that, while a party system may be well-balanced in terms of the aggregate state-wide vote, this does not necessarily signify a competitive election. If both sides are entrenched in their own sets of safe seats, a balanced popular vote will have no effect on the overall competitiveness of the system. By the same token, a party system with few safe seats may be viewed as relatively competitive, regardless of the overall distribution of popular vote.[34]

Thus, by combining 'balance' and 'vulnerability' in to an index of party system 'competitiveness', we are able to account for both the distribution of electoral support and the probability of government alternation in a single, summary measure.

MEASURING INTER-PARTY COMPETITION

Together, 'conflict intensity' and 'competitiveness' constitute core party system dynamics. To this point, we have discussed these two concepts independently, under the premise that each has a unique effect on the character and identity of party systems. Moreover, we have discussed the internal components of each in a similar fashion. While creating a series of composite indexes to measure 'intensity' and 'competitiveness', we have also retained significant detail by assembling separate measures for 'issue convergence', 'policy divergence', 'balance', and 'vulnerability'. The resulting two

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[34] For example, if a governing party dominates city constituencies in a highly urbanized state, its share of the popular vote may be substantially greater than that of a party who performs well in rural areas. Yet, if the distribution of seats favors rural areas, and if most rural seats are considered "marginal" or "swing", the overall competitiveness of the system may be relatively high.

typologies developed thus far serve as excellent frameworks for analyzing different components of party system development. By the same token, as composite measures, the 'conflict intensity' and 'competitiveness' indexes provide researchers with powerful tools of comparison. The ability to validly and reliably label a party system using two, easily-interpretable summary statistics will be valuable for multivariate analyses of the causes and consequences of party system change.

This raises the possibility of creating a single typology and corresponding index to capture the entire character of a party system. Different party system types include:

(i)   *hegemonic*, with low levels of intensity and competitiveness;
(ii)   *predominant*, with high levels of intensity, but low competitiveness;
(iii)   *syndicated*, with high levels of competitiveness, but low levels of intensity; and
(iv)   *adversarial*, with high levels of both intensity and competitiveness.

Figure 3: Types of Inter-Party Competition
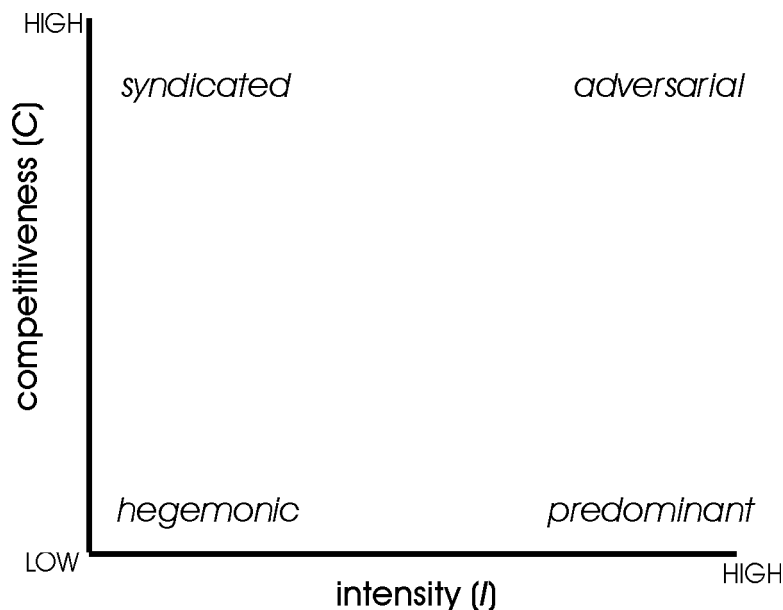
"Hegemonic" party systems are those in which most parties are similar in terms of their programmatic outlooks, and where a single party dominates all others in terms of electoral strength. A single party monopolizes the government, and debate is monopolized by a single set of policy parameters.[35] "Predominant" party systems also feature low levels of competitiveness, but the parties involved are more diverse in their visions for society. Inter-party relationships in "syndicated" systems are closest both in terms of their competitiveness and their programmatic similarities, just as members of a syndicate often compete in the same, common interest. "Adversarial" systems are the

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[35] This category closely resembles the "hegemonic" types developed by Lapolombara and Weiner (1966).

most confrontational of all, featuring high intensity conflict between closely-matched parties.

