

Modeling New Party Performance: A Conceptual and Methodological Approach for Volatile Party Systems

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This study of new political parties in the Third Wave democracies of Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Venezuela conceptualizes the early life of a party as a developmental phase. The analysis uses latent trajectory modeling to identify five qualitatively distinctive performance profiles, which the author calls “explosive,” “contender,” “flash,” “flat,” and “flop” trajectories. This finding challenges the conventional approaches used in the study of new party performance, where scholars classify parties using subjective criteria, often into the successful/failed dichotomy. In unstable party systems, where we expect greater diversity in the performance profiles of new parties, latent trajectory modeling is preferred because it yields a result more consistent with extant theorizing on new parties. In stable systems, as in the case of Chile, the approaches can yield similar results. Nevertheless, the case of Venezuela (1958–88) demonstrates that even in stable party systems, the modeling approach used here can identify important variation that alternatives might miss.

1 Introduction

Long ago, Duverger (1957, xxiii) observed, “Just as all men bear all their lives the mark of their childhood, so parties are profoundly influenced by their origins.” This metaphor suggests that the early years in the life of a political party are distinctive and warrant their own nuanced theorizing. Political scientists have constructed a valuable theoretical foundation to form and test new hypotheses explaining patterns of party formation and success. Analytically, however, our techniques for modeling new party performance have not kept pace. In this paper, I extend the human development metaphor by borrowing from the field of developmental psychology to propose a conceptual and methodological approach to model new party performance. I conceptualize the early life of a party as a developmental trajectory and measure development by using the vote percentage won by a party over its first five elections to the lower or only chamber of congress.

In the larger context of studying party system change—whether it be realignment, dealignment, fragmentation, collapse, or consolidation—it is extremely important to rigorously model new parties and their developmental patterns. A preliminary step of our progress in constructing comprehensive and generally applicable theories of party system change, and in particular of the role of new parties, is the adoption of an empirically and theoretically

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defensible technique for studying electoral performance. This project seeks to improve upon the methods conventionally used for identifying and grouping new political parties by adopting a testable modeling technique, which is also theoretically sensible. In particular, it seeks to move beyond the overly simplistic strategies, such as dichotomizing parties into “successes” and “failures,” and instead to model distinct performance patterns over time.

There are other dimensions, besides electoral performance, of party success. Some parties, for example, may have influence disproportionate to the size of their legislative contingent because they occupy a fulcrum point in a party system and are frequently drawn into the executive. Other times, a new party may use electoral competition as a means to threaten existing parties and, thereby, lead them to adopt the issues or issue positions the new party espouses. This study’s model of party performance is, thus, constrained to the extent that electoral results capture only a single dimension of the concept. Nevertheless, electoral performance is at least a large and crucial piece of party performance and, often, also a valid proxy for other dimensions of performance. The vote share metric has the added benefit of being highly reliable and readily observed, and combined with the relative ease of execution of the modeling approach adopted here, it results in a typology of party performance trajectories that captures the full range of theoretically relevant variation.

I adopt an analytic technique called latent trajectory modeling—also, semiparametric mixture modeling—which is compatible with the developmental conceptualization. The technique arose in the social sciences for applications that use repeated measures of a given phenomena over time, when there are theoretical reasons to believe that the distribution of the observed individual trajectories can be grouped into discrete and qualitatively distinctive latent categories.¹ In political science, the study of new party performance is among the promising possible applications for latent trajectory modeling. The construction of a complete and rigorous specification of the observed patterns of party performance, alone, is a valuable contribution to the process of concept construction and theory building, and this is my purpose here. However, a future extension of this work would be to take the resulting party classifications and construct an explanatory model that answers questions such as: What explains why a new party will be of the “explosive” type, rather than one of the other types?

Following the introduction, I review the conventional approaches for classifying new party performance and identify the problems that result for concept and measurement. Also, I argue that those approaches are theoretically ill-suited for application in volatile party systems. Then, I present a theoretical basis for treating the early life of a party separately, as a distinct developmental phase. Next, I describe the methodological approach I adopt for measuring party performance. Finally, I test the propositions of the theoretical framework on a sample of new political parties in four countries of Latin America in their most recent democratic episode. I find that in this geographical and temporal context, new political parties follow a small number of qualitatively distinctive developmental trajectories. Specifically, I have identified and named five trajectory groups: “explosive parties,” “contender parties,” “flash parties,” “flat parties,” and “flop parties.” In short, I espouse a method by which we can (1) hypothesize and test for the existence of distinctive performance profiles and (2) use the estimates of the model to compute the probability that each party in the sample belongs to each group. I thereby build a typology of party performance that quantifies the level of certainty in the classifications.

¹For example, important work on the approach was developed by Nagin (1999) in his study of the patterns of physical aggression by young males.

2 The Flaws of Snapshots and Dichotomies

Extant approaches to the study of new party performance are insufficient in party systems with high volatility. The conventional approaches are of two variants. The first approach is subjective and most commonly dichotomizes electoral performance into the categories of success and failure. In the earliest published quantitative analysis on new party performance, Harmel and Robertson (1985) use this measurement strategy and take the *country* as the unit of analysis. They ask: Why do new parties perform well in some countries and not others. They are limited to testing an explanation that includes only attributes of the country and cannot use predictors that are attributes of the party since the party is not the unit of analysis.²

Among the body of work where the *party* is the unit of analysis, the principle weakness is that the studies adopt arbitrary cut points to group their cases, usually into the categories of successful and failed new parties. For example, Kitschelt's (1989) study of ecological parties in Europe parses out cases of "significant" and "insignificant" entry by setting a cut point of 4% of the national legislative vote during at least one election. In systems where electoral competition is stable, this approach may be defensible and the subjective and arbitrary nature of the coding process may not affect the veracity of the findings. But when moving outside stable party systems, authors who adopt a dichotomous successful/failed classification of new political parties ignore the fact that ambiguous cases and additional types may exist.

Individual country case studies sometimes yield conceptualizations that are more subtle than the dichotomous approach, as, for example, in the study of the French Fourth Republic (1946–58) by Converse and Dupeux (1962). From within the context of advanced democracies, they analyze a "peculiar" feature of the French party system when they identify what they call flash parties. They remark:

"The turbulence of French politics has long fascinated observers, particularly when comparisons have been drawn with the stability or . . . the dull complacency of American political life. Profound ideological cleavages in France, the instability of governments and republics, and the rise and fall of "flash" parties . . . have all contributed to the impression of *peculiar intensity* in the tenor of French political life" [emphasis added] (1).

Flash parties start strong but soon die. In a dichotomous scheme, it is unclear whether these parties should be considered cases of success or failure. In the long run, they may properly be considered "failed" cases, but in the short run, they may properly be considered "success" cases. To the extent that a party's performance can be measured at a higher level of measurement and/or in a more highly parameterized fashion, we do not need to settle for a blunt scheme. There are modeling techniques available that allow us to conduct this analysis with more precision and support, and scholars can use these techniques in any context, volatile or not.

Approaches that use cut points are unnecessarily restrictive in that they adopt a nominal or ordinal level of measurement when they could instead adopt a higher level of measurement. In the course of dichotomizing according to *ad hoc* rules, one discards important information concerning the variation of the variable. Although doing so is not technically problematic—and depending on the research question may be perfectly appropriate—this review of the literature on new party performance suggests that it is ill-advised because

²Rice and Van Cott (2006) also combine the vote shares of all new indigenous parties; therefore, they are unable to test the effect of party attributes on performance. In contrast to Harmel and Robertson (1985), they take the electoral district as the unit of analysis and measure vote share directly without dichotomizing.

there is a theoretical foundation for expecting distinctive intermediate categories, as in the case of flash parties.

A second variant is to measure and analyze vote share directly. When vote share has been used directly in the study of party performance, it is often only measured at one point in time—at the first election—and consequently performs poorly as a measure of new party performance (Hug 2001; Rice and Van Cott 2006). Often, it only tells a partial story, in that two parties can enter with similar levels of support and later diverge in subsequent elections. The story of a new party's development, as I will argue below, is a dynamic process which should instead be measured over several elections.

These flaws in concept and measurement call into question some of the important conclusions of the literature, especially the literature on volatile party systems, because the form of the dependent variable has explanatory implications. If there are theoretically relevant and qualitatively distinctive groups of performance profiles among new parties that are not identified, our explanations can be incomplete or flawed. The research design I adopt here allows a more rigorous specification of the dependent variable for use in explanatory models of party performance.

3 Electoral Performance in Volatile Party Systems

The prominence of the subjective approach is not surprising given the fact that the literature on new party performance was developed in the context of advanced democracies. Cleavage theory, for example, posits new party entry at selected critical junctures with subsequent system freezing (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Even given the advances of this and other frameworks, as with studies of party system realignment and dealignment (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1985), it remains conceptually plausible if blunt to think of new parties as succeeding or not because the systems remain relatively stable and institutionalized. How shall we proceed, however, when the “intensity” of political life observed by Converse and Dupeux, rather than being peculiar, is the norm?

In Latin America, many parties and party systems are highly volatile and poorly institutionalized. In some cases, the implementation of liberalizing economic reform has weakened the organizational basis of labor-based parties leading them to replace or complement programmatic and socially encapsulated organizational linkages with alternatives ones—such as charismatic or clientelistic linkages—in order to remain competitive (Roberts forthcoming, Levitsky [2003] on Peronism in Argentina, Luna [2007] on Frente Amplio in Uruguay, Luna manuscript on Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) in Chile, Samuels [2004], and Hunter [2006] on Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in Brazil, Alcántara-Sáez and Freidenberg [2001] on Izquierda Democrática (ID) in Ecuador). In other cases, some or all parties in a given party system have always been at best weakly linked with voters. Even where volatility has been relatively low historically—as in Chile and Venezuela—new entrants or system upheavals have altered the traditional party system and introduced new lines of cleavage and new forms of party-voter linkage.

Under these circumstances, we can expect wide diversity in the performance profiles of new parties. The case-based literature underscores the degree of variation that exists in new party trajectories around the region. To name just a few, Gamarra and Malloy (1995) describe new parties that arose during Bolivia's transition in 1980 as “taxi” parties because their entire official membership can fit in a taxi. Keck (1992), Bruhn (1997), and Ellner (1988) trace the origins and early life of three leftist parties—Brazil's PT, Mexico's Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), and Venezuela's Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), respectively—which were electorally weak but enduring over their early years. Also, there

is ample discussion in journalistic and academic press about performance profiles that resemble flash parties. The wider range of variation in performance profiles is theoretically relevant to our understanding of party systems in volatile contexts.³

Taken together, the studies on the diversity in party systems of the region justify skepticism of the sufficiency of using simplistic measures of new party performance. In short, those approaches to measurement lack validity. Returning to the reflection on politics by Converse and Dupeux (1962, 2) during the French 4th Republic, they note: “. . . It seems likely that [the rise and fall of “flash” parties] represent spasms of political excitement in unusually hard times on the part of citizens whose year-in, year-out involvement in political affairs is abnormally weak.” Hard times which in France may have been unusual, in Latin American Third Wave democracies have been usual, and a citizenry which in France may have been abnormally weakly involved, in Latin America has been much closer to the norm. Below, I propose a method for measuring electoral performance that is well suited to the task of discerning patterns of party performance where “spasms of political excitement” are routine.

4 New Party Performance as a Developmental Trajectory

In this section, I develop a theoretical basis for conceptualizing new party performance as a developmental trajectory. Panebianco (1988, 50) once noted: “Every organization bears the mark of its formation, of the crucial political-administrative decisions made by its founders, the decisions which ‘molded’ the organization.” Much like childhood is a distinct developmental phase from adulthood and treated as such in medicine and psychology, I will argue that the first several electoral contests for a political party are fundamentally different than electoral competition by a mature party.

Whether a new party emerges seemingly from nowhere or arises out of long-standing social or economic groups transferred to the political arena, in so far as it is a new collective actor, it enters the electoral arena as a novice. Its electoral linkages with a base will be embryonic and its organizational infrastructure will be nascent and unconsolidated. Even where a long-standing social or economic actor moves into electoral politics, it will deploy its organizational apparatus toward a new end and forge new relationships with new constituents or a new type of relationship with long-standing constituents.

Panebianco (1988) outlines one theoretical approach to the treatment of the early years of a party as a distinct developmental phase. Over the course of a party’s life, it shifts from being an organization oriented toward some particular program or issue to become one oriented toward its own survival. He builds upon Michels’ (1911/1959) theory of “substitution of ends,” which “illustrates precisely this passage of the organization from being an instrument for the realization of certain aims . . . , to a natural system in which the survival imperative and the actors’ particular objectives predominate” (Panebianco 1988, 8). His approach is an organizationally oriented treatment of the party, and he contrasts features that one would expect to see during the founding years of a party with features from during the mature years when the party is focused on survival.

Additionally, one can distinguish an early developmental phase because at the time of a party’s initial entry into the electoral arena, ties with voters are weak and under construction. Of course, not all parties consolidate ties with voters, but for those that do and evolve

³Evidence of the weak and unstable footing of some party systems in Latin America can be found in the literatures on party linkages and representation (Kitschelt and Zechmeister 2003; Luna and Zechmeister 2005; Rosas 2005) and on party system institutionalization (Jones 2005; Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Scully 1995, Mainwaring and Torcal 2006).

into long-standing actors in the political arena, the initial phase takes place under conditions of vulnerability which are not as life-threatening after linkages are established and ties are strong. A party in its early years will not have accumulated reputational capital that mature parties can rely upon. To the extent that strong relationships between parties and voters rely upon many iterations of exchange of some public, club, or private good for a vote, one expects that vote-winning patterns over time for new parties will be more volatile than for established parties, and the causes of their performance gains or losses to be at least in part distinct from those of established parties.

