Party Institutionalization and De-institutionalization:

Concepts and Indicators

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It is our primary contention in this paper\(^1\) that the building of theory on institutionalization of political parties\(^2\) (and political organizations more generally) can be substantially enhanced by recognizing that "institutionalization" (and by extension, de-institutionalization) is a multidimensional concept whose individual components are theoretically related, but not conceptually redundant. Recognizing that institutionalization has more than one dimension should not only help theory-building by clarifying the meaning(s) of the concept itself, but may also serve to expand the search for explanatory variables, since the different dimensions may indeed be best explained by different types or levels of factors.

Because we do see and treat de-institutionalization as an extension of institutionalization, we begin with the latter and turn later in the paper to its reverse.

**Approaches to Institutionalization in the Existing Literature**

A number of approaches to "institutionalization" have been applied in the study of political parties. We begin here with four “classical approaches” (Huntington (1968), Panebianco (1988), Rose and Mackie (1988), and Janda (1980) that are commonly cited or used by others, then consider a number of more recent treatments, and finally offer our own.

The definition of "institutionalization" that is most used throughout political science is

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\(^1\) Content for this paper is taken largely from Chapters Three and Seven of a book manuscript by Harmel, Svasand, and Mjelde, in progress. Tentative book title: *Institutionalization (and De-Institutionalization) of Rightwing Protest Parties.*

\(^2\) Note that this paper is about party institutionalization, not the institutionalization of party systems. While these two concepts may overlap, and may certainly be theoretically linked, they are not the same thing. Thus, in our references to extant literature, we will be focusing upon those pieces which relate directly to party institutionalization, and will effectively exclude references to the equally interesting and important literature on institutionalization of party systems.
that of Samuel Huntington, who sees it as "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" (1968, p. 12). From that definition, he argues that institutionalization may be measured "by its adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence" (p. 12).

Huntington's approach has been used primarily in the study of political change, and especially the modernization of societies, but has also been applied to the study of political parties (see Polsby, 1968; Wellhofer, 1972; Formisano, 1974). The central component of this approach is time, i.e. the ability of a structure to survive and to achieve stability so that its existence is not totally dependent upon its original members and leaders.

Panebianco (1988) further developed the concept, specifically for use in the study of parties. Defining institutionalization as "the way the organization 'solidifies'" (p. 49), Panebianco argues for measuring along two scales: "(1) that of the organization's degree of autonomy vis-a-vis its environment, and (2) that of its degree of systemness, i.e. the degree of interdependence of its different internal sectors" (p. 55). The latter scale is further defined as "the internal structural coherence of the organization" (p. 56), maintained by "centralized control of organizational resources and exchange processes with the environment." More specifically, five indicators of degree of party institutionalization are suggested and considered: (1) "degree of development of the central extra-parliamentary organization..., (2) degree of homogeneity of organizational structures at the same hierarchical level..., (3) how the organization is financed..., (4) relations with the external collateral organizations..., [and] (5) degree of correspondence between a party's statutory norms and its 'actual power structure...''" (pp. 58-59). In effect, then, for Panebianco institutionalization includes organizational complexity, autonomy, internal cohesiveness, and a centralized authority pattern (on the last, see esp. pp. 56-57).
In their treatment of institutionalization, both Huntington and Panebianco emphasize organizational attributes, and both include within their indicators several which might be thought of as conceptually distinct from, though perhaps causally related to, the authors' narrower initial definitions of institutionalization. Janda (1980), for instance, explicitly treats concepts like autonomy as related to, but not part of, institutionalization. He notes that "a party can be highly institutionalized and yet lack independence of other groups (Huntington's 'autonomy') -- as the Labour Party in Great Britain" (p. 19). The same argumentation would seem to hold, in the main, for organizational complexity, centralization of power, and internal coherence, all of which Janda treats as separate concepts throughout his own cross-national parties project.

Janda himself defines an institutionalized party as "one that is reified in the public mind so that 'the party' exists as a social organization apart from its momentary leaders, and this organization demonstrates recurring patterns of behavior valued by those who identify with it" (p. 19). He then operationalizes institutionalization with six variables: the year of origin, name changes, organizational discontinuity (i.e. splits and mergers), leadership competition, legislative instability, and electoral instability. Thus, Janda’s approach seemingly recognizes not just an internal, organizational component of institutionalization, but what might be considered an “external” component as well. While “leadership competition” clearly indicates internal routinization of leadership selection, legislative and electoral instability tap a different, external dimension: treatment of the party as an “institution” by the electorate. (More later on the

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3 Other authors who do include at least some version of autonomy in their conceptualization of institutionalization include Randall and Svåsand (2002) and Basedau and Stroh (2008).

4 While recognizing both of what we have called the internal and external components of institutionalization, however, Janda proceeds to otherwise treat the two dimensions as though they were one. Beyond the statement of the definition, there is no further mention of the two aspects of the concept, though the set of indicators does include measures of both.

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relationship of the other indicators to the broader concept!

Richard Rose and Thomas Mackie (1988) take a "minimalist" approach to both conceptualizing and measuring institutionalization of parties. To become institutionalized is, for them, "to merit recognition as an established party." While doing so requires three things ("(1) create crosslocal organization to contest elections nationwide; (2) nominate candidates to fight national elections; and (3) continue to nominate candidates at successive elections"), only one indicator is employed in Rose and Mackie's own analysis:

An institutionalized party must continue from election to election; operationally a party is judged to have become institutionalized if it fights more than three national elections. A group that fails to do this is not an established political party, but an ephemeral party. (p. 536)

The Huntington and Panebianco approaches emphasize internal, organizational aspects of institutionalization to the exclusion of "external" perceptions of the party as institution; Rose and Mackie emphasize the latter to the exclusion of the former; Janda includes some of both.

More recent approaches to party institutionalization continue to incorporate some of the "classical" elements while introducing some new ones. Veugelers (1995, p 4, as referenced in Pedahzur and Brichta 2002, p 35), defines "institutionalization as a combination of systemic, temporal, spatial criteria of party success: (a) a party has systemic importance if it has governing or blackmail potential; (b) a party has temporal importance if it persists without interruption – a stable party fields candidates in successive national elections; (c) a party has spatial important if it pervades the polity – a national party fields candidates across the country." Thus, Veugelers adds national scope and perceived importance by other parties (as presumably would be required
for governing or blackmail potential) to the more traditional element of persistence over time.  

Levitsky (1998) emphasizes two dimensions: “value infusion” and “behavioral routinization,” arguing that the two should be treated separately rather than combined. For Levitsky, value infusion occurs when a party, in Janda’s terms, “is reified in the public mind” or in Huntington’s terms, is “valued for itself” rather than its original purposes or goals. As an example, he offers evidence of the Peronist leaders and members remaining committed “through periods of severe diversity and despite important changes in the organization’s goals and strategies” (p 82), including Peron’s death. As for routinization, he argues that prior literature recognizing only routinization into formal rules had been mistaken; routinization of informal patterns of behavior should count as well.

Defining the process of institutionalization of a new party as “the transformation of the party from a mere instrument of founders for the pursuit of a set of goals in its formative phase into ‘an end in itself’ for the majority of supporters later on,” and following on Levitsky (1998) and Randall and Svasand (2002), Bolleyer (2013: 55-56) also adopts the dual internal party life dimensions of value infusion and routinization.

Pedahzur and Brichta (2002) also employ a two-pronged approach, starting with Rose and Mackie’s operationalization as persistence, but broadening it beyond just the more-than-three-elections rule: “Even though [their] definition does not allow us to judge whether one party is more institutionalized than the other, we may assume that the more elections the party contests the more institutionalized it becomes.” They go on to add the elements of electoral and

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5 Lupu (2009) also includes nationalization as an element of institutionalization: “Parties that are more institutionalized should have coherent organizations that are able to penetrate politics broadly” (4). To Lupu, nationalization is a proxy for organizational institutionalization (2).
legislative stability, as had been included in Janda’s approach.

Finally, Arter and Kestila-Kekkonen (2014) adopt a multi-dimensional approach with the dimensions defined by different venues: “an institutionalized party will have a stable electoral base – that is, a body of “core supporters” (societal rootedness); the electoral party will be served by an organizational structure having a core membership, an effective candidate supply and a de facto dispersal of roles and authority (autonomy and systemness); and its body of elected representatives will function as a coherent legislative actor (cohesion) and, if and when necessary, sustain the party in government.” (937) They then add “adaptability” as well. Thus, their approach incorporates stable support base, persistent electoral participation, internal routinization, legislative cohesion, and adaptability. For them, institutionalization does not necessarily occur simultaneously in the electoral, organizational, and legislative arenas.

It is obvious from this inventory of others’ approaches that institutionalization means many different things to different folks. While our own approach incorporates many of the elements just discussed, it stops far short of including all of them. While it joins other approaches in being multi-dimensional, the dimensions are not exactly the same as for any of them.

Our Approach

Our approach is rooted in consideration of the major roles that the concept of “institutionalization” has played in the development of theory concerning political parties. In our understanding of the literature, there are three such roles:
(a) as internally institutionalized organization, valued in its own right and behaving accordingly;

(b) as perceptions by other actors that the party is an “institution” to be counted upon, taken into account, and/or reckoned with for the foreseeable future; and

(c) as an objectively durable organization, which has long persisted in spite of difficulties and “shocks.”

Our conceptual approach, then, recognizes three separate dimensions (or “types”) of party institutionalization, distinguished by “role” more so than venue:

(1) as routinized party behavior ("internal" or "organizational" institutionalization);

(2) as the perception, and consequent behavior, by other actors that the party has "lasting power" ("external" or "perceptual" institutionalization); and

(3) as an objectively established survival record, i.e. objective durability ("objective" institutionalization).

And our approach to operationalization must also reflect all three dimensions: (1) evidence of routinization of decision making processes within the party, including but not limited to leadership selection, in ways which suggest that the party can have a "life of its own" beyond the political lives of its current leader(s), (2) evidence that the party has become part of the "routines" of other relevant actors in ways which suggest that they consider it to be an "established party," to borrow Rose and Mackie's terminology, and (3) a record of durability that includes both persistence and ability to adapt.

While all three dimensions are necessary for achieving what we label “institution-hood” -

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6 This is essentially the same concept as what Randall and Svåsand (2002) call "reification."
the state of being fully institutionalized -- each of the separate dimensions also has value in its own right for measuring and theorizing about institutionalization, as will be argued more fully below.

Having established what is included in our conceptualization of institutionalization, we should make clear what it does not include. While the approaches of Huntington, Panebianco, and Arter and Kestila-Kekkonen all include at least some of external autonomy, organizational complexity, centralization of power, and internal cohesion, we join with Janda in treating those concepts as separate from institutionalization. Institutionalized parties can come in many forms, including: externally autonomous or dependent, organizationally complex or simple, centralized or decentralized, and cohesive or factionalized. And while Veugelers requires national scope, we see no reason for assuming the non-institutionalizability of regional or local parties. Institutionalization and each of these other concepts may be related theoretically, but they are -- and should be kept -- conceptually distinct.

Though we agree with Janda’s exclusions in his conceptual approach to institutionalization, we disagree with two of his specific indicators. Among his six indicators, he includes "name changes" and "organizational discontinuity." Janda sees name changes as an indicator of lack of institutionalization of the party, since they may be "assumed to result in at least momentary confusion about the party's identity within the citizenry at large." But some

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7 Pedahzur and Brichta (2002: 33,35) have also gone on record as preferring to treat autonomy as a separate concept rather than as a component of institutionalization.

8 That there are attributes of the internal workings of the party which do indicate internal institutionalization cannot be denied, however. Some minimal levels of organizational complexity and coherence must be present in order to establish "routine patterns of behavior," the essential ingredient for institutions (internally-speaking, of course).
name changes could in fact *increase* the institutionalization of the party, indicating its maturity rather than its instability (as we feel is the case of the Norwegian Progress Party, formerly known as Anders Lange’s Party for a Drastic Reduction in Taxes, Rates and Public Intervention). This is even more clearly the case when parties that have existed for a long time nevertheless see fit to change their name, as did the Agrarian parties in Sweden (1957) and in Norway (1959). These parties’ changes to the “Center Party” label are best seen as organizational adaptation to changing environments, i.e. with declining numbers in the agricultural sector (Christensen 1994).

Likewise, organizational discontinuities in the forms of splits or mergers *may* (as Janda argues) alter the "interaction patterns" by narrowing/broadening the party's focus, or even bring about the end of the party. If the party can endure such discontinuities, however, the end result may in fact be a stronger party internally which is perceived as a more viable institution externally, and which has given a clear indication of its durability.⁹

The fact that Janda's own factor analysis showed name changes and organizational discontinuities to have low intercorrelations with his other four indicators is not surprising in this light. Hence, we think it more reasonable to treat name changes and organizational discontinuities as factors *in* institutionalization than as indicators *of* it.

We turn now to a detailed examination of each of the three dimensions that *are* included in institutionalization.

**Routinization**

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⁹ And in the case of splits, the *type* of split that occurred is likely to be more important than the fact that a split did occur. For instance, if the splitting group is a relatively small component of the parent party and/or if it is on the party’s ideological extreme, any negative impact may be negligible.
"Routinization" of parties' internal behavior has been considered a key element for distinguishing "charismatic" parties, reliant on one person, from parties with more "normal" organizational structures reliant on rules and procedures rather than a single, omniscient and omnipotent personality. Panebianco, for instance, distinguishes between the party organization "founded exclusively on personal ties" (the "charismatic" party) from those based on "rules,' internal 'career patterns,' and a clear division of labour" (pp.143-144). More generally speaking, routinization is the dimension of institutionalization most clearly and directly linked to Huntington's definition as "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behaviour" and Janda's criterion that "this organization demonstrates recurring patterns of behavior valued by those who identify with it" (both in Janda, 1980, p.19). Levitsky (1998) also treats routinization as a key component of institutionalization, arguing explicitly for incorporating “informally routinized behavior patterns” as well as routinization in conformity with formal rules. Seen in this way, routinization can be demonstrated by two kinds of evidence:

(1) **written rules** that are perceived as legitimate by party leaders as well as the membership; there is expectation that they will be followed, and

(2) **actual behavior** suggestive of regularized behavior, whether rules are written or not; this amounts to de-personalization of the party.

Though written rules would not be sufficient evidence of routinization in the absence of the actual behavior for older parties, of course, the first criterion (including the expectation of compliance) is all that could reasonably be expected for some parties too new to have demonstrated "recurring patterns of behavior" in practice.10

10 *It is important to recognize also that not all departures from formal rules*
On the other hand, some more mature parties may have developed recurring patterns of behavior and expectations even in the absence of a written and formally adopted set of rules (e.g. the Peronists, as analyzed by Levitsky 1998). The British Conservative Party, for instance, did not have any formal rules for leadership selection prior to 1965 (Punnett 1992). When there was a leadership change it was referred to as ‘the emergence of the party leader’. But it would not be correct to infer from a missing formal rule on leadership election that the British Conservative party was not following routinized behavior patterns before 1965.

So while it is possible – and our conceptualization allows – for routinization to take place in the absence of formalization of rules, it is certainly easier to detect when rules are indeed both formalized and followed. Even when a party does have what constitute formalized party statutes covering such things as leadership selection, candidate nomination, and party finances, it is still possible of course for those rules to be altered over time. The key feature of change in such cases, though, is whether the party change itself is made following procedures outlined in the statutes and known to the participants in the party. In other words, in an institutionalized party, change does not occur at the whim of a party leader. With this in mind, an important indicator of

are of the same type, and not all will have the same impact on institutionalization. There are times, for instance, when parties deviate from the rules in order to avoid a worse outcome, such as a split or a threat to the party’s existence. In 1989, for instance, the Norwegian Labour party changed its statutes to allow for electing two deputy leaders rather than just one. The change was made at the national convention, in spite of a similar proposal which had been rejected at a meeting of the party’s national council one year earlier. The change also violated the party’s statutes that such changes must be proposed weeks ahead of the convention. The motivation for the change was to avoid a serious division in the party, which could indeed triggered de-institutionalization. (See Skjeie 1999: 61)

Punnett cites characterizations of the selection “method” as: “a procedure of a confidential and mysterious character,” “a magic circle of people close to the Prime Minister,” and “the informal alchemy of a charmed circle of elders” (1992: 32-33).
routinization in a party with formalized rules is that when those rules are changed, the changes are made following steps specified in the party’s statutes.

For parties whose routinization of behavior patterns is of the less formal variety, a similar criterion should apply. That is, the routinized patterns should not be changed willy-nilly, by means that themselves are not included in the routinized, albeit informal, patterns of behavior. And they should certainly not be made at the whim of a party leader.

Whether routinization is by formal or informal means, it is a truism that there is no party with a perfect match between the rules/patterns and how the party operates in practice. But in the routinized party, those rules/patterns are more, rather than less, accepted and followed in practice. And when a practice deviates from the norms, there should nevertheless be a sense of legitimacy, i.e. general acceptance that the deviating practices serve to supplement, but not replace, the rules/patterns which the party has adopted (Helmke and Levitsky 2004).

**External Institutionalization**

"External institutionalization" consists of perceptions by others that the party is indeed an "institution", and is to be thought of and treated as such. These external perceptions have at least two major components: the party's perceived "lasting power" and its perceived "relevance". For the relevant external actor (whether a potential voter or another party's leader), a reasonable question would be "Is this a party whose presence should cause me to rethink my own behavior", or in other words, "Is it relevant to me, and is it likely to be around long enough that I should care?" If the answers are "yes", then for that external actor, the party is perceived to be an
institution (and may affect that actor's behavior accordingly), regardless of the new party's levels of persistence or internal routinization. The most relevant actors asking such a question, from the standpoint of the new party, would seem to be (1) the electorate and (2) the other parties.

Indicators of these actors' perceptions of the new party may come in two forms: (1) direct evidence of the attitudes of voters (or leaders of the other parties) and (2) evidence of their altered behavior as a consequence of the new party's presence in the system. On the part of the electorate, external institutionalization could be seen in the development of a stable core electorate for the new party (also part of Arter and Kestila-Kekkonen’s (2014) “societal rootedness”), especially when it consists of voters whose reasons for supporting the party indicate the likelihood of continued support. Leaders of other parties might demonstrate their perceptions of the new party directly in statements to the media, or indirectly by altering their own programs or in other ways indicating enhanced blackmail or coalition potential of the new party (see also Veugelers’ (1995) “systemic performance”).

Because it is unreasonable to expect that all other parties will perceive the lasting power and/or relevance of the new party in the same way, the perceptions must be weighed by the number and importance of the parties holding them. (At a minimum, only the perceptions of

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12 Note that the emphasis here is upon electoral stability rather than electoral strength. A party with a small, but stable, support base is just as institutionalized as one with a stable and large support base. A good concrete example is the Norwegian Communist party. This party, formed in 1921, continues to exist. It nominates candidates in elections, but it has failed to win a single seat in parliament since 1957. Its failure to win seats since 1957 does not mean that it is no longer institutionalized. As a reverse example, the Danish Progress party became the second largest party in its debut election in Denmark in 1973, just a few months after it had been formally established. The electoral success did not, at that time, match any criterion for party institutionalization.

13 The emphasis on a stable core electorate disqualifies "flash" parties from being considered institutionalized on this dimension.
parties which themselves hold at least minimal relevance in the system should be considered.)

**Objective Durability**

Whereas routinization refers to organizational matters, and external institutionalization refers to perceptions by outside actors, "objective durability" (or "survivability") may be thought of as an objective estimate of the probability of continued survival of a party, based on its past history of endurance. Existing literature has already established that simply the current age, or what we will call "persistence", of a party is itself closely related to the likelihood of surviving longer. Janda and Gillies (1980), for instance, studied the survival patterns of 208 parties, and concluded:

> Obviously, there is some analogy to infant mortality in the case of parties as well as humans. Once parties are allowed to mature, their chances of survival increase dramatically... For parties between 5 and 15 years of age, more than sixty percent died before 1979. If a party survives until age 15, its chances of continuing nearly double. After parties reach 25, the probability of continuing jumps to 80 percent... It is clear that party longevity, unlike human longevity, is associated with increased likelihood of survival. (p. 166-7)  

Clearly, though, persistence alone is not sufficient as a predictor of further survival (particularly in the lower age range), nor as a complete measure of objective durability. The concept of

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14 (Bolleyer 2014:2) found that 65 of 140 parties formed since 1968 had ceased to persist by the end of 2011. According to Lowery et.al. of a total of 161 different parties competing in Dutch elections between 1946 and 2006, 117 (72.67 per cent) competed in only one election (Lowery et al. 2013) (p. 388).
"durability" includes not just persistence, but also a record of being able to survive "shocks" (i.e. important changes within the party or in its environment).

We have adapted our own two-pronged approach from Gurr's study of the durability of political systems (1974). For Gurr (and for us), persistence "is defined simply as longevity," while adaptability refers "to the extent of...demonstrated capacity for undergoing incremental change..." (p. 1484). Durability includes both aspects. A party which is relatively young, but which has already survived many shocks, has thereby provided evidence of durability (i.e. in the aspect of adaptability) in spite of its relative youth (i.e. lack of persistence, so far). An old party which has never experienced a shock, on the other hand, has never had the opportunity to demonstrate that it can successfully adapt. Hence, a party with both persistence and a record of adaptability would receive the highest "score" on durability. A party with one but not both of the criteria would have a lower score, though higher than a party with neither age nor a record of adaptability.

While the measurement of persistence (i.e. simply the age of the party) is straightforward and poses no problem for our analysis of change in the parties, adaptability requires historical

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15 We should note we are using the word “shock” somewhat more liberally here than Harmel and Janda do in their “Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change” (1994), where a shock is an external stimulus impacting directly upon the party’s primary goal. Here we are including both internal and external shocks, and external variety need not impact upon the “primary” goal of the party (though “issues” were the Progress parties’ primary goals throughout the period of our study, with “votes” being secondary goals, and all of the external stimuli mentioned here would have impacted upon one or the other of those goals).

16 While we measure persistence simply as number of years of existence as a party, others would use the number of elections in which the party has participated. Rose and Mackie (1968), for instance, operationalize an institutionalized party as one that has participated in more than three consecutive national elections. Pedahzur and Brichta (2002) use number of elections as a continuous indicator of degree of institutionalization. Arter and Kestila-Kekkonen (2014) use a different elections-based indicator: a regular supply of candidates. Our approach explicitly allows for parties
analysis of change in the parties and in their "relevant environments" during their lifetimes.

Evidence to be considered includes responses to leadership changes, name changes, "organizational discontinuities" (i.e. splits, resignations, etc.), and "environmental changes" such as adjustments in the established parties' programs to neutralize the new party's message. To the extent that the new parties have had such experiences, survived them, and presumably adapted to the changed circumstances in doing so, they have demonstrated objective durability.

The Argument for A Multidimensional Approach

If all parties at a particular level on one dimension of institutionalization were at similar levels on the others, then this effort at separating the dimensions, conceptually, would be pointless, empirically. But such is not the case. In Norway alone, the Norwegian Communist Party had durability and routinization, but after the 1970's few voters and no other parties paid much attention to it (i.e. it lacked external institutionalization on the dimension of "relevance"); the Pensioners' Party has had durability but no routinization (disputes over who is actually the party's leader are common) or external institutionalization. Elsewhere, some of the new environmental parties lack routinization and a record of durability (being very new), but circumstances could still warrant high expectations that they will last and gain relevance, thus which only nominally participate in elections, e.g. many institutionalized minor parties in the United States.

17 It should be noted that while we think of past durability as a guide to future durability of parties, Gurr was not willing to do so in his study of polity durability. See Gurr, (1974: 1484). Also, Gurr considered adaptability to be changing the polity to cope with stress, rather than just the ability to endure stress. We assume that enduring a shock requires some change in the party.

18 It might be argued that persistence and especially adaptability also indirectly indicate that a party "is reified in the public mind" (Janda 1980) and is"valued for itself" (Huntington 1968), i.e. that they are also indirect indicators of “value infusion” (Levitsky 1998).
already affecting the behavior of others. And according to Panebianco's study of charismatic parties, some parties of that type have established records of durability and external perceptions of relevance, but little or no routinization.

These examples demonstrate why it is necessary, for a thorough treatment of party institutionalization, to consider all three dimensions. It would be incorrect to assume that evidence of a high (or low) level of institutionalization on one dimension means the same level of institutionalization across the board, with consequences for both theory building and predictive ability.¹⁹

**Theoretical Implications: Factors in Institutionalization**

While the three dimensions or “types” of institutionalization are conceptually and theoretically distinct, they are nonetheless conceptually related – through their obvious association with the more general concept of “institutionalization” – and they are highly likely to be theoretically related as well. And yet those anticipated theoretical relationships are not so robust as to suggest that the conceptual distinctions are unnecessary. An objective record of durability is likely to contribute to the perception that a party is an “institution” to be reckoned with, for instance, though some parties are able to reach external institutionalization even before establishing a record of objective durability. Routinization of behavior may be necessary for some parties to be seen by others as predictable and trustworthy, though some highly routinized parties may still find it very difficult to achieve external institutionalization. Routinization – especially for parties that were formerly personalistic vehicles – may be necessary for persisting

¹⁹ Levitsky (1998: 78, 82) clearly agrees. In arguing for treating separately his two dimensions of value infusion and behavioral routinization, he suggests “failure to make these conceptual distinctions may pose serious problems for causal analysis.”
and adapting to a record of objective durability, though routinization by itself may not be sufficient to assure reaching that status. And so on! While one type of institutionalization may be either necessary or sufficient for another, none is both necessary and sufficient, as would be required for the conceptual distinctions to be empirically and theoretically unnecessary.

While those inter-dimensional relationships are important for understanding why some parties fully institutionalize when others do not, a more complete understanding certainly must include other factors as well. Some of the other concepts of “party organization” which we earlier separated from the concept of institutionalization – e.g., organizational complexity, centralization of party power, and cohesion – may well relate theoretically to one or another of the three types of institutionalization. Some minimal level of organizational complexity may be necessary for routinization, for instance, and extreme decentralization and lack of cohesion could hamper external institutionalization at the national level. Beyond the party’s own organization, a significant level of electoral performance – as distinguished from the electoral stability which we associate with the concept of external institutionalization itself – may well be a contributing factor to external institutionalization and/or objective durability, at least for parties for whom electoral success is the primary goal. And features of the electoral system may also matter; public subsidies, for instance, should make it easier for parties to institutionalize, especially if they would otherwise have had to rely on one or a few private donors for financial sustenance.

Because some of the potential factors may be situation-specific, as when explanation for parties in competitive systems differs from that for non-competitive parties in single-party systems, we should be clear that we speak in these pages primarily for the former rather than the latter. See also footnotes 23 and 24.

In discussing what she sees as “challenges of institutionalization, Bolleyer (2013: 72-73) can be seen as alluding to the potentially negative reaction to lack of party cohesion “from the voters’ perspective” and negative implications of decentralization for establishing national-level routinization.
(and hence the possibility of personalization).

Looking within the party itself, we have in another place formulated the argument that parties with personal, entrepreneurial roots require different types of leadership skills at three separate phases of the institutionalization process. Parties whose leaders at one of those stages lacks the necessary skills and orientations may well be hampered from institutionalizing. On the other hand, prospects for institutionalization – whether of the routinization or external perception varieties – could be markedly enhanced by transfer of leadership from one who resists institutionalization to one who is determined to pursue institutionalization (Harmel et al, 2015).

While all of those may indeed be factors in the explanation for variant experiences with institutionalization, it is important to recognize that not all such factors will necessarily play the same role. Some may be triggering factors, making it more likely that institutionalization will be pursued. Change from an organization-resisting leader\(^{22}\) to one bent on developing more “normal” party organization would be such an event. Some may be hindering factors. Persistence in top leadership positions of founders who never intended to build other than personalistic vehicles, and who consistently and actively resist efforts at routinization, would be such a hindrance. And some are favoring conditions, providing resources needed for institutionalization should there be motivation and willingness for doing so. An example might be public subsidies, for reasons just noted above.

The Concept of De-Institutionalization

\(^{22}\) Bolleyer (2013: 53-54) also notes this general reluctance of party founders to build institutionalized parties.
Though Huntington (1965) was not explicit in defining "decay," it can be inferred from his use of the term that it included, as at least one aspect, the breakdown of organizations that were already institutionalizing, if not fully institutionalized.

In more general usage, the term "decay" is taken as synonymous with deterioration, decomposition, or disintegration. As applied to a living organism, decay implies that some wound has not been effectively treated, such that decomposition has begun. Even after decay has set in, however, it is often possible to remove and/or arrest the deterioration. To do so most often requires first the removal of the affected tissue, followed by vigorous treatment with medication. But if the original onset of decay is left untreated or treated ineffectively, the likely result is a spreading of the decay to include other limbs or organs, and eventually general decomposition of the body.

For our purposes, which involve applying the concept to the deterioration of party organizations, "decay" will be defined explicitly as de-institutionalization. As such, decay may occur as discrete setbacks during the process of institutionalization, or as isolated instances of reversal when the organization is fully institutionalized. Beyond that, it may also occur as a set of related setbacks or reversals, i.e. as a "process" of de-institutionalization.
Just as isolated instances of setback or reversal may themselves be arrested or reversed by skillful organizational leaders, un- or ineffectively treated instances may develop into a full-blown process of de-institutionalization.

With decay defined as the deterioration of institutionalization, we take as evidence of decay any clear signs of reversal from our indicators for institutionalization, on any or all of the three separate dimensions.

De-routinization

Ignoring established patterns of behavior – and replacing the established patterns with ad hoc decision-making -- is evidence of deinstitutionalization. While reverting from behavior based in established rules/norms to decision-making by a single leader of the moment would be an example, re-personalizing the party’s organization is only one of the forms this de-routinization might take. Replacing accepted routines by ad hoc practices is the key; “changing” existing patterns to new, regularized patterns – if done according to written rules or unwritten party norms – would not be evidence of deinstitutionalization. 23 In fact, changes from old routines to new ones could be taken as further evidence of institutionalized organization, where regularized application of rules and norms continues to be valued.

Evidence of de-routinizination could obviously come in many forms. Just a few

23 Here we clearly differ with Oliver (1992), who focuses at the micro level and treats change from one routinized practice or activity to another as de-institutionalization. “Replacement” is thus explicitly considered by Oliver to be a form of de-institutionalization, along with dissipation or rejection.
examples would include the holding (or not holding) of party meetings or the expulsion of members without following accepted procedures.

**External De-institutionalization**

Just as external institutionalization takes the form of perceptions by external observers – including in particular voters and other parties – that the party is not just a “flash in the pan” and has relevance for future planning, de-institutionalization involves loss of such perceptions. Behavioral evidence of deinstitutionalization from the perspective of the electorate would come in the form of loss – and absence of replacement in the relatively short term – of a stable core electorate. From the perspective of other parties of relevance, deinstitutionalization would be evidenced in their growing disregard for the party, e.g. no longer granting the party either coalition or blackmail potential. While the denigration may well be due to altered perceptions of the likelihood the party will continue to exist for the foreseeable future, the reason for the changed perceptions of relevance is less important than the perceptual – and consequent behavioral – changes themselves.

**Loss of Objective Durability**

As one indicator of the durability dimension of institutionalization, growing “persistence” is operationalized as gradual increases in age. But when it comes to de-institutionalization, decline in persistence is an abrupt event, ultimately marked at the instant when the party ceases to exist. While going beyond simple electoral failure, party death may still take different forms in different contexts, including de-registration, declaration of cessation by party leadership and/or party conference, or being subsumed into a merger where the former party effectively
loses both form and identity.

For the other aspect of durability, adaptability, decline is less categorical. For this aspect, deinstitutionalization is evidenced in the inability of the party to cope with either an internal or external shock. Though clearly indicating a weakening of the party as institution, failure to cope with a single shock will not necessarily result in its demise.

In sum, then, evidence of de-institutionalization would include:

a) important decisions being made by behavior which defies routinized rules, and yet are allowed to stand;

b) indications of re-personalization of the party;

c) instability or decline in the party's core electorate;

d) evidence of decline in the party's blackmail/coalition potential (as seen through statements or behavior of other parties), due to other than simply decline in votes and/or seats;

e) evidence of decline in the party's ability to cope with internal or external “shocks.”

It should be noted that while we have included in our indicators several measures involving “decline” -- i.e., in the core electorate, the blackmail/coalition potential, and ability to survive shocks -- we
have been careful not to directly equate decay with "electoral decline."
The latter term is reserved for negative trends regarding the party's
achievement of electoral goals. Most often, a party is said to be in
"decline" when it is experiencing — over a series of elections —
diminishing shares of votes and/or seats. Such a decline may indeed
serve as a "challenge" to the party and its leaders, causing them to
rethink aspects of the party's organization or public profile. The same
may be true for discrete disturbances to the party's system, such as
death of a popular leader or birth of a rival party. But the fact that
a party is challenged does not mean that it will necessarily fall into
decay. In fact, there are many examples in party history of the parties
facing challenges and remaining relatively healthy, if not even stronger
than before.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, we have gone so far as to treat such experiences
as indicators of adaptability, one aspect of institutionalization itself.
It is not the challenge which serves as evidence of institutionalization
or de-institutionalization, but rather the character of the response
from leaders or relevant others within or outside the party.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{24}In the Danish Progress party, founder Mogens Glistrup's years in prison
were met with a strengthening of the party under new leadership in the
parliamentary wing. In Norway, the Progress party lost its founder in its
first year; after a few years of unsuccessful replacements, the party elected
the pro-organization and very successful Carl I. Hagen as its leader.}
Theoretical Implications: Factors in De-Institutionalization

As noted above, the three separable dimensions or "types" of institutionalization can be theoretically linked in various ways. Separate aspects of de-institutionalization may also be theoretically related to one another, sometimes simply as reversals of the hypothesized links between dimensions of institutionalization. Whereas routinization can contribute to both external institutionalization and objective durability, for instance, de-routinization -- e.g., when taking the form of re-personalization -- may well contribute to reduction in outsiders' perception that the party is still trustworthy, and could ultimately threaten its continued durability.

But again, as with institutionalization, a complete understanding of de-institutionalization must certainly take other factors into account as well, though those "other factors" may not impact all of the three dimensions. De-routinization is likely to be driven by internal factors having little to do with the other components of de-institutionalization; leadership replacement is one prominent suspect. Electoral decline and critical policy shifts are two likely factors in external de-institutionalization. We have indicated that persisting through "shocks" is an indicator of adaptability and thus objective
durability; however, following the same reasoning, multiple shocks in
close proximity could challenge a party beyond its ability to cope, and
thus be a factor in reducing the ability of the party to persist.

Applicability of the Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Implications

While we ourselves are particularly interested in the institutionalization and de-
institutionalization of entrepreneurial issue parties, which share with other charismatic or
pseudo-charismatic parties their origins as creations and creatures of their founding leaders, there
is no reason why application of the conceptual framework presented here should be limited to
such parties. The dimensions of external institutionalization and objective durability – and their
reversals -- are fully applicable to any party. And the primary feature of the “routinization”
dimension is not transformation from a charismatic party, per se, but rather the replacement of
ad hoc decision-making by routinized behavior patterns.

While this conceptualization should be widely generalizable, though, it is very much an
open question to what extent theories developed to explain institutionalization and de-
institutionalization of parties in well-established democracies will prove to be relevant for parties
in less-mature democratic contexts or in non-democracies. Our own nascent attempts toward

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25 Entrepreneurial issue parties, as we define them, share most or all of the
characteristics usually associated with “charismatic” parties (e.g. see
Panebianco, 1988), but also – unlike entrepreneurial person parties – emphasize
“issues” in the message the leader creates.

26 Or for that matter, that theories developed to explain institutionalization
of older party formations will even apply for party formed much more recently
in established democracies! See note 23.
spurring further theoretical development have, admittedly, been aimed primarily at parties in the former setting, many of which institutionalized (or de-institutionalized) some time ago. Further theoretical development must certainly and explicitly account for differences in context, both as to time and to space.27

REFERENCES


Gurr, Ted R. 1974. "Persistence and Change in Political Systems, 1800-

27 Some parties in established democracies have survived for more than 150 years, as in the case of the major parties in the United States and the Norwegian Social Democratic Party. We cannot assume that factors leading to institutionalization of parties formed in the nineteenth century will be the same for newly formed parties in established democracies, such as the new Pirate parties (Bartels, 2009; Opsahl, 2013). Similarly, explanation for institutionalization gleaned from the analysis of parties in established democracies may be more or less relevant for the study of party institutionalization in new democracies (Randall & Svåsand, 2002). Persistence of political parties implies survival across time but survival for single-party regimes is likely to be subject to different variables than survival of parties in competitive party systems.


