

“Keeping it in the Family? Party Cohesion, Disagreement and Voter Perception”

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At times, parties' internal disagreements become public affairs. Competing factions, leaders and MPs may even highlight internal differences to influence internal debates and appeal to distinct constituencies. Yet, parties also face incentives to manage their disagreements to present a united face as voters think poorly of parties appearing divided. Scholars have yet to demonstrate the conditions under which real divisions within the party spill over to voter perceptions of the party's cohesion. Major changes to their public face such as a new leader or shifts in the party's policies likely highlight underlying divisions, whereas greater stability indicates a more cohesive party. I examine hypotheses from this perspective from a case of historically cohesive parties in the United Kingdom. I develop new indicators of internal disagreement over policy preferences and issue priorities derived from their largest decision-making body, the party conference, to predict voters' perceptions of party unity. The results highlight the importance of intra-party politics and the role of party leaders in maintaining an internal coalition while helping to explain conflicting evidence on whether voters perceive parties' policy change.

Intra-party politics, issue salience, voter perceptions, party congresses, issue disagreement

Voters form perceptions of parties' internal politics from diverse sources and types of information. These perceptions hold serious implications for the functioning of parliamentary democracies where judgements of parties' governing capability depend heavily on a potential government's ability to implement policy change and competently manage the structures of government. However, scholars have only begun to characterize the factors deciding how voters evaluate parties' internal decision-making processes. To date, most studies explain perceptions of party unity as primarily derived from broad political events or contextual factors such as the state of the economy. Questions over parties' management of their internal conflicts remain. Examples such as the major parties' divisions over the choice to exit the European Union in the United Kingdom or the split up of the Parti Socialiste in the 2017 French elections indicate that major internal disagreements between prominent party members can have disastrous effects. Yet, this perspective ignores differences over party members' attitudes towards policy-making and the potential for internal actors to reach compromise on an issue with the goal of presenting a united and collaborative front. Appearing divided may derive more from the quality of the party's internal management than actual policy differences.

This paper develops a perspective focused on the role of intra-party coordination and compromise in how voters perceive parties' campaigns and policy statements. Internal ideological disagreement does not inherently lead to conflictual outcomes or a breakdown of cooperation. Party leaders and members have agency to negotiate internally consensual positions that encourage the perception of a united front rather than adversarial or majoritarian internal decisions that lead to intra-group conflicts. Indeed, party members and leaders may hold pragmatic views on how to reach their policy goals that encourage them to collaborate with groups on which they disagree through internal policy trades or specific policy compromises (e.g. Kitschelt 1989). Parties' internal structures likely provide solutions for party members' and leaders' intra-party barriers to collective action. Even in the face of

salient disagreements, parties that address these issues effectively through election campaigns provide voters with reassurance that these parties will be capable of effectively governing on these issues in office. Ultimately, this perspective leads to the prediction that the content of parties' election campaign materials moderates the effect of parties' internal disagreements on voter perceptions.

To assess empirically the support for the hypotheses from this logic, I combine a new dataset of speeches from party national conferences from the Party Congress Research Group, electoral manifestos (Comparative Manifesto Project) with voter perceptions using the British Election Study in the United Kingdom from 1999 to 2018. Using tools for automated content analysis of the speeches at the major parties' party conferences, I measure both the internal level of policy disagreement and the overall attention to issues at these meetings.¹ The measures provide a key indicator of positional disagreement linked to parties' election manifestos. Those parties that offer more ideologically diverse manifestos decrease the likelihood that voters perceive those parties as internally divided.

The theory and results from this analysis provide an important caveat to recent studies of party election strategy and voter perceptions. In particular, this study integrates perspectives that conceptualize parties as coalitions of actors with diverse policy goals and preferences with those that focus on parties' election strategies. Parties containing ideological diversity either integrate these perspectives and convey a united image or narrowly focus on the dominant leader or faction's goals, but appear divided. This paper further encourages new measurement strategies for understanding parties' internal disagreements as both positional and issue disagreements. Ultimately, this research has implications for parties seeking to learn from ongoing failures of intra-party democracy in contexts such as the Labour and Conservative Parties' handling of European issues in the

¹ Future iterations of this project will add measures of issue diversity from the party conference level.

United Kingdom. In these parties, as well as a number of other prominent cases across Europe, leaders pursued exclusionary, plurality based strategies and ignored prominent internal disagreements with the eventual outcome of major party divisions and defections.