Also, a new party will often not have a strongly established relationship with the state. In a professionalized state, this means that it may not have secured the credibility and formally institutionalized connections as its established competitors. In a politicized state, this means that it will not have carved out points of access to resources and policy making that a mature party has secured. For example, in a study of clientelism in Europe, Piattoni (2001) and her contributors argue that a new party's relationship with voters can shift from programmatic to clientelistic as the party itself gains increasing access to the resources of the state. We can expect these alternative party-voter linkages to be associated with alternative organizational forms (Kitschelt 2000). This reality is graphically illustrated in the Venezuelan case, where Hugo Chavez and his new party, *Movimiento Quinta Republica* (MVR), entered the electoral arena in 1998 and began instantly on their agenda to transform the state by squeezing out entrenched interests and bringing it under their control. For the newcomer, this goal was a matter of survival, not just governance. Chavez imitators in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru entered electoral politics with the similar goal of "refounding the state," though with less and varying success.

In sum, the first few electoral contests of a party are distinct from those of an established party in so far as it forms and consolidates its organization, contests, and then gains access to the state and other resources, forms and consolidates linkages with voters and organized interests, and effectively governs or opposes. Based upon this conceptualization, I measure new party performance with a time series of up to five observations for each party.

5 New Parties as the Unit of Analysis

One thorny problem in a study of new parties is to identify them. Careful observation of new political organizations reveals that they arise from a wide range of circumstances. A preliminary task is to first define political parties. I use the definition adopted by Hug (2001), who in turn borrowed from Sjöblom (1968, 21), which focuses upon a single criterion: a party "appoints candidates at general elections to the system's representative assembly."

Implied in this definition is that the system's representative assembly refers to the *national* representative system; therefore, parties that form and compete exclusively at subnational levels are excluded from this analysis. This constraint is not problematic because the purpose of this study is to analyze how new national political parties are projected into the national arena. Some parties that eventually compete nationally begin at the local level, and there are theoretical reasons for hypothesizing that this early subnational competition will predict performance at the national level. In a project that aspires to *explain* electoral performance, subnational electoral experience may be an important independent variable; but it is beyond the scope of this paper and I will exclude such parties.⁴

⁴Note that this exclusion means that some of the parties which Van Cott (2005) classifies as having "moderate viability"—the second level in her three category scheme of party success—will by design not be detected in this analysis. "Moderately viable" parties include those that "may win local or regional elections, but rarely can compete at the national level" (18).

Also following from the definition, I exclude parties that compete in only presidential or senate races but not lower house elections. The lower house is a more valid venue for measuring a party's performance in the national political arena than the upper house or the presidency. As with the case of subnational electoral competition, political competition for the executive or upper house may have an important role in determining a new party's trajectory in national political life; therefore, rather than considering these elected offices in the *measurement* of the trajectory of a new party, one could incorporate them as *predictors* of that trajectory. Finally, I exclude from my analysis candidates who run as independents.

Having identified parties, I now turn to identifying *new* parties. For this analysis, broadly stated, new parties are marked by discontinuities in the organizational structure of a party and/or lack of experience in competitive elections at the national level. Specifically, I address five conditions: nondemocratic regime interruptions, party splits, parties that have existed but never competed at the national level, party mergers, and party hijackings. A new party is one that meets any of the following criteria.

After an extended nondemocratic interruption, parties are new if they did not compete in the election immediately before the democratic breakdown or the founding election after the transition (e.g., Democracia Popular (DP) in Ecuador is new in 1984) or if the interruption caused a rupture in the organizational life of the party (e.g., Partido Socialista (PSCH) in Chile).⁵ Nondemocratic interruptions often introduce pressures into the party system that can disrupt party organizations. If an interruption is sufficiently long, it may be fair to consider all parties that participate in the founding election of the transition back to democracy as new parties. A nondemocratic regime effects party organization by introducing alternative organizational forms and survival strategies into the party that do not rely on electoral incentives. Thus, the founding election will be a new challenge. Also, a regime transition can form a critical juncture that fundamentally alters the dimensions of political competition by introducing a new dimension of competition, often over the issue of regime (Moreno 1999). For this reason, it is advisable to use a slightly lower standard of organizational disruption for identifying a new political party than one would use under regime continuity.

When a party splits, one piece will never be considered new and the others will always be considered new (following Mainwaring 1999, 29). In the clear and common situation where a small group of dissidents leave the main party and complete under a new name, the coding decision is simple. In more complex situations, I take into consideration additional factors, including continuities in name, the relative size of the two groups, the organizations inheritance of the two groups, and the source of the split.

A political party that has existed but never competed for a seat in the lower or only chamber of congress will be considered new. Such a party is effectively entering a new political arena subject to electoral pressures it has never encountered (Schlesinger 1984). Formerly banned leftist parties are examples of parties that may be longstanding but treated as new under this criterion.

A party that arises from a fusion of two or more parties will not be counted as a new party. However, because I conceptualize a party's life as a trajectory, I must code party

⁵The PSCH broke up into various pieces during the Pinochet dictatorship. In 1989, during the founding election of the transition back to democracy, two "instrumental" parties, the Partido por la Democracia (PPD) and Partido Amplio de Izquierda Socialista (PAIS), competed (Scully and Valenzuela 1993). Furthermore, many former members competed in 1989 without party affiliation, as independent candidates within the center-left Concertación alliance. It was not until 1993 that the PSCH solved its organization's dilemmas and reemerged as an organizational unit, though deeply changed. In fact, 8 of the 10 candidates that competed as members of PAIS in 1989 later joined the Communist Party rather than the PSCH and the PPD turned out not to be so instrumental—it continues to play a prominent role today. In this project, I treat the PSCH as new since 1993.

death. I will use the following decision rule: at the time of a fusion, I will always consider one (or more) of the parties as having died and one and only one of the parties as having survived. As with the case of fissures, the decision regarding which party dies and which survives will take into consideration the size of the merging parties, the continuities in leadership, and the continuities in name.

Parties that are hijacked by new leadership and essentially emerge as a new party will be counted as new. This often happens when there is a nearly defunct party that nevertheless has the benefit of having legal recognition by electoral authorities. This decision will be guided by the following circumstances: (1) the entry of a large cadre of new leadership, (2) the simultaneous disaffiliation of large numbers of the previous leadership, (3) the abruptness of the change, (4) large changes in party platforms, organizational operations, and party statues, and (5) name changes (e.g., MAS in Bolivia and Partido Liberación Nacional [PLN] in Ecuador).⁶

The coding rules used here differ to some extent with other efforts. Mair (1990), for example, includes as new parties any resulting from a fusion or from a fission. Hug (2001, 13) distinguishes “genuinely new parties”—those that “emerge without the help from members of existing parties”—from fusions, fissions, and alliances. He concludes that in his analysis, the category of new parties will be reserved for “genuinely new parties” and fissions. This definition will not suffice in this project because it fails to provide guidance under a number of difficult circumstances, many of which are not often found in the sample of advanced democracies he studies.

6 Latent Trajectory Modeling as an Approach to Modeling Early Party Performance

Latent trajectory modeling is an alternative approach for modeling and classifying new party performance. Before proceeding with the four steps of the technique—estimation of the shape parameters, estimation of the population prevalence, model comparison and selection, and computation of posterior probabilities—I begin by describing the method and argue that the approach is well suited and superior to alternative techniques of modeling and classifying new party performance.

6.1 Model Estimation

Vote share trajectories are determined by fitting a latent trajectory model to the data, using SAS’s Proc Traj routine.⁷ Latent trajectory models identify qualitatively distinct groups of trajectories within a population. This approach to modeling growth curves is different from traditional multilevel modeling, in that the latter assumes the random parameters to be bivariate normally distributed (Nagin 2005). In other words, all individuals are assumed

⁶Beginning in 1999, Evo Morales’ Instrumento Político para la Soberanía de los Pueblos (IPSP) party adopted the party registration of MAS. In Ecuador, the party that was born in 1989 as the PLN changed hands three times despite being officially registered as one continuous organization with the electoral authorities. It was founded as a progressive splinter from the communist Frente Amplio de Izquierda (FADI) party followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1995, it was occupied by Rosalía Arteaga and changed its name to Alianza Nacional (PAN) to serve as a platform for her 1996 vice presidential (VP) bid on the ticket with Abdala Bucaram. After Bucaram was removed from the presidency, the party was abandoned by Arteaga and cooped by César Alarcón, who changed its name to the Partido Libertad (PL). The coincidence of name changes, rotation in party leadership, and shifting ideologies has led me to code this party as three cases of the emergence and death of a new party. Interviews: PLN Central Committee member at party’s founding, on April 12, 2006; PLN Executive Committee member at the transition from PLN to PAN, on March 28, 2006; PL member of the National Directorate at the transition from PAN to PL, on March 22, 2006.

⁷Alternatives include the gllamm routine for Stata and M Plus.

to belong to a single class of individuals that vary continuously on a latent trait. In contrast, the group-based method employed here assumes a number of discrete groups of parties, each having a specific intercept, slope, and higher order polynomial as well as a unique estimated population prevalence.

Latent trajectory models were first developed for application in the fields of criminology and psychology to analyze distinctive trajectories of human behavior, such as criminal recidivism and childhood delinquency. It has potential applications in political science but has not been widely used.⁸ The premise of the technique is that “patterns in the repeated measures reflect a finite number of trajectory types, each of which corresponds to an unobserved or latent class in the population” (Bauer and Curran 2003).

A latent trajectory model is particularly appropriate when the developmental trajectories found within the population are expected to have either different functional forms—some zero-order constant trajectories, some first-order linear trajectories, some second-order quadratic trajectories, etc.—or the various individual trajectories do not vary regularly within the population—some are monotonically increasing, whereas others are monotonically decreasing while still others are not monotonic (Nagin 1999). In the study of new political parties, theory suggests that both circumstances apply.

Regarding varying functional forms, consider the fact that the most successful new parties will not continuously grow, but will flatten out, usually near or before becoming a major party. In this situation, a second-order specification may be appropriate to capture the curvilinear shape of the trajectory. Similarly, a second-order specification may be necessary to model performance of a flash trajectory, where parties start strong but then begin losing at a decreasing rate. On the other hand, there may be a distinctive set of parties strongly rooted in an identity group—ethnic parties, extreme left parties—that enter with relatively few votes but are able to sustain that support over the long run. This profile may be modeled best with a zero-order functional form: they enter with a very small percentage of the vote and continue on with little gain or loss. A single term—the intercept—may be sufficient to summarize their trajectory. Finally, there will likely be parties that enter and grow steadily or enter and decline steadily, best modeled with a first-order polynomial (see Fig. 1a below).

Regarding the expectation of irregular variation in performance trajectory, contrast the concept of a flash party with a conventionally successful party. The two have distinctive slopes, one increasing and the other decreasing. In the language of latent trajectory models, flash parties are hypothesized to have a relatively high intercept and a relatively high *negative* slope, whereas the successful cases are those with a *positive* slope (see Fig. 1b).

Taken together, these expectations are another way of saying that latent trajectory models make differing assumptions than conventional multilevel models about the distribution of the random parameters: that is, they will be discretely rather than continuously distributed. These assumptions are consistent with our theoretical expectations of the phenomena under consideration here.

The modeling procedure takes place in four steps. First, I estimate the “shape parameters” for alternative specifications on the number of groups and the order of the polynomials; then, for each specification, I estimate the “population prevalence” for each of the groups in each of the models; next, I compare models using both statistical and theoretical criteria and select the best model; and finally, I use the estimates of the best model to compute group membership probabilities—also called posterior probabilities—for each of the parties in the data set.

⁸See Plutzer (2002) for an exception.

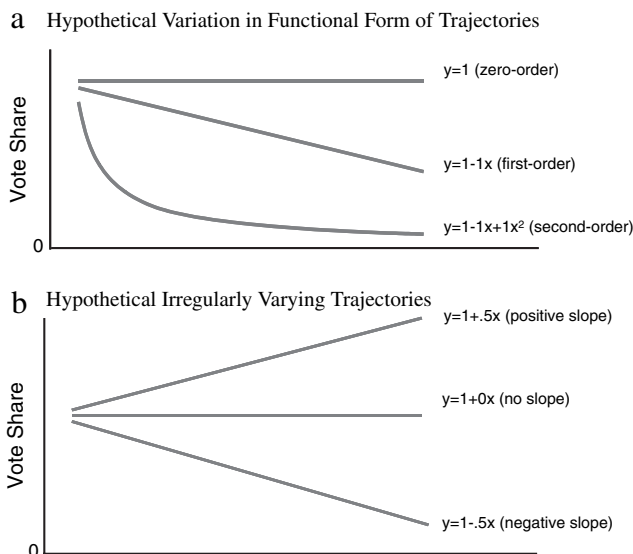


Fig. 1 (a) Hypothetical variation in functional form of Trajectories. (b) Hypothetical irregularly varying trajectories.

6.2 Estimating the Shape Parameters

The shape parameters are the set of estimates that describe each trajectory group. They are estimated using equation (1), where vote is the vote percentage of party i at age t , age is party age measured in national lower house election cycles, and j is the trajectory group.

$$\text{Vote}_{it} = \beta_0^j + \beta_1^j \text{Age}_{it} + \beta_2^j \text{Age}_{it}^2 + \epsilon_{it}. \quad (1)$$

Notice that β 's are superscripted with j , which means that each trajectory has its own intercept, slope, and quadratic term. β_0 , β_1 , and β_2 are collectively the shape parameters for the polynomial because they define the shape of each group's trajectory.

6.3 Estimating the Population Prevalence

The population prevalence is a parameter estimate of the prevalence of a given trajectory group in the population, given the sample. The model yields one value for each trajectory group. Its notation is π_j , as shown in equation (2), where π_j is the probability of membership in group j and $\sum_{j=1}^J \pi_j = 1$.

$$\pi_j = \frac{e^{\theta_j}}{\sum_{j=1}^J e^{\theta_j}}. \quad (2)$$

6.4 Model Comparison and Selection

I estimate and compare multiple models in order to answer questions such as: Does a four-group model fit the data better than a five-group model or a three-group model? Does

a second-order polynomial on Trajectory 5 fit the data better than a first-order polynomial on that trajectory? Model selection is informed using a combination of theory, domain knowledge, and formal statistical criteria, normally the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) (Raftery 1995; D'Unger et al. 1998).

6.5 Computing Posterior Probabilities

Finally, once a model is selected, I use the model estimates and a party's actual vote share history to compute the posterior probability of party i 's membership in group j , $\hat{P}(j|\text{vote}_{it})$, using equation (3).

$$\hat{P}(j|\text{vote}_{it}) = \frac{\hat{P}(\text{vote}_{it}|j)\hat{\pi}_j}{\sum_j \hat{P}(\text{vote}_{it}|j)\hat{\pi}_j} \quad (3)$$

This value, which is calculated for each party, indicates the probability that a given party is a member of a given group. An indication of a good fitting model is that it places most or all parties solidly in one group or another with a high probability.

Sometimes, a party will be difficult to classify. In one circumstance, we might imagine that a party's history of electoral returns over five elections may make its membership status ambiguous between two trajectories. Keep in mind, however, that if it is truly a party "in a class by itself," the model selection stage of the analysis would have yielded a superior model with a group for this one party. Furthermore, the analysis does not serve the research question well if it yields multiple similar trajectory groups. We are looking for a discrete set of qualitatively different groups. If the distributional assumptions about the random parameters are correct, therefore, we expect that truly ambiguous cases will be rare in a strong model.

In a second circumstance, where parties have entered the electoral arena so recently that we have only observe them once or twice, it may be difficult to classify a party into a group. Imagine, for example, a scenario where there are two groups of parties. Both enter with high support—say, with 10% of the vote—but one group continues to grow and the other soon dies. If we observe a party entering at the most recent election with 10% of the vote and have no other observations, we might say that this party has a .5 probability of being in each group. Only after we observe the party at another election can we make a stronger determination of group membership. This will be the case if the best model yields two or more groups with similar intercepts.

7 Sample and Measurement

The sample includes new parties in four countries: Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Chile. Given my expectation that party systems with high and low volatility will behave differently, I select Bolivia and Ecuador as cases of high volatility, Chile as a case of low volatility, and Venezuela as a case that had low volatility from 1958 to 88 and high volatility thereafter. I collected vote percentage data of all parties at the level of electoral district. Though I analyze national level data here, district level data are desirable for two reasons. First, in many countries, electoral alliances are formed at the district level and sometimes vary from district to district. In this paper, because I analyze results by party, I divide all

Table 1 Summary of election results analyzed

<i>Country</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Election results analyzed</i>
Chile	1989–2005	Lower chamber; Single tier
Bolivia I	1985–1994	Lower chamber; Single tier
Bolivia II	1994–2005	Lower chamber; PR tier
Ecuador I	1979–1998	Single chamber; District tier
Ecuador II	1998–2005	Single chamber; Single tier
Venezuela I	1958–pre-1993	Lower chamber; District tier
Venezuela II	1993–1999	Lower chamber; PR tier
Venezuela III	1999–2005	Single chamber; Single tier

alliance vote returns equally among alliance partners. Employing this stylized simplification at the level of district provides a more accurate approximation of party support than doing so at the national level. Second, future extensions of this project that will propose and test explanatory models of party performance will require district-level data.

I measure party support of new political parties that compete in national elections to the lower or only legislative chamber since the most recent transition to democracy. In mixed proportional/plurality electoral systems, I analyze results from the proportional tier if it generally governs the overall seat distribution in the legislative body (see Table 1).

Overall, during 32 elections, 950 new parties entered the electoral arena. The majority of them, however, are one-district parties from recent elections in Venezuela (about 200 each year in 1998, 2000, and 2005) and Ecuador (about 25 each year in 1996, 1998, and 2002), and I exclude them from the analysis. With respect to their national electoral performance, the 649 one-district parties comprise a homogeneous group together with several hundred other small parties that compete in multiple districts. All the one-district parties conform to the general profile of the “flop” parties I describe later. That is, they all enter with a very small vote share and none have lived beyond four election cycles. On only five occasions did any of these parties ever earn more than 1% of the national vote, and they never earned more than 3.5%. The mean national vote percentage of these parties is less than .05%. Because they severely skew the sample distribution, they lead to estimation difficulties. Therefore, I have excluded them from the analysis.⁹

After excluding one-district parties, the resulting sample includes 297 parties with 558 party-year vote percentage observations. Because vote percentage is not reported for parties that die, I add an observation to each dead party. Otherwise, because we only observe a party’s death indirectly after it ceases to compete, the general electoral profile of a party that dies would appear healthier than it actually is. Including a defensible value for party death makes the analysis more representative of the life course of a party. Fortunately, vote percentage has a meaningful value for death. Following Diehr and Patrick (2003), if a party has died, I add to its panel an entry of zero vote percentage following the last election in which they compete in order to “account fully for death.” When parties have competed in the most recent election, I do not add an additional observation of zero. Once accounting for death in this way, the final data set of 297 parties includes 759 party-year observations (see Table 2).

⁹Data on excluded one-district parties are available at the author’s Web site as Appendix 1.

Table 2 Frequency of new party entrants

Country	Years	Elections	New parties			Party-year <i>N</i>	
			Total	Excluded one district	Analyzed	without accounting for death	Accounting for death
Bolivia	1985–2005	6	34	0	34	53	82
Chile	1989–2005	5	20	2	18	40	51
Ecuador	1979–2002	10	96	73	23	64	72
Venezuela	1958–2005	11	797	574	223	401	554
Total		32	950	649	297	558	759

Conceptually, this analysis is built upon a new party's life cycle between birth and its fifth election or death, whichever occurs first. Chronological time (e.g., whether a party was born in 1989 or 2005) is not theoretically important for estimating the party's performance trajectory over its lifetime.¹⁰ Therefore, rather than year, I will use a party's age to measure time in this analysis. However, electoral cycles in different countries (and sometimes in the same country over time) run on different increments. Therefore, rather than counting a party's age in years, I will count its age in election cycles. At the time of a party's first electoral run for national office, it will be 1 cycle old; at the time of its second run, it will be 2 cycles old, etc. A party in Chile that was born in 1989 and ran also in the 1993 election will be 1 cycle old in 1989 and 2 cycles old in 1993 (e.g., PPD). When a party is born in Ecuador for the 1984 election and then runs again in 1986, it will be 1 cycle old in 1984 and 2 cycles old in 1986 (e.g., Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (PRE)). A party born in Venezuela for the 1998 election which goes on to compete in 2000 and 2005 will be 1 cycle old in 1998, 2 cycles old in 2000, and 3 cycles old in 2005 (e.g., MVR).

I limit my analysis to the first five electoral cycles for each new party because, as I argue above, the early years of a party's life are developmentally distinctive from its mature years. The farther in time that we go from birth, the more the result will incorporate elements of a party's life that are unrelated to early developmental characteristics. The choice to use five elections rather than fewer is based upon the observed performance of the best performing parties across the four countries; their level of support levels off after around five elections. The majority of new parties do not live to the age of 5 election cycles old, and in those cases, the model produces parameter estimates based upon the available data. For parties that live longer, the added cycles lead the model to discriminate between the most enduring parties based upon their electoral performance in elections relatively far in time from their birth.¹¹

8 Results: An Empirically and Theoretically Based Typology of New Party Entrants

I estimate models that allow for one to eight groups using zero-, first-, and second-order polynomials for each group. Improved fits were obtained for each new group through five

¹⁰Of course, if there were period effects associated with a party's performance, it may be an important consideration in an explanatory model.

¹¹A complete list of the new parties and their electoral history over the first five elections is available at the author's Web site as Appendix 2.

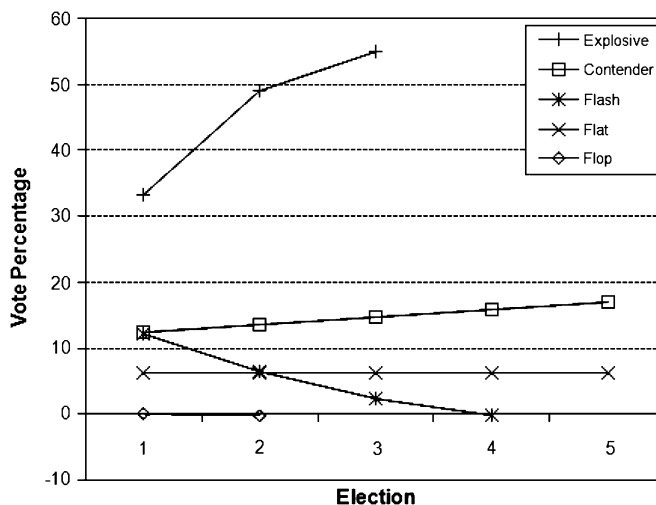


Fig. 2 New party trajectories.

groups; however, no improvement was obtained when six and subsequent groups were allowed. The BIC supports the five-group model as the best fitting. The preferred model also had trajectories with differing orders in the polynomial. The best model has one flat trajectory (an intercept, but neither a slope nor a quadratic term), two trajectories with a constant rate of change (an intercept and slope but no quadratic), and two trajectories with a variable rate of change (an intercept, a slope, and a quadratic). Thus, the results I present here are based upon the five-group model, with individual parties being assigned to their most likely trajectory group using posterior probabilities, a value calculated postestimation using the model's parameter estimates as described above.

I named the five trajectory groups "flop," "flat," "flash," "contender," and "explosive." The flop group is estimated to enter with a vote percentage of 0.1% and drop-off at a rate of .36% of the vote per election. This group is estimated to comprise 89.4% of the population. The flat trajectory enters with about 6% of the vote and neither grows nor dies. They make up 2.5% of the population. Flash parties enter with about 12.2% of the vote and lose 8% by the second election and continue losing at a steadily declining rate. They are estimated to be 4.3% of the population. The contender group enters with over 12% of the vote and grows at a rate of about 1% per election. They make up 3.0% of the population. Finally, the fifth class of explosive parties enters with an intercept of over 33% of the vote and grows at an initially high rate that steadily declines. It is estimated to be 1% of the population (see Fig. 2 and Table 3).

The figure truncates the trajectory of the explosive group to three points because it is estimated to be a group of only three parties, all of which are relatively new. Bolivia's Podemos has completed in only one national legislative election, Bolivia's MAS has completed in only two, and Venezuela's MVR has completed in only three.

The case classifications in Table 4 are based upon the posterior probabilities. In all but seven of the cases, we can predict with at least 97% confidence that the parties are properly classified. The lower level of certainty for the remaining seven parties is not surprising (see Table 5). In five cases (Ecuador's Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional [PRIAN] and Partido Sociedad Patriótica [PSP], Bolivia's Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti

Table 3 Five-group model of new party electoral performance (latent trajectory model; parties $N = 299$; panel $N = 758$)

<i>Group</i>	<i>Population prevalence</i>	<i>Share parameters</i>	
Flop	89.20%**	Intercept	0.11**
		Slope	-0.36**
Flat	3.00%**	Intercept	6.26**
		Slope	-8.44**
Flash	4.32%**	Intercept	12.24**
		Slope	-8.44**
		Quadratic	0.85**
Contender	2.50%**	Intercept	12.38**
		Slope	1.15**
Explosive	1.00%*	Intercept	33.11**
		Slope	55.66**
		Quadratic	-9.93**

*Significant at .1 level; **Significant at .05 level. Intercepts are undefined at $t = 0$ and have been adjusted to $t = 1$.

[MIP] and Frente de Unidad Nacional [UN], and Venezuela's Por la Democracia Social [PODEMOS]), the data set includes only one observation on each party. In the other two cases (Ecuador's Pachakutik and Venezuela's Patria Para Todos [PPT]), each party has three observations. As their electoral history grows, each will likely settle into one category with higher probability. A new election in Ecuador that took place after data collection for this project ended suggests that PSP, which was classified as "flop," would likely be reclassified as a "contender."

This model is based upon a sample derived from my definition of new political parties. In the course of coding parties as new or pre-existing at the time of a democratic transition, I omit 24 as preexisting parties and call them "legacy" parties. Earlier, I conceptualized a party's life cycle using a developmental metaphor and argued that the early years of a new political party constitute a distinctive phase that might display altogether different trajectories and that are likely subject to a different explanatory model than one would use to account for the performance of legacy parties. Democratic transitions, however, introduce some ambiguity into the coding decisions. For the transitional elections, one may wonder whether I should have coded all parties as effectively new. Alternatively, one may wonder whether the results of the trajectory models are sensitive to my analysis of the continuities and discontinuities in the life of a party over the democratic interruption and the resulting coding decisions I made. For example, would the result have changed if I counted Chile's PSCH as a legacy party rather than a new party; or if I had counted Ecuador's Social Christian Party (PSC) as new rather than a legacy party? In order to test the sensitivity of the results to these issues, I estimated models on two alternative samples. First, I estimated a model using just legacy parties. Second, I estimated a model which included all cases, legacy and new. The results, which are reported and discussed at the author's Web site as Appendix 3, support the approach I adopt here.

9 Discussion and Conclusion

This result offers a compelling alternative to the approaches most commonly used to group new parties according to their performance. In this section, I will begin by using a comparison between the findings of this project and the approach of Van Cott's (2005) study of ethnic

Table 4 Party classifications using posterior probabilities

<i>Bolivia</i>	<i>Chile</i>	<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>Venezuela</i>
Explosive MAS PODEMOS	None	None	MVR
Contender MIR	PPD RN UDI PSCH	ID PRE PRIAN	None
Flash NFR Condepa UCS	None	PD PUR	CCN1 Convergencia FDP1 FND1 MEP PODEMOS PRVZL
Flat MIP UN	None	FRA MPD Pachakutik DP	LCR MAS PPT
Flop	... All others ...		

Note. Bolivian Parties—PODEMOS, Poder Democrático Y Social; MIR, Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionaria; NFR, Nueva Fuerza Republicana; Condepa, Conciencia de Patria; UCS, Unidad Cívica Solidaridad; Chilean Parties—RN, Renovación Nacional; Ecuadorean Parties—PD, Partido Demócrata; PUR, Partido Unión Republicana; FRA, Frente Radical Alfarista; MPD, Movimiento Popular Democrático; Venezuelan Parties—CCN1, Cruzada Cívica Nacional; FDP1, Fuerza Democrático Popular; FND1, Frente Nacional Democrático; MEP, Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo; PRVZL, Proyecto Venezuela; LCR, La Causa Radical.

party success in Latin America to help sharpen the contrast. The comparison is possible because many of her cases overlap with this project, though I truncate the bottom of the performance distribution (as described above) by eliminating parties that do not compete nationally and parties that compete in only one electoral district in national elections. The

Table 5 Posterior probabilities^a

<i>Country</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Maximum posterior probability</i>	<i>Alt 2</i>	<i>Alt 3</i>
Ecuador	PRIAN	.56 Contender	.44 Flash	
Venezuela	Podemos	.57 Flash	.37 Flat	
Bolivia	UN	.52 Flat	.43 Flash	
Ecuador	Pachakutik	.88 Flat	.08 Flop	.04 Flash
Venezuela	PPT	.60 Flat	.40 Flop	
Bolivia	MIP	.61 Flop	.39 Flat	
Ecuador	PSP	.87 Flop	.12 Flat	

^aAll other parties classified with >.97 probability.

comparison of results is based upon Van Cott's sample, as listed in Table 7-1, and excludes three parties that come from Peru and Colombia, countries outside the sample used here.

Van Cott defines an ordinal measure of party performance. Parties with "low viability" compete briefly before dying and win few seats in subnational elections. Parties with "moderate viability" compete regularly and consistently win seats in local or regional elections. The author also includes parties in this group that have competed nationally and did well, but at the time of writing were new and only competed once. "Successful parties" contest elections at the national level and win representation. Table 6 shows the comparison.

The most striking contrast between the two methods of grouping is that Van Cott's "successful" group is extremely heterogeneous and includes parties of the explosive, flat, and flop trajectories. Using the groupings defined here by the parameter estimates, her group of success conflates cases that enter with estimated vote shares of 0.11%, 6.26%, and 33.11% and with estimated slopes of -0.36% , 0% , and 55.6% .

The case of Bolivia's MIP underscores the way the two approaches deal with uncertainty. MIP has competed in national legislative elections twice, beginning in 2002. Judging from Table 6 alone, it is difficult to decide how to classify this party, which entered with 6.09% and declined to 2.16% in the next election. The intercept (6.09%) suggests that it belongs in one of the better performing groups, whereas the slope suggests that it does not. MIP is one of the seven relatively ambiguous cases, as reported in Table 5. It is estimated to be in the flop group with a .61 posterior probability and in the flat group with a .39 posterior probability. A new observation of MIP at a later time point will likely resolve this ambiguity. In sum, the approach used here quantifies and reports the degree of uncertainty of the group classification.

Three implications arise from this study. First, it suggests that in volatile party systems, we abandon the process of separating new parties using subjective classification schemes to two or a few ordinal groups. The result here is consistent with studies that have theorized, usually in a small-N context, that wider and more complex diversity exists. If I reorganize

Table 6 Comparison of trajectory groups and Van Cott (2005) groups

Country	Party	Van Cott (2005) classification	Trajectory group	Observed vote %				
				E1	E2	E3	E4	E5
Bolivia	MAS	Successful	Explosive	20.9	53.7			
Ecuador	Pachakutik	Successful	Flat	7.1	2.1	4.2		
Bolivia	ASP	Successful	Flop ^a	3.7	0			
Bolivia	MIP	Moderate viability	Flop	6.1	2.2			
Venezuela	PUAMA	Moderate viability	NA ^b	0.02	0.04	0.1		
Bolivia	Eje Pachakuti	Low viability	Flop	1.1	0.8	0		
Bolivia	MRTK	Low viability	Flop	0.9	0			
Bolivia	MRTKL	Low viability	Flop	2.2	1.6	0.6		
Bolivia	MITKA	Low viability	NA ^c					
Bolivia	MITKA-1	Low viability	NA ^c					
Ecuador	MIAJ	Low viability	Flop	0.1	0.4			

Note. E1–E5, Election 1 through Election 5; ASP, Alianza Social Patriótica; PUAMA, Pueblo Unido Multiétnico de Amazonas; MRTK, Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaj Katari; MRTKL, Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaj Katari de Liberación; MITKA, Movimiento Indio Tupaj Katari; MITKA-1, Movimiento Indio Tupaj Katari Uno; MIAJ, Movimiento Independiente Amauta Jatari.

^aCompeted as part of Izquierda Unida.

^bExcluded because a one-province party.

^cExcluded because completed in elections under nondemocratic regime.