From this framework, we may calculate an overall 'index of inter-party competition' (IPC). If the core of a party system consists of its 'intensity' and 'competition', then the overall degree of inter-party competition (*D*) is:

$$D = IC$$

or

$$D = (UW)(BV)$$

where
D is the overall degree of inter-party competition;
I is the overall level of conflict intensity;
C is the overall level of competitiveness;
U is the overall level of issue convergence;
W is the overall level of policy divergence;
B is the overall level of balance; and
V is the overall level of vulnerability.

BEYOND A NEW TYPOLOGY

This new model for measuring inter-party competition should not be considered an endpoint of investigation into the nature of party systems. Rather, it should mark an entry point for further inquiry.[36]

First and foremost, the value of a typology or index lies in its ability to create a common medium of discourse, to permit economical discussion, and, ultimately, to foster the accumulation of knowledge surrounding a particular subject. They do so by classifying a series of cases into discrete categories or arranging them in an ordinal fashion, grouping like items together and distinguishing them from those that are dissimilar. In this sense, the primary purpose of typologies and indexes is descriptive: to depict similarities and differences, to break down a complex universe into distinct patterns, and to provide a general overview of the topic, be it minerals, party systems, automobiles or any other phenomenon. Indeed, the development of a common framework of analysis – the determination of what 'counts' when it comes to comparing various cases, what 'matters' in defining patterns and regularities among them – is a crucial first step in any scientific inquiry (Rasmussen, 1967: 98-99; Wolinetz, 2004).

Yet, an effective typology or index must also serve a second purpose: it must provide for some element of *explanation* (Brady, 1973:153; Diamond and Gunther, 2001; Lijphart, 1968; Scarrow, 1963: 577; Ware, 1996: 147-148) . It must move beyond describing the regularities in a phenomenon, to explaining their causes and effects

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[36] For a discussion of the role of time, or periodicity, in measuring party system development, see Appendix 1. For a note on determining thresholds, see Appendix 2.

(Hempel, 1965a: 139-140). It must be "a tool of analysis rather than an objective in its own right" (Hofferbert, 1964: 550). Regrettably, some students reject this advice, approaching their typologies as an endpoint of analysis. While appropriate in the *initial* stages of the comparative method, or in the exploration of an entirely novel political phenomenon (e.g., the burgeoning party systems in Eastern Europe or Africa), the simple sorting of cases ought seldom remain the sole purpose of the comparative approach (Bogaards, 2004).

In other words, an effective framework of comparison should have "systemic import" or "naturalness", in that it facilitates the analysis of other political phenomena (Hempel, 1965a). A typology or index ought to have explanatory power as an independent variable, for example, and ought to "aid in the discovery of significant characteristics that are logically independent of the criteria defining the types but empirically associated with the different types" (Lijphart, 1968: 7). In this vein, the party system typologies and indexes proposed in this study may be used to explain a wide range of different political phenomena, including voter turnout (Crepaz, 1990; Hill and Leighley, 1993), government efficiency (Jones, 1964), and, more generally, "the quality and nature of democratic representation, economic policies and stability of governments and political systems" (Chhibber and Kollman, 2004: 9). In short, it is important to move beyond simply classifying or ordering party systems – "it is valuable to study the causes and consequences of party system change because these changes are themselves consequential" (Ibid: 10).

By the same token, a typology or index ought to be explicable, as a dependent variable, using factors separate from those incorporated into its classification scheme. In terms of classifying political party systems, this means that each different system 'type' or 'kind' must correspond to a qualitatively different set of party interactions and systemic inputs (Bogaards, 2004: 177). In the Canadian provincial context, according to Carty and Stewart (1996: 64), "The distinctive civic cultures and political economies that characterize the provinces no doubt account for much of the varied composition and success of the parties that organize their respective political lives." In this vein, at least three sets of independent variables may be used to explain changes and differences in the nature of competition among party systems. One set involves *structural* factors, including electoral laws and the structure of the province's economy. A second set of independent variables involves *cultural* factors, including the demographic and ideological characteristics of the electorate. A third set includes elements of political *leadership*, such that a change in the leadership of one party in a system may prompt changes in its level of 'intensity' and/or 'competitiveness'. Together, these three sets of independent variables, and others, may help to explain party system change and diversity.

CONCLUSION

The last thing our discipline needs is another typology or index for comparing specific party systems. Dozens already exist, many of which are tailored to specific contexts and cases. The purpose of this paper was not to contribute to this methodological proliferation by adding a special scheme for Canadian provincial politics. Rather, this study has been an attempt to condense existing literature into a series of manageable dimensions of inter-party competition, to develop typologies and indexes from these components, and to suggest ways of adapting these measures to a wide variety of contexts, be they cross-national or sub-national.

There are several advantages of the proposed approach. First, it combines the use of typologies and indexes in a single methodology, allowing for the qualitative and quantitative measure of inter-party competition. Second, this approach distinguishes between two conceptually distinct elements of competition – conflict intensity and competitiveness; it then uses these two dimensions to gauge the overall structure and degree of inter-party competition. Third, in dealing with conflict intensity, the proposed model is among the first to incorporate the fact that parties compete both in terms of the agendas they propose (saliency theory) and in terms of their policy stances (confrontation theory). The resulting typology and index of conflict intensity are, thus, more valid measures of the nature of inter-party competition. Fourth, it recognizes that the competitiveness of a party system depends on the evenness of competition at both the state-wide and constituency levels, and that the overall 'uncertainty' of an election relies on the party system's balance and the governing party's vulnerability. Lastly, because the data upon which it relies are more widely available than ever before, the proposed model is testable in a wide range of environments. In terms of cross-national data, the Comparative Manifesto Project has assembled information on party platforms from over 50 countries and 500 elections, and similar projects are underway to collect platforms from sub-national party systems like Canada. Moreover, as time passes, more and more election authorities have converted their election returns data to electronic form, making the measurement of party system competitiveness less arduous, as well.

The comparison of political party systems is a global enterprise, but one which has received relatively little attention among Canadian scholars. This has left a significant gap, not only in terms of our empirical knowledge about provincial politics, but also in terms of closing the doors to one of the world's best, natural political laboratories. Thus far, we know little about the diversity and development of provincial party systems in the Canadian provinces. Yet, there is reason for optimism. As Dunn (Dunn, 2001: 468) notes, "Such is the present utility of the comparative provincial exercise: to pose some interesting questions. That many of the questions have yet to be answered is, in a sense, useful. It gives a new generation of political scientists a program of study. Let us hope they adopt it."

APPENDIX 1: A NOTE ON PERIODICITY

Each of the indexes and typologies used throughout this paper may be applied to single elections, or aggregate series of elections. This means we can compare intensity, competitiveness or IPC of individual election campaigns, or in party systems as they exist over extended periods of time.

The incorporation of an element of *periodicity* into the study of provincial party systems is particularly useful, allowing researchers to divide each province into discrete 'eras' of competition.[37] There are at least two alternative approaches in this regard. The first makes use of a 'chapter' technique, establishing uniform timeframes across all cases. Under this method, a party system would be defined as lasting a specific length of time (e.g., ten years), allowing researchers to compare states across different, pre-determined periods. Provincial party systems would be given labels like 'Ontario, 1960-70', 'Ontario, 1970-80', 'Alberta, 1970-80', and so on. A major hazard in this approach lies in establishing and justifying an adequate party system lifespan; comparativists elsewhere continue to debate this issue ad infinitum (Hofferbert, 1964: 552-553; Wolinetz, 2004: 8).

A second approach would be more idiosyncratic, labelling party systems on a case-by-case basis, according to the unique character of each state. This 'generation' method is noticeably less parsimonious and straightforward than the former; it would require researchers to determine, for instance, when New Brunswick's first party system ended, and when its second began. Moreover, the resulting labels may not be symmetrical; 'Saskatchewan I' may last from 1904 to 1909, while 'Ontario I' may span the period between 1867 and 1918.

While there are drawbacks to either method of periodizing provincial party systems, the advantage of clarifying trends and shifts over time makes the method preferable to a simple aggregation of data across a period of several decades. In particular, it prevents us from encountering the "cross-sectional fallacy", whereby analysts generalize findings from the entire timeframe to make specific claims about individual elections within that period (Gray, 1976: 153-154) (see also: Coulter and Gordon, 1968; King, 1989). In short, periodization allows us to compare party systems not only across space, but also over time. It adds a dynamic component that is often missing from purely static analyses (Pedersen, 1980; 1983).

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[37] Somewhat ironically, this type of approach was pioneered by Carty, himself; his identification of four, historical "party systems" serves as a classic in the field of Canadian federal politics (Carty, 1992; Carty et al., 2000). Carty's framework is based on the division Canadian political history into a series of different 'party eras', the first lasting from 1867 to World War I, the second from the 1920s to the late 1950s, a third from the 1960s to the 1980s, and a fourth lasting into the twenty-first century. Each of these periods featured its own unique 'framework of party behaviour' – that is, each was separated by a dramatic departure from 'politics as usual' – thus making the history of the Canadian federal system an interesting case study in comparative party politics. Research exists to complete a similar type of periodization for each of the Canadian provinces. Indeed, the narrative accounts offered by Carty and Stewart, and McCormick would provide a solid empirical foundation for such research.

APPENDIX 2: A NOTE ON THRESHOLDS

Of course, the measurements outlined above provide only general guidelines for comparing party systems. As is the case with most typologies, the lines between these various 'ideal types' become blurry when applied to real-life cases (Hempel, 1965b: 98-99; Sharman, 1990). At what point does a "low-intensity" system become a "dialogical" one, for instance? What divides "uncompetitive" party systems from "elastic" ones, or "hegemonies" from "syndicates"?

Fortunately, the use of the two approaches in tandem allows us to use index values as axis variables for each typology. But where should the thresholds be drawn between the various types?

There are two principal means of operationalizing typological categories. The first involves deductively defining the thresholds between categories according to some underlying theory or mathematical formula. In terms of inter-party competitiveness, this often entails determining "crude but workable" or "quick and reasonable" cutting-points between competitive and non-competitive systems (McCormick, 1996: 356, 361). For example, a 'balanced' two-party system may be defined as one in which the strongest party receives less than two-thirds of the vote (Cairns, 1968: 57; Pinard, 1967: 359).

The second approach proceeds inductively, allowing the data to define the thresholds between categories.[38] Typically, cutting-points are determined by dividing the cases into relatively equal groupings based on their ordinal rankings on the dimension under question. Dye's (1984: 1103) development of a typology of American states is exemplary of this method. According to his framework, "competitive states are those which ranked in the upper half of the fifty states on measures of interparty competition… Noncompetitive states are those which ranked in the lower half of the fifty states on these same measures..."[39] Categories are typically balanced in terms of the number of cases they contain, which allows for sufficient variation to conduct meaningful comparative analysis. Because they are dependent on the particular data under examination, each researcher's specific inductive thresholds are unlikely to apply to the classification of party systems outside her analysis, a weakness discussed in greater detail below.

In reality, any attempt to define thresholds in a typology must rely on both deduction and induction. While party analysts should avoid designing categories with specific cases and little theory in mind (Liebersson, 1992: 116; Pateman, 1980: 68), likewise, they ought not draft a typology that classifies party systems into so few categories as to lose the ability of comparison (Mair, 2002; Wolinetz, 2006). Both the deductive and inductive approaches necessarily produce arbitrary thresholds; the key is to back operational choices with as much theoretical and empirical support as possible.

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[38] Ranney and Kendall (1954: 481) refer to this as a "clustering technique", and Hofferbert (1964: 556), a "natural grouping" method.

[39] For a similar approach, see Ranney's (1976) seminal studies of competitiveness in the American states.

Vitally important to this discussion is the realization that thresholds are, and ought to be, dependent on the cases under evaluation (Dahl, 1971). This allows us to use an identical *framework* to analyze party systems among Canadian provinces, as well as between countries cross-nationally. The specific, mathematical *parameters* of the 'types' may vary, but the general comparative technique need not change. Regardless of the universe of cases under consideration, certain party systems are more 'hegemonic', 'predominant', 'syndicated', or 'adversarial' than others.

This technique of measuring inter-party competitiveness is heavily dependent on the universe of cases under analysis. As a result, there are downsides, the most significant of which limits the portability of thresholds to cases outside the analysis, itself (Feigert, 1985-102). Yet this weakness is in some ways a strength, in that the thresholds are determined with an eye to the comparison of the specific cases under examination, offering a higher level of validity when comparing relative levels of competitiveness. In this sense, as Ranney and Kendall (1954: 481) said of their own analysis of state party systems in the U.S., "…the specific dividing-line[s] employed would very likely be inappropriate for a classification of, say, the provincial party system of Canada." Nonetheless, "the *process* for determining the dividing-lines – as opposed to the specific location of the line itself – should be equally applicable to Canadian and American party systems". In short, what the proposed approach lacks in terms of the reliability of its thresholds beyond the cases under analysis, it gains in terms of the validity with which it compares the cases in question.

A complete analysis of the degree of inter-party competitiveness in the Canadian provinces is not within the scope of this paper.[40] Thus, the precise thresholds between the various categories of the IPC typology cannot be provided at this time. Instead, the focus of this analysis has been on defining the general principles underlying the comparison of party systems, both in Canada and abroad, leaving the application of these methods to a future date. In short, this paper has suggested proper questions that may be answered by subsequent research.

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[40] In large part, this is due to the lack of available data from provincial party platforms; a research project is currently underway to collect and code these materials, with complete collections already obtained for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, for every provincial election since 1932. While not entirely prohibitive, the resources required to expand this collection to all provinces will take time to amass.

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