The Most Unkindest Cuts: Speaker Selection and Expressed Government Dissent during Economic Crisis

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Economic crisis and the resulting need for austerity budgets have divided many governing parties and coalitions in Europe despite strong party discipline in the legislative voting on these harsh budgets. We measure these divisions using automated text analysis methods to scale the positions that legislators express in budget debates in an effort to avoid punishment by voters for supporting austerity measures while still adhering to strict party discipline by voting along party lines. Our test case is Ireland, a country that has experienced periods of rapid economic growth as well as one deep financial and economic crisis. Tracking dissent from 1987 to 2013, we show that austerity measures undermine government cohesion as verbal opposition markedly increases in direct response to the economic pain felt in a legislator's constituency. The economic vulnerability of a legislator's constituency also directly explains position taking on austerity budgets among both government and opposition.

The most unkindest cut[s] of all; . . . O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
—William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, act 3, scene 2

Government stability in parliamentary systems depends crucially on one overriding characteristic of legislative behavior: unity. Without party discipline in voting, especially on critical legislation, governments quickly come apart, formally or informally, leading to a new government or new elections. While scholars continue to debate the extent to which parties can be treated as unitary actors (e.g., Giannetti and Benoit 2009; Laver and Schofield 1998), there is little doubt that in order to stay in government, parties have to enforce sufficient discipline so that they act as unitary actors in important legislative votes (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999). Despite the party discipline enforced in almost every parliamentary democracy, however, we also know that significant heterogeneity exists within parties. Moreover, legislators often answer to more than one type of principal, and this may cause tensions when constituency representation clashes with party demands (e.g., McElroy and Benoit 2010; Strøm and Müller 2009). The more acute the tension between the personal interests of the legislator and the group interests of his or her party, the more we would expect the legislator's preferences to diverge from his or her party's. This trade-off has been observed in roll call data, both in national parliaments (Kam 2009) and for members of the European Parliament (Hix 2002; Lindstädt, Slapin, and

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Vander Wielen 2011), and more recently for parliamentary debates (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015) and questions tabled by legislators (Martin 2011).

Because of the strong party unity enforced in many parliamentary systems, legislative voting records tell us little about intraparty politics where party discipline is strong. While disunity on roll calls in parliamentary systems exists, overall levels of unified voting are very high (Carey 2007; Depauw and Martin 2009; McElroy and Benoit 2010), especially on key legislative decisions, such as the annual government budget.[1] What legislators say, however, is typically less constrained. Legislative speeches are seldom, if ever, subject to formal sanction for those who speak out of turn. Indeed, party leaders may view floor debates as an opportunity for reluctantly faithful members to send messages to their constituents, as long as they follow party instructions when it comes to voting (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015). For these reasons, the text analysis of parliamentary speeches has formed an important leg of the empirical study of intraparty preferences (e.g., Lauderdale and Herzog 2015; Laver and Benoit 2002; Proksch and Slapin 2010; Schwarz, Traber, and Benoit, forthcoming). The words that legislators use can be scaled into positions providing a potentially much more valid indicator of their preferences than the votes they cast.

In this paper, we exploit this feature of parliamentary texts to measure the strain placed on party unity by austerity budgets: those dividing not only government and opposition but also governing parties and coalitions by requiring deep and deeply painful clawbacks of services, tax raises, and spending cuts.[2] Austerity budgets have been an unfortunately familiar feature of European politics since the onset of the Eurozone crisis in banking and sovereign debt servicing. The challenge of passing these severe budgets, often necessitated by externally imposed conditions of emergency funding packages, has split and sometimes brought down governments. Legislators will engage in blame avoidance to avoid voters punishing them for the pain their austerity measures have inflicted, whether this punishment is real, as in Pierson (1996)'s "new politics" of the welfare state, or only perceived (Wenzelburger 2014). In systems of strong party discipline, however, legislators also fear the wrath of opposing their party, whose punishments can include expulsion for voting against important measures such as budgets. The only viable blame avoidance strategy then becomes verbal opposition, voting for a painful budget while speaking against it.

Austerity budgets provide a good context for testing the limits of observable behavior as a measure of preferences because they are plausibly about a single dimension: taking responsibility for painful cuts sooner in order to get better later, versus short-term desires to avoid painful measures while refusing to accept responsibility.[3] Because austerity measures are neatly packaged in the form of annual budgets, are proposed by governing parties, and are subject to fairly constrained rules of parliamentary debate, we tend to observe text generation on a single topic within a fairly regulated format (Lowe and Benoit 2013). The potential to produce scaled estimates of "ideal points" using text as data, therefore, has great potential in the arena of debates over austerity measures. Furthermore, understanding positioning in and ultimately the outcomes of these highly significant debates is crucial to understanding the means to implement successfully such difficult but necessary measures. Successful measurement of intraparty differences in this context thus serves as both an ideal methodological validation of the ability to scale underlying positions from texts using statistical methods and as a means for understanding the dynamics of support and opposition to one of the most difficult political and economic challenges of the decade.

