Knowledge is Power

The Staffing Advantage of the 'Party in Public Office'*

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the power balance between parties' central – and public offices by examining the characteristics of their staff. While earlier studies have analyzed the intra-party power balance by comparing staff sizes, I argue that the qualifications of staffers shape the everyday interactions between party faces. More specifically, public offices are better able to evade control by extra-parliamentary party organizations when their staffers are more experienced and less responsive to partisan loyalty. The empirical section is based on a cross-sectional analysis of original survey data collected among political staffers in Belgium and the Netherlands (N=1009). The result show that parties' public offices do indeed have a qualitative staffing advantage, as their staffers are more experienced and more motivated by career prospects and political influence. This advantage is mostly driven by the high presence of policy experts and political assistants within the '*public face of the party*'. However, several contrasts between Belgium and the Netherlands demonstrate how the distribution of parties' human resources depends institutional factors. While parliamentary offices consistently dominate Dutch parties, the existence of extensive ministerial offices in Belgium causes dramatic shifts in the allocation of parties' human resources.

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Introduction

The impact of professionalization on the internal power balance of parties lies at the heart of influential party models (Panebianco, 1988; Katz and Mair, 1995). The growing presence of political professionals is often seen as an organizational game changer, empowering elected elites in parliament and government. According to Katz and Mair's description of '*the ascendancy of the party in public office*' (2002), the shift in parties' resources inevitably affects their internal power relations. More specifically, the dominance of the party in public office brings along the '*subordination of the other two faces',* namely the party on the ground (members and activists) and the party in central office (national headquarters) (Katz and Mair, 2002). While earlier research suggests that parties' public offices have a quantitative staffing advantage (Krouwel, 2012; Kölln, 2015; Bardi et al., 2017), this paper examines also enjoy a qualitative staffing advantage. I argue that public offices have not only gained the upper hand by hiring more staff than central offices – they also hire different types of staffers. Building on the seminal work of Panebianco (1988), I hypothesize that public offices include more 'professional' staffers. Because of their high degree of expertise and their lower focus on partisan loyalty, these professional staffers experience little interference or monitoring from parties' central offices. As such, the qualitative staffing advantage loosens the grip of the extra-parliamentary party organizations on its elites in public offices – both elected and unelected.

The empirical analysis is based on original survey data collected among the staff of 14 Belgian and Dutch parties (N=1009). As no detailed longitudinal data on staffers' qualifications is available, I present a cross-sectional analysis of the current internal distribution of parties' human resources. Firstly, I build on existing studies by examining the quantitative advantage of parties' public faces. Are the parliamentary – and ministerial offices indeed supported by the larger staffs than the party in central office (RQ1)? Secondly, I focus on qualitative indicators for political professionalism by examining three key characteristics discussed in Panebianco's seminal work (1988): staffers' organizational role, their expertise and their professional ethos. Are staffers with strategic tasks, experience outside politics and careerist motivations indeed more prevalent within the parties' public offices (RQ2)? Thirdly, I examine the impact of institutional factors on the distribution of human resources. Do parties' public offices similarly benefit from a qualitative staffing advantage in Belgium and the Netherlands (RQ3)?

This paper makes several innovative contributions to existing literature. Firstly, it offers an in-depth analysis of a chronically under-researched but essential group of unelected actors in politics (Webb

and Keith, 2017). Although research on political staffers is considered particularly troublesome (Webb and Kolodny, 2006), a diverse selection of parties cooperated – resulting in a satisfying response rate of 34%. Secondly, the characteristics of staffers working within different institutional settings (central office, parliament, government) are compared for the first time. Instead of focusing on a specific subgroup (e.g. ministerial advisors), I approach political staffers as a unified group of actors spread across different organizational entities. Thirdly, this research design enables an original, direct assessment of a key assumption behind the often recited '*ascendancy of the party in public office'* (Katz and Mair, 2002).

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I explain how I interpret central concepts such as political staff, staffers' individual tasks and the three faces of political parties. Second, the impact of staffers' qualifications on the intra-party power balance are discussed in detail to develop three hypotheses. After describing data collection and the operationalization of variables, I consider the findings and their implications.

Conceptualizing political staff

This paper defines political staffers as individuals with a remunerated, unelected position that have been politically recruited within a party's central office, parliamentary party group or ministerial office. In this section, I explain the empirical implications of this definition and discuss how they can be divided into separate groups based on their individual tasks and the party face in which they work.

Political staffers have several characteristics that set them apart from other actors involved in party politics. For example, their relationship to party politics is fundamentally different from voluntary activists because staffers receive a salary in return for their efforts. Neither is their position comparable to elected elites, as staffers are not elected but get recruited by a political party or office-holder. Their position also contrasts with civil servants, even when the civil service is subject to politicization. In contrast to state officials, the positions of political staffers are in parliaments or ministerial offices not permanent. They are an integral part of the spoils of office and remain tied to the positions of elected elites, which are up for grabs with every cycle of parliamentary elections and government formation. Lastly, staffers work directly for parties, parliaments of ministerial offices – in contrast to lobbyists or external consultants that might also be involved in political decision-making.

Individual tasks

The individual tasks of political staffers include professional activities that can be grouped into six categories (Figure 1). Managers ensure that the political machine runs smoothly. As central figureheads, they are responsible for translating a party's political-strategic goals into an effective political operation. In this role, they often coordinate with elected elites and monitor the activities of other staffers as people managers. Policy experts provide elected elites with tailored policy advice by drafting legislative documents and writing briefings (Maley, 2000; Busby and Belkacem, 2013; Gouglas et al., 2015; Pittoors et al., 2017; Wolfs and De Winter, 2017). In ministerial offices, they often coordinate with policy experts from other coalition parties (Maley, 2011; Askim et al., 2018) and civil servants (Askim et al., 2017; Connaughton, 2015). Communication experts help elected elites to connect with voters effectively in a mediatized political environment. They run electoral campaigns and promote the (social) media presence of elected elites on a daily basis (Askim et al., 2017; Dommett et al., 2020; Sabag Ben-Porat and Lehman-Wilzig, 2020).

Managers	Director (central office, ministerial office), party group secretary, head of general policy (ministerial office), cabinet secretary (ministerial office)
Policy experts	Policy advice (party study service, party group or ministerial office)
Communication experts	Director of communications, communication cell staff, spokesperson (party leader, party group or minister), internal party communication staff, translator, public relations staff
Political assistants	Personal assistant (party leader, MP or minister), parliamentary liaison (ministerial office)
Party organizers	Coach of local sections/campaigns (central office), experts in local policy (central office), assistants to party subgroups (youth, women, elderly, ...)
Administration & support	Finance and accounting, human resources, IT, reception, administration, catering (central office or ministerial office), personal driver (party leader, minister)

Table 1: Staffers' individual tasks

Political assistants are the main sidekick for many individual politicians as they manage the practical, daily routines of holding an elected office. In this role, they act as gatekeepers to elected elites by managing their daily schedule (Busby and Belkacem, 2013) and organizing constituency services (Landgrave and Weller, 2020). Party organizers support the party on the ground as the available pool of volunteers to run the party on the ground becomes increasingly limited (Scarrow, 2014; Van Biezen et al., 2012). In this role, they support local office-holders, candidates and party members (Super, 2009). Lastly, staffers in the administration & support category are part of the

collective support structure of a specific party, party group or ministerial office and contribute to bureaucratic routines or provide operational services to guests, personnel and elected elites.

Party faces

Political staffers work within several subunits of parties, including parliamentary party groups, ministerial offices, local or regional offices and party headquarters. To categorize these different settings, this paper builds on Katz and Mair's (1993) seminal conceptualization of the three party faces, distinguishing between the *party in public office* (parliament and government), the *party on the ground* (members and activists) and the *party in central office* (national party organization). More specifically, I focus on staffers in parties' central and public offices to assess the power balance between both faces. To my knowledge, it is the first time a study on political staff covers those working at party headquarters, parliamentary offices and ministerial offices. In contrast, existing empirical research on staff is scattered across disciplines interested in particular party faces. As a result, these earlier studies do not consider political staffers as unified group, only covering specific subgroups of staffers. Firstly, legislative scholars have focused on staffers' impact on political representation, most notably the US congress (Patterson, 1970; DeGregorio, 1988; Salisbury and Shepsle, 1981; McCrain, 2018; Hertel-Fernandez et al., 2018) and the European parliament (Busby and Belkacem, 2013; Pegan, 2017). Secondly, public administration scholars have focused on the policy advice of ministerial advisors (Maley, 2000; Brans, 2017) and the (dys)functions of ministerial offices, particularly in relation to civil servants (Connaughton, 2015). More recently, attention to the partisan loyalties of ministerial advisors has been reinvigorated (Hustedt and Salomonsen, 2014; Askim et al., 2018; Christiansen et al., 2016) by increasing politicization in Westminster countries (Shaw and Eichbaum, 2018; Gouglas and Brans, 2017). The few inroads into the subject by party politics scholars remain limited to staffers in central – and parliamentary offices, neglecting the role of ministerial staff (Webb and Fisher, 2003; Karlsen and Saglie, 2017).

Although this paper positions itself within the field of party politics, I argue that ministerial offices should be considered an integral part of a party's human resources. While parties often only directly pay central office staffers (Webb and Kolodny, 2006), a party's human capital clearly extends beyond its own headquarters. Although the salary of elites in parliament and government originates from the state, parties are nonetheless indirectly responsible for their compensation because they are the principal recruitment channel for such positions (Schlesinger, 1984; Jun and Bukow, 2020). As pointed out by Katz and Mair (1993), "*the resources of the party in public office may not be visible in pure party terms, especially when the party in question includes a governing as well as a parliamentary face, and when key*

staff are appointed to positions in the public, as opposed to the party, bureaucracy" (Katz and Mair, 1993: 606). For these reasons, ministerial offices cannot be overlooked in an analysis of parties' internal distribution of human resources. As a result, government status has considerable implications for a party's human capital in political systems where ministerial positions include a group of politically recruited advisors (Bolleyer, 2009; Wilson, 2020).

Professionalization and power

Ever since Ostrogorski (1902) and Michels' (1915) seminal work on political parties, the link between organization and power has been a focal point for party scholars. Similarly, the impact of professionalization on the internal power balance of parties lies at the heart of influential party models such as the electoral-professional party (Panebianco, 1988) and the cartel party (Katz and Mair, 1995). The growing presence of political professionals is seen as an organizational game changer, empowering certain actors within political parties at the expense of others. More specifically, Katz and Mair (1993) have argued that the influx of paid staffers has mostly benefitted the party in public office, which gained importance over both the party in central office and the party on the ground. Subsequent empirical analyses illustrated how staff growth within parliamentary offices has outpaced central offices in most Western European nations (Kölln, 2015; Krouwel, 2012; Bardi et al., 2017). These studies demonstrate that professionalization has indeed produced a quantitative shift of staff resources as parties' public offices are supported by larger staffs than parties' central offices.

However, the concept of professionalization goes well beyond a mere increase in staff resources. Panebianco (1988) described how traditional party bureaucrats were gradually being replaced by a new type of staffers: political professionals. Parties' demand for new types of staffers is rooted in several environmental challenges that arose during the second half of the 20th century. In the electoral arena, parties faced increased competition from centripetal competition (Kircheimer, 1966) and challenger parties (De Vries and Hobolt, 2020), resulting in electoral volatility (Drummond, 2006). At the same time, the emergence of mass media (and later: social media) provided new opportunities to connect with voters. As a result, parties recruited communication experts to navigate new technological developments and strengthen their position towards media outlets in this permanent campaign environment (Blumenthal, 1980). In the policy arena, parties faced increasing complexity because of the expansion of the welfare state and the growing importance of multi-level governance (Marks et al., 1996). At the same time, parties became increasingly confronted with interest groups (Allern, 2012), lobbyists (McCrain, 2018) and think

tanks (Stone et al., 1998) seeking to shape policies. As a result, parties recruited policy experts to navigate the increasingly complex and technical nature of policy-making.

Building on Panebianco (1988) and Katz and Mair (2002), I argue that the influx of these political professionals puts the party in public office at a double advantage. Parties' public offices do not only have larger staffs, their attractiveness to qualified professionals reinforces its primacy over other party faces. The causal mechanism driving this process is visualized in Figure 1, which connects Panebianco's conceptualization of professionalism (1988) to the uneven distribution of resources described by Katz and Mair (1993). In response to the challenges in the electoral – and policy arena discussed above, elected elites attract in-house expertise by hiring strategic advisors. These political professionals share several important characteristics that set them apart from other staff, of which three are analyzed in this paper: their tasks, expertise and vocational motivations. As shown in Figure 1, my interpretation of professionalization theory is that the particular demand for political-strategic advisors in parties' public offices attracts qualified candidates who bring their own professional experience and – motivations to the table. In effect, this results in a qualitative imbalance reducing the ability of parties' central offices to control their representatives in public office.

Figure 1: Causal mechanism driving public office advantage

The first defining characteristic of political professionals are their tasks. Drawing from private sector terminology, Panebianco (1988) distinguished between the different assignments linked to line – and staff roles. On the one hand, traditional party bureaucrats exemplified the line role in politics by supporting the party machine as administrative clerks with operational duties. On the other hand, political professionals take on advice-oriented staff roles, supporting elected officials with their specialist knowledge. More recently, Karlsen and Saglie (2017) have underlined the

political impact of professional staff by conceptualizing staffers' roles as a distinction between technical – and strategic assistance. "*Strategy assistance refers to involvement in essentially political decisions, such as the development and implementation of policy and campaign strategy. Technical assistance includes administrative functions and services, such as website design or maintaining membership files*" (Karlsen and Saglie, 2017: 4). It follows that such strategic, advice-oriented positions are centered around the most visible elected elites representing the party in parliament or government.

H1: Policy – and communication experts are more prevalent within the party in public office.

The second defining characteristic of political professionals is their expertise. For Panebianco (1988), professionalization is about the introduction of extra-political knowledge and experience into the realm of politics. The added value of a communication advisor is the strongest when it is based on earlier professional experience as a marketeer, pollster or social media analyst. Policy experts are the most valuable when they have specialized within a specific policy domain in an earlier position in academia, business or the civil service. For Katz and Mair (2009) however, professionalization has established politics as a separate occupational track. Indeed, it seems reasonable that parties and elected elites will also value advisors who have pursued a specialized career in politics. Such seasoned advisors bring along a particular kind of political craftsmanship, based on their experience with past political cycles and crises.

H2: Highly experienced staffers are more prevalent within the party in public office.

The third defining characteristic of political professionals is their vocational ethos. Whereas Michels (1915) once described traditional party bureaucrats as employees who completely identify with a party's political ideas, professionals supposedly lack such strong partisanship. Instead, Panebianco (1988) argues that they temporarily venture into politics to seek career advancement, expanding their own professional experience and – network (Askim et al., 2020). Similarly, Katz and Mair (2009) state that professional staffers prioritize their employment contract over loyalty or ideology. In a rare empirical study of party staffers, however, Fisher and Webb (2003) find that most are moved by both rational career incentives and altruistic partisan motives. More recently, research by Svallfors (2017) argues that above all, political professionals seek to influence political decision-making without taking the spotlight. Compared to the party staffers at central offices, I anticipate that public office staff is nonetheless more receptive to influence – and career motives because their advisory role within public institutions (parliament, government) is further removed from the party's organizational core. Vice versa, those who are strongly driven by partisan motives can be expected to flock towards positions at central offices, remaining close to party activists.

H3: Staffers driven by influence – and career motives are more prevalent within the party in public office.

How does this all affect the internal power distribution of parties? If public office staffers are indeed more qualified than their counterparts in central offices, this reduces the capacity of a party's extra-parliamentary organization to control its staffers in public offices. These control mechanisms matter because the party in central office acts is the official mouthpiece for a party's membership base. However, Panebianco (1988) states that the specific characteristics of political professionals make them harder to control. Indeed, both professional expertise and vocational motivations could have this effect in my opinion. Knowledge is power: staffers with extensive experience have an informational advantage over others due to information-asymmetry. Moreover, staffers with extra-political expertise balance their partisan loyalty with the judgement of their peers outside politics. Panebianco (1988) uses the example of a formally-trained expert in economic policy, aiming to uphold a reputation among fellow economists in other sectors. The issue of professional credibility is especially pertinent among staffers motivated by careerism instead of partisanship, who often see their position as a stepping stone towards more lucrative positions outside of politics (Askim et al., 2020). This informational advantage and their professional links outside to other sectors make political professionals more independent from interference by both fellow staffers and elected elites.

Data and method

This study examines staffers from Belgium and the Netherlands. From an international perspective, both countries share many similarities. Both are historically divided societies which have overcome societal cleavages through consociationalism and power-sharing (Deschouwer, 2009; Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). Their highly proportional electoral systems have produced extensive, complex party systems that require cooperation through coalition government. In both countries, this institutional context has created collective staff infrastructures centered around parties, who predominantly recruit their staff within their own network (Moens, 2020). However, several important differences between their institutional settings have important implications for staffing. Firstly, the resources of Belgian parties far exceed those of their Dutch counterparts. While the dependence of Dutch parties on state resources remains limited, Belgian parties brazenly tap into the state for financial and human resources (Van Biezen and Kopecký, 2014). This remarkable contrast is illustrated by the staff sizes of parties at the time of data collection (Appendix A). As the Netherlands' largest

party, the VVD led by prime minister Mark Rutte included about as much staffers as Ecolo, the ninth largest party represented in the Belgian parliament. Moreover, this contrast is exacerbated by fundamental differences in the support structure for government ministers. Whereas Dutch ministers are assisted by a handful of political staffers, their Belgian counterparts are supported by extensive 'ministerial cabinets' comprised of dozens of partisan advisors (Brans et al., 2006). Secondly, Belgian staffers are diffused across several levels of government because of federalism. Whereas Dutch parties include one national party group with elected officials, Belgian political elites are spread along several regional and federal entities. Thirdly, the gravitational center of Belgian – and Dutch party organizations lies within party faces. Whereas central offices are considered as the central power houses within the Belgian 'partitocracy' (Deschouwer et al., 1996), parliamentary party groups dominate parties within the Dutch 'fractiocracy' (Andeweg, 2000; Koole, 1992). Although some have suggested a gradual erosion of the dominance of party groups in the Netherlands (Koole, 2018), the subordination of Belgian party groups to central offices and governments is widely acknowledged (De Winter and Dumont, 2006; De Winter and Dumont, 2003).

Data collection

Original survey data were collected among the paid staff of fourteen parties (Appendix A). Since the support of party leadership was indispensable for contacting the target population, face-to-face interviews with senior party management were set up to gain an official endorsement. Although parties are often reluctant to provide access to their personnel (Webb and Kolodny, 2006; Webb and Keith, 2017), this approach resulted in the participation of 14 out of 25 parties represented in the Belgian and Dutch parliaments. Apart from the radical right family (which refused to participate), these cases mirror the diversity of the party landscape in electoral size, organizational resources and ideological outlook. Before launching the online survey, a carefully-developed questionnaire was tested among party staffers during 33 face-to-face interviews.

Designed to be completed in under 15 minutes, the questionnaire contained general background questions on staffers' sociodemographic characteristics, day-to-day professional activities and previous professional experiences, but also gauged their political attitudes, future ambitions and their interactions with peers and elected elites. Between December 2018 and January 2020, the complete population of staffers from the participating parties received a digital invitation to answer this online questionnaire, followed up by two reminders. Out of a population of 2936 individuals, the survey obtained a response rate of 34% (N=1009). To calculate response rates and check the

representativeness of our findings, participating parties provided population data. Based on the weighted cases approach (Parke, 2012), X^2-tests were run to test under – or overrepresentation among specific subgroups within the sample. Post-stratification weights were calculated based on five indicators with significant differences between sample and population (country, party system, party, party face and age).

Variables

Staffers professional experience was measured through 6-point Likert scales[‡] surveying their prior experience in a given field, e.g. the public sector. The questionnaire also included 12 statements on staffers' vocational motivation based on earlier research among this unelected elite (Fisher and Webb, 2003; Svallfors, 2017). A principal component analysis identified three underlying factors, which were consequently labeled as partisanship (political incentives), influence (power incentives) and careerism (professional incentives). All statements, factor loadings and the direction of the relationship (positive/negative) are listed in Table 2.

Factor 1: Partisanship	
As a political staffer, I can work with like-minded colleagues.	0,72
Thanks to my occupation, I contribute to the success of the party.	0,70
Thanks to my occupation, I contribute to the working of our democracy.	0,68
Factor 2: Influence	
As a political staffer, I am closely involved in important political decision-making.	0,55
As a political staffer, I can be involved in politics without taking the spotlight myself.	0,51
Working for a political party is more satisfying than working elsewhere.	- 0,59
Factor 3: Careerism	
A position as a political staffer is good for my career.	0,68
For the same efforts, I could earn a higher salary elsewhere.	- 0,64
A position as a political staffer is a good preparation for becoming a politician.	0,42

Table 2: Factor analysis of staffers' vocational motivations

For each country, three multiple logistic regression models were estimated, explaining which types of staffers are more prevalent within central – , parliamentary – and ministerial offices. More specifically, these models show how staffers' with certain professional experience and motivations are more likely to work in specific party faces (dependent variable). Sex and level of education were

[‡] 1 = no experience, 2 = a few months, 3 = several years, 4 = more than 5 years, 5 = more than 10 years, 6 = more than 20 years.

added as control variables, as staffers' relationship to parties is gendered (Taflaga and Kerby, 2019; Snagovsky and Kerby, 2018; Calcagno and Montgomery, 2020; Erikson and Verge, 2020) and younger, less-experienced staff cohorts have higher levels of education due to the democratization of education[§].

Results

The starting point of the empirical analysis is the internal distribution of staff resources within parties (RQ1). Similar to earlier studies, staffers are not spread equally across party faces in Belgium and the Netherlands either. However, this internal organizational balance is strongly related to institutional factors and government participation (Figure 2). Firstly, parliamentary resources are considerably lower in Belgium. This is clearly illustrated by comparing opposition parties in both systems. While the staff of Belgian opposition parties is divided equally between central offices and parliament, parliamentary staffers dominate Dutch opposition parties.

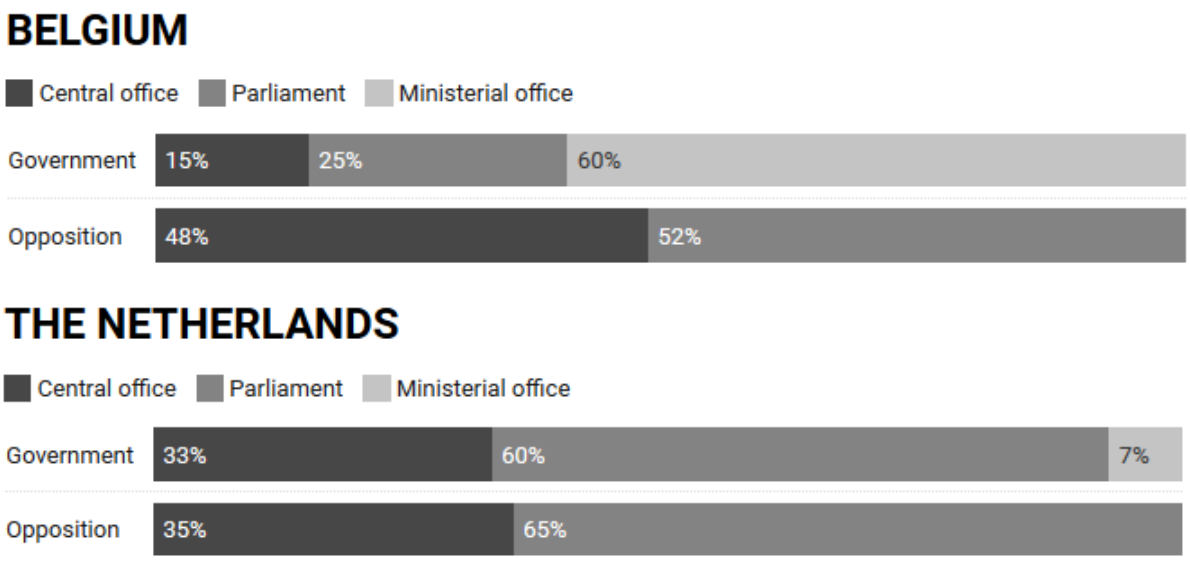


Figure 2: Quantitative staff distribution

Secondly, government participation dramatically alters a party's human resources in Belgium[**], whereas government status only has a marginal impact on staff resources in the Netherlands. In the Dutch case, the parliamentary party remains the organizational center with the largest staff

[§] Age could not be included as a control variable due to its strong correlation to professional experience, one of the main independent variables.

[**] On average, governing parties have a larger vote share and parliamentary party group than opposition parties. For this reason, parliamentary staffers outweigh central office staff in Belgian governing parties

when a party joins a government. In the Belgian case, however, joining government comes with the spoils of the so-called "cabinets": extensive ministerial offices that include dozens of political staffers. These findings mostly align with the conventional wisdom that parties' public offices enjoy a quantitative staffing advantage – with one remarkable exception: Belgian opposition parties. In this case, staff sizes are equally split between the 'party in central office' and the 'party in public office'. If one takes into account that parliamentary staffers in these parties do not form a unified group because they are spread across at least three parliamentary institutions (federal and regional parliaments), it is plausible that central offices remain dominant in Belgian opposition parties. While this observation aligns with the 'partitocractic' features of the Belgian political system, the staff distribution in Belgian governing parties does not. In those cases, the quantitative staffing advantage of the 'party in public office' is irrefutable.

The balance between party faces is about more than the quantitative staff distribution. The central claim of this paper is that the '*party in public office*' also has a qualitative staffing advantage. Central offices, parliaments and ministerial offices are distinct professional habitats and their staffers have diverging backgrounds. To fully appreciate the staffing advantage of the 'party in public office', I examine whether the more highly qualified staffers are indeed concentrated within parties' public offices (RQ2). A regression model for each party face (central office, parliament and ministerial office) was estimated in Belgium and the Netherlands.

The multivariate analysis shows that staffers from different party faces do indeed bring different professional experiences and – attitudes to the table. The first two models (central office) uncover several contrasts between staffers from the 'party in central office' and the 'party in public office'. Firstly, central office staffers have less professional experience in politics. In Belgium, they are also significantly less experienced within the public sector than their counterparts in parliamentary – and ministerial offices. Secondly, they are significantly less driven by careerist interests and the desire to exert influence. While this attitude translates into a higher degree of partisanship among central office staffers in Belgium, this is not the case in the Netherlands. Lastly, Dutch central office staffers are significantly less likely to hold a college degree than their counterparts from public offices. Despite several contrasts with their colleagues at central offices, however, the staff of the 'party in public office' is far from homogeneous. Firstly, the models show how the vocational motivations of parliamentary – and ministerial staff diverge. On the one hand, parliamentary staffers stand out for their careerism incentives – a characteristic that is not shared by their peers in ministerial offices. On the other hand, ministerial staffers stand out for their lower responsiveness to partisan incentives – a characteristic that is not shared by parliamentary staff.

Table 2: Understanding the internal distribution of staffers' qualifications

	CENTRAL OFFICE		PARLIAMENT		MINISTERIAL OFFICE	
	Belgium	Netherlands	Belgium	Netherlands	Belgium	Netherlands
Professional experience						
Politics	0,56 (0,27) *	0,15 (0,99) °	1,40 (0,23)	2,95 (0,83)	1,11 (0,21)	2,15 (2,08)
Public sector	0,16 (0,41) ***	2,51 (0,97)	0,33 (0,30) ***	0,23 (0,97)	5,65 (0,26) ***	14,98 (2,47)
Private sector	0,71 (0,36)	0,22 (1,11)	1,03 (0,32)	1,78 (0,95)	1,24 (0,28)	3,39 (2,02)
Vocational motivation						
Careerism	0,82 (0,05) ***	0,74 (0,14) *	1,08 (0,05) °	1,33 (0,14) *	1,07 (0,04)	0,81 (0,50)
Partisanship	1,35 (0,06) ***	1,11 (0,20)	1,01 (0,05)	1,16 (0,19)	0,82 (0,05) ***	0,27 (0,59) *
Influence	0,73 (0,06) ***	0,56 (0,22) **	1,05 (0,05)	1,58 (0,20) *	1,18 (0,05) ***	1,05 (0,63)
Controls						
Education *(Ref. cat. No higher education)*						
Higher, non-college education	1,07 (0,36)	0,41 (1,00)	2,82 (0,40) **	2,53 (0,98)	0,50 (0,31) *	19,07 (10996)
College degree	0,86 (0,32)	0,10 (0,90) **	2,97 (0,37) **	5,55 (0,85) *	0,54 (0,28) *	4E+10 (8029,9)
Age	1,00 (0,01)	1,01 (0,03)	0,99 (0,01)	1,01 (0,03)	1,01 (0,01)	1,02 (0,07)
Sex (*Ref. cat. Male)*						
Female	1,12 (0,20)	1,00 (0,54)	0,91 (0,18)	1,51 (0,51)	0,98 (0,16)	0,23 (1,84)
Constant	1,42 (1,11)	1809,47 (3,33) *	0,05 (1,01) **	0,00 (3,46) **	0,99 (0,89)	0,00 (8029,9)
Nagelkerke R^2	0,21	0,38	0,09	0,32	0,19	0,54
N	733	136	733	136	733	136

Note: Odd's ratios (SE's) of multiple logistic regressions; ° p ≤ .1, * p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001

Why are public office staffers more experienced but less motivated by partisanship? In the theory section, I have argued that the qualitative staffing advantage of parties' public offices is caused by a high presence staffers with specific skills and attitudes. To test the validity of this causal mechanism, two assumptions will be examined in more detail. Firstly, the assumption that some staffers have distinct experiences and motivations will be analyzed based on 6 logistic regression models explaining the individual qualifications of staffers. Secondly, the assumption that some staffers are overrepresented within specific will be examined based on bivariate data showing the qualitative staff distribution within parties.

The multivariate analysis shown in Table 2 demonstrates how staffers' individual qualifications are strongly connected to their tasks. On the professional side of the spectrum, staffers are harder to control due to high levels of professional experience lower responsiveness to partisanship. In particular, policy experts appear the most professionalized, as they are highly educated, experienced and motivated by exerting influence. Political assistants have similar characteristics. Although they are often young and unexperienced, these newcomers are significantly more motivated by future career prospects and political influence. On the traditional bureaucratic side of the spectrum, party organizers resemble traditional bureaucrats most closely, as they combine low levels of experience and careerism with a high degree of partisanship. While the lower-educated administration and support staff also leans towards this category, they do not share the strong partisan loyalty of party activists. However, other staffers are harder to characterize. As the leading figures within the hierarchy, managers hold a particularly ambiguous position as they combine a high degree of political experience with partisan motivations. Communication experts remain somewhat enigmatic, as they do not stand out for any kind of professional experience or motivation. Similar to the majority of staffers, they have limited external professional experience and are largely motivated by partisanship.

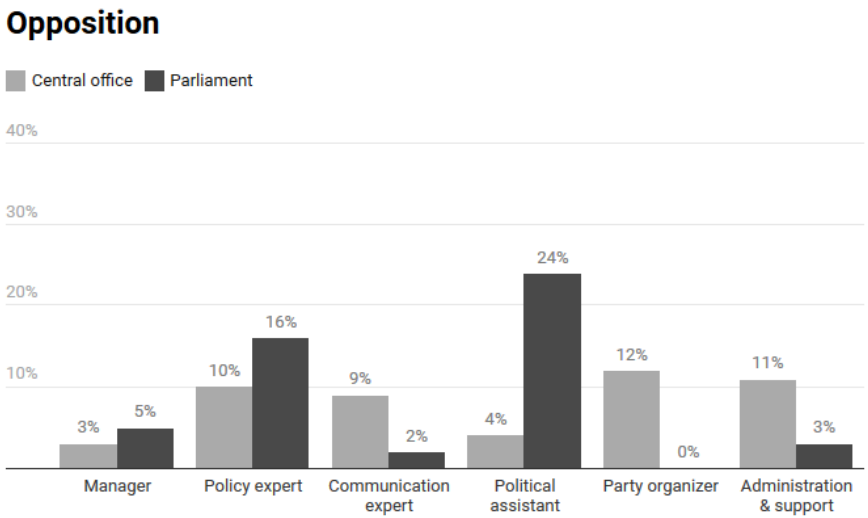
The qualitative staff distribution between party faces shows that the link between staffers' tasks and their experiences and motivations affects parties' internal balance. As expected, those staffers who are least susceptible to control (policy experts, political assistants) are indeed overrepresented within the public face of the party. Figure 2 illustrates the weight of specific types of staffers within the party as a whole. For example, parliamentary assistants are the largest group of staffers within Belgian opposition as they account for 24% of the total staff of these parties. While parliamentary offices include more policy experts than central offices, the opposite is true when communication experts are concerned. Belgian government parties are dominated by policy experts, as they make

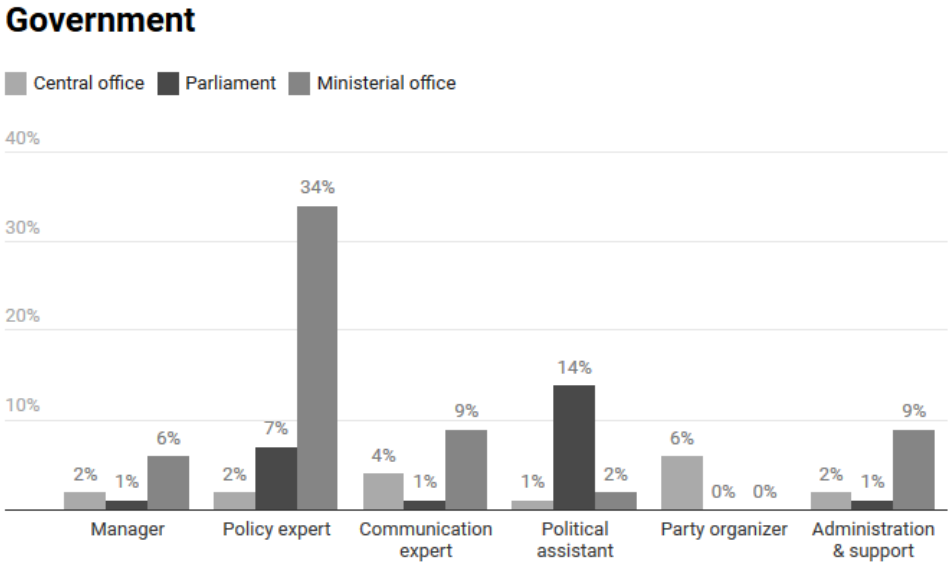
Table 3: Understanding the individual qualifications of staffers

	Manager	Policy expert	Communication expert	Political assistant	Party organizer	Administration & support
Professional experience						
Public sector	0,55 (0,37)	2,60 (0,23) ***	0,62 (0,35)	0,57 (0,32) °	0,13 (0,82) *	1,10 (0,34)
Private sector	1,05 (0,41)	1,08 (0,29)	1,29 (0,36)	0,81 (0,37)	0,37 (0,63)	1,11 (0,36)
Political experience	1,74 (0,31) °	0,98 (0,21)	0,85 (0,29)	0,84 (0,27)	0,47 (0,45) °	1,21 (0,32)
Vocational motivation						
Partisanship	1,18 (0,09) °	1,02 (0,05)	1,08 (0,06)	0,93 (0,17)	1,24 (0,09) *	0,82 (0,07) **
Influence	1,11 (0,08)	1,21 (0,05) ***	0,94 (0,06)	1,11 (0,06) °	0,78 (0,09) **	0,61 (0,08) ***
Careerism	0,90 (0,07)	1,03 (0,04)	0,96 (0,05)	1,18 (0,05) ***	0,79 (0,07) ***	1,07 (0,07)
Control variables						
Age *(Ref. cat. 15-35)*						
36-50	3,58 (0,45) **	1,09 (0,21)	0,67 (0,28)	0,68 (0,11)	0,70 (0,41)	2,02 (0,36) *
51-65	6,02 (0,53) ***	1,37 (0,30)	0,53 (0,41)	0,53 (0,10) °	1,75 (0,52)	1,12 (0,46)
Education *(Ref. cat. No higher education)*						
Higher, non-college education	2,98 (0,65) °	2,14 (0,42) °	2,48 (0,02) *	1,24 (0,54)	0,58 (0,59)	0,47 (0,31) *
College degree	3,31 (0,62) °	9,91 (0,38) ***	1,23 (0,59)	0,87 (0,67)	0,87 (0,46)	0,07 (0,33) ***
Sex *(Ref. cat. Male)*						
Female	1,20 (0,28)	0,61 (0,16) **	0,92 (0,67)	1,14 (0,49)	1,42 (0,31)	1,34 (0,25)
Constant	0,00 (1,53) ***	0,01 (0,84) ***	0,16 (0,67) °	0,06 (0,00) **	0,62 (1,41)	171,79 (1,09) ***
Nagelkerke R^2	0,13	0,25	0,05	0,09	0,15	0,43

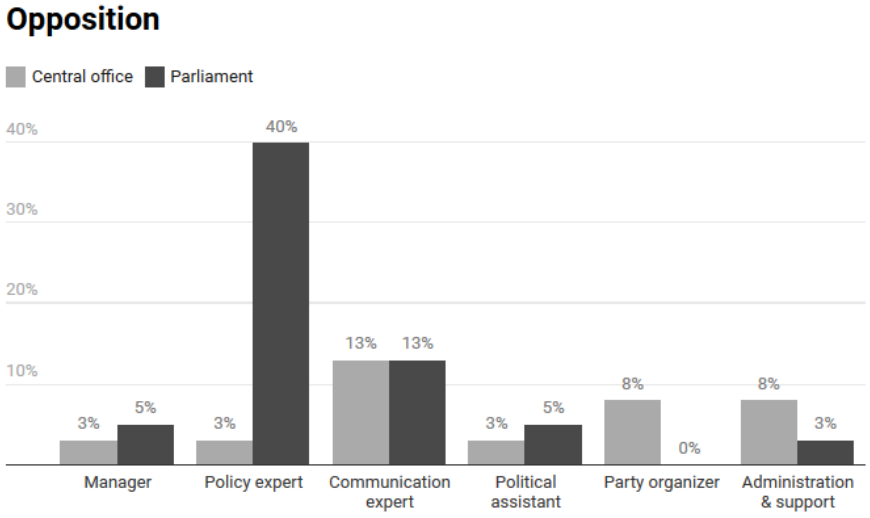
Note: Odd's ratios (SE's) of multiple logistic regressions; ° $p \leq .1$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

BELGIUM





THE NETHERLANDS



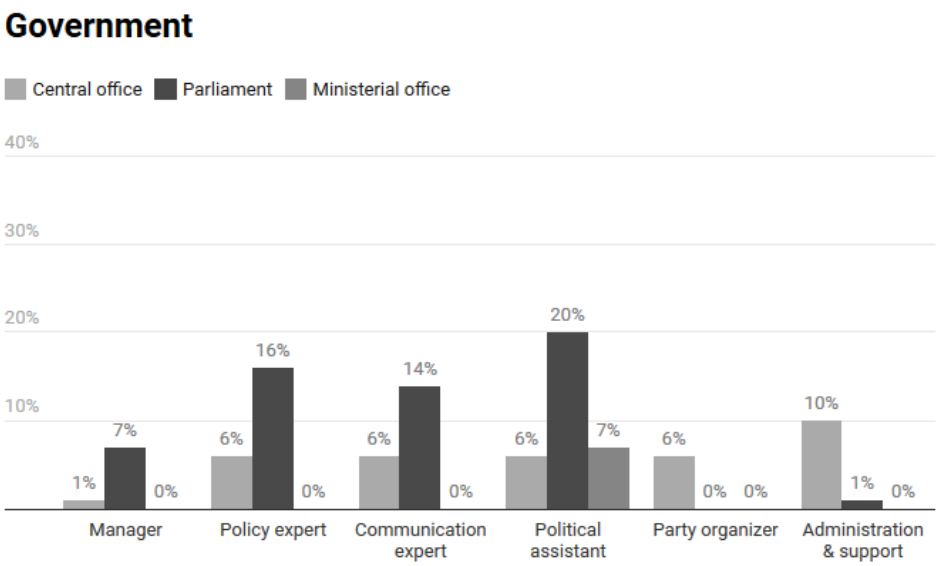


Figure 3: Qualitative staff distribution

up 34% of parties' total staff size. This high number of ministerial policy advisors dwarfs the capacity of central offices and party groups, who's limited number of policy advisors cannot cope with the activities of their numerous peers at ministerial offices. Although the contrast is less stark, ministerial offices also have a communicational advantage compared to central offices. The strongest imbalance can be found in Dutch opposition parties, where parliamentary policy experts account for 40% of the total staff. Among other important staff categories, however, the human resources of central – and parliamentary offices appear on balance (managers, communication experts, political assistants). This is clearly not case within Dutch government parties, where the balance of human resources is consistently tilted towards parliamentary offices. Within these parties, parliamentary offices have a staffing advantage when it comes to managers, policy experts, communication experts and political assistants. Although Dutch ministerial offices also include political assistants, the size of this group is to limited to tilt the balance of human resources in their favor.

While the analysis has largely confirmed the causal mechanism described in the theory section, it also shows that this mechanism works differently in Belgium and the Netherlands. The institutional become apparent by disaggregating the 'party in public office' into parliamentary – and ministerial offices. This more fine-grained examination demonstrates how the distribution of parties' human resources is shaped by institutional factors (RQ3). These systemic contrasts are a recurrent element in my analyses. Firstly, the quantitative staff distribution (Figure 1) showed that the majority of Dutch staffers work within parliamentary offices – regardless of their party's opposition status. In Belgium, however, the balance in a parties' human resources shifts dramatically when it enters government. Whereas the resources of central – and parliamentary offices seem in balance within opposition parties, ministerial offices employ the largest share of staffers in government parties. Secondly, the relative strength/weakness of party groups within both systems affects the allocation of qualified staffers (Table 1). While the Belgian staffers motivated by exerting influence are concentrated in ministerial offices, Dutch influence-seekers flock towards parliamentary offices. Moreover, public sector experience is particularly high among Belgian ministerial staffers – who are known to hop back and forth between civil service positions and cabinets. In contrast, this exchange between politics and administration does not appear to affect Dutch political staffers. Thirdly, the qualitative distribution of staffers (Figure 2) suggests that the dominant party face tends to incorporate the pivotal group of policy experts to maintain its political advantage. While the parliamentary party group consistently dominates in the Netherlands, the situation is more complex in Belgium. Although parliamentary offices appear to have a slight staffing advantage in

Belgian opposition parties, ministerial policy experts strongly outnumber other staffers in government parties.

Conclusion

This paper examined the internal power balance of parties by studying the distribution of their human resources. While earlier research suggests that parties' public offices have a quantitative staffing advantage (Krouwel, 2012; Kölln, 2015; Bardi et al., 2017), I have argued that they might also enjoy a qualitative staffing advantage. The underlying causal mechanism is driven by forces of supply – and demand. Compared to central offices, the demand for experienced, career-oriented staffers is higher in parties' public offices because elected elites seek staffers to help them navigate the complexities of daily politics. Such public office positions attract more individuals with high professional experience and less partisan motives than the positions at central offices (supply). The strong presence of such professional staffers in public offices tilts the internal power balance of parties in favor of the '*party in public office'*. As a result, public office staffers operate relatively autonomously, as their expertise often puts them one step ahead of their peers at central offices. Hence, this qualitative staffing advantage has contributed to the 'ascendancy of the party in public office' described by Katz and Mair (2002).

The findings demonstrate that parties' public offices do have a qualitative staffing advantage. First of all, central offices include less staffers with typically professional tasks (H1). Indeed, policy experts are significantly less prevalent at party headquarters. Surprisingly, the same effect does not occur for communication experts who are spread relatively evenly across party faces. Although their higher presence at central offices echoes Krouwel's characterization of contemporary central offices as '*professional campaign vehicles*' (Krouwel, 2012: 244), this contrast with the '*party in public office*' is not significant in the multivariate analysis. As for now, the most distinctive feature of central office staff is the dominant presence of party organizers. These findings partially confirm the first hypothesis, which stated that policy – and communication experts are more prevalent within the party in public office. Second, experienced staffers tend to flock towards parties' public offices (H2). However, only ministerial staffers have significantly more professional experience than their peers, more specifically in the public sector. A closer examination of the qualifications of policy experts (Appendix C) illustrates that this advantage which is strongly driven by the strong presence of policy experts. These findings partially confirm the second hypothesis, which stated that highly experienced staffers are more prevalent within the party in public office. Third, public office

staffers are more attracted to incentives other than partisanship (H3). Although staffers from all party faces are affected by partisan motives, public office staffers are significantly more driven by influence and career incentives. Moreover, ministerial staffers are significantly less affected by partisan considerations. These findings largely confirm the third hypothesis, which stated that staffers driven by influence – and career motives are more prevalent within the party in public office.

In conclusion, the findings also illustrate that the experiences and motivations of staffers within the '*party in public office*' are shaped by institutional factors. Despite the recurring dominance of parliamentary offices in the Netherlands, it appears that ministerial offices have been particularly successful in reaping the benefits of the ascendancy of the '*party in public office*' in Belgium. Within Belgian opposition parties, however, the staffing advantage is far from clear and the human resources of parliamentary – and central offices seem to be in an awkward balance.

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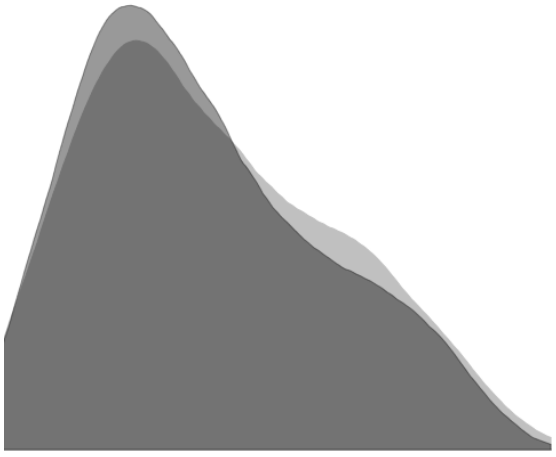
Appendix A. Participating parties (N=14)

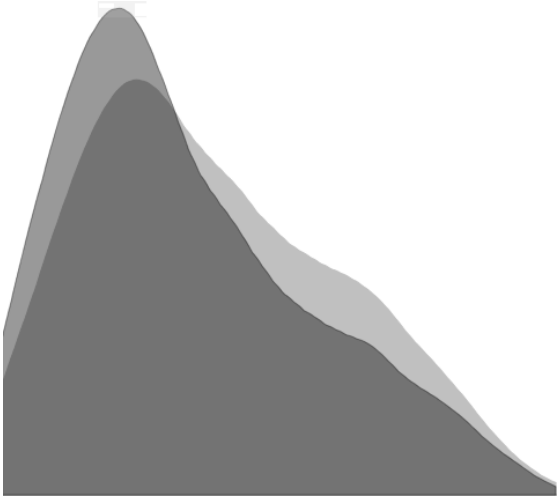
Party	Country	Party Family[#]	Vote Share	Total Staff	Governing status	Response rate	Survey period
N-VA	Belgium	Conservative	20%	560	Government	32%	November 2018 - January 2019
CD&V	Belgium	Christian-Democratic	12%	521	Government	33%	December 2018 – March 2019
PS	Belgium	Socialist	12%	565	Opposition	29%	February 2019 - April 2019
VLD	Belgium	Liberal	10%	417	Government	37%	December 2018 - March 2019
Sp.a	Belgium	Socialist	9%	192	Opposition	34%	November 2018 – May 2019
Groen	Belgium	Green	5%	91	Opposition	45%	January 2019 - March 2019
PVDA-PTB	Belgium	Radical Left	4%	65	Opposition	38%	January 2019 - April 2019
Ecolo	Belgium	Green	3%	104	Opposition	46%	March 2019 – April 2019
Défi	Belgium	Liberal	2%	103	Opposition	19%	March 2019 – April 2019
VVD	Netherlands	Liberal	21%	107	Government	51%	October 2019 - December 2019
D66	Netherlands	Liberal	12%	93	Government	47%	September 2019 - November 2019
PvdA	Netherlands	Socialist	6%	62	Opposition	48%	September 2019 - January 2020
50Plus	Netherlands	Liberal	3%	27	Opposition	22%	October 2019 - November 2019
SGP	Netherlands	Conservative	2%	29	Opposition	48%	December 2019

#: Parlgov Database

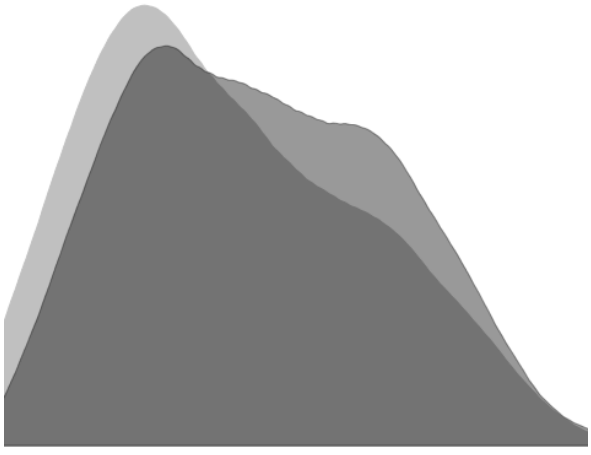
Appendix B. Age distributions by party face



Central office



Parliamentary office



Ministerial office

Note: Young to old. Light gray areas: general distribution, dark gray areas: distribution within party fac