Does Increased Party Fragmentation Lead to Electoral Reform? A Cross-National, New Zealand, and Canadian Approach

By Matthew Risley

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In this paper, I set out to better understand the relationship between political parties and electoral systems in democracies. Electoral systems are the methods through which citizens' votes are translated into representation in government, while political parties provide an organized expression of political beliefs, facilitating democratic representation. By their nature, these two concepts must be related and interact with each other. Parties must utilize the electoral system in place to obtain votes and thus power. They also, once in power, are able to manipulate – to varying degrees, according to the power afforded to the legislature in a given country – the electoral system employed in the country.

Though there is far from a consensus, the dominant idea regarding the interaction between these two is one of simple cause and effect. First enumerated by Maurice Duverger in 1954, the general conception is that the electoral system determines the characteristics of the party system, e.g. the size and number of political parties within the system. According to this school of thought, Single Member District plurality systems (SMDP)[1] (systems in which each electoral district contains one seat and the candidate with the most votes wins) create two-party systems, while Proportional Representation (PR)[2] leads to fragmented multi-party systems. It seems, then, to follow quite logically that a PR system with a lower vote threshold to achieve representation would lead to a number of smaller parties

However, there is a strong subset of literature that believes the interaction between party systems and electoral systems is the reverse of the dominant belief, that party systems actually

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[1] My analysis largely deals with single member district systems, of which, the overwhelming majority are SMDP. This system is referred to in the literature by many different names and abbreviations. Because of the dominance of SMDP, I will refer to single member district systems as plurality systems and abbreviate it as SMDP in this paper.

[2] Please see Appendix A for a more detailed look at the systems pertinent to this paper.

shape the electoral system. It is within this school of thought that my analysis takes place; in this paper, I posit that an increasing number of political parties is associated with change to a more proportional electoral system.

This school of thought, myself included, does not deny that there is no effect from the electoral system on party structure, but instead takes a more actor-based approach to its analysis. It is because of the above-discussed effects of electoral systems that a party would fight to change the electoral system in its favor. I have attempted to analyze the validity of the idea that party systems are the main causal factor in electoral system development. This paper analyzes a large amount of new data, as well as attempts to build on the arguments of the likes of Grumm (1958) and Colomer (2005).

In order to analyze the empirical relationship between the effective number of political parties and the effective threshold, I conduct a two-pronged approach. First, I employ regression analysis to analyze the empirical association between the number of political parties and the electoral threshold, with a number of iterations and control variables. Then I conduct qualitative analyses of case studies in New Zealand and Canada. I pay special attention to the circumstances surrounding debates and decisions around electoral change in these countries – New Zealand changed from a plurality to a Mixed-Member-Proportional (MMP) system in 1993, while Canada has debated moving away from plurality throughout the 21st century, but has yet to change their electoral system. These case studies allow me to analyze differences in institutions, domestic politics, timeframes, election results, economic factors, government structure, and many other factors that could explain why New Zealand switched from SMDP to MMP, while the other has not, despite their similarities.

There will not be a single reason around which states decide to build or change their electoral systems, and it would be a fool's errand to attempt to prove this. I do not pretend to argue that the fracturing of the party structure is the sole reason behind electoral change. This paper is an effort to further magnify this effect, in order to gain a deeper understanding of its role in the larger overall causes of electoral system formulation. After analyzing an extensive amount of new data, I hope to establish that it is a necessary condition to affect electoral change in democracies, though it is only a part of a complicated web of interacting factors in influencing electoral change.

Before detailing the methodology and design of my analysis, I will review the existing literature, in an attempt to illuminate the context the findings in this paper exist within and to more fully describe the different schools of thought regarding the interaction between these two systems.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Commentary on the causes of shaping electoral systems, as well as their effects in turn on the party system structure of a country, have existed for hundreds of years. Henry Droop, the inventor of the Droop quota for assigning seats used in some PR systems, wrote about the effects of plurality voting on the number of political parties or candidates in 1881 (As noted in Riker 1982, 756). Undoubtedly, questions about the factors shaping electoral systems have been raised since they came into being.

The literature on the subject has, as one would expect, expanded massively in size and complexity since the days of Henry Droop. Different approaches to the subject have emerged, with Krister Lundell categorizing three main approaches to studying the factors influencing electoral system choice: a rational perspective, a historical and cultural one, and an institutional perspective (2010). Of course, this is not the definitive organization of research on this subject, but I have chosen to employ it because it is a logical, effective, and relatively simple manner of organizing the vastly different manners of inquiry within the subfield of electoral systems' research.

The rational perspective contends that electoral systems are designed deliberately by actors and structures in countries according to their own conditions and needs. This could be concerned with the effects ethnic and cultural diversity or fragmentation, size and population, or actors' decision making. My research is within the framework of the actors' decision making aspect of the rational perspective, and I will provide a more detailed analysis of the history of research in this tradition in the coming pages.

The historical and cultural approach maintains that the form of electoral systems and other institutions are reflections of their historical and cultural backgrounds. This could come in

the form of a colonial legacy, and thus a shared electoral system with a country's former colonizer. A country could also be influenced by regional or temporal diffusion. For example, when South and Central American countries first gained their independence, they adopted the presidential model of the United States (Lijphart 1992). Similarly, Western Europe has followed a pattern of adopting proportional systems from plurality or majority ones since the twentieth century. The adoption of new electoral systems could also be explained by temporal trends of democratization, such as colonial inheritance of electoral systems in the second wave of democratization or electoral reforms after the third wave of democratization (Lundell 2011).

In a particularly interesting paper within this conceptualization, Cusack, Iversen, and Soskice argue that the forces behind electoral system development are largely economic (2007). They replicate and retest a model used by Carles Boix in 1999 (detailed below), proposing that "the right adopted PR when their support for consensual regulatory frameworks, especially those of labor markets and skill formation where co-specific investments were important, outweighed their opposition to the redistributive consequences; this occurred in countries with previously densely organized local economies" (Cusack et al. 2007). Thus, as illustrated by this perspective, the history of a country influences the decision-making of political actors and leads to the adoption of different political systems accordingly.

The institutional approach asserts that electoral systems, as a smaller aspect of broader political institutions, are shaped by constitutional design. Particularly of note are the decisions between presidential and parliamentary forms of government and between a plurality electoral system and a PR one. For example, presidentialism affects the party system in a majoritarian manner, as only the largest parties could hope to claim the highest sole executive position (Lijphart 1991, 73).

Recalling back to the discussion of the rational perspective of electoral system formation, I will now discuss the literature within this tradition in a more detailed and thorough manner. Though the findings from my analysis interplay with each of these formulations in various ways, my method of analysis could be most accurately classified within the rational perspective.

Perhaps the most important and influential work in shaping the field's discussion and analysis of these effects was published in 1954 by Maurice Duverger. His two main hypotheses, as classified by Riker, are Duverger's Law and Duverger's hypothesis. Duverger's Law states, "the simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system" (As noted in Riker 1982, 754). Duverger's hypothesis posits that, "the simple-majority system with second ballot and proportional representation favors multi-partyism" (1954, 239).

There is far from a consensus on the accuracy of these two assertions, with some disputing the importance of the electoral system when compared to social cleavages, others questioning its empirical validity, and others disputing the direction of causality between the party and electoral systems. However, as Cox points out, though there is quite a large amount of debate and criticism of Duverger's claims, scholars do not believe that these points "compel their abandonment" (1997, 27). Particularly, Duverger's idea of PR's fractionalizing effect on political parties has been researched extensively (See Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989, among others).

In 1994, Arend Lijphart conducted an extensive study of electoral and party systems on a set of twenty-seven democracies from 1945 to 1990 through comparable-cases, cross-tabulation, and regression analyses. His methodology provides a great deal of inspiration for my own analysis, which will be detailed in the following section. Though his aim was quite different from my own, attempting to measure disproportionality caused by choice of electoral system, he

also analyzed the links between electoral systems and the characteristics of the party system. In this aim, he found that there is an extremely weak relationship between the electoral system and the effective number of *elective* parties (parties who receive a portion of the vote share) and a much stronger relationship between electoral systems and the effective number of *parliamentary* parties (parties who receive a portion of the legislative seat share). This influences my selection of variables, which will be detailed in the following section. Reflecting the overarching trend of the literature, his analysis places electoral systems as a *cause* of party system configuration.

Stein Rokkan, one of the earlier and most important scholars working within the rational framework, hypothesized that Proportional Representation emerged in Europe due to the emergence of a broad working class empowered by expanding suffrage (1970). He emphasized the important role that ethnic fractionalization played in the initial proliferation, as well as ascribing to Karl Braunias' idea of a second, "antisocialist" wave of PR proliferation (Rokkan 1970, 157; Braunias, 1932). Under this conceptualization, the initial proliferation of PR before World War I was an attempt to give representation to minority groups within the country, and thus help prevent internal strife. The second wave came as labour parties surged onto the scene as the franchise expanded and urbanization increased. Switching to PR guaranteed some form of minority representation, rather than risking no representation as a result of consistent losses under a majority system.

Carles Boix attempts to build upon Rokkan's theoretical ideas and discover what causes the wide degree of variation between electoral systems in the paper discussed above (1999). In this paper, he analyzes the evolution of electoral systems in twenty-three countries from 1875-1990. Boix utilizes Lijphart's Effective Electoral Threshold measurement as his dependent variable and analyzes the effect of a number of explanatory variables on effective Electoral

Threshold through regression analysis. He argues that the choice of electoral system comes from the current ruling political parties, in order to maximize their representation, and that a change in the electoral market could cause the current ruling political parties to change the electoral system. The phenomena to which he attributes the changing electoral market during the time period he analyzed are,

> "the extension of universal suffrage (Western Europe in the 1910s or new democratic nations in the postwar period); the introduction of competitive elections (Eastern Europe and several African nations in the 1990s); a massive political realignment among voters (the rise of socialism at the turn of the century) ... and a high turnover in party organizations" (Boix 1999; 621).

In Boix's framework, actors (political parties), are determining the electoral systems in a manner to best guarantee their current and future electoral success. This actor-focused approach falls within the rational approach that I ascribe to and his methodology also carried a significant influence on my own, which will be detailed in the following section.

There is also a long tradition of dissent that believes party systems determine the choice of electoral system. In a 1958 paper, John Grumm attempts to collect empirical evidence in an attempt to either prove or disprove Duverger's theories. Grumm analyzes 5 different countries in Western Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and Germany) for different, overlapping ranges of years (earliest being 1876, latest being 1955). He notes that this is not a representative sample, but it is one in which each country has experienced both PR and plurality systems. To test Duverger's[3] "mechanical" factor – that the system itself creates disproportional results for smaller parties – he compares the parties' vote percentage with their percentage of seats in the legislature. If this mechanical effect did exist, one would expect smaller parties to be underrepresented and larger parties to be overrepresented. He tests Duverger's "psychological"

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[3] Note: Duverger formalized this concept, but was not the first to discuss it. (Grumm 1958).

factor – an idea that voters are discouraged from voting for smaller parties because of their smaller chance of winning representation – by analyzing the vote share of under-represented parties before and after a country's switch from plurality to PR. If this factor works as Duverger hypothesized, one would expect that under-represented parties would see an increase in their popular vote totals after the switch to a more representative system, because voters are less likely to feel as though their vote is wasted if voting for a smaller party.

Grumm does not find empirical support for either factor through his analysis, and though his sample cannot be said as representative and definitive, he posits a very important idea. He notes:

> Among the countries examined here, we have noted that Belgium had essentially a three party system before it adopted P. R. in 1900, that Denmark had a four-party system during most of the period in which it employed a British-type of electoral system, that Norway had at least three major parties on the eve of the adoption of P. R. in 1921, that Switzerland had four parties in the last elections under the plurality system, and that Germany had anywhere from a six- to a twelve-party system depending on the criteria used to define it (Grumm 1958, 374).

He even goes on to state that "eventually, one or more parties begin to demand proportional representation as a means of reducing the inequities and arbitrariness of the older electoral system" and once they are able to form a majority in parliament, they will enact Proportional Representation (Grumm 1958, 375). This point is particularly important in my qualitative analysis of Canada and New Zealand and will be further explored and contradicted during that section. Grumm's conclusions lead him to posit that the causal relationship between party systems and electoral systems might indeed be the inverse of what Duverger has posited: that electoral systems are a consequence of party systems.