Intra-Party Diversity, Disagreement

Theories of democracy contend that parties play a key role in encouraging collective action amongst those with ideologically similar goals, but differences over specific policy positions or strategies (Aldrich 2011; Kölln 2015). By providing a venue for groups with diverging goals to construct a single platform, parties' provide incentives for individuals to coordinate their electoral campaigns. The party organization therefore provides a key role in facilitating collaboration among party members. This logic contends that parties' internal structures provide a decision-making mechanism for resolving conflicts. Party structures provide the leadership with tools for incentivizing those with diverse groups to act in a cohesive manner.

In contrast to this perspective, substantial research takes as a simplifying assumption that parties act as if they are single, unitary actors. Party leaders represent the median view within the party. This line of work has led to serious advancements in the study of party election strategies, coalition negotiations and a range of other government behaviors (e.g. Downs 1957; Riker 1986; Laver and Shepsle 1996; Adams 2012). Broadly, this literature assumes that internal differences hold few implications for the party's behaviour as the strategies undertaken by leaders will lead the party to behave *as if* it consists of a single unified decision-maker.

Despite these advancements, the unitary actor assumption has come under scrutiny. Scholars show that weakening this assumption can lead to contrasting predictions about party behavior. For example, recent work suggests that broad appeal strategies encouraging

voters to project their policy positions on parties may backfire when voters perceive competing statements as ideological disagreement rather than simply uncertainty over the position (Lehrer and Lin 2018). Indeed, voters that perceive parties as divided evaluate them as less competent and are less likely to vote for those parties in the following election.

Complementing this research, studies focused on descriptive representation and individual characteristics of party members, MPs and leaders show that there are further consequences to the inclusion of more diverse groups. The relative proportion of men and women in the party's parliamentary delegation influences the issues they address in their campaigns (e.g. Kittilson 2011; Greene and O'Brien 2018). Even the careers of prominent party members prior to entering office influences the types of portfolio positions they seek to control (Alexiadou 2017; O'Grady 2018). More informed party members tend to hold more incongruent views with the party leader and are even more likely to vote for other parties (Kölln and Polk 2016). The internal strength of these groups likely depends on their past electoral success (e.g. Harmel and Janda 1994; Ennser – Jedenastic and Müller 2015; Kaltenegger et al. 2019).

A range of literatures provide theoretical motivations to expect diverse views among party members, factions and leaders placed to influence the party's election campaigns. Paired with the finding that voters perceive internal differences negatively (e.g. Greene and Haber 2015), this literature leads to the implication that parties would do well to manage their public disagreements. However, studies of electoral strategy often ignore or provide little direction for understanding the effect of internal diversity on voters' perceptions

The Role of Party Election Strategy

Studies of party election strategy focus on the relative positions parties take in an election or the issues they emphasize. Broadly, parties develop electoral strategies that increase their

voter support relative to their primary competitors. Many of the strategies scholars propose require the unitary actor assumption to hold for results to converge on both formal theoretical and empirical grounds.

Deriving from Downs' (1957) seminal work, scholars predict that parties benefit from taking positions that match those of the median voter in an election under a set of specific assumptions. Scholars have extended this perspective in a number of ways that relax assumptions related to the party's motivations, inter-party competition and the party system, and even the extent to which voters perceive parties' positions (see Adams 2012 for an overview). Other scholars emphasize how parties respond to their electoral competitors (e.g. Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2005, 2008).

Issue emphasis strategies reflect the relative advantages parties gain from selectively campaigning on issues. Linked to concepts of issue ownership and entrepreneurship (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Petrocik 1996; de Vries and Hobolt 2011; Egan 2013; Hobolt and de Vries 2015), scholars predict that parties emphasize issues on which they hold a competitive advantage. Ultimately, parties develop this competitive advantage by building policy reputations in office or taking positions on issues important to voters relative to the major electoral competitors.

Some theories of electoral competition directly address the motivations that might cause or incentivize parties to convey divided messages. Foremost, electoral rules place incentives for individual candidates to distinguish their positions from the party's, particularly when constituency preferences diverge from the national ones (e.g. Carey and Shugart 1995). As Downs' (1957) theory emphasizes the district level, rather than the national, candidates likely find it beneficial in single member district elections to focus on the constituency median position, which likely differs from the national one (Grofman 2004). Indeed, theories of legislative behaviour explain decreased parliamentary party cohesion or instances of MP defection as a consequence of the incentives to appeal to distinct electoral

constituencies (Huber 1996; Bowler et al. 1999). Under a strong party-led government, the appearance of defections reflect purposeful attempts to make constituency focused appeals (e.g. Cox and McCubbins 1994).