Table 7 Frequency of new parties, by country and by type

	<i>Number of parties of each type</i>				
	<i>Explosives</i>	<i>Contenders</i>	<i>Flash</i>	<i>Flat</i>	<i>Flop</i>
Bolivia	2	1	3	2	26
Chile	0	4	0	0	14
Ecuador	0	3	2	4	14
Venezuela	1	0	7	3	212
Venezuela (1958–1988)	0	0	4	2	94
Venezuela (1993–2005)	1	0	3	1	118

the content of Table 4 by country rather than by trajectory group, the country-level diversity becomes clear (see Table 7). In the two most volatile party systems of Bolivia and Ecuador, parties of nearly all new types have arisen since the transition to democracy. Ecuador lacks only a party of the explosive type, but parties of that type are extremely rare. Chile, on the other hand, has new parties of only two types: contenders and flops. The Chilean result is consistent with what a project using a conventional dichotomous technique might have yielded. Like similarly stable party systems in advanced democracies, Chile has the two types of parties that conform most clearly to the conventional notions of success and failure. Thus, despite the superiority of the latent trajectory modeling approach on its merits, the conventional approach can produce the same result in party systems that are highly stable.

Venezuela, however, offers a cautionary tale. Despite the fact that country experts on Venezuela have long recognized the instability and unrest at the margins of the party system from 1958 to 1988, conventional wisdom on Venezuela during this period most commonly considers it to have been a stable two-party system. Some of our most influential metrics of party system stability concur, as, for example, the classification of Venezuela as an “institutionalized party system” by Mainwaring and Scully (1995). The frequency of new party formation and the diversity of party types both before and after the collapse of the two main parties in the 1990s suggest that *even in systems with low volatility, the latent trajectory modeling approach may yield intermediate categories between success and failure*. Four of Venezuela’s seven flash parties entered during the 1960s, as the new party system was consolidating; two of its three flat parties first entered electoral politics during the 1970s. The two elections from the 1980s were the only ones during which only new parties of the flop type electorally challenged the two main parties, but even then there were 49 such entrants. In sum, by using the latent trajectory approach, a study of new party performance can test rather than assume the types of parties that populate a party system in all circumstances, both volatile and not.

Second, this paper demonstrates that we can use a much richer set of data in studying electoral performance. Some early studies have used the country as the unit of analysis—in some countries, successful new parties arise, whereas in others they do not (Harmel and Robertson 1985, Rice and Van Cott 2006). Not surprisingly, these studies find system-level variables, such as the electoral system, to be predictive of success and failure. Other studies have observed parties at only the first election in determining success or failure (Hug 2001). A single point of observation misses several important distinctions, especially if two or more sets of parties enter with a similar level of voter support, but evolve along divergent trajectories. The implication of looking at more detailed data of a party’s performance, rather than at a country or a party’s single time point, is that it places the analytic lens more squarely on the party as the unit of analysis and implies that party-level variables may take on greater explanatory power.

Third, this project lends support to the argument, made most systematically by Hug (2001), that a generalized sample of new parties across countries and over time is preferable to samples that look primarily at single-case studies (in Latin American Keck 1992, Bruhn 1997, Ellner 1988), single-country studies (Scully 1992), or single-party family studies (Collier and Collier 1991; Hawkins 2003; Rice and Van Cott 2006; Van Cott 2005). Two errors may result from these case selection techniques: cases that appear similar from within the narrower perspective may in fact be different; or cases that appear unique from the narrower perspective may in fact be part of a larger class of parties.

As the case comparisons with Van Cott (2005) above in Table 6 demonstrate, the (ethnic) party-family approach risks concluding that parties are similar when in fact they are different. Van Cott argues that Ecuador's Pachakutik and Bolivia's MAS are two cases of party success. The explanatory project is then to determine why they succeeded while other attempts failed. In this paper, using a larger sample of parties across party families, I find that the electoral performance of these two parties is qualitatively distinct. The implication is that, rather than explaining why they both succeed, we must explain why one is "explosive" and the other is languishing on a "flat" trajectory.

Furthermore, the family-party research design obscures the fact that in addition to MAS, there are other explosive parties in the region, including PODEMOS in Bolivia and Chavez' MVR in Venezuela. The explanation for MAS' spectacular success may have less to do with factors related to its roots in an indigenous movement and more to do with other party-level variables shared by PODEMOS and MVR or with country-level variables shared by Venezuela and Peru.

There are four important implications of these results for the larger literature on new party performance. First, the results alter the explanatory goal. They suggest that large-N comparative studies come to terms with what small-N studies of party performance have long held: there are more than two distinctive performance profiles and this variation will require more nuance or entirely new explanatory models, at least in the contexts where these distinctive types are observed.

Second and related, the fact that certain party systems are able to generate multiple types of performance profiles suggests that features of the parties themselves have a large and independent influence on performance, over and above system-level variables. In many instances, the system has been relatively fixed, yet parties of more than two different types have emerged. In particular, it may be promising to bring together the insights of the older literature on party organization and the newer insights of the literature on party-voter linkages (Kitschelt 2000) to show how parties pursue alternative strategies with respect to the types of organizations they build in order to mobilize voter support. An organization-centered approach may not elaborate on the extent or manner that issues and social or economic divides drive party competition—for example, Gibson cautions "If our concern is to distinguish between parties in ways that are relevant to the broader conflicts of society, an organization-centered approach provides little to work with" (1996, 19)—yet, there is ample evidence that many party systems in Latin America and elsewhere lack partisan divides which articulate broad social conflicts (Coppedge 1998; Dix 1989; Luna and Zechmeister 2005; Rosas 2005). Though it lacks the normatively appealing presumption that party systems are programmatically structured, alternative party-building strategies on the more mundane features of party organization may be highly influential on the electoral performance of a new party (Coppedge 1994; Levitsky 2001; Mainwaring 1999).

Third, an explanatory model using the results of this approach as the dependent variable would need to accommodate the fact that they form a categorical variable. One promising and relatively simple quantitative solution would be to take the party group classifications

derived here and then use multinomial logit to predict group membership, with the party as the unit of analysis. This would be suitable to answer a question such as What predicts that parties will be of the explosive type rather than of each of the other types? Alternatively, Nagin (2005) introduces strategies available from within the latent trajectory group modeling approach. This would be appropriate if the research question concerns predictors that alter the intercept, slope, or higher order parameters of the trajectories themselves. For example, one might ask whether an exogenous shock, such as an economic crisis, alters the slope of a governing party's trajectory.

Finally, and most importantly, the study yields a result that is substantively interesting and provokes interesting new research questions. For example, parties of the "explosive" type are only found in two of the four party systems: Bolivia and Venezuela. Furthermore, the three explosive parties all emerged following recent party system collapses. This suggests that not only is the explosive trajectory distinctive from the conventional type of success we observe among new parties, but that it only arises under very particular circumstances that may have to do with representation failures and the openness of party systems to outsider candidates. Also, one may ask whether the patterns found in Latin America will be similar or different from the patterns found in other emerging democratic systems and, especially, in Eastern Europe where a large literature exists on the process of party and party system formation and consolidation.

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