Josep Colomer took a further step into analyzing the effects of party systems on electoral systems. In his 2005 paper, he argues that Duverger's laws are backwards; that party systems are what cause electoral systems. His methodology and data work alongside my own, but differ in a few key places. Within this paper, he develops a "'behavioral-institutional equilibrium', which can be produced by actors with the ability both to choose behavioral strategies … and also to choose institutions regulating and rewarding those behaviors" (Colomer 2005). He analyzes 219 elections in 87 countries since the 19th century until 2002 for his data, looking at the effective number of political parties (using Laakso and Taagepera's 1997 measurement, which I discuss later). He posits that majority systems will be established or maintained if the effective number of political parties is between one and four and that proportional representation systems will not be enacted when the effective number of political parties is below two. He uses the number of *elective* political parties as a proxy for the threat faced by the majority parties, as they illustrate the vote distribution, even if there is underrepresentation due to the electoral system.

Colomer distills his data down to elections in processes of electoral system change in the 87 countries. Colomer finds that in 37 changes from plurality to PR (including mixed systems), the average effective number of political parties is 3.9. He emphasizes that this finding refutes the idea that plurality rule leads to a two-party system. Each of these instances is an example of coordination failure. He then uses a probit analysis to find the likelihood that a country that has a plurality system in period t would change to proportional representation in period $t + 1$. He finds a base value for change of 27% and that this number rises above 50% (to 61%) when there are four political parties (Colomer 2005). Within his formulation, an important point to note is that plurality systems are more likely to create coordination failures between actors and thus split into

more than two-party systems. He further develops this theory to predict that these strategic party choices lead to a general trend toward proportional representation over time (2005).

In his same book from which I have borrowed the classification of methods of research into the history of electoral system selection and development, Krister Lundell attempts to explain electoral choice through a contextual, rather than an actor-based lens (2010). In this attempt, he hopes to determine the likelihood of systems being chosen, rather than which system is best – something that will depend greatly on the individual circumstances surrounding a country. His sample is choices of electoral systems by countries between 1945 and 2007. Within his section discussing party systems' effects on electoral systems, Lundell critiques Colomer's decision to include the first electoral experience of a nation within the "stable" subsection of elections, as there is a higher chance of electoral change after the first election than the second election. He then conducts a similar analysis to that of Colomer, using electoral systems rather than elections as his observations. In his sample, democracies with plurality systems had a mean of 2.60 EPP, with those changing from plurality to mixed and PR having a mean of 3.66 EPP. The mean of proportional systems was 4.11 EPP and of those that switched from PR to plurality or mixed, 5.18 EPP. However, it is important to note that there are only two instances of a switch from PR to plurality included in this sample, and four instances of a switch to a mixed system, making the sample size exceedingly small and most likely unrepresentative. Lundell concludes that party systems are not a main determinant of electoral system choice, but a non-insignificant one, and one amongst many (2010).

Having now established the context in which my thesis exists, I will now discuss the methods through which I conducted my analysis.

Chapter 3 - Research Design and Case Selection

<u>Brief Overview of the Research Design</u>

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, I will be conducting a two-pronged analysis in this paper. This will consist of a quantitative and qualitative section. Within the quantitative section, I will be conducting regression analysis of a large cross-national selection of data in order to understand the empirical correlation between the number of political parties and the elective threshold. In broad terms. I use a lagged variable and attempt to see if an increase in political parties in time t [4] is associated with a decrease in the elective threshold (which represents an increase in proportionality or a switch to a more proportional electoral system) in time $t + 1$. The variables I use to accomplish this goal will be described in the following section.

The qualitative case studies of Canada and New Zealand are much more focused on the individual circumstances of each nation surrounding their respective legislatures' decisions to change or maintain their electoral systems. I will briefly be reviewing each country's history of voting, as well as the similarities and differences between their governments and electoral systems. Then, I will look at the circumstances surrounding particularly important elections, as well as their results, in both countries. The end goal of this analysis is to ascertain what key differences between the two countries could be attributed to causing starkly different outcomes in electoral reform. Additionally, aspects that differ between the two countries, such as federalism in Canada versus a more centralized government in New Zealand, provide interesting variables to include in the quantitative analysis.

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[4] In this case, a time period t is a singular election and $t + 1$ is the next election.

The dataset I use includes a wide variety of democratic elections from the years 1980 to 2020. Further detail of the dataset, including reasoning behind inclusion and exclusion of observations, will be included in the upcoming sections.

<u>Operationalization of Concepts</u>

Though measuring the type of electoral system a country employs is quite easy – simply assigning it a categorical variable is possible – this simple categorization is not particularly useful. Though there are two main types of electoral systems, Proportional Representation (PR) and Plurality systems, there are subsets of each with varying rules, thresholds, and processes, as well as mixed systems, which combine aspects of both. Both the legal and effective vote threshold necessary to obtain a seat in the legislature vary widely across PR systems. In this categorical definition, the only possible measurement is a change from one system to another, the most extreme version of alteration. Any smaller changes are overlooked.

Thus, because numerous institutional changes can be made[5], the best way to capture change quantitatively is through a measurement of Effective Electoral Thresholds. I will be using a variation of Lijphart, Taagepera, and Shugart's version of the variable. Lijphart builds his Effective Threshold from Taagepera and Shugart's conceptualization; it is calculated by obtaining the mean of the upper threshold (the amount of votes needed to guarantee a seat) and the lower threshold (the minimum number of votes needed to obtain a seat, in the most optimal outcome) (Lijphart 1994, 26-27; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). Taagepera, Shugart, and Lijphart's variables each make a significant number of approximations in order to create the

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[5] This can take the form of either a change in the number of seats in parliament (resulting in a subsequent change in the average district magnitude) or in a combination or reduction in the number of electoral districts (e.g. a change mimicking Israel's single nation-wide district).

variable, which are unnecessary to detail here.[6] Lijphart's effective threshold variable is as follows:

$$T_{ef} = \frac{50\%}{(M+1)} + \frac{50\%}{2M}$$

Where M is the district magnitude, e.g., the number of seats available in the district.

This appears to be quite a good measure, and it certainly is when measuring PR, however, it does not accurately describe the thresholds for plurality or majority systems (when $M = 1$, $T_{eff} = 50\%$ which is the upper threshold in these elections). Lijphart maneuvers around this by assuming that the number of candidates in these elections is rather small, leading to a lower threshold of 20 to 25 percent (If four or five candidates are competing, in the most optimal distribution, a candidate could win the seat with only 20 or 25 percent, respectively). This would lead to an effective threshold of about 35 percent, which he uses as a rough estimation for every plurality system in his study (Lijphart 1994, 26-27).

This leads to a problem for my purposes. It creates discontinuity within the dependent variable I hope to analyze, making it harder to analyze any changes smaller than a complete change of the electoral system. Luckily, Taagepera and Lijphart themselves provide an alternative measurement in the very same book in which Lijphart formulates his effective threshold formula. In his notes to Chapter 2, Lijphart writes that Taagepera suggested a reformulation of the index in the following manner (1994, 183).

$$T_{ef} = \frac{25\%(3+\frac{1}{M})}{M+1}$$

Omitting the 1/M term acts similarly to Lijphart's provision that when $M = 1$, $T_{ef} = 35\%$, and results in:

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[6] See Appendix B for a detailed description of the assumptions inherent to these variables.

$$T_{ef} = \frac{75\%}{M+1}$$

This is a simple formula that solves the issue of discontinuity and provides a reasonable estimate

for single-member districts: 37.5%. Furthermore, Lijphart states that this reformulated index and

his own are so similar that it makes little difference which is used, and virtually no difference

when used in his regression analyses (1994, 183). Due to its help in solving discontinuities, as

well as its remarkable similarity to the most prevalent formulations of the variable, I will be

using the Lijphart-Taagepera formula to determine the Effective Electoral Threshold. By using

this measurement, I can observe smaller changes in threshold within PR systems, as well as

larger switches from plurality to PR.

It is important to note here that some nations have a legal threshold, which parties must

reach to gain representation in parliament. The most notable example of this is in Germany,

where a party must obtain 5% of the votes in order to obtain representation. In single tier

electoral systems with a legal threshold, I will be following the practice of Lijphart and assigning

the higher of the legal threshold and the calculated effective threshold as the effective threshold

in the dataset (1994, 37). Logically, this makes sense: if the legal threshold is higher than the

effective threshold, parties still need to achieve the legal threshold. However, if the legal

threshold is lower than the effective threshold, they would need to achieve a larger vote share

than is legally required to obtain representation.

This becomes increasingly complex in cases of Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)

systems, where there are multiple levels of election. The effective electoral threshold will still be

calculated at 37.5% due to the first level of seats elected by SMDP. However, with a legal

threshold at 5% like in Germany or New Zealand, a party only needs to achieve 5% of the party

vote to obtain representation due to the nature of the MMP system, meaning that the effective

electoral threshold is 5% in reality. This issue is easily sidestepped for MMP countries with a legal threshold, because that becomes the effective threshold for representation. Thus, for MMP systems, the defined legal threshold will be used in place of the calculated effective threshold within my dataset.

Having determined the measurement for our dependent variable, we must now determine the measure we will employ for the number of political parties, our main independent variable. This leaves us with another set of questions about how to measure and weigh political parties. Should the Green Party in the United States be attributed to the title of "third party?" It has received hundreds of thousands of votes in congressional elections, yet has failed to obtain a seat in the House of Representatives. Likewise, how much weight should the Liberal Democrats of the United Kingdom be given in their parliament? Are they a third party, or could the United Kingdom be better understood as a two-and-a-half-party system? This conundrum of weighting is solved by the Effective Number of Political Parties measurement.

There have been a number of efforts to measure the number of parties. In 1979, Laakso and Taagepera formalized the most widely used measurement of the number of parties, the above-mentioned Effective Number of Political Parties. It is as follows:

Calculated on the basis of vote share:

$$N_v = \frac{1}{\Sigma v_i^2}$$

Calculated on the basis of seat share:

$$N_s = \frac{1}{\Sigma s_i^2}$$

Where v_i or s_i is the fractional share of votes or seats, respectively, of the i-th political party (Laakso and Taagepera 1979; Noted in Lijphart 1994, 68). For example, if there existed a two-party system in which both parties received exactly half of the vote, the Laakso-Taagepera index would give an effective number of 2.00 political parties. Whereas if three parties existed, receiving 0.5, 0.25, and 0.25 of the vote, respectively, the index would give an effective number of 2.63 parties. Multiple efforts have been made to improve this measure since its initial formulation. In the above examples, the resulting figure makes intuitive sense given the distribution of votes. Molinar proposed an alternative measure, which generally reduces the impact of smaller parties (1991). Dunleavy and Boucek further attempted to refine this formula to remove mathematical quirks that could be misconstrued for genuine party formulation changes (or vice versa) (2003). Finally, Golosov further attempts a measurement more intuitively agreeable to the dominance of larger parties (2010).

However, as these formulations have grown more removed from the Laakso-Taagepera index, they have grown increasingly computationally complicated, with little improvement in actual value as a tool for measuring the number of political parties. There rarely exists a difference between the measurements of more than a decimal place. Moreover, the true meaning of the number of effective political parties is inherently context-dependent. These attempts to mathematically improve the precision of measurement miss the forest for the trees; shortcomings of this measurement can be noticed and explained intuitively by analyzing the actual distribution of votes. Due to its relatively simple yet empirically effective status, as well as its prevalence in the field, I will employ Laakso and Taagepera's Effective Number of Political Parties (ENPP or ENEP) as my main independent variable of measurement.

Having decided on Laakso and Taagepera's formulation, it is then necessary to decide whether to calculate this figure on the basis of vote or seat share – whether to use the effective number of *electoral* parties or the effective number of *parliamentary* (legislative) parties. This decision revolves around theoretical considerations about political party formulation and bargaining. If we are to believe that a smaller party that pushes for electoral change gaining a foothold in the legislature is a necessary condition for electoral change, then only an increase in the effective number of *parliamentary* parties would be a potential foreshadowing of electoral change. However, if it is possible that a party with a platform of electoral change only requires a significant vote share, regardless of their parliamentary success, to influence changes in the electoral system or alterations of more dominant party's platforms, then the effective number of *electoral* parties is of great interest to us. Because the extent and depth of this relationship is currently unknown to us, I will be conducting my analysis with each variable, to measure the potential difference in correlation with the electoral threshold between the two. I make special note of the difference in values.