Furthermore, parties may use a broad or vague appeal strategy to obscure their position on an issue. The logic for this strategy follows that voter with some positive affinity or valence with the party will project the party's position as closer to their own (Shepsle 1972; Somer-Topcu 2015). One approach to encourage an unclear position is to encourage differing leaders and factions to disagree in a public setting over the party's position. However, this strategy may backfire when voters perceive the party as divided instead of vague (Greene and Haber 2015; Lehrer and Lin 2018; Eichorst and Lin 2019).

Studies of party election strategy provide substantial insight into the potential approaches parties might take during an election campaign. The success of these strategies is likely context dependent. Voters may be even unaware of the broader messages parties seek to convey (Somer-Topcu 2009). Theories of voter perception offer alternate perspectives on how voters inform their electoral choices.

Perceptions of Disagreement and Intra-Party Cooperation

Voters form perceptions of parties' ability to govern based on the party and individual's characteristics. Factors such as the individual's partisan attachments and ideological proximity lead voters to hold more positive views of a party. However, factors such as the party's position in government and the state of the economy also play an important role, as voters use these positions as information shortcuts (or heuristics) to evaluate how well the government is performing (e.g. Bawn and Somer-Topcu 2012; Green and Jennings 2011). Although voters may not notice parties' short-term electoral positional shifts (e.g. Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009), there is greater evidence that parties develop

reputations for policy-making in office and on the issues that they regularly include in their campaigns (Stubager and Slothuus 2012; Egan 2013).

Voters likely take note of disagreements between members of the same party for a number of reasons. Foremost, competitor parties seeking to hurt the image of their primary rivals regularly highlight issues on which their competition internally disagrees. Parliaments often provide tools to individual MPs and opposition parties to highlight issues (e.g. Dion 1997; Döring 2003). Furthermore, news media, always in search of important events that attract additional readers and viewers, likely highlight dramatic disagreements. Furthermore, voters directly engaged with a party will likely even have stakes in the winners of intra-party decisions (e.g. Kölln and Polk 2016).

Based on this perspective, I argue that when parties are more internally divided voters will take note. In particular, I propose that voters perceive parties disagreements and disunity. Although voters are often unaware of any individual party statement, instances of intra-party disagreement are often salient events highlighted to voters by various forms of media and opposition groups. Policy disagreements can take multiple forms.

Positional differences often exist within parties. For example, both the major parties in the UK struggled to reach a common position to implement the 2016 referendum on exiting the European Union. Differences over the degree of separation, a hard, soft, or no Brexit, eventually led to numerous MPs splitting the Conservatives and Labour and the formation of the Independent Group. Scholars of government and voter congruence indicate that this is a key dimension to evaluate the degree to which policies align.

Yet, differences in issue priorities also exhibit a serious and common form of disagreement. Given that parties and governments hold only limited resources to address policy, the choice to emphasize one issue has impact on the party's ability to address others. For example, the focus on Brexit in the United Kingdom following the 2016 referendum or the Democrats' work on the Affordable Care Act in the United States following the election

of Barack Obama to the presidency limited both governments' ability to enact policy in other areas such as financial market reforms, environmental regulation, or fox hunting.

Differences over issue priorities, therefore, presents a key perspective for understanding disagreement between party members and internal factions.

Regardless of the type of disagreement, parties' real disagreements are likely to become public affairs. Parties have few truly private contexts to negotiate their positions with the varied groups and factions seeking to influence their goals. Ideological disagreements are bound to emerge between parties with diverse memberships. Following this logic, the first hypothesis predicts that disagreements lead voters to perceive parties as divided.

H1) Increased intra-party disagreement expressed at parties' national conferences increases the likelihood that voters perceive the party as internally divided.

A theory of election strategy accounting for parties' decision-making process requires consideration of voters' perception of the internal dynamics. Like other aspects of voter perceptions of parties' valence and ability to govern, I propose that an inability to express a unified position indicates an internal division and inability to govern competently (see Greene and Haber 2015 for a similar perspective). This logic implies that parties' disagreements play an important role in determining voters' perceptions of parties.

While informed citizens may observe instances of policy disagreement expressed in a range of public venues such as parliament, the average voter likely relies more heavily on salient events and simple heuristics to inform their perceptions of parties' ability to govern. Perceptions of disunity derive not only from specific public instances of policy differences, but also from the ways in which parties manage these differences in their policy campaigns. Parties that offer manifestos that bring together diverse groups, not matter how strong their

internal policy differences, will likely be perceived as more coherent and competent than even ideologically cohesive parties that disagree on the details.

Given the negative reputational costs parties face for appearing divided (e.g. Greene and Haber 2015; Lehrer and Lin 2018; Steiner and Mader 2019), party leaders will seek to minimize the costs of these divisions. On the one hand, parties may choose to avoid discussing issues in their campaigns on which the party has a negative reputation or is internally divisive (Petrocik 1996; Eichorst and Lin 2019). This strategy holds the benefit of avoiding having to take a clear position on an issue that party members, factions and leaders may not have much common ground.

Yet, avoiding contentious issues or positions may be a recipe for disaster. Party members seeking to draw policy towards their position or issue will seek to find an upper hand in internal negotiations. These internal divisions increase the risk that not only do the policy disagreements become public, but also that the tone of debates themselves become acrimonious. Furthermore, issues that are salient due to ongoing events or because they are important to other parties in the system are difficult to avoid entirely (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2011). Empirically, parties address issues important to the leadership as well as broader party groups (Kaltenegger et al. 2019), although the content of parties' manifestos better reflects the dominant faction's priorities (e.g. Ceron and Greene 2019).

Alternatively, parties can resolve or de-escalate internal conflicts through an internal coalition building process. Parties' internal politics are likely not a zero-sum, majoritarian process (Kitschelt 1989, 2018). Prior to key meetings such as party conferences, party leaders seek to build an internal set of compromises that motivates and awards diverse factions within the party (Greene 2017). From this perspective, parties may ultimately place greater emphasis in their election campaigns on issues that they internally divide precisely because they have reached a compromise. The logic mirrors coalition negotiation strategies for forming a governing cabinet as parties emphasize divisive issues in detail to hold the

coalition publicly accountable for those issues (Eichorst 2014). This reasoning supports the finding that parties tend to emphasize issues in greater detail on which their own supporters are divided (Spoon and Williams 2017).

Ultimately, this discussion leads to the prediction that parties' internal disagreements do not inherently increase voters' perceptions of parties' internal divisiveness. Instead, the presence of policy disagreement only becomes an issue when voters perceive that the party cannot reach internal compromises. The following hypothesis summarizes empirical predictions from this perspective.

H2) Manifesto diversity moderates the effective of issue disagreement on voter perceptions.

Parties internally divide over policy for a myriad of reasons. In this paper, I argue that when parties are more contentious that voters perceive them as more internally divisive. Yet, the presence of policy disagreements alone is not enough for voters to decrease their views of the party. The party's ability to put together a clear set of compromises in their election campaigns moderates the presence of disagreement. Stated differently, parties that can work together to reach a common electoral position can signal to voters that they are cohesive for electoral and governing purposes even if they hold diverse policy goals.

Data and Methods

To evaluate the empirical support for these hypotheses, I combine data on parties' internal deliberations, their electoral platforms and voter perceptions. I select the United Kingdom as a preliminary test of the theory as parties in the UK historically exhibit strong parliamentary cohesion (e.g. Cox [1985] 2005). This observed discipline slowly unravelled over the course

of the sample period, particularly following the passage of the fixed term parliament act during the 2010 coalition period (Dunleavy 2012; Schleiter and Issar 2016). These parties present a difficult test of the theory, particularly prior to 2010 as the parties rarely expressed public divisions over their electoral statements. Any public division marked the exception, rather than the rule. The UK, therefore, presents an unlikely case for manifesto compromise to mitigate any perceptions of disunity.

To construct the dependent variable, I combine responses from the British Election Study. Foremost, I focus respondent perceptions of party unity in election years using the BES election year cross-sections. Since the start of the available party conference data, there have been five elections. The analysis uses an indicator variable that establishes whether respondents perceive the party as divided or not for both the Labour and Conservative parties.

I construct my primary independent variable from the positions expressed by speakers at the major parties' annual conferences in the UK. In particular, I collected all speeches presented at the major party conferences for the Conservative and Labour parties. Speeches at party conference meetings play an important role as they enable the major groups within the party to express their distinct priorities. As the central party tends to select the specific speakers chosen, they generally represent the positions of the major groups within the party at a venue where speakers primarily address other party members and politicians.

Using 393 Labour Party and 380 Conservative Party speeches at 22 party national conference meetings each, I construct a measure of internal disagreement by finding the standard deviation of speaker positions at a party meeting based on an unsupervised text-scaling model (e.g. WORDFISH; Slapin and Proksch 2008). This form of analysis determines the largest difference in word frequencies between the different documents. This method is ideal for uncovering the latent, levels of disagreement without having to specify the content

of that disagreement in advance, although scholars of ideological change would likely predict that the largest disagreements within these parties is over the rise of post-material and European Union issues (e.g. Spoon and Williams 2017).

In the first step, I combine all speeches from a single party in the sample and estimate a WORDFISH model. I prepare the documents for analysis by removing numbers, punctuation and overly common words, combining a number of common phrases, and reducing words to their stems. The resulting document feature matrices include 20,316 and 19,288 features for the Labour and Conservative speeches. I further remove sparse words by excluding that do not occur in at least five Labour speeches and ten Tory speeches. Once the documents have been prepared, I perform the analysis on each party separately. This produces an estimated position for each speech given at the conferences that can be used to find the average and standard deviation of positions expressed at each conference. Following Greene and Haber (2016), I treat the standard deviation as the positional measure of internal disagreement.

Finally, I operationalize the party's success at developing internal compromise through a measure of manifesto content using the Comparative Manifestos Project (Volkens et al. 2018) derived from previous studies of intra-party decision-making. Evidence from party congress research indicates that parties address a larger number of issues with greater detail when they are more internally divided (Ceron and Greene 2019; Greene, *working paper*). The argument follows that parties use the manifesto and the content of their electoral campaigns as a public commitment to the party's internal negotiated positions. This logic implies that parties that address a greater diversity of issues will have also more successfully managed their internal disagreements. Therefore, the Effective Number of Manifesto Issues presents a strong indicator of the party's policy coherence. I estimate a measure of issue diversity, the effective number of manifesto issues (ENMI), to determine the extent to which the party's manifesto addresses a similar breadth of issues as in their manifestos (e.g. Greene

2016, 2018).² I use this indicator to moderate or condition the effect of parties' expressed disagreements at their party conferences on the likelihood that voters perceive those parties divided or unified.

In addition to the primary independent variables, I also include a number of common control variables in the analysis generally included in studies of voter perceptions. In particular, I include indicators of the respondent's sex and age as well as their expressed partisan identification. I account for respondent's broader perceptions of political conditions by including measures of their household income and broader sociotropic, prospective economic evaluations. I expect that voters perceiving conditions as more positive personally and generally will perceive parties as less divided (see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000 and Anderson 2007 for economic voting arguments). Finally, I account for whether the party is in the government or opposition with a dummy variable to account for the ideological disagreements that often arise in office (Greene and Haber 2016).

Estimating Party Conference Disagreement

I present the results of the two Wordfish analyses in the Appendix. For the Labour party, the Wordfish algorithm determines that the largest underlying division is over those speakers emphasizing domestic politics related to the state's role in public infrastructure and transportation versus those that primarily emphasize United Kingdom's role in international affairs. This side of the dimension includes a large number of terms related to the UK's role in foreign interventions such as Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria. This division is consistent with

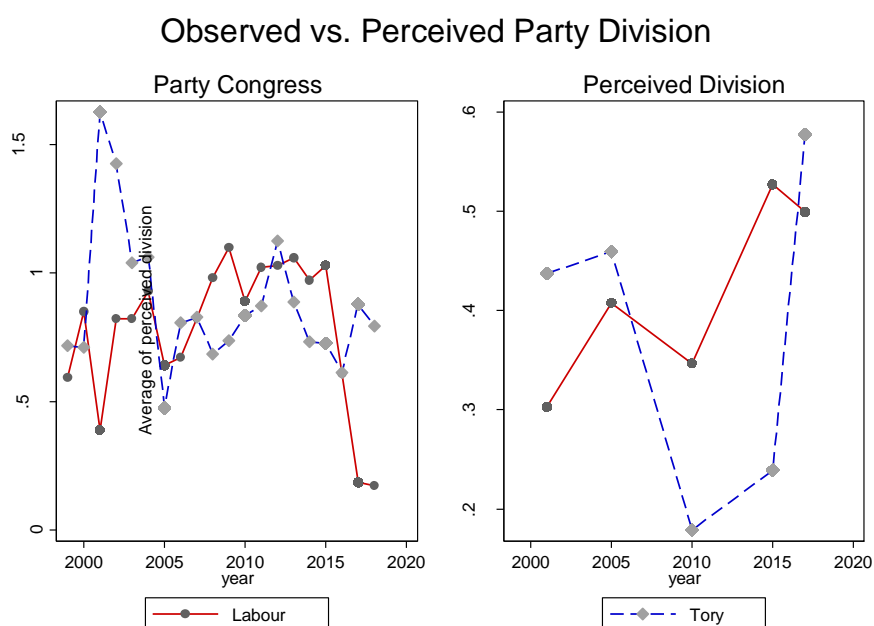
² An alternate indicator derived from parties' manifestos that measures the percentage of the manifesto dedicated to the most important dimension of conflict (although only moderately correlated with ENMI at .29) leads to substantively similar results as those presented.

the broader events in the UK that divided those in support of Tony Blair against those focusing on a renewed emphasis nationalisation of key industries in the 2000s.

The Conservative Party, on the other hand, divided along a domestic politics and international affairs dimension, but the specific content of the disagreement has more to do with the UK's relationship with the European Union. Words such as Brexit, globalisation, and features of the deal negotiated with the EU in 2019 all feature on one side of this dimension whereas the other side includes terms focused on reforming domestic institutions such as the education system and the National Health Service.

Based on these estimates, I derive the standard deviation of speakers' positions at each party conference in Figure 1. I contrast these estimates with the average percentage of respondents perceiving the party as divided. An interesting pattern emerges as parties tend to be less divided in the opposition based on the speeches given at party conferences, but that they become more divided over time as they remain in government. Perceptions of division seem to follow a different pattern altogether, suggesting that revealed disagreements do not mechanically lead to voter perceptions of division.

Figure 1. Observed and Perceived Party Disagreement.

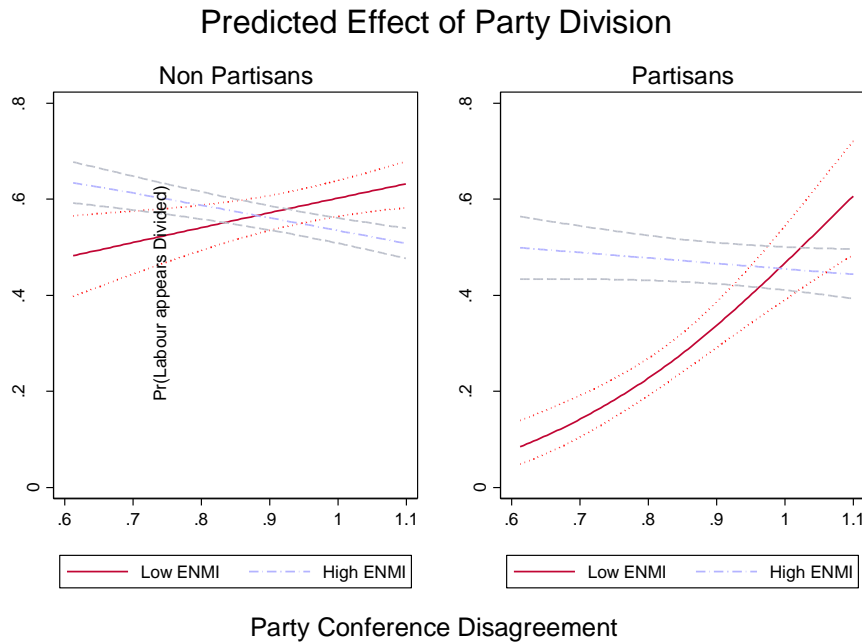


Analysis

To test the primary hypotheses, I combine the estimates of intra-party disagreement with the measure of issue diversity from the party manifesto to predict the likelihood that a respondent perceives the party as divided. To account for the likely difference in the perceptions of those that identify with the party from the general public, I include this as an interaction with the key independent variables. I present the results of the logistic regression analyses using robust standard errors predicting perceptions of the Labour Party and Conservative Party in Table 1 and Table 2.

In the first hypothesis, I predict that when members disagree at their party conferences, voters will be more likely to evaluate them as divided. The estimates for the two parties in Table 1 and 2 reveal only mixed evidence for this hypothesis. As the dynamics in Figure 1 foreshadowed, the simple correlation between intra-party disagreement and voter perceptions of the party's division is in the wrong direction, negative, and statistically different from zero. This result suggests that voters' perceptions derive from more than just the internal debates at these meetings as the broader perspective would expect.

Figure 2. Predicted effect of Labour party disagreement on voter perceptions of division.

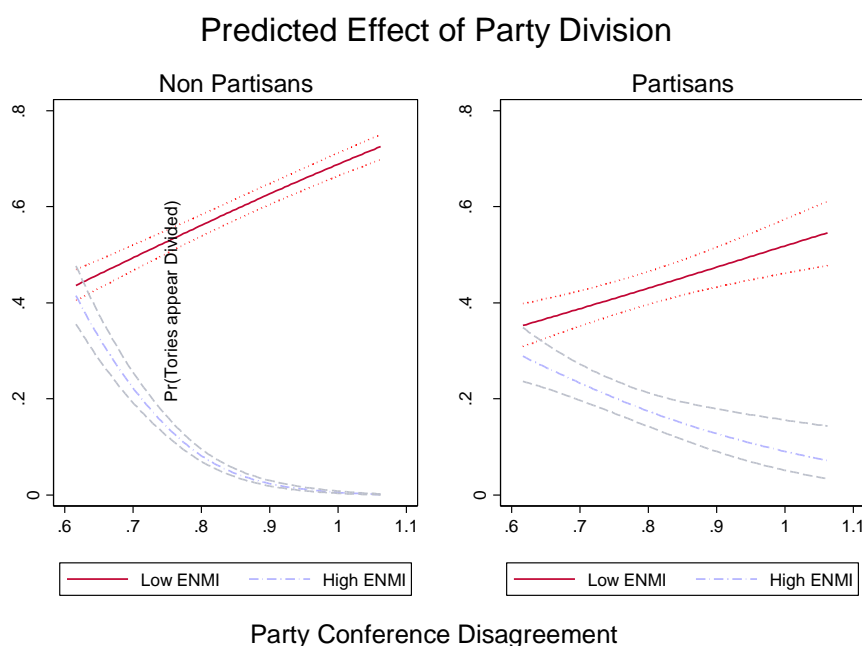


The second hypothesis adds greater nuance to this perspective by integrating the party's broader campaign message. It predicts that a more diverse electoral manifesto can moderate the revealed intra-party dynamic by making a more inclusive appeal. Indeed, once the interaction of intra-party disagreement and ENMI is included in both analyses, the results are more consistent with the primary predictions. The constitutive term for intra-party disagreement is positive and statistically significant in all models that include the interaction with ENMI. Furthermore, the coefficient for the interaction term is negative and statistically significant in these models as well for both Labour and the Conservatives in each model.

The coefficients and patterns of significance present evidence broadly consistent with the hypotheses, however, the inclusion of multiple interaction terms makes substantive interpretation of the results difficult. Therefore, I present the predicted change in likelihood for each of the parties over the range of values for intra-party disagreement at both high and low levels of ENMI (plus and minus one standard deviation below mean ENMI) in Figure 2

and Figure 3.³ The figures are revealing. Higher levels of intra-party disagreement lead to an increased likelihood of evaluating the party as divided when the party's manifesto is less diverse. Yet, higher levels of manifesto diversity reverse the effect of intra-party disagreement as the parties are likely considered more inclusive, rather than divisive.

Figure 3. Predicted effect of Conservative Party disagreement on voter perceptions of division.



The results from the final analysis including the full range of control variables (Model 3 and Model 6) for each party also provides clear information about the factors influencing perceptions of party division. In particular, the coefficient for government parties indicates that there is no additional negative effect of government participation for Labour, but that the Conservative party does not fare well as the incumbent. Those that identify with the largest competitor party also are less likely to perceive the party as divided. Although women are less likely than men to perceive either party as divided, older respondents are more likely to do so. Intriguingly, the respondent's household income has

³ Predicted effects are the median predicted likelihood of a respondent perceiving the party as divided from 1000 draws of the variance-covariance matrix holding other variables at their means or at their modes for dichotomous variables.

no consistent effect for perceptions of Labour, but decreases the likelihood of perceiving the Tories as divided. Those that generally perceive the economy as improving are less likely to perceive the party as divided, perhaps reflecting a broader perceptual halo the respondent gives when they expect the economy to be improving.

Discussion

In this paper, I propose a theory of intra-party decision-making and voter perceptions that accounts for parties' attempts to reach internal agreements and consensus. I propose that when parties internally reach agreements on how to discuss the major issues in their election campaigns that they can limit the negative effects of intra-party disagreement on voter perceptions. I find evidence largely consistent with this moderating effect from the two major parties in the UK since 1999 by combining a new dataset on party conference speeches, manifestos and voter perceptions from the British Election Study. These results show that intra-party disagreement increases the likelihood that voters perceive parties as divided, but that more diverse election platforms reduce this effect.

The results from this analysis lend support for a broader theory of party decision-making that takes intra-party politics seriously. Party leaders must reach out to diverse intra-party groups to avoid appearing divisive during an election. This internal negotiation process likely reflects the increased cohesion many parties exhibit as an election nears (Ceron 2014). These results further indicate that parties avoiding important issues on which they internally divide will likely face some punishment. This result contrasts predictions from theories of issue competition (e.g. Petrocik 1996) suggesting that parties should avoid issues on which voters may evaluate them negatively.

Ultimately, these preliminary results offer some guidance to parties seeking to structure their electoral campaigns. The internal rules and structures influencing the way parties decide determines their ability to resolve broader societal collective action problems

(e.g. Aldrich 2011). Parties that rule with a more majoritarian and exclusive decision-making process may lead voters to perceive them poorly (e.g. Kenig 2009). Instead, a managed, consensus based internal structure likely holds electoral rewards for these parties. This research shows some of the potential for studies of intra-party politics to focus on the actors within parties included in the decision-making process and the effects of this on party and voter behaviour.

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Appendix

Table 1 – Logit estimates of Perceived Labour Party Division

	(1) Simple	(2) ENMI	(3) Full
Party Division	-1.197*** (0.123)	29.692*** (1.811)	10.665*** (2.949)
ENMI	0.067*** (0.007)	1.360*** (0.076)	0.447*** (0.129)
Party ID			-21.290*** (5.627)
Party Div X ENMI		-1.367*** (0.080)	-0.507*** (0.133)
Party Div X PID			19.804** (6.195)
ENMI X PID			0.879*** (0.252)
Party Div X ENMI X PID			-0.829** (0.275)
Gov Party			-0.272*** (0.060)
Tory PID			-0.163*** (0.049)
Woman			-0.097* (0.039)
Age			0.018*** (0.001)
Household Income			0.001 (0.001)
Prospective Sociotropic Economy			-0.040** (0.013)
chi2	121.428	401.524	784.865
Log-Likelihood	-11666.143	-11517.582	-7592.608
N	17384	17384	11714

Table 2 – Logit estimates of Perceived Conservative Party Division

	(4) Simple	(5) ENMI	(6) Full
Party Division	-0.450*** (0.110)	40.586*** (1.411)	38.393*** (2.377)
ENMI	-0.109*** (0.005)	1.557*** (0.057)	1.348*** (0.101)
Party ID			15.387*** (2.782)
Party Div X ENMI		-2.312*** (0.079)	-2.188*** (0.136)
Party Div X PID			-24.541*** (3.817)
ENMI X PID			-0.929*** (0.152)
Party Div X ENMI X PID			1.447*** (0.211)
Gov Party			0.463*** (0.095)
Labour PID			0.234*** (0.052)
Woman			-0.301*** (0.040)
Age			0.018*** (0.001)
Household Income			-0.002** (0.001)
Prospective Sociotropic Economy			-0.068*** (0.013)
chi2	557.494	1279.516	1347.407
ll	-11227.140	-10791.260	-7195.763
N	17384	17384	11714

Figure A1. Labour Party Conference Wordfish Estimates Tower Plot

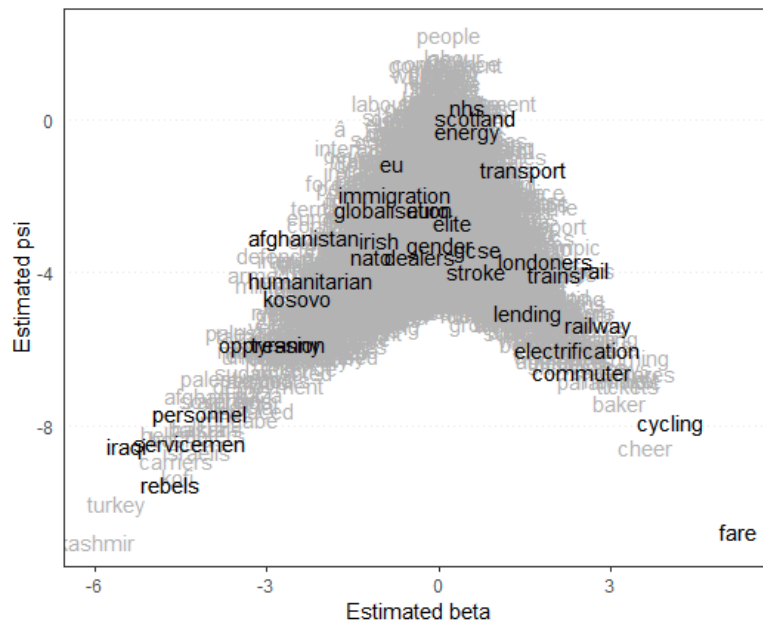


Figure A2. Conservative Party Conference Wordfish Estimates Tower Plot