In what follows, we measure expressed levels of government support in the face of conflicting pressures from constituent and party demands in response to unpopular austerity measures. Using the debates from 27 Irish budgets from 1987 to 2013, we estimate who is selected to speak as well as the positions of individual legislators in each debate, and we systematically relate speaker selection and expressed dissent to variation in party and constituency-level political variables.

1. Sieberer (2006), using roll call data from 11 parliamentary systems, finds that party unity is lowest in Sweden, Germany, New Zealand and, particularly, Finland. Compared to the US Congress, however, unity is still very high, with an average score of 97 on the Rice index of party cohesion that ranges from 0 to 100. Depauw and Martin (2009) find that party unity in voting is particularly high in Ireland.

2. These austerity budgets often produce in electorates the same sense of disappointment and betrayal as in our title reference, with disastrous electoral consequences. The continuation of the quotation in the epigraph from *Julius Caesar*, act 3, scene 2, is "Then I, and you, and all of us fell."

3. Parliamentary speech has been analyzed previously with an aim to locating legislators' policy preferences, but the dimensions of policy measured in these applications have been less than clear. Monroe and Maeda (2004), for instance, were unable to provide a clear interpretation of the primary dimension to emerge from their two-dimensional scaling model of US Senate speeches. Proksch and Slapin (2010) had to interpret their single estimated dimension from the European Parliament by resorting to correlations with roll call vote analysis and independent expert surveys. Such problems point to a need for scaling models that take a different approach to dimensionality, namely, one where plausible positioning on an a priori dimension is used to anchor the analysis. Alternatively, a careful selection of texts to limit speeches to a particular (one-dimensional) policy context where the primary axis of difference is known would make it much easier to interpret scales ex post.

Our analysis shows that government "backbenchers" (members of a governing party without ministerial offices) are more likely to speak against budgets than are cabinet members, a tendency that intensifies in response to the pressures of financial crisis. Those with more economically vulnerable constituencies, all other factors being held constant, are more likely to speak against budgets. The pain of fiscal austerity undermines government cohesion as legislators seek to avoid blame in direct response to the pain felt by their local constituents.

BUDGETS AND THE POLITICS OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

Our case study in austerity budgets is Ireland, one of the first European states to experience a deep banking crisis and receive a multibillion euro bailout with austerity conditions attached. Beginning in 2008, the country experienced a steep decline in economic output and a sharp rise in unemployment, accompanied by a massive debt problem caused by the financial load of recapitalizing a failing banking system. This forced the government to implement a number of severe austerity measures against a background of growing public resentment, ultimately leading to a record low in the popularity ratings for the government parties and a breakdown in January 2011 of the coalition led by Fianna Fáil, a party that had led Ireland continuously since 1997. Addressing the crisis required a €85 rescue package from the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund, a bailout that led to tax cutbacks in social spending equivalent to €20 billion, or 13% of GDP (Bergin et al. 2011, 51). The painful cuts included emergency taxes and highly contested revisions to wage agreements, while leaving the public with the perception that the bankers who had caused the crisis were getting rescued.

During the three decades that we examine, Fianna Fáil (FF) dominated Irish politics. It governed alone from 1987 to 1989, with its main junior coalition partner the Progressive Democrats (PD) from 1989 to 1993, in a short-lived coalition with the Labour Party (LAB) from 1993 to 1994, and again with PD from 1997 to 2009. From 2007 to 2009, the FF-PD coalition additionally included the Green Party, which became FF's main coalition partner from 2009 to 2011 after the dissolution of PD in 2009.[4] FF alternated office with Fine Gael (FG) twice during the time period in our data, from 1994 to 1997, when FG, LAB, and Democratic Left (DL; a small socialist party that merged with LAB in 1999) formed a three-party coalition after LAB resigned from the FF-led coalition over internal disputes in 1994, and then again after the 2011 general election, when FG and Lab formed a coalition following the collapse of the FF-Green coalition as a result of the financial crisis. Compared to main parties in other European countries, FF and FG are relatively similar in terms of their policy positions (Benoit and Laver 2005; Weeks 2009*a*), with their primary differences based mainly on historical reasons and tradition. Table A1 in appendix A details the full composition of the governments included in our analysis.

Party competition in Ireland has been shown to take place mainly between the government and the opposition blocs (Hansen 2009). This divide is also clearly reflected in legislative debates over the budget following the annual presentation of a budget by the minister for finance. In these debates, legislators are free to discuss the budget, with governing party members and ministers typically expressing support and opposition parties invariably criticizing the budget and the government that produced it. Given the strong party discipline in Ireland (Gallagher 2009), budget votes follow strict party lines. Voting against the government's financial bill or resigning from the party are extreme measures that only a few MPs—known in Ireland as *Teachta Dála* (TDs)—are willing to face. Party discipline in Ireland indeed makes the two equivalent since voting against the party on a budget results in expulsion from the party. In parliamentary systems like Ireland, where budgets are written entirely by the party in government, votes on these national fiscal plans are very much votes for or against the government itself, and indeed were the government to lose such a vote, it would fall and a new coalition would have to be formed (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2011).