Taagepera suggests further alterations to the formulation of ENPP in a 1997 paper, which would more accurately calculate the "other" category for countries that lump all small and independent parties into one category. However, this alteration should only be of any interest to us in small edge cases. I check my regressions with these alterations and note if it changes any of their outcomes.[7]

Within the theoretical framework in which I am analyzing the relationship between parties and electoral systems, it is necessary to involve a temporal element. As Leslie Lipson stated, "chronologically, as well as logically, the party system is prior to the electoral system" (1964, 343). The chronological order of events is extremely important. Changes to the bargaining

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[7] See Appendix C for more details.

environment due to the proliferation of new parties, either within the parliament or simply in votes received, cannot be expressed and understood within the same election in which they take place. If electoral reform is an important topic of an election in a given year, time t, then the effects of implementation can only be noticed in the next election in time $t + 1$ or even further in the future. Thus, in an attempt to capture the chronological nature of the effect of an increase in elective and/or parliamentary parties, I will be utilizing a lagged version of the effective electoral threshold in my analysis. I will vary the length of the lag from one to three elections, seeing if the impact of changing the length of time between a change in the effective number of political parties and the measurement of effective electoral threshold is important.

Along with these two main variables, I include a number of control variables. This is an attempt, albeit an imperfect one, to account for the sociological, historical, or cultural explanations of electoral and party system formulation as discussed by a number of scholars mentioned above, among others (Grumm 1958; Lipson 1964; Rokkan 1970; Cusack et al. 2007; Lundell 2010). These control variables are as follows: GDP per capita, Land area, Population, the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization, and Federalism[8].

The most complex of these control variables is the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF). This variable is taken from Drazanova's dataset, which contains annual ethnic fractionalization estimates for 162 countries for the years 1945–2013 (2020). I have selected this measurement for one main reason. Though there are many different ways economists and political scientists have attempted to measure and quantify ethnic fractionalization (not to mention religious and linguistic fractionalization), this dataset contains the most complete measurements within my time frame of analysis. For example, though

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[8] Note: I am not including a factor variable of country due to the high multicollinearity of the country factors with each of the control variables. Because each of the factors differs according to country and time, the country factor will be very correlated with each of them, which affects the reliability of the regression model.

Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, and Wacziarg's Fractionalization article provides

separate measures for the three different fractionalizations, its 2003 publication date precludes

almost half of the observations within my dataset, while Drazanova's precludes only the last

seven years.[9]

The degree of ethnic fractionalization is calculated as follows:

$$EF_{ct} = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} S_i^2$$

Where EF_{ct} is "the level of ethnic fractionalization in country c at time t, i indexes ethnic groups,

and S_i is the proportion of the population in unit c belonging to ethnic group i (i = 1, …, n) at

time t" (Drazanova 2020). Thus, the fractionalization can range from 0, where all members of a

country are part of the same ethnic group, to 1, where every single individual is in their own

ethnic group. Though the formulation is quite complicated, it is useful enough to understand it

ordinally: a higher number means a larger degree of ethnic fractionalization.

Drazanova importantly notes that changing definitions and identities of ethnic groups can

alter the data, and this is further complicated due to categories such as "mixed race," "mestizo"

or "mulatto," that might overlap, be replaced by one another, or be removed entirely as identities

change over time. There is little to be done at this stage regarding this complication, but it is

important to note and be conscious of it while interpreting the data and subsequent results of

analysis.

Federalism is a dummy variable that I created using data from The Forum of Federations

Handbook of Federal Countries 2020 and the UN's Peacemaker's comparative table on

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[9] Note: I am able to estimate the values of the next 10 years through a method of Last Observation Carried Forward, but this will make the assumption that the last value of fractionalization will remain more or less the same over the estimated period. See the Quantitative analysis section for more on this topic.

federalism (Griffiths, Ann, et al 2020; UN Peacemaker). As Nicole Taylor and Dr. Joel Selway stated in a 2013 paper, there is a lack of available datasets coded on federalism.[10] I was unable to find a dataset containing comprehensive information about the federalist systems among current democracies. Therefore, I have simply created a dummy variable coded as "1" for countries that are identified as federalist by the two sources above, and "0" otherwise. This leaves much to be desired, as a categorical, or even a continuous variable representing the degree of centralization across federalist nations would be of great interest to me and those interested in the potential effects of federalism on electoral reform. Taylor and Selway's formulations of federalism were coded according to each country's constitutions and would provide a much more accurate measurement. It is regrettable that this dataset is inaccessible. However, I do believe that including a simple binary variable is more useful than it is harmful, as the existence of federalism provides a strong theoretical argument against reform to a more representative electoral system – an idea that I explore further within the qualitative section of the paper. Future research would do well to analyze the issue of federalism in much greater detail.

I include GDP per capita, Area, Population, and Ethnic Fractionalization as controls largely because of the significance afforded them by Rokkan (1970) and detailed and tested by Boix (1999). Rokkan argues, "In linguistically and religiously divided societies, majority elections could clearly threaten the continued existence of the political system. The introduction of some element of minority representation came to be seen as an essential step in a strategy of territorial consolidation" (1970, 157). This quote explains the inclusion of ethnic fractionalization as a control variable, as it could be correlated with a decrease in effective threshold. On its own, population was shown to have a positive correlation with the effective electoral threshold in Boix's own analysis (1999). Population and area interact with ethnic

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[10] Ironically, I was unable to find the dataset they created as a response to this absence of data.

fractionalization as well: a larger country with a more spread-out population could alter the effect of ethnic fractionalization. A more centralized country could favor PR over SMD because of the relative locality of its congress members. Larger populations could demand more specialized focuses from their political leaders, leading to more political parties and thus PR.

Federalism is another layer of complexity to these controls. As Boix states, other methods of representation, such as federalism, could impact the extent to which these control variables play a role (1999). It could also play a role in a country's decision to maintain SMDP. If a voting population does not feel adequately represented at the national level, yet is satisfied with its local, state, or provincial government, this could lessen public pressure for electoral reform.

In addition to providing an avenue to analyze the theoretical explanations above, the inclusion of these variables controls for a greater range of effects besides simply the effective number of political parties.

A table of summary statistics for the control variables has been provided below, along with the theoretical effect of each variable on the effective electoral threshold.

Variable	N	N = 867[1]
Area	867	Mean: 888,635 | SD: 2,210,876 | Min: 295 | Max: 9,923,995
GDP per Capita	844	Mean: 21 | SD: 15 | Min: 1 | Max: 89
Population	857	Mean: 39,061,059 | SD: 118,167,330 | Min: 94,677 | Max: 1,295,600,768
HIEF	740	Mean: 0.34 | SD: 0.22 | Min: 0.01 | Max: 0.89
Federalism	867	173 (20%)
[1] Federalism: Count (%)		

Theoretial Effect of Variables on Effective Threshold	
Variable	Expected Correlation
ENPP/ENEP	-
Area	+
GDP Per Capita	-
Population	-
HIEF	-
Federalism	+

Data Sets

In this paper I am not concerned with elections of heads of states, only those of the legislature. If a state's legislature contains an upper and lower house, I have chosen only to analyze the lower house, due to its typical preeminence in policy and decision-making, as well as to standardize the analysis.

The dataset from which the majority of my quantitative analysis is conducted is the *Democratic Electoral Systems* – hereafter DES – dataset, created by Nils-Christian Bormann and Matt Golder. It contains information about the electoral rules and party system size, among other things, for 1563 lower-house parliamentary elections from 1946 until 2020 (2022). I use its included measurements of the effective number of political and elective parties and calculate the effective electoral threshold from the included assembly data.

I decided to utilize a smaller subsection of the temporal range, 1980 to 2020, from the dataset for multiple reasons. For the end date, I wanted to obtain the most up-to-date information that was widely available across the dataset. In regard to the start date, it is – as any temporal start date would be – somewhat arbitrary, though there are a few important reasons behind my choice to select 1980 as the earliest date. The first is the relative abundance of literature and analysis of electoral systems on data up to the year 2000. Although there is no analysis of the

same formulation during this time period, the election data has been combed through and analyzed many times over, and I did not wish to become redundant in my analysis. However, because there could be more general factors that have changed over time since this analysis, I did not wish to exclude less recent data, which leads to my second consideration. The year 1980 provides an abundance of electoral data that has already been analyzed, as well as new data. It also allows for the inclusion of numerous countries that emerged onto the democratic scene throughout the eighties and nineties, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. This date range ensures that I am analyzing a significant amount of new data and allowing more countries to be included, while ensuring that any conclusions cannot be entirely detached from previous research because of our shared data.

Utilizing this dataset and time period, it is then important to further refine the countries whose elections will be used. A country in which there is no democratic stability is not of much use to this analysis; I am not as much concerned with the initial formation of an electoral system as it is the change of an already established one. If there is not sufficient time to establish the electoral system as the legitimate source for and transfer of power, or for political parties to form and engage with each other, it is not useful to include it in this analysis.

Thus, the first consideration is a country's democratic classification. The DES dataset contains five different indicators of democracy: Boix-Miller-Rosato (BMR), Freedom House (FH), Polity$_5$, and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). There is no consensus on how to measure democracy, and the number of elections occurring in countries classified as democratic shifts significantly between the various indicators (Bormann and Golder 2022).
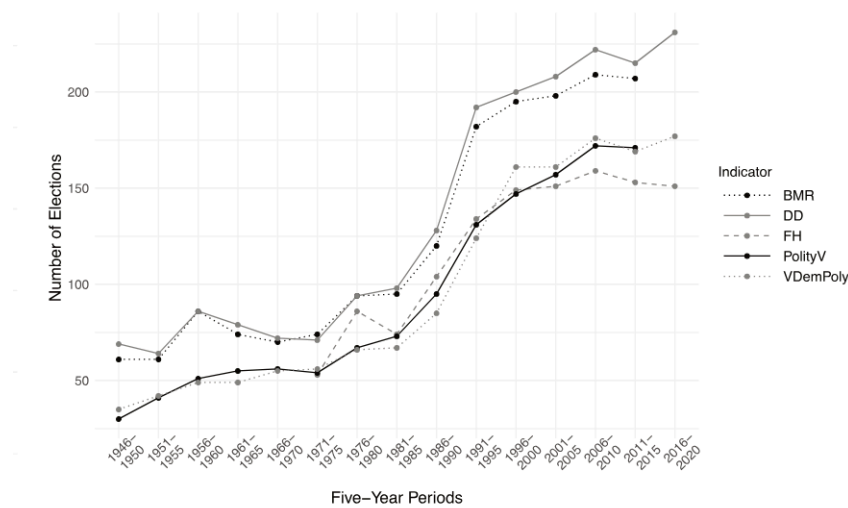
The number of democratic elections by democracy indicator, 1946–2020[11]

This large amount of variation in the classification, measurement, and conceptualization of democracy is interesting, but it is not relevant to my analysis. I predict that utilizing a different indicator would result in nearly identical results, and doing such an analysis remains an option for the future. However, in the interest of simplicity, I have chosen to utilize the V-Dem indicator of democracy. The DES dataset codes a country as democratic if its V-Dem polyarchy score is greater than or equal to 0.5 on a scale from 0-1 (Bormann and Golder 2022). I used this as a determinant of inclusion because V-Dem's own data provides a thorough measure of the control variables mentioned above (besides the HIEF) and the measurement exists for the entire time frame I analyze.

As a baseline, countries that did not satisfy the V-Dem democracy indicator for an election during the period of analysis were dropped. There are numerous countries that emerged from autocracy during this time period and still hold democratic elections, as well as democracies that have followed the inverse pattern. Countries for which this is the case have had elections during their period of autocracy dropped. Building off of this, if a state did not conduct

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[11] Taken from Figure 1 in Bormann and Golder 2022.

three consecutive elections under a democratic regime during the period of analysis, I also dropped it from the dataset. Finally, I also dropped states for which data on the average district magnitude or effective number of parliamentary parties was not available, as they are integral to how I am to analyze the data, and thus analysis of that state within this framework would be unavailable.

The dataset containing the measurement of ethnic fractionalization (HIEF) only contains data up until the year 2013, as mentioned above. This leaves seven years of elections without a measure of ethnic fractionalization. Any regression I conduct that includes this variable will only contain the years 1980 to 2013. To make use of the entire dataset, I, in addition to analyzing a regression with only the available years, estimate the HIEF for the remaining years in each country, utilizing the last observation carried forward (LOCF) method. This means that for the remaining years, the value a country had in 2013 will be carried forward. Of course, this means that the ethnic fractionalization measures for the last decade or so will be slightly inaccurate, however, the change in ethnic fractionalization is small and slow throughout the dataset, meaning that this should not overwhelmingly affect the outcome of the analysis. This should be further reinforced by comparing the effect of the variable over the section of the data for which it is available to the effect over the section in which it is not. If there is no significant change in its effect and significance, this further supports the notion that the LOCF estimation of the HIEF does not skew the data.

Qualitative Case Selection

Alongside these regression results, I hoped to analyze a few states in more detail. While regression analysis can provide an overview of commonalities and correlations between the effective number of political parties and alterations to electoral systems, there is a massive

amount of variance across both time and states. This works to our benefit for understanding

common trends across nations, but to our detriment for understanding the decision-making

behind actors who change electoral laws.

This is an attempt to analyze the context behind certain actions (or inactions) taken by the

legislatures of multiple states across the world. Both of the selected countries have changed, or

proposed changing, their electoral systems. I hope to detail the background of the decision to

table these issues, either for the electorate as a whole or the legislature, the party dynamics, any

alteration to said dynamics, as well as the extent to which different parties supported or opposed

the changes.

I also employ a measurement of disproportionality for the elections and subsequent

allotment of Parliamentary seats during the time period of analysis. Although there are multiple

methods that attempt to measure disproportionality between the distribution of votes and seats, I

will be using Gallagher's Least Squares Index due to its tendency to assign greater weight to

larger discrepancies, as well as its prominence in the field[12] (Gallagher 1991). Additionally, I

follow Lijphart's decision to not include the "other" category of votes into the index (Lijphart

1994). This would create a higher value of the index than is accurate, as although these votes are

likely distributed across a large number of small parties, they will be counted as a single party

(that usually does not obtain representation), thus unduly increasing the disproportionality index.

In this case study analysis, I hope to better understand how bargaining environment

dynamics dictate the success or failure of changes, as well as how alterations to the dynamics

affect these changes. There could also be a number of corroborating factors which affect

electoral changes. This could be a difficulty to change the system itself (some sort of strict

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[12] Iit is also employed by both Canada and New Zealand's special councils on electoral systems to measure disproportionality.

constitutional supremacy), a concentration of parties in geographic areas, the values on which the newer / third parties are being based, the political norms of the country, if the country is federalized or centralized, or the people's willingness or unwillingness to change systems. Hopefully, this small exercise in analysis can provide a glimpse into these micro decisions and deepen our understanding of how countries are affected by an increase in the number of effective political parties.

Chapter 4 - Regression Analysis

To begin, I looked at the most basic regression possible with the data that I have collected, one of the effective threshold in time $t + 1$ on the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) in time t. This is measuring the association between a change in the ENPP and the effective electoral threshold. This gave the following results:

	(1)
Intercept	0.278***
	(0.010)
ENPP	-0.029***
	(0.002)
Num.Obs.	757
R2	0.161
R2 Adj.	0.160

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
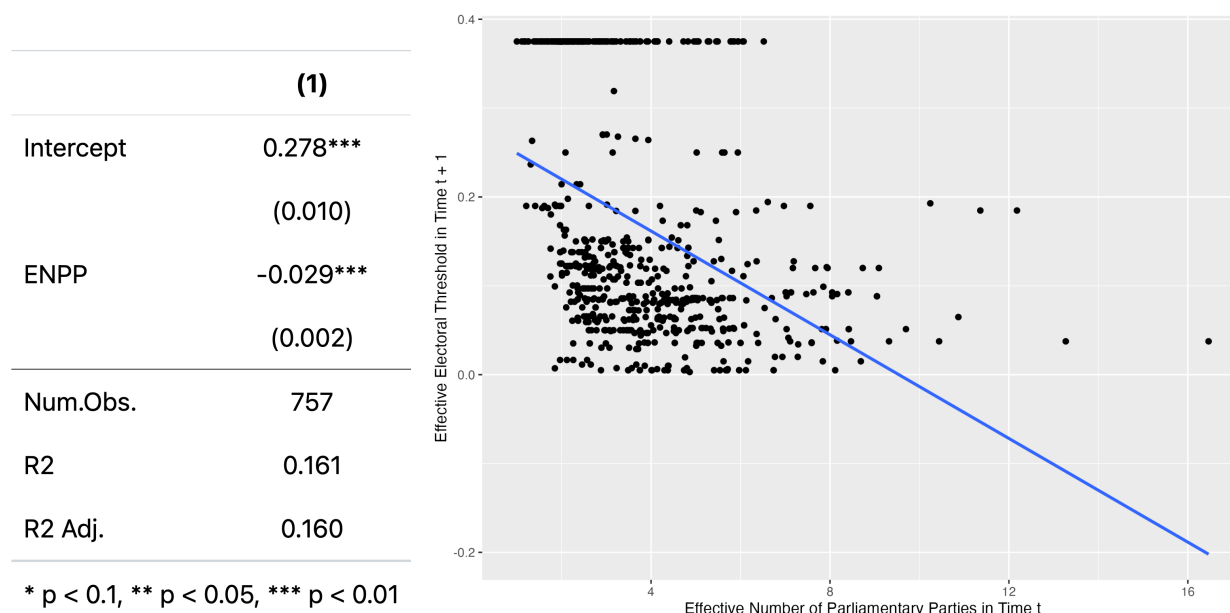
Thus, in the most basic formulation, an increase in ENPP of 1 in time t is correlated with a decrease in the effective electoral threshold of 0.029, or 2.9 percentage points, in time $t + 1$. This relationship should be obvious, as even the dominant viewpoint of the existing literature would agree that there is a significant correlation between the number of political parties and the effective electoral threshold, it simply argues that the causality is reversed.

When analyzing the same regression, but with elective instead of parliamentary parties, the correlation decreased, which is to be expected:

	(1)
Intercept	0.256***
	(0.011)
ENEP	-0.019***
	(0.002)
Num.Obs.	757
R2	0.097
R2 Adj.	0.096

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

These results are not overwhelming, but this is expected as well. This is a small, though statistically significant effect, without any of the control variables added. Now let us analyze a more complete regression, with our control variables added, and see how this affects the correlation between ENPP or ENEP, and the Effective threshold. This gave the following results:

	(1)		(1)
Intercept	0.229***	Intercept	0.211***
	(0.015)		(0.016)
ENPP	-0.031***	ENEP	-0.017***
	(0.003)		(0.002)
Land Area	0.000***	Land Area	0.000***
	(0.000)		(0.000)
GDP Per Capita	0.000	GDP Per Capita	-0.001
	(0.000)		(0.000)
Population	0.000*	Population	0.000**
	(0.000)		(0.000)
HIEF	0.100***	HIEF	0.079***
	(0.024)		(0.025)
Federalism	-0.041***	Federalism	-0.052***
	(0.015)		(0.015)
Num.Obs.	530	Num.Obs.	530
R2	0.355	R2	0.288
R2 Adj.	0.348	R2 Adj.	0.279
* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01		* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01 13	

It is important to note that this regression does have a significantly smaller sample size than the previous number because of the limitations of the HIEF variable. Thus, we must re-run the regressions after using LOCF to estimate its values up through 2020.

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[13] Regarding ethnic fractionalization, it is important to note that the coefficient of HIEF is more useful as an ordinal indication of effect; due to its range between 0 and 1, the coefficient indicates the difference between that range. The maximum in the dataset is 0.89. Thus, though it seemingly has a larger effect than the number of political parties, we cannot conclude that it does in reality, only that it has a statistically significant effect correlated positively with the effective threshold.

	(1)		(1)
Intercept	0.231***	Intercept	0.211***
	(0.014)		(0.016)
ENPP	-0.030***	ENEP	-0.017***
	(0.002)		(0.002)
Land Area	0.000***	Land Area	0.000***
	(0.000)		(0.000)
GDP Per Capita	0.000	GDP Per Capita	-0.001
	(0.000)		(0.000)
Population	0.000**	Population	0.000**
	(0.000)		(0.000)
HIEF	0.087***	HIEF	0.079***
	(0.021)		(0.025)
Federalism	-0.042***	Federalism	-0.052***
	(0.014)		(0.015)
Num.Obs.	635	Num.Obs.	530
R2	0.356	R2	0.288
R2 Adj.	0.350	R2 Adj.	0.279

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

After re-running the regression, it seems as though it has had a minor effect, though
nothing that would indicate that these estimations are flawed. Finally, I wished to see if
increasing the lag on the effective electoral threshold would affect the result. Increasing the lag
to two elections did not noticeably affect the results; however, increasing the lag to three
elections had the following effect:

	(1)		(1)
Intercept	0.228***	Intercept	0.220***
	(0.014)		(0.015)
ENPP	-0.031***	ENEP	-0.021***
	(0.003)		(0.002)
Land Area	0.000***	Land Area	0.000***
	(0.000)		(0.000)
GDP Per Capita	0.000	GDP Per Capita	0.000
	(0.000)		(0.000)
Population	0.000*	Population	0.000*
	(0.000)		(0.000)
HIEF	0.092***	HIEF	0.080***
	(0.023)		(0.024)
Federalism	-0.041***	Federalism	-0.051***
	(0.014)		(0.015)
Num.Obs.	554	Num.Obs.	554
R2	0.379	R2	0.322
R2 Adj.	0.372	R2 Adj.	0.315
* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01		* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01	

Although not much change occurred with the effective number of *parliamentary* parties, there was a significant change in the correlation with the effective number of *elective* parties.

Results and Takeaways From Cross-National Analysis

The result of the quantitative analysis does indicate that there is a statistically significant correlation between the effective number of political parties (both selective and parliamentary) in time t and the effective electoral threshold in time $t + 1$ and $t + 2$, and $t + 3$. This supports the idea that an increase in the effective number of parliamentary parties is correlated with a lower effective threshold in the next election. The results also point toward a greater importance of public sentiment. Measurements of elective parties are a much better indicator of voter sentiment

than parliamentary, because parties are not prevented from obtaining votes from the same structural barriers that prevent them from obtaining seats. Sustained support for smaller parties from the public could lead to the concession of electoral reform from larger parties, even without the smaller parties gaining representation. Both of these takeaways serve to further bolster arguments brought by the likes of Colomer, who conducted a different form of analysis that narrows down observations to only times in which electoral systems were altered. However, there is perhaps even stronger support for a multi-factored explanation of electoral change.

Reviewing the results of our most complete regression (analyzing the association of the effective electoral threshold in time $t + 3$ with the effective number of political parties in time t) we find the following results. Controlling for all the other variables, a change of one unit in ENPP corresponds to a -3.1 percentage point change in the effective threshold three elections in the future. As mentioned above, the HIEF index is more useful as an ordinal measure, and indicates that an increase in ethnic fractionalization is associated with an increase in the effective electoral threshold in time t + 3. The existence of federalism is associated with a -4.1 percentage point change in the effective electoral threshold in time t + 3. Land area is statistically significant, but its association with the effective electoral threshold in time t + 3 is so small that it is being rounded to 0. The same is the case for population. GDP per capita has no significant association with the effective electoral threshold in time t + 3.

When looking at these results, a few particularly interesting conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the statistical significance of the effective number of political parties is maintained, even with a number of potentially strong alternative explanations. Second, it is striking that the control variables of ethnic fractionalization and federalism have such large impacts, and the remaining variables have no significant relationship. Perhaps even more interestingly, both ethnic

fractionalization and federalism have the opposite relationship than would be theoretically expected!

There could be a few reasons for these divergences from theory. For federalism, the simplest explanation is that the dataset that I have gathered does not accurately represent the distribution of federalist systems in the world. There could be important differences between systems (such as more or less power delegated to states/provinces) that would change their interaction with the effective threshold. A point of further departure is certainly to create a more accurate dataset of federalist nations, including a variable that characterizes them as a range of possibilities (perhaps ranging from 0 to 1), rather than a simple binary 0 or 1. Another possibility for both of the variables' divergence is the numerous other contextual factors that each country possesses. Rokkan posited that the very fractionalization that in this dataset is correlated with a higher effective threshold was the *cause* of many European countries' adoptions of proportional representation (1970). Certainly, this fractionalization was in a completely different context in the early 20th century than it is today. This divergence from expectation certainly calls for further research into federalism's effects on electoral systems, particularly on more recent data.

Each of these results indicates a more sociological explanation for the development of electoral systems than an actor-based one. This isn't completely unexpected, as there has been a throughline of uncertainty and complexity throughout the oeuvre of political science literature on electoral systems. The results do, however, indicate that we cannot conclude that an increase in the number of political parties is the sole or major driving force of electoral reform, just that it is significantly correlated with it. It is clear that alongside this force, there are many contextual factors that play into the decision to decrease the effective electoral threshold in a country.

Hopefully the qualitative analysis of the case studies will shed further light on the phenomenon

observed in the cross-national study.

Chapter 5 - Case Studies

New Zealand

New Zealand first developed its own political institutions in 1852, with the passage of "An Act to grant a Representative Constitution to the Colony of New Zealand" (Penniman 1980, 2). It established a national Parliament and six short-lived assemblies (abolished in 1876). The parliament contained two Houses, though the upper house was largely of no consequence, and found no real position in legislation until its removal in 1950 (Penniman 1980, 3). In 1867, the Maori Representation Act of 1867 was passed to give representation to Maori, who were unable to achieve representation through land-owning means (Penniman 1980, 3). This created four Maori districts, in which only the Maori population could vote. To the present day, this system exists in a similar form.

The Parliament is elected for three-year terms, but can be dissolved sooner by the Prime Minister, resulting in a "snap election." However, this does not occur very frequently, and traditionally the entire three year term of Parliament is served and elections take place every three years.

For practically New Zealand's entire existence (excluding a few elections in the early 20th century), it has elected Members of Parliament by a plurality model, adopted from the British. However, in 1993, a referendum was passed in which New Zealand switched to a Mixed-Member Proportional system. It bears a large resemblance to the Mixed Member system utilized by Germany. Each voter has two votes, one for a party and one for a candidate in their electoral district. 70 of the seats in the legislature are for electorates and the remaining 50 are for

party lists.[14] The candidate votes are tallied in the same SMDP fashion, and the candidates

elected take their place in Parliament. The party votes are counted across the entire nation, and a

portion of Parliamentary seats are reserved for party seats elected via this vote. The seats are

distributed proportionally to the party vote received, with a 5% vote requirement (or a victory of

an electoral district seat) to obtain any representation from the party vote. If a party wins more

electoral district seats than they are entitled to from the party vote, they will keep those seats, and

more seats will be added to Parliament for that term to maintain the proportionality of the party

vote seats. These are called overhang seats.

In order to gain a better understanding of the development of electoral systems, it is also

important to understand the political environment in which changes to New Zealand's systems

were made. During the seventies and eighties, public trust in the first-past-the-post system

plummeted due to two abnormal elections in a row. There was a particularly noticeable mismatch

between the percentage of votes received and the percentage of seats received. There were four

exceedingly close elections (each was decided by margins of less than 15 thousand votes) from

1969 to 1993, and two extremely atypical elections in 1978 and 1981 (Wilson 2011). These

election results compounded with general discontent with current governments, leading to

widespread dissatisfaction with the electoral system.

I first will describe the results of the particularly notable elections during this time period,

before detailing the effects on public opinion, party platform, and parliamentary make-up.[15] I

have provided below a table of the election results and disproportionality below.

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[14] This ratio was originally set at 65 and 55, respectively, but has changed as the population of the country
has increased.
[15] Note, I will be analyzing the 1978 election, even though it does not fall into our quantitative analysis'
date range. This is because of the disproportionate result and effect on the public.

1978	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	39.80%	55.00%	
Labour Party	40.40%	45.00%	
Social Credit League	16.10%	1.09%	15.54
Values Party	2.40%	0.00%	
New Zealand Party	n/a	n/a	

1981	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	38.78%	51.00%	
Labour Party	39.01%	47.00%	
Social Credit League	20.65%	2.17%	16.65
Values Party	0.19%	0.00%	
New Zealand Party	n/a	n/a	

1984	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	35.89%	39.00%	
Labour Party	42.98%	59.00%	
Social Credit League	7.63%	2.11%	14.95
Values Party	0.20%	0.00%	
New Zealand Party	12.25%	0.00%	

1987	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	44.02%	41.24%	
Labour Party	47.96%	58.76%	
Democratic Party	5.74%	0.00%	
Mana Motuhake Party	0.53%	0.00%	
New Zealand Party	0.29%	0.00%	13.27
New Labour Party	n/a	n/a	
Green Party	n/a	n/a	
Alliance Party	n/a	n/a	
New Zealand First Party	n/a	n/a	

1990	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	47.80%	69.00%	
Labour Party	35.10%	30.00%	
Democratic Party	n/a	n/a	
Mana Motuhake Party	n/a	n/a	
New Zealand Party	n/a	n/a	16.42
New Labour Party	5.20%	1.03%	
Green Party	6.80%	0.00%	
Alliance Party	n/a	n/a	
New Zealand First Party	n/a	n/a	

1993	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	35.05%	51.00%	
Labour Party	34.68%	45.00%	
Democratic Party	n/a	n/a	
Mana Motuhake Party	n/a	n/a	
New Zealand Party	n/a	n/a	18.22
New Labour Party	n/a	n/a	
Green Party	n/a	n/a	
Alliance Party	18.21%	2.02%	
New Zealand First Party	8.40%	2.02%	

Change to Mixed Member-Proportional Electoral System

1996	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	34.91%	33.83%	37.00%	
Labour Party	31.09%	28.19%	31.00%	
New Zealand First	13.49%	13.35%	14.00%	
Alliance	11.25%	10.10%	11.00%	
Act New Zealand	3.75%	6.10%	6.67%	3.12
United New Zealand	2.07%	0.88%	0.83%	
Green Party	n/a	n/a	n/a	
United Future	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Jim Anderton's Progressive Coalition	n/a	n/a	n/a	

1999	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	31.32%	30.50%	32.50%	
Labour Party	38.74%	41.75%	40.83%	
New Zealand First	4.19%	4.26%	4.17%	
Alliance	6.90%	7.74%	8.33%	
Act New Zealand	4.52%	7.04%	7.50%	1.72
United New Zealand	110.00%	0.54%	0.83%	
Green Party	4.21%	5.16%	5.83%	
United Future	n/a	n/a	n/a	

2002	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	30.54%	20.93%	23.00%	
Labour Party	44.69%	41.26%	43.00%	
New Zealand First	3.98%	10.38%	11.00%	
Alliance	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Act New Zealand	3.55%	7.14%	7.50%	2.01
United New Zealand	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Green Party	5.35%	7.00%	7.50%	
United Future	4.63%	6.69%	6.67%	
Jim Anderton's Progressive Coalition	1.84%	1.70%	1.67%	

2005	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	40.38%	39.10%	40.00%	
Labour Party	40.35%	41.10%	41.00%	
Jim Anderton's Progressive	1.64%	1.16%	0.83%	
Green Party	4.12%	5.30%	4.96%	
Māori Party	3.36%	2.12%	3.31%	1.12
ACT New Zealand	1.97%	1.51%	1.65%	
New Zealand First Party	3.49%	5.72%	5.79%	
United Future New Zealand	2.84%	2.67%	2.48%	
Mana	n/a	n/a	n/a	

2008	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	46.60%	44.93%	47.54%	
Labour Party	35.22%	33.99%	35.25%	
Jim Anderton's Progressive	1.13%	0.91%	0.82%	
Green Party	5.63%	6.72%	7.38%	
Māori Party	3.34%	2.39%	4.10%	3.78
ACT New Zealand	2.99%	3.65%	4.10%	
New Zealand First Party	1.69%	4.07%	0.00%	
United Future New Zealand	1.13%	0.87%	0.82%	
Mana	n/a	n/a	n/a	

2011	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	47.31%	47.31%	48.76%	
Labour Party	35.12%	27.48%	28.10%	
Jim Anderton's Progressive	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Green Party	7.16%	11.06%	11.57%	
Māori Party	1.81%	1.43%	2.48%	1.42
ACT New Zealand	1.43%	1.07%	0.83%	
New Zealand First Party	1.84%	6.59%	6.61%	
United Future New Zealand	0.87%	0.60%	0.83%	
Mana	1.38%	1.08%	0.83%	

2014	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	46.08%	47.04%	49.59%	
Labour Party	34.13%	25.13%	26.45%	
ACT New Zealand	1.18%	0.69%	0.83%	
Green Party	7.06%	10.70%	11.57%	2.20
Māori Party	1.79%	1.32%	1.65%	
New Zealand First Party	3.13%	8.66%	9.09%	
United Future	0.63%	0.22%	0.83%	

2017	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	44.05%	46.45%	46.67%	
Labour Party	37.88%	36.89%	38.33%	
ACT New Zealand	1.01%	0.50%	0.83%	
Green Party	6.91%	6.27%	6.67%	1.92
Māori Party	n/a	n/a	n/a	
New Zealand First Party	5.45%	7.20%	7.50%	
United Future	n/a	n/a	n/a	

2020	% of Electoral Votes	% of Party Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
National Party	34.13%	25.58%	27.50%	
Labour Party	48.07%	50.01%	54.17%	
ACT New Zealand	3.46%	7.59%	8.33%	
Green Party	5.74%	7.86%	8.33%	3.32
Māori Party	2.15%	1.17%	1.67%	
New Zealand First Party	n/a	n/a	n/a	
United Future	n/a	n/a	n/a	

[16]

Elections of 1978 and 1981

The result of the 1978 election was shockingly close. The National Party received

39.82% of the vote and Labour received 40.41%. However, even though the National Party

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[16] Data sourced from IPU Parline and the New Zealand Electoral Commission.
Disproportionality: Calculated by Gallagher's Least Squares Index. See Appendix D for more.

received fewer votes, they obtained 55.4% of the seats, to Labour's 43.4%. Perhaps even more surprisingly, the Social Credit League received 16.1% of the vote and only 1 seat in parliament (the party leader, who had won a By-election for the seat the previous year, kept his seat). This is an extreme example of the natural disproportionality of plurality systems (the wrong party won!), and highlighted the disproportionality in a negative light to New Zealanders.

The election of 1981 followed a very similar path to 1978. Labour was attempting to wrest control away from the government of the National Party, while the Social Credit League continued to offer a strong third-party alternative.

The National Party received 38.78% of the votes while Labour received 39.01%. However, although Labour had again obtained more votes than the National Party, it failed to obtain a majority of seats, with National obtaining 55.4% and Labour obtaining 43.4%. The Social Credit League continued to return impressive vote totals, taking home 20.65% of the vote. However, it failed to obtain any new seats and only maintained the two seats it held entering the election. Again, the disproportionality of the Single Member District Plurality system was magnified to the public; the party with the most votes did not win a majority in Parliament. The wrong party had won two elections in a row

1984 - 1990

The election in 1984 was called early because the National government believed it would be a beneficial time to hold elections, disrupting the usual timely dissolution of Parliament. Though we are unable to judge its true effect, it is important to note the unusual calling of snap elections. This is a government that had twice lost the popular vote yet retained its majority in the legislature, now exercising an increased amount of executive power.

Labour took back control from National, while fringe parties saw high voting totals, with the New Zealand Party emerging. This party was a conservative alternative to the National Party and a symptom of discontent with the National government. The New Zealand party also stated in their manifesto that they supported the introduction of Proportional Representation, meaning that between them and Social Credit, there was again around 20% of the electorate who supported parties intent on changing the electoral system (Calderwood 2010). Additionally, Labour promised a Royal Commission on the electoral system, which released a report in 1987 recommending a referendum on electoral reform alongside the next election (New Zealand Electoral Commission 1986).

The 1987 election results were starkly different from the three preceding it. Labour maintained power and both Labour and National regained large percentages of the vote, with the Democratic Party (previously Social Credit) seeing significant losses and the New Zealand Party all but ceasing to exist. The party system had returned largely to a two-party affair. Labour did not follow the recommendation of the Royal Commission and did not hold a referendum reform alongside the general election, despite the Prime Minister promising that they would hold a binding referendum (New Zealand Electoral Commission 1986).

In 1990, New Zealand saw a return of smaller parties, with the New Labour and Green Party emerging. After six years of Labour's rule, economic problems greatly decreased the party's popularity and National gained a significant amount of support. National, in an attempt to capitalize on Labour's failure to act, promised to hold a binding referendum on electoral reform as part of their party platform. After years of promises by the government, the non-binding referendum was scheduled for 1992. This passed by a significant margin, and a binding referendum was scheduled alongside the next general election.

Discontent with the two major parties re-emerged during 1993 election, with the new center-left Alliance Party – a combination of the NewLabour Party, the Democratic (Social Credit) Party, Mana Motuhake (a Māori party), and the Green Party – gaining a significant foothold in voting. The New Zealand First Party also emerged as a center-right alternative.

1996 Election

The 1996 election was the first conducted under the new Mixed Member Proportional system. The effects of this change were immediately clear. All tallied, the vote totals were similar to the previous election, but the distribution of those votes into seats was remarkably different. National and Labour both received 30-35% of the electoral vote and 28-33% of the party vote, but instead of obtaining 96% of the seats in parliament, as they had the previous election, they only obtained a combined 68%. The New Zealand First and Alliance Parties also received similar vote totals to the previous election, but obtained 18% of the seats instead of its previous 4%. These are massive changes in the seat distribution, reflecting the remarkable shift in the electoral system.

1999-2020

After the referendum to switch to a Mixed member Proportional system, the year to year major fluctuations in vote and seat percentages largely subsided. The disproportionality of the electoral system reduced greatly, and changes in support for parties in power no longer meant voting shifts of 20-30%, as votes that previously would have gone to the opposition as protest to the current government, could be distributed among a number of different parties that had a genuine chance of election. This reflects Duverger's idea of a "psychological effect," and is a major focus of Cox (1997). Voters did not have to worry about a "lost vote" given to a party like

the historical Social Credit Party, which could not obtain sufficient representation even with 20% of the vote. Labour and National still obtain a plurality of the vote in every election, but the remainder of the vote is now distributed proportionally to the number of votes received by each party. This has remained the case since the switch to MMP.

Alongside these general elections, two separate Royal Commissions, one in 2011 and one in 2024, have been called to analyze the effectiveness of MMP, and weigh a switch back to SMDP. The 2011 commission advocated for the abolition of the one electorate seat qualification for allocation of list seats, a lowering of the party vote threshold to 4%, and the abolishment of overhang seats. This is in reference to the ability for a party to gain representation in parliament despite not achieving the 5% party vote threshold that is necessary to achieve representation through an electorate victory. If one electorate district is won, it allows the party to bring with them a number of additional representatives through the party vote, even though they would ordinarily be barred from receiving seats due to their low vote totals. It also recommended holding the ratio of electorate to party seats constant at 60:40. This also allows the parliament to grow with the population of the country (New Zealand Electoral Commission 2011)

The 2024 commission published extremely similar recommendations. It agreed with the recommendation of abolishing the one electorate seat qualification and overhang seats, as well as the holding of a constant 60:40 ratio of electorate to party seats, respectively. It suggested lowering the party vote threshold from 5% to 3.5% in order to encourage the entering of smaller parties into parliament and broadening representation(New Zealand Electoral Commission 2011).

These recommendations illustrate that although there is much that has been addressed by the change to MMP, there is still some room for smaller maneuvering. Though, at the same time,

the relative smallness of these recommended changes, as well as the referendum result in 2011, indicates that the nation is largely content with MMP after almost three decades.

Looking at why New Zealand decided to change its electoral system from SMDP to MMP, we can pinpoint a few important factors. A Royal Commission on the Electoral System of New Zealand, in 1986, found exactly how small a margin the 1978 and 1981 elections were decided by. In 1978, only 722 voters across seven seat districts would have had to change their vote from National to Labour in order to flip all seven seats to Labour and thus allowing them to form a majority in government (New Zealand Electoral Commission 1986). The districts for these seats contained only 135,129 voters (New Zealand Electoral Commission 1986). Similarly, in 1981, if only *154* voters across three districts changed their votes from National to Labour, there would have been a change in the party in power.

These are razor thin margins, and reinforced the perception of unfairness of the electoral system. The small number of districts in which these marginal battles are fought become more politically and electorally important than other districts. This seems to undermine fundamental understandings of what democracy is supposed to mean – some votes are worth more than others.

Not only are these margins incredibly thin, but the wrong party won each of these elections. To the average citizen, it is normal and understandable that the party winning the majority of seats in a given government might only receive a plurality of the total vote. This is one of the major benefits of SMDP – it is as simple to understand as the party with the most votes wins. By facilitating majorities, it creates an easily understandable back and forth of power, decisions, and accountability. A voter knows which party enacted what laws, and that they can

remove them from power by simply out-voting them. Yet these results fly in the face of this idea. The party with the most votes not only lost, but these elections resulted in lopsided majorities for the party that came in second. I believe that this is an important distinction to make – that it takes extraordinary results such as the elections in 1978 and 1981 to stoke large public sentiment in favor of electoral reform.

Alongside these issues, which already place significant doubt on the electoral system, there was also the emergence of significant elective third parties. (I note elective because although they obtained a large percentage of the votes they repeatedly obtained almost none of the seats in parliament). The Social Credit party obtained over 20% of the votes in the 1981 election, yet obtained only 2 seats. The trend of high vote percentages being garnered by small parties was not novel for these two elections and continued afterward as well. This chart created by the NZ parliament report in 2011 illustrates this very well.

Source: Parliamentary Library
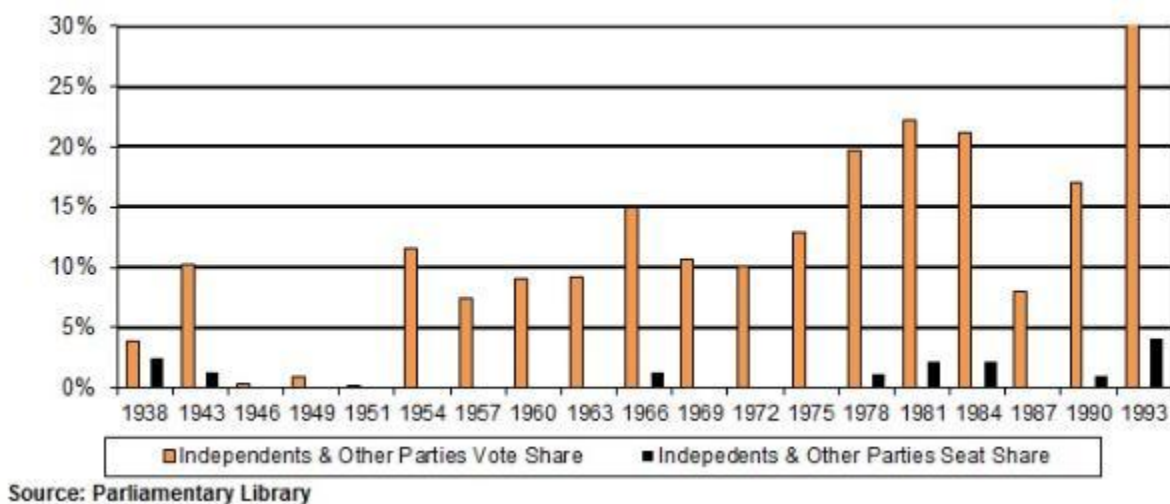
As is clear from the above chart, there was a consistent and significant rate of votes cast for parties who obtained few or no seats in parliament. These two significant disproportionalities swayed public opinion in favor of electoral reform.

One of the more interesting takeaways is that the parties in contention did not change after the switch to MMP. Though there was some small proliferation of the smaller parties, what mainly occurred was a repeat of the vote in 1993. However, instead of Labor and National taking 90% of the seats on 60% of the votes, they took home around 60% of the seats on the same proportion of votes. It served almost remarkably as a proof of concept for the new system. It also seems to line up with the idea posited by Grumm and ascribed to by myself, that the electoral system does not influence the party system as we largely believe, because the party system did not change as a result of the change in the electoral system. The structure of the existing party system, which is dependent on public opinion, influences the decision to reform to a more proportional system, and there is no sudden increase in the number of parliamentary parties because of the change. To give this idea fairer consideration, however, I believe that we must look at the longer-term effects of such a change. But, when looking at the party structure from 1996 until the present day, we do not see as much variation or expansion in the number of political parties as this idea would suggest. There is a proliferation of a number of very small parties, yet they are often taking the place of one another, leading to more or less the same number of political parties, and even more so the number of *effective* political parties. Though this is just a small anecdote, it supports the school of thought that party system structure determines electoral systems.

A final interesting note from the case study of New Zealand is the occurrence of a second referendum in 2011, which asked if voters wished to maintain MMP or change electoral systems.

57.77% voted to keep MMP, while 42.23% voted to change the system. A second question asked which system they would vote to change to if a switch were to happen. The listed options and vote share received were First Past the Post (46.66%), Preferential Voting (12.47%), Single Transferable Vote (16.73%), and Supplementary Member (24.14%). This demonstrates that the level of support for MMP has remained relatively the same for the first fifteen years of implementation. Only around a 4% increase, up from 53.86% in 1993, occurred during this time period. Although there is not much to be gleaned from these vote totals alone, perhaps this points to the entrenchment of this issue in voters' minds. Further research on this topic could provide interesting insight into how the voting public forms and maintains opinions on electoral reform.

Canada

Canada developed a united system of political institutions in 1867 by the Constitution

Act, 1867, passed by the UK Parliament. The electoral system of Canada is largely similar to that

of New Zealand before 1996 – both being based upon the United Kingdom's plurality system –

but maintains a few key distinctions that are important to understand.

The first difference is the number of houses. While New Zealand elected to abolish their

upper chamber in 1950, the Senate in Canada has retained its position as an upper chamber. In

function, it is extremely similar to the House of Lords in the UK. Its members are appointed by

the Governor General (a representative of the Crown) after being advised by the Prime Minister.

It serves largely as a chamber of review, with little power in the legislative process.

A second important difference is the length of time between elections and the willingness

of governments to call snap elections. In contrast to New Zealand's maximum of three years

between elections, Canada has selected a maximum period of five years, though customarily

(and by law as of 2007) elections are called every four years (Government of Canada, 2007).

Additionally, Canada has a richer tradition of utilizing snap elections, contrasting with New

Zealand's custom of allowing this power to go largely unused. This includes elections called

when the government is defeated on a vote of no confidence, another occurrence in Canada that

is largely missing from New Zealand politics.

Perhaps the most important difference between Canada and New Zealand is Canada's

federalism. As mentioned above, this distribution of power between federal and provincial

governments is a nuance of Canada's government that I am extremely interested in exploring in

relation to its effect on the platforms of political parties in Canada. Canada's federalism is similar

to the United States' form of government, though perhaps with slightly more regional and less federal power (Brock and Hale 2023). Federalism in Canada has evolved greatly over the state's existence, becoming more inclusive of and sensitive to regional differences and disagreements. However, there has been a longstanding history of conflict between these regions, particularly with Quebec, and these tensions still influence both federal and provincial politics and intergovernmental relations (Brock and Hale 2023).

Another important wrinkle that interacts with and complicates the aspects of federalism and federal party politics is the continued secessionist attitude held in the province of Quebec. The province held two separate referendums on independence, in 1980 and 1995. Importantly, these were called by Parti Québécois (PQ) governments in the National Assembly of Quebec, the provincial legislative body. This party is not the same as Bloc Québécois (BQ), which competes in federal elections, but they share much of the same attitudes regarding Quebec's sovereignty. It is important to understand the backgrounds that shaped these issues, as they relate to the interaction of federalism and federal party politics, while also helping to inform our understanding of BQ's interaction with the current electoral system.

PQ's platform of support for the first referendum was based on the emancipation of francophones and the creation of a more egalitarian society (in a manner similar to the social democracies of the Scandinavian countries). (Lecours 2017). The French language was of primary importance in the Québécois identity for this election. PQ used the idea of "sovereignty" rather than "independence," as well as the promise of future affirming referendums should "Yes" win, attempting to push the idea of easing into a transitional period, rather than a sudden schism (Lecours 2017). The 1980 referendum failed with 40.4% voting "Yes" and 59.6% voting "No," with a turnout of 85.6%.

PQ's platform for the 1995 referendum was quite different in its classification of the needs and benefits of secession. A series of failed negotiations between Quebec and the rest of Canada was portrayed as a rejection of the Québécois by the remainder of Canada, and secession was a last resort (Lecours 2017). The referendum promised economic and political partnerships with the rest of Canada, should it be passed. The 1995 referendum failed by an incredibly small margin, with "Yes" receiving 49.42% of the vote and "No" receiving 50.58%.

It is unlikely that another referendum will be called, as there is significant opposition to a sovereign Quebec in the province (338 Canada). Additionally, a decision by Canada's supreme court and a federal law passed in response to it give significant federal oversight on a secession referendum, and bar a province from unilaterally seceding. As evidence of this dwindling support, Duval and Villeneuve-Siconnelly found that there was a significant fluctuation in support and framing of the issue of sovereignty by the BQ from 2002 to 2021, largely revolving around perceived attitudes before elections (2024). A strong attitude toward secession in Quebec does not currently exist, but it has shaped party interactions throughout the last half century, and is an important factor to remember while analyzing Canada's party system.

1980-1993

Below is an overview of the election results within the timeframe of analysis, 1980-2020.

	1980				1984				1988		
	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
Liberal	44.30%	52.10%			28.00%	14.20%			31.90%	28.10%	
Progressive Conservative	32.50%	36.50%	8.72		50.00%	74.80%	20.89		43.00%	57.30%	11.24
New Democratic Party	19.80%	11.30%			18.80%	10.60%			20.40%	14.60%	
Social Credit	1.70%	0.00%			0.10%	0.00%			0.03%	0.00%	

	1993				1997				2000		
	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
Liberal	41.30%	60.00%			38.50%	51.50%			40.80%	57.10%	
Bloc Québécois	13.50%	18.30%			10.70%	14.60%			10.70%	12.60%	
Reform	18.70%	17.60%	17.64		19.40%	19.90%	13.22		n/a	n/a	12.25
New Democratic Party	6.90%	3.10%			11.00%	7.00%			8.50%	4.30%	
Progressive Conservative	16.00%	0.70%			18.80%	6.60%			25.50%	21.90%	
Canadian Alliance	n/a	n/a			n/a	n/a					

	2004				2006				2008		
	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
Liberal	36.70%	43.80%			30.20%	33.40%			26.20%	25.00%	
Conservatives	29.60%	32.10%			36.30%	40.30%			37.60%	46.40%	
Bloc Québécois	12.40%	17.50%	9.78		10.50%	16.60%	8.64		10.00%	15.90%	9.96
New Democratic Party	15.70%	6.20%			17.50%	9.40%			18.20%	12.00%	
Green Party	4.30%	0.00%			4.50%	0.00%			6.80%	0.00%	

	2011				2015				2019		
	% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality		% of Votes	% of Seats	Disproportionality
Conservatives	39.60%	53.90%			31.90%	29.30%			34.30%	35.80%	
New Democratic Party	30.60%	33.40%			19.70%	13.00%			16.00%	7.10%	
Liberal	18.90%	11.00%	12.46		39.50%	54.40%	11.96		33.10%	46.40%	12.11
Bloc Québécois	6.00%	1.20%			4.70%	3.00%			7.60%	9.50%	
Green Party	3.90%	0.30%			3.40%	0.30%			6.50%	0.90%	
People's Party of Canada	n/a	n/a			n/a	n/a			1.60%	0.00%	

[17]

The party dynamics of Canada share some similarities with New Zealand. From 1980 to 1993, there were three main parties competing for seats in Parliament. These were the Progressive Conservative, Liberal, and New Democratic Parties. The Progressive Conservative and Liberal Parties regularly obtained around 70-80% of the vote and 80% of the seats, with the New Democratic Party hovering around 20% of the vote and 10-15% of the seats.

1993

The 1993 election marked a significant shift in the federal political party landscape, shaping how elections would look up to the present day. The Bloc Québécois (BQ) entered the political scene. Alongside BQ, the Reform Party (later the Canadian Alliance) emerged as a dissenting party from the Progressive Conservatives. The emergence of these two parties marked

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[17] Data Sourced From IPU Parline and Andrew's Heard's dataset.
Disproportionality: Gallagher's Least Squares Index of Disproportionality. See Appendix D.

the end of the Progressive Conservatives as a viable political party, leading to their dissolution and the creation of the Conservative Party, a merger between the Progressive Conservatives and the Canadian Alliance, for the 2004 election.

The results of the 1993 election reflected and reinforced the massive changes that emerged on the political party front. The Liberals won a majority, while the Progressive Conservatives won only 2 seats, a mere 0.68%, and *167* fewer than in the previous election, despite receiving 16.04% of the vote. BQ received 13.5% of the vote and 18.3% of the seats, and the Reform Party also obtained 17.6% of the seats, while receiving 18.7% of the vote.[18]

1997-2004

The party landscape created in 1993 remained relatively stable for the next two elections, with the Liberals' lead slowly decreasing, the BQ retaining around 10% of the vote and 12-15% of the seats and Reform/Canadian Alliance increasing their vote share to 19 and then 25%, with seat shares lingering around 20%. The New Democratic Party received 8-11% and 4-7% of the vote and seats, respectively, while the Progressive Conservatives rebounded slightly in seat share, winning 4-6% of the seats on 12-18% of the vote.

2006-2021

A new status quo developed after the 2004 election, which remained through 2020. The Conservatives took the place of the now defunct Progressive Conservatives. The Liberals and Conservatives competed as the two largest parties, each usually receiving around 30-40% of the vote and generating small minority governments except for a Conservative majority in 2011 and a Liberal majority in 2015. BQ and The New Democratic Party compete for the third largest vote

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[18] It is important to note the discrepancy of vote to seat percentage between the Reform and BQ parties. Because of BQ's extreme territorial concentration, it is easier for it to obtain seats in single member districts as a larger portion of its total votes are concentrated in fewer districts.

share, usually combining for around 25% of the vote and 15-25% of the seats. The Green Party also consistently receives between 3 and 6% of the vote, winning only a handful of seats throughout this time period.

The one true outlier of this period is the election of 2011. The Conservatives cruised to a majority in Parliament, with 39.6% of the vote and 53.9% of the seats. The Liberals were handed a crushing defeat, winning only 18.9% of the vote and 11.0% of the seats. The New Democrats obtained their first resounding success, becoming the second largest party and taking charge of the opposition.

2015-2019 and Trudeau's Promise

The 2015 election is of particular interest to this paper because of Trudeau's, and thus the Liberal Party's, insistence on electoral reform. Trudeau, remarkably, stated, "We are committed to ensuring that the 2015 election will be the last federal election using first past the post" (Liberal Party of Canada).

The Liberals won an outright majority, increasing their seat share by over 40% from the last election. After being elected and forming a government, the Liberals established the House of Commons Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE) to "review a wide variety of reforms, such as ranked ballots, proportional representation, mandatory voting, and online voting" and deliver its recommendations to Parliament. The ERRE was put under the charge of Maryam Monsef. (CBC; Liberal Party Platform). They additionally promised to enact electoral reform within 18 months of forming a government (Liberal Party Platform).

However, one year into the Liberal government's term, Trudeau changed course, stating in an interview, "If we are going to change the electoral system, it is necessary that people are

open to it"[19] (Vastel 2016). He furthered this by stating that while the public may have been very dissatisfied with the previous Conservative government, they are less so with the current Liberal one and thus this issue holds less importance in the public's eye: "However, under the current system, they now have a government they are more satisfied with. And the motivation to want to change the electoral system is less urgent" (Wherry 2016). The leader of the ERRE even stated that she had not heard the overwhelming support that would require electoral reform[20] (Collins 2016, Milner 2017).

When the ERRE released its report, it found that the overwhelming majority of those that wanted change were in favor of Proportional Representation. It recommended that the government ensure that the government should use and pay special attention to the Gallagher index (a measure of the disparity between votes and seat allocation), and attempt to keep it below 5. It also recommended that the government should not implement a full list system because they destroy the connection between voters and their member of parliament (Scarpaleggia 2016). Finally, it stated that a change of this magnitude should be put to a vote by the population of the nation as a whole in a referendum. (Scarpaleggia 2016). It did not specify and recommend an alternative system but simply stated that the government should fully design the alternative before putting it to a vote.

After the release of the report, in a mandate letter to Minister of Democratic Institutions Karina Gould –a replacement for Maryam Monsef –Trudeau wrote:

> "A clear preference for a new electoral system, let alone a consensus, has not
>
> emerged. Furthermore, without a clear preference or a clear question, a

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[19] "Si on va changer le système électoral, il faut que les gens soient ouverts à ça"
[20] This is despite a Pro-electoral reform lobby citing that over 88% of the witnesses called by the committee had supported change to proportional representation.
(https://www.fairvote.ca/03/11/2016/strong-mandate/)

> referendum would not be in Canada's interest. Changing the electoral system
>
> will not be in your mandate" (Wherry 2017).

This has effectively ended the Liberals' support for a change in the Electoral system from First Past the Post, despite its promises, the recommendation of the committee, and the support of the witnesses called to testify at the committee.

In the last instance in our time frame, the Liberals called a snap election in 2019, hoping to obtain a majority, yet the election returned the status quo, maintaining the distribution of power from 2015.

What is the difference between NZ and Canada?

Despite the longstanding discussion and support for electoral reform in Canada, as well as two separate governments gaining power with a promise of engaging in reform, there have not been any changes to the electoral system. The extreme outcome of the 1993 election led to much discussion about changes to the federal electoral system. Not only was one of the major parties completely dismantled, creating a period of practical one-party rule, but the distribution of votes and seats in parliament became extremely regionalized. The Liberals won 101 of Ontario's 103 seats, BQ won 44 of Quebec's 75, and Reform won all 60 of its seats in the Western provinces (LeDuc 2009). Alongside this, voter turnout had been declining consistently since 1984. This is without a doubt connected to the extensive regionalization, as there were numerous seats seen as safe or guaranteed, leading to little incentive to vote (LeDuc 2009). During this time, the Liberals continued to form majority governments with around 40% of the vote, leading to more scrutiny of the electoral system. In 2003, when Paul Martin became the new Prime Minister and leader of the Liberals, he added addressing the "democratic deficit" to his party platform (LeDuc 2009). However, after suffering a defeat in the 2004 elections and being reduced to a minority

government, the issue of electoral reform became an afterthought, and any movement on the issue seemed stalled.

This series of events was largely mirrored by the Liberal Party in 2015. Twice, a political party has refrained from acting on their promise, even after being elected to a position where they could easily act on it. These events, despite having opposite outcomes, mirror the political situation of 1987 in New Zealand very closely. In this election as well, the standing government refused to take the advice of an established commission to hold a referendum on electoral reform. I believe that the actions of the parties in these scenarios can be explained by two aspects. First, the parties' belief in the short-term political gains to be made by campaigning on and then following through on electoral reform. Secondly, the public's opinion on the issue of electoral reform (which ties into their belief of potential political gains).

The disparate outcomes of New Zealand and Canada seem to differ from Grumm's prediction on what would incentivize a political party to enact electoral reform. Grumm conceptualized that a party that was being hurt by the current electoral system would change it once it gained power (1958). In New Zealand, Labour had just won the largest percentage of the vote two elections in a row, but was unable to achieve a majority in Parliament. It is not a stretch to believe that it saw itself as a party hurt by the current electoral system. Yet once it gained power, it did not enact reform. After Labour's chance had lapsed, the opposing National party (perhaps the party most helped by SMDP) established a referendum. Though less perfectly – I do not believe that they could view the system as strictly hurting them – this also applies to the Liberal Party in Canada, both in the early 2000s and mid-2010s.

In these situations, the short-term support gained from supporting these issues is quite obvious. With hindsight, we can see that in New Zealand, over 80% of voters in the non-binding

referendum, and over 50% in the binding referendum, supported electoral reform. Though we do not have similar referendum numbers in Canada, we can assume that this was a popular policy, due to its inclusion in smaller parties' platforms, as well as the Liberals. By adding a promise to address electoral reform a party can receive broad support with very little downside. However, once given the opportunity to conduct reform, the effects are much different. To move away from SMDP toward a more proportional system would, by design, limit the political power of the largest parties. It would be a continuous disservice to the Liberals to enact such a reform. Thus, the importance of public support on the issue comes to light.

A very important conclusion to be drawn from these case studies is that both countries have shown a significant reluctance to unilaterally change the electoral system. Popular engagement in support of electoral change is undoubtedly extremely important to the success of efforts at reform. Royal Commissions conducted by both nations have continuously suggested that the channel in which this reform should be conducted is through a nation-wide referendum (New Zealand Electoral Commission 1986 and 1999; Scarpaleggia, Francis. 2016). The Liberals have even used public sentiment as reason not to hold a referendum, as we have seen earlier. Each situation has shown that in these two countries, parties do care about overstepping political norms and customs. Now, whether that is out of fear of voter retribution from a perceived overstepping of power, and thus a loss of political support, or a genuine respect for the political institutions of their respective countries is impossible to know. But *why* this is the case is a question for another day. For now, understanding its necessity for change is sufficient.

With this understanding of the importance of popular support, we must now ask how this differed between the two countries. Though they both seem to have had popular support, I believe there are two key differences: the "wrong-party winning" that occurred in New Zealand

in 1978 and 1981, and the federalism and geographic concentration of parties in Canada. I believe these are uniquely impactful to the general voting population.

In 1979, Canada had a "wrong-party winning" result when the Liberal party earned 5% more of the vote but did not win a majority of the seats. However, this case differs from New Zealand's. The Conservative government only lasted one year before failing a confidence vote and being replaced by the Liberals, who had "rightly won" the prior election. I do not believe that this had the same effect on the voting public in Canada due to the quick nature of its resolution. In fact, this could even be thought of as a success for the electoral system: an error was quickly fixed and the most popular party was once again in power.

As discussed while analyzing New Zealand, the "wrong-party winning" is easily understood by the voting population, and is necessarily unfair. This could easily sway someone who has no opinion on electoral reform into believing that the system must be made fairer. Compounding the effect is the fact that this occurred twice in a row, perhaps further breaking trust in the fairness of the system because of the public's inability to remove an unpopular party from power, even though they, according to the vote totals, should be removed.

Interestingly, "wrong-party winning" has occurred in the last two elections in Canada. The Liberals have maintained power since 2015, the year that they promised electoral reform. This again illustrates the benefit that they would be giving up if they were to pass electoral reform. It will be interesting to see how the Conservatives or New Democrats proceed with electoral reform after wrestling power away from the Liberals. Those interested in electoral reform should keep close watch, as the situation as it currently stands in Canada is shockingly similar to that of New Zealand in the early 1980s.

The unique aspect of federalism and regionalism also impacts the desire for electoral reform in Canada. In SMDP systems, small parties typically struggle because their collection of votes is spread across the entire country, leaving them unable to win many seats. However, when a party is regionally concentrated, SMDP could lead to *over*representation in Parliament. This is the case for Bloc Québécois. Looking at the election results in the table above, BQ receives a higher proportion of seats in Parliament than it does votes in nearly every election in which it competes. The regional concentration of BQ allows it to compete extremely strongly in every electoral district within Quebec. In fact, unlike the other three largest parties, BQ only stands candidates for election in districts within Quebec. This means that there is a significant incentive for BQ to support the retention of SMDP, leaving a non-negligible number of seats in each Parliament in favor of retaining SMDP, alongside the largest two parties.

Federalism intertwines with the idea of regionalism as well. With provinces able to exercise a certain amount of autonomy, voters and parties could feel less strongly about the federal level due to the ability to exercise control at the provincial level. For example, there have been many referendums on electoral change at the provincial level, with most failing, or being ignored by the government (LeDuc 2009). This is a clear indication of the separation between the federal and provincial party feelings on electoral change, with referendums being commonplace at the lower level, and heavily resisted at the federal level. This is further reinforced by the experience in Quebec. Parti Québécois, a near-analogue to BQ at the provincial level, did not stand for election at the federal level. Though certainly due partially to their desire for secession and their dislike of the Canadian government, this also indicates that they felt they had significant power at the provincial level. If they had no representation at the federal level, but

were able to issue multiple referendums on secession at the provincial one, what desire would

there be for electoral reform?

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Looking at both the large cross-national analysis as well as the case studies of New Zealand and Canada, there are a few important and interesting conclusions that can be drawn. Firstly, the importance of a proliferation of political parties, both parliamentary and elective, is undeniably important in effecting electoral change since 1980. However, it cannot be said to be the main or only determinant of change. Nor can it be said to be sufficient to enact change. There are an incredible number of individual factors at play in each nation's politics that could influence both voters and party actors. In our quantitative analysis, both federalism and ethnic fractionalization were significant factors. In our case studies, further complications such as Quebec's relationship with the federal government, or "wrong-winner" elections, alter our understanding of what shapes electoral systems. The only truly accurate way to understand why a country's electoral system was shaped in its unique way is to analyze the circumstances surrounding its development within that country. Yet, if one is going to look at the determinants of electoral systems, it is clear that one must take into account the political party structure. Based on the analysis within this paper, it seems clear that a proliferation in the number of elective political parties is a necessary condition for electoral change within this time frame.
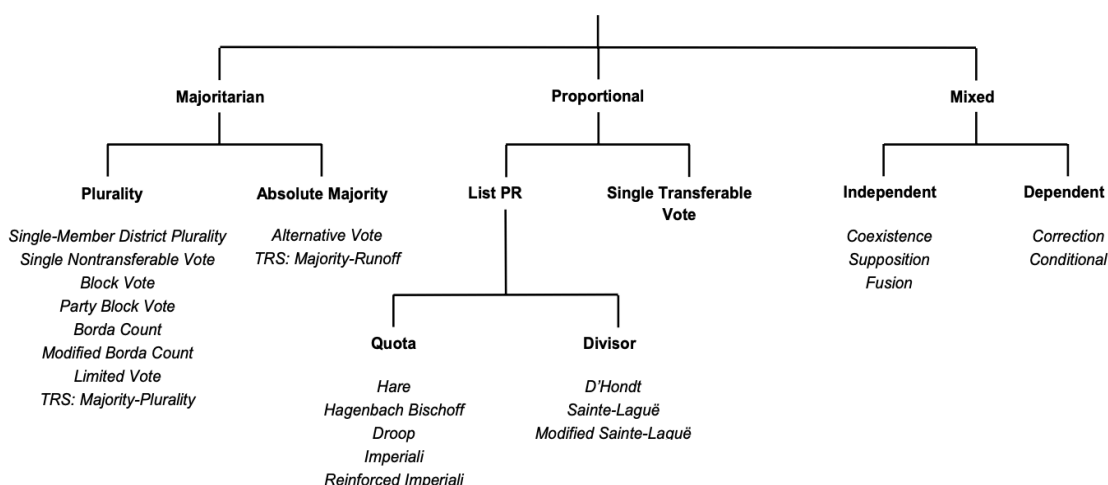
Another extremely important development from this analysis is the importance of public input into decision-making about electoral reform. Compared to many earlier studies of this exact relationship, this analysis does not include the many changes of electoral systems that occurred at the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century. These changes occurred under vastly different circumstances than the time frame of my analysis. Electoral reform was largely debated and enacted directly through the legislature, without direct public input. However, in both of our case studies, assemblies tasked with researching electoral reform

recommended a nationwide referendum on the issue. Though not always following the advice of these committees, the parties never indicated that they would enact change without a referendum. The extent to which the experiences of New Zealand and Canada can be extrapolated to other democracies in this regard remains to be seen. However, I do believe that changing views held by both the voting population and political actors have increased the importance of public opinion in affecting electoral reform to an extent not seen previously, and play a larger role than previously believed. This conclusion removes some of the agency from the political actors within this circumstance, further muddying attempts at generalizing causes of electoral change.

There are quite a few avenues of research that could be taken as a response to these conclusions. The first would be to conduct additional case studies of countries that have encountered serious discussions on or efforts for electoral reform. This would provide more detailed insight and allow us to better understand the details in each example than through a cross-national study. If data can be sourced, an effort to better understand the effect of public opinion on electoral change is another clear effort that should be undertaken. This would also provide better insight into the actions and motivations behind party actors (to what extent do they bend to public will in this regard, and to what extent do they ignore it).

Appendix A

There are three major groupings of electoral systems: Majoritarian, Proportional, and Mixed. Under these three groupings, there are numerous sub-categories and rules. Below, I have provided a chart included in Bormann and Golder's DES dataset:

	Majoritarian			Proportional			Mixed	
	Plurality	**Absolute Majority**	**List PR**	**Single Transferable Vote**		**Independent**	**Dependent**	
	Single-Member District Plurality *Single Nontransferable Vote* *Block Vote* *Party Block Vote* *Borda Count* *Modified Borda Count* *Limited Vote* *TRS: Majority-Plurality*	*Alternative Vote* *TRS: Majority-Runoff*				*Coexistence* *Supposition* *Fusion*	*Correction* *Conditional*	

Under List PR:

Quota	**Divisor**
Hare *Hagenbach Bischoff* *Droop* *Imperiali* *Reinforced Imperiali*	*D'Hondt* *Sainte-Laguë* *Modified Sainte-Laquë*

In this paper, the two groups that are of most interest to us are majoritarian and mixed systems. Though in the quantitative analysis, we will be interested in countries from all three categories, it is not necessary to understand the complexities of the quotas and divisors that can be employed. It suffices to understand that in List PR, voters vote for lists of candidates (either provided by the parties or chosen by the voters, depending on the system), and the seats in the legislature are proportionally filled, according to one of the methods under this umbrella. The single transferable vote is a rare form of PR, in which voters rank candidates in order of preference, and votes are transferred as candidates are elected or eliminated.

Regarding majoritarian systems, the overwhelming majority of them are single member district plurality (SMDP). In this system, there is one seat in each electoral district, and the candidate with the highest number of votes gets that seat. In the absolute majority subsection above, both formulations are versions in which, if no one gets a majority in the first round, a

second round with the two highest vote getters is conducted. The remaining models are extremely rare, and unnecessary to understand for the analysis within this paper, which will be focusing on SMDP as the major representative of majority systems. This is also why I will be referring to these as plurality systems.

Mixed systems combine aspects of majoritarian and proportional representation, and are usually significantly more proportional than majoritarian systems. In this paper, we will be only interested in the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) subsection of mixed systems, as this is the system employed by New Zealand. In this system, a portion of the seats in the legislature are elected in single-member districts by plurality rules, and the remainder of the seats are elected through a separate party vote. Voters get two votes: one for their electoral district, and one for a party. The party vote is translated into seats using one of the PR formulas (in the case of New Zealand, the Sainte-Laguë formula). The Mixed Member Proportional model employed by New Zealand would fall under the "dependent-correction" category in the above chart.

Appendix B

The assumptions made are as follows: The number of parties are assumed to be about the same as the district magnitude, that the average magnitude for the system as a whole should be used, that the formulas be roughly averaged, and that the effective threshold is assumed to be halfway between the lower and upper thresholds. (as noted by Lijphart 1994 pg 26).

Appendix C

Taagepera's suggested alteration is to account for the "others" category creating a spurious strong party, when it could in fact be a group of smaller parties and indicate extreme fractionalization. His formulation is as follows:

$$N \; = \; P^2/[f(R) \; + \; \Sigma P^2_i]$$

Where P_i is the number of votes or seats for the i-th party and P is the total number of valid votes or seats. f(R) is a function of R that will be estimated.

He then calculates the highest and lowest possible ranges of f(R) (step 2 below), and then calculates the mean of those values to insert into the equation. E.G:

Taken from Taagepera (1997,150).

(Values can be votes or seats)

Party A: 40%

Party B: 30%

Party L: 10% (P_L - Least party)

Others: 20% (R - Residue)

Take the mean of the extremes:

(1) Add "Others" as 0: $N = 100^2/(40^2+30^2+10^2) = 3.846$

(2) Add "Others" as the lower value of R^2 or $P_L R$. $R^2 = 20^2$ and $P_L R = 10{\times}20$. Thus:

$$N \; = \; 10,000/(2,600 \; + \; 200) \; = \; 3.571.$$

(3) Finally, calculate the average: $N = 3.71$.

In my analysis, I did not find any significant changes to the results when employing this adjusted version of ENPP.

Appendix D

The Gallagher Index is the most widely used measure of disproportionality (the difference between vote and seat distribution). It is formulated as follows:

$$LS_q = \sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{2}\Sigma(v_i - s_i)^2\right)}$$

Where v_i is the vote percentage of party i and s_i is the seat percentage of party i.

I will be disregarding the "other" party in my calculation of the Gallagher least squares formulation of disproportionality because it could lead to a greater measurement of disproportionality than is appropriate. All of the miscellaneous votes would be counted as all being cast for the same party, which more likely than not failed to gain representation.

To provide some additional context to the measurement, I will list some notable countries' indices. U.S.: Ranging from 0.82 to 5.25 in the last 20 years. UK: Ranging from 6.47 to 23.64 over the last 20 years. Germany: 2.80 to 4.84 over the last 20 years (Gallagher 2025).

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