In addition to very strong party discipline, Ireland also has an electoral system that gives TDs strong incentives to promote their constituency interests and to cultivate a personal vote (Gallagher and Komito 2009; Marsh 2007), which has been observed in interviews with legislators (Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005; Wood and Young 1997), surveys (Martin 2010), and parliamentary questions (Martin 2011). Proksch and Slapin (2015) have shown that in this situation party leaders tend to allow legislators to speak more freely than in systems with weaker personal vote incentives, such as the closed list PR systems common in continental Europe (see Proksch and Slapin [2015, 82–83] for an excellent overview). The strong ties between legislators and their constituents in the single-transferable-vote electoral system leaves TDs vulnerable to public resentment resulting from unpopular policies. In their time allocated for speaking in the budget debates, legislators have both a motive and an op-

4. The Progressive Democrats essentially ceased to exist as a parliamentary party in 2009. The sole remaining PD cabinet member, Mary Harney, remained in office and continued to support the government as an independent.

portunity to voice relative levels of support or disagreements, nuances, or other pertinent concerns and to have these views go on public record. Legislators signal these differences not only to constituents but also to fellow party members. Speeches offer the chance to cast a reluctant verbal vote, to display one's ministerial credentials, or to indicate the level of vociferousness of an opposition member's attitude against the government. For a variety of reasons, therefore, what legislators say has the potential to reveal important intraparty differences in budget debates whose votes follow strictly party lines.

During the economic crisis that emerged following the crash of Ireland's property boom, voters blamed the government that had presided throughout the "Celtic Tiger" period of approximately 1995–2005. Accepting the austerity budgets was closely linked to legitimizing the role and responsibility of the government in causing the crisis. Relative support for austerity measures in the budgets during the period we examine, therefore, combines support for government's ability to guide the Irish economy out of the crisis with the desire to move on to solving the problems rather than identifying blame. Relative opposition to the budgets, on the other hand, signals a rejection of the government's competence to resolve the crisis, as well as a rejection of the perceived injustice of having society bear the costs of hard-biting austerity plans necessitated by the government's irresponsible financial management during the economic boom. Our argument, in a nutshell, is that legislators, and particularly backbenchers, may engage in "blame avoidance" (Pierson 1996; Starke 2006) by distancing themselves from the proposed austerity measures when motivated by constituents who are more sensitive to losses than to gains (Weaver 1986, 373). Because budget cutting involves imposing tangible losses on constituents in exchange for diffuse and uncertain gains, the politics of austerity are "treacherous" (Pierson 1996, 145) and divisive. Speeches over austerity budgets offer opposition a "blood in the water" opportunity to apportion blame to the ruling coalition, and they present chances for governing parties forced to support the budgets to position themselves verbally to avoid blame.

Our argument is best illustrated by the events that surrounded the announcement of the first emergency budget in 2008. Ireland officially entered recession in mid-2008, leading to the announcement of an early budget in October 2008 for the fiscal year 2009. The budget proposal, which was introduced by Finance Minister Brian Lenihan (FF), called for cuts in health spending, a reintroduction of university fees, a 1% emergency levy on income, and an abolition of the automatic entitlement to free health care services for those aged over 70 years. The last change in particular—the abolition of automatic "medical card" entitlement—led to a public outrage whose scope and scale few in the government had anticipated, generating extreme tension between the coalition parties and between FF backbenchers and their party leadership.

The Green Party publicly criticized the government for the way it handled the medical card controversy, accusing it of causing "unnecessary distress and confusion amongst our older people and their families."[5] FF backbenchers revolted against the proposed austerity measures, and a small group of backbenchers even threatened to vote against the government in an upcoming motion put forward by the opposition parties. One TD resigned from the party and joined the opposite side as an independent, calling into doubt the stability of the government and the authority of Brian Cowen, *Taoiseach* (Irish Prime Minister) and FF party leader.[6] In the end, the government backed down and softened the changes.[7]

The medical card reversal presents but one example of legislators trying to avoid public resentment resulting from unpopular budget cuts. It illustrates the dilemma that government TDs face: on the one hand, they must stick to the party line and defend the austerity measures. On the other hand, they are pressured by their constituents to act against the government's policies. Especially in systems combining strong party discipline with a strong personal vote, the politics of austerity create strong counterpressures on individual members of ruling parties both to follow the party line and to engage in blame avoidance to avoid punishment by local constituents.

Charlie O'Connor of FF—a true politician's politician—for example, remarked the following in his speech on the austerity budget:

> I will not forget where I am from and will not forget the issues that are of concern to my community. . . . I spend all day, every day in my constituency. However . . . those who voted for me were clear that I was a Fianna Fáil Deputy who was under the Fianna Fáil banner and that is my position. While I am not commenting on any other colleague, I strongly believe that

5. Green Party Spokeswoman Deirdre de Búrca, quoted in "Greens Criticise Way Medical Card Issue Was Handled," *Irish Times*, October 21, 2008, http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2008/1021/1224454426027.html (last accessed on April 14, 2015).

6. "Chaos in FF Calls Cowen's Authority into Question," *Irish Times*, October 20, 2008, http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2008/1020/1224279464929.html (last accessed on April 14, 2015).

7. "Government Backs Down on Key Budget Measures," *Irish Times* October 21, 2008, http://www.irishtimes.com/news/government-backs-down-on-key-budget-measures-1.830436 (last accessed on April 14, 2015).

> one sticks to one's tasks and focuses on the issues. One should have the courage to bring matters to the attention of one's party leadership, both before the parliamentary party and in other conversations, and one tries to correct things that were done wrongly.

In a similar vein, Deputy Paul Gogarty from the Green Party, the junior coalition partner of FF, summed up his opposition to the budget with these words: "The Government has my vote but no Government will take away my conscience. In all conscience I cannot give the budget a ringing endorsement. It is like the proverbial curate's egg: good in parts but with bits that would turn one's stomach."

Because one of a legislator's principals is a local constituency, and local constituencies vary, the acuteness of each TD's dilemma will also vary with the characteristics of his or her local supporters. A legislator's other principal, of course, is the party. Consequently, we expect that a legislator's counterpressure to toe the party line—even verbally—will also vary with his or her position within the party or within government. Cabinet members are much more constrained than backbenchers to oppose the budget as the doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility prevents ministers from publicly opposing government decisions.

For some deputies, local electoral pressures overwhelm loyalty to party, even at the cost of expulsion from the party. On budgetary matters, discipline is strictly enforced, such that opposition to the government's fiscal measures is punished by expulsion. In 2011, prior to the first budget following the election of a new government earlier that year, this happened to four government TDs: Patrick Nulty, TD from Dublin West, was expelled from Labour for taking a public stance against announced budget cuts, and Tommy Broughan was expelled after he opposed the government's renewal of the bank guarantee scheme. These two joined former Junior Minister Willie Penrose, who left over the closure of Columb Barracks in Mullingar, and Fine Gael's Denis Naughten, who was expelled from Fine Gael for refusing to support cutbacks at the Roscommon hospital in his constituency.[8]

DATA: IRISH BUDGET SPEECHES, 1987–2013

Our analysis includes 27 Irish budget debates for the time period from 1987 to 2013.[9] We retrieved all speeches from *DPSI: Database of Parliamentary Speeches in Ireland* (Herzog and Mikhaylov 2013), a complete collection of all speeches from the Irish parliament that also includes speaker-specific information, such as party affiliations, constituencies, and office positions.

Every debate begins with the official budget statement by the Minister of Finance, followed by the official spokesperson of the opposition, who is usually the leader of the largest opposition party. Then, and usually on a separate day, the Taoiseach comments on the budget, and this is followed by speeches from the party leaders. The remaining time is filled by other government and opposition speakers selected by their respective party whips. The speeches by the Minister of Finance and the official opposition speaker are limited to 45 minutes. All other speakers receive 20–40 minutes, though some speakers shared their time with other TDs. The median speech length we observed was 1,657 words, with ministers typically making the longest speeches. Contributions to budget debates are typically political rather than technical in nature, with speakers expressing their support of or opposition to announced budget measures. Technical details of the budget are discussed in subsequent committee debates that are excluded from our analysis.

In a typical budget debate, only about a third of TDs (median 53) in the 166-member Irish parliament speak, but this varies from as few as 14 speakers during the debate of the austerity budget for 2010 to as many as 95 speakers for the 2009 budget (see table A2 in app. A). We collected data for all TDs from 1987 to 2013 whether they spoke or not in order to examine the process determining who speaks in addition to examining the positions expressed.

Our key variables of interest are two measures of the trade-off between constituency interests and party pressure: the *economic vulnerability* of local constituencies to austerity and *electoral safety*. We measure economic vulnerability as the proportion of constituents on the "Live Register," the officially recorded number of people who have registered for unemployment benefits or related social welfare benefits, which can be considered a measure of short-term trends in unemployment.[10] Because social welfare benefits formed one

8. "Six Weeks in Dail Eireann and Patrick Nulty Is a Rebel," *Irish Independent*, December 7, 2011, http://www.independent.ie/national-news/budget/news/six-weeks-in-dail-eireann-and-patrick-nulty-is-a-rebel-2956226.html (last accessed on April 14, 2015).

9. Starting in 1997, budget debates take place in December for the budget of the following fiscal year. Throughout this paper, we refer to debates by their fiscal year.

10. We collected this data from the Department of Social Protection's annual publication "Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services," which reports average numbers on the Live Register by county. There are 26 counties in Ireland and 43 legislative constituencies, which means that some counties include more than one constituency. This is particularly the case for the four largest cities—Cork, Dublin, Galway, and Limerick—with Dublin being the largest county with more than 10 constituencies. Because data are not available at the level of constituencies, we use the same unemployment rate for all legislators from the same county. We believe that this is a reasonable approach because low unemployment rates in densely

of the main targets for cuts in the crisis budgets, this variable provides a good proxy for a constituency's vulnerability to austerity measures.

To measure electoral safety, we calculate each TD's first-preference votes as a proportion of the overall district quota required to win a seat. Ireland uses the single-transferable-vote electoral system, in which voters rank candidates in multimember districts. To be elected, candidates have to reach the district quota, which is calculated as the minimum number of votes required to fill the available district seats. A candidate's first-preference votes is equal to the number of voters who have ranked the candidate first. When divided by the overall district quota, a value greater than one means that a candidate was elected with a surplus of first-preference votes, while a value below one means that a candidate was only elected after votes from those who received a seat were transferred. Because larger values indicate a larger margin between a candidate's first-preference votes and the votes of all other candidates, this variable provides a good measure of electoral safety.[11]

EXPLAINING SPEAKER SELECTION

Not all deputies participate in the budget debate, and not every budget debate includes the same number of speakers. Who can speak and for how long depends on a number of factors. The government controls the parliamentary agenda as well as the number of days allocated for the debate, which limits the overall number of speakers. Further, only members of a parliamentary group recognized by the Standing Orders (i.e., rules of procedure) have full speaking rights. Members of smaller parties and independents receive less time to speak, unless they form a so-called technical group.[12] Within those constraints, it is party whips who decide which speakers are allocated speaking time, with the final decision of who speaks lying with the chairman (*Ceann Comhairle*), who is considered to be impartial.

Because the selection to speak is potentially endogenous to the politics of austerity and related support or opposition to the budgets that we are attempting to explain through speech content, in this section we examine the determinants of speaker selection. We find strong evidence that government backbenchers and those representing economically vulnerable constituencies were less likely to be included in debates on austerity measures than other members.

We first look at the composition of budget debates by calculating the participation rates of cabinet members, government backbenchers, and opposition members. Because these groups differ in size, we calculate the log odds ratio for each group as the proportion of those who spoke to the group's overall proportion in parliament (fig. 1). A value greater (less) than zero means that a group is overrepresented (underrepresented) compared to what would be expected under even chances of selection to speak. By examining changes in the log odds ratio over time and across different categories of speakers, according to whether they were in the cabinet, in a governing party but not in the cabinet (backbenchers), or in opposition, we see patterns emerge in the changing dynamics of speaker selection.

Figure 1 shows that until about 2008, the last budget year before the crisis, each group participated at roughly similar odds. An exception is the 2006 budget debate, which was the third-smallest debate (in terms of number of speakers) in our sample and which only included a single government backbencher. With the onset of the crisis in 2009, we see a significant decline in backbench participation and an increase in the participation rates of cabinet members.

To test speaker selection more systematically, we estimate a multivariate probit model that includes the following variables: our measure of economic district vulnerability, which for simplicity we denote as "constituency unemployment"; electoral safety; a dummy variable for belonging to a government party (backbench and cabinet); a dummy variable indicating a speaker was a member of the cabinet; a dummy variable for party leaders; legislative seniority, measured by the number of years in parliament at the time of speaking; and a dummy variable for the crisis years (the budget years of 2009–13). We include two additional control variables to capture TDs' variable exposures for participating in a debate: party size (since members from large parties are less likely to be selected) and the number of days

populated cities affect people and their representatives beyond district boundaries. The Department of Social Protection reports absolute numbers on the Live Register. To calculate proportions, we used county population estimates from censuses conducted in 1986, 1991, 1996, 2002, 2006, and 2011.

11. General elections were held in 1987, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2011. We collected the election data from "Nealon's Guide," which is a comprehensive election guide that is published after every general election.

12. Parties with at least seven members are recognized as a parliamentary group. Deputies who are not members of a parliamentary group (i.e., independents and members of small parties) can form a technical group, which requires that at least seven deputies request to be formally recognized as a group (Article 120, Dáil Éireann Standing Orders, 2011). The requirements for being recognized as a group have changed over time, which makes it difficult to determine the exact speaking right of each deputy under the Standing Orders at that time. Further, it is not uncommon for speakers to share their speaking time with other members, which means the likelihood to speak is determined by more than procedural rules. We therefore make the simplifying assumption that each legislator can be selected to speak, though we control below for factors that may explain debate participation.

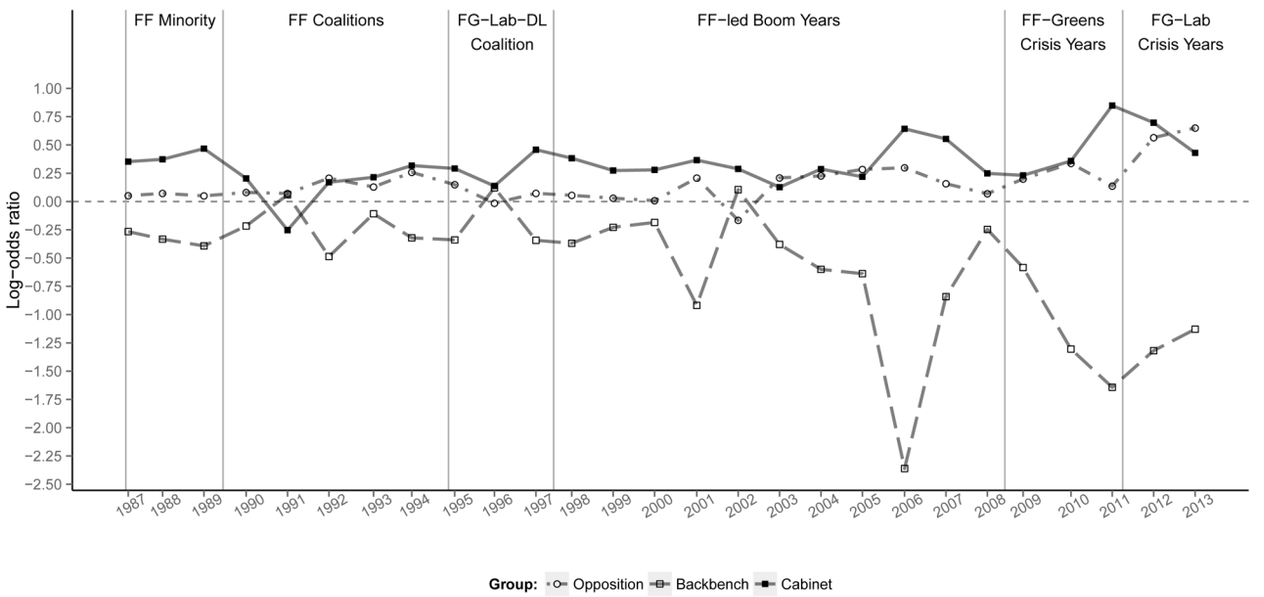

Figure 1. Log odds ratios of cabinet members, government backbenchers, and opposition members who participated in budget debates, 1987–2013

that were scheduled for the debate (as longer debates increase everyone's likelihood to speak).[13]

Strictly speaking, each deputy has a different likelihood to speak that depends on the number of speakers that were selected before him or her. Because accounting for these individual likelihoods would unnecessarily complicate the model, we instead take the log of each exposure variable to account for the marginal decrease in their effects.

Each row in our data set is one legislator-year observation. In each year, there are 166 legislators (the size of parliament) from which speakers can be selected. We exclude from this set the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker (*Ceann Comhairle* and *Leas-Cheann Comhairle*, respectively) as well as the Finance Minister and the opposition spokesperson, because these speakers participate in every debate.

We index legislator-year observations $i \in 1, 2, \ldots N$ and individual legislators $j \in 1, 2, \ldots M$. Our dependent variable y_i is 1 for TDs who were selected to speak, and 0 otherwise. This model could be estimated as a simple nonhierarchical logit or probit model, but this would ignore the repeated nature of the data with legislator-year observations clustered within individual legislators and with covariates measured at both the year level (e.g., constituency unemployment, legislative seniority) and the legislator level (e.g., party leadership or party size, which vary less over years). On average, each TD appears about 10 times in our data set, with some TDs only appearing once (such as those who retired during a legislative term or were appointed to outside offices) and some appearing in each of the 27 years included in our sample.

To account for the nested structure of our data, we specify a hierarchical probit model with varying intercepts, α_j, for TDs that are assumed to be normally distributed with mean μ_α and variance σ^2_{TD}. An advantage of this specification over the nonhierarchical (i.e., completely pooled) model is the partial pooling of the estimated intercepts. For legislators who only appear a few times in our data, the intercept will shrink toward the group mean μ_α, while for those who appear more often and provide more information, the intercepts will be closer to a fixed-effects model that estimates a separate mean for each TD (Gelman and Hill 2006). The full model we estimate has the following form:

$$y_i \sim \text{Bernoulli}(\pi_i), \tag{1}$$

$$\pi_i = \Phi(\alpha_{j[i]} + X_i'\beta), \tag{2}$$

$$\alpha_j \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_\alpha, \sigma^2_{\text{TD}}). \tag{3}$$

We fit this model using Bayesian inference and with noninformative priors for all parameters. We use Bayesian in-

13. Ireland has a relatively large number of independent deputies who regularly occupy between 5% and 10% of seats (Weeks 2009*a*,*b*). We treat them as a single group when calculating their exposures for participating in a debate. A related question is how to treat independents who supported a government. Two governments in our sample relied on the support of independents: the 1987–89 FF single-party minority government, which was three seats short of a majority, and the 1997–2002 FF-PD coalition, which was supported by four independents, three of whom were necessary to reach a majority. We code these independents as opposition members because their cross-pressure from constituency interests and party demands is different than for regular government members, though we note that this coding decision has no impact on the reported results because of the small number of observations affected by it (6 out of all 444 individual legislators (1.4%), or 26 out of all 4,333 repeated observations (0.6%)).

ference because of its greater flexibility in model specification and more meaningful measures of uncertainty compared to maximum likelihood (ML) estimation, though we note that ML yields substantively identical results.[14] For easier model convergence, we standardize the continuous measures to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one in this and all following models, but we report results on the original scales of the variables when computing quantities of interest.

Figure 2 (and table B1 in app. B; apps. B–D available online) presents the results from three models. In all three models, we find that party leaders and cabinet members—compared to the average opposition member—have the highest probability of speaking, while government members are less likely to be selected. All other things being equal, we also find that the level of constituency employment is positively related to the probability of speaking.

To focus on the effects of austerity, we include a dummy variable called "Crisis" that indicates whether the budget was debated in 2008 or after (for fiscal years 2009 and after). When constituency unemployment is interacted with the crisis indicator, we see the positive effect of the unemployment rate reversing: more unemployment reduces a legislator's probability of participating in a debate, a pattern also seen clearly in the top panel of figure 3, which shows predicted probabilities for changes in unemployment rates before and during the crisis. That graphic also shows how during the crisis years government members were much less likely to speak in general than opposition members, a difference that does not occur pre-crisis. Because we estimate a separate effect for cabinet members (who are also indicated by the government dummy variable), this means that government members who are not in the cabinet (i.e., government backbenchers) have the lowest probability of speaking.

Turning to our measure of electoral safety (bottom panel of fig. 3), we find that the 95% credible intervals on the estimated probabilities are too wide to draw conclusions from the results. One problem might be that our measure of electoral safety, which is calculated from election results, is constant between election years and hence varies little over the time period we observe. Furthermore, past election results might be a poor proxy for future expected electoral safety during times of economic crisis.

Finally, as expected, the number of days allocated to the debate significantly increases the probability of any legislator speaking, whereas party size has no notable effect. Party leaders are more likely to speak than party members. Legislative seniority decreases debate participation, probably because some of the potentially positive effect of seniority is captured by the effects for cabinet members and party leaders, who tend to be senior legislators.

EXPLAINING EXPRESSED DISSENT

Method: Supervised text scaling using Wordscores

To measure the degree of expressed support for each budget, we use the *Wordscores* method of Laver, Benoit, and Garry (2003), a scaling model for texts on a single dimension after training it with a series of anchoring documents whose positions are assumed to be known. Our implementation sets a reference score of 1.0 for each finance minister's speech and −1.0 for each opposition finance spokesperson's speech. Within budget year, we computed a document-term matrix of word counts, normalized by word frequency, for every speech in the debate, $F_{ij} = C_{ij} \times C_{i+}$ (where C_{i+} denotes the row marginal [sum] of row i).[15] Taking o, f as the document indexes of the opposition and finance minister speeches, respectively, we slice out Y_{ij}, where $i \in (o, f)$, so that ${}_{2\times J}\mathbf{Y}_J$ represents the normalized term counts for the opposition and Finance Minister speeches. We then compute the "word score" ${}_{1\times J}\mathbf{s}_J$ in the following series of steps:

$$ {}_{J\times 1}\mathbf{P} = \mathbf{Y}'/\mathbf{Y}_{+j}. \tag{4} $$

$$ {}_{J\times 1}\mathbf{s} = \mathbf{P}'\begin{bmatrix} -1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{5} $$

The "text scores" can then be computed as

$$ {}_{I\times 1}\mathbf{S} = {}_{I\times J}\mathbf{F}_J\,{}_{J\times 1}\mathbf{s}. \tag{6} $$

To make the documents scores $\mathbf{S}$ comparable across years, we applied the rescaling proposed by Martin and Vanberg (2007), a procedure that ensures that the scaled positions of the reference texts are reset to the scores used to train the system: −1.0 for the opposition finance spokesperson and 1.0 for the finance minister, with all other speeches' scores set relative to those values. Taking S_o and S_f as the text scores of opposition and finance minister speeches, respectively, this linear rescaling (for the two-class example with −1.0, 1.0 as reference scores) is

$$ S_i^* = \frac{2(S_i - S_o)}{S_f - S_o} - 1. \tag{7} $$

While not always recommended, this transformation ensures that all other documents' scaled values are positioned

14. Results for all models estimated via maximum likelihood are included in appendix C online.

15. The results we show operate on the entirety of the texts, without stemming, trimming, manicuring, polishing, or otherwise manipulating or selecting features. The only exception is that we "smoothed" the word counts for the reference texts by adding one to the count of each term observed in the debate. This does not affect any of the results in a material way.

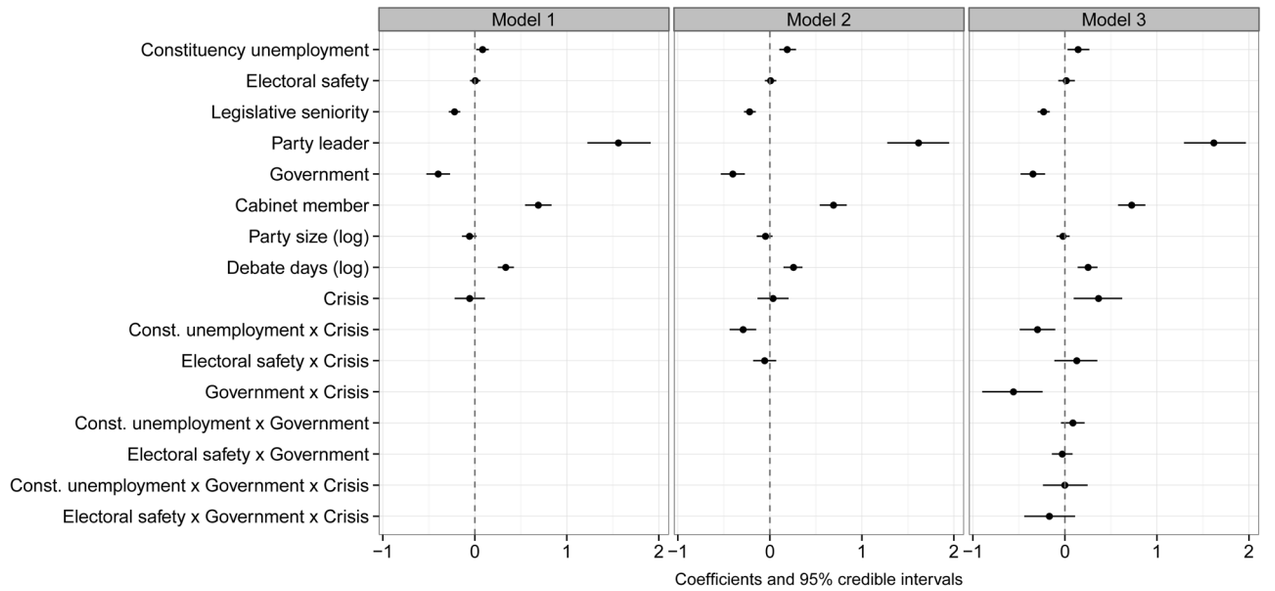

Figure 2. Coefficient plots for multilevel probit models of speaker selection. Continuous measures are *z*-transformed

relative to the reference documents (Benoit and Laver 2007), an outcome we explicitly desire in our budget-by-budget comparison. Each position is then "fixed" relative to the positions of the government and opposition finance spokespersons, making the scores comparable across budgets according to a common benchmark.[16] We next turn to a description of government and opposition unity estimated from these positions. Results for each individual speaker and each debate are included in appendix D.

Government versus opposition unity

Relative to the fixed extremes of supporting and opposing the budget as set out in the speeches of the government and opposition spokespersons, we can compare the distribution of position taking among government and opposition legislators over time.

Figure 4 plots the distribution of estimated positions for government and opposition members, showing, as expected, that the typical government speaker was more supportive of the budget than the typical opposition speaker. There are two interesting summary results related to party unity visible in figure 4. First, governmental positions were always more heterogeneous than opposition positions. When it comes to hardball distributive politics, apportioning blame is apparently far easier than taking it. Second, there are also clear differences in verbal support for the budget between cabinet members and government backbenchers. The former are bound by the doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility, and hence we expect that they would be more supportive of the government budget than the backbenchers from their parties. The plots bear out this expectation, showing not only that government ministers are more pro-budget but on average are also more unified than their nonministerial colleagues.

Figure 5 plots the mean position of each of these three groups—cabinet members, government backbenchers, and opposition speakers—over time, to highlight the group differences in a trend comparison. Very consistently, we see three groups whose ordering reinforces our expectations. Cabinet members are consistently the most pro-budget group, the opposition is the most anti-budget group, and government backbenchers' positions lay in the middle.

In figure 6, we plot the interquartile range of estimated positions for the government and the opposition.[17] The two

16. Wordscores falls into the class of supervised scaling methods. An unsupervised alternative for scaling positions from textual data is the latent variable model dubbed "Wordfish" by Slapin and Proksch (2008), which models word generation in a document as a Poisson process from which a latent variable representing the document position can be estimated. In the context of a subset of the Irish budget debates examined here, Lowe and Benoit (2013) successfully validated the Wordfish approach against human coders. We use supervised scaling, however, because it allows us to estimate speeches on an ex ante defined dimension anchored by the speeches of the Finance Minister and the opposition spokesperson. By anchoring the positions in each debate according to the Finance Minister and the opposition spokesperson, we are able explicitly to measure every other speaker's position relative to these anchors and to compare their positioning across speeches.

17. The interquartile range is a measure of statistical dispersion that is calculated as the difference between the upper and lower quartiles. Using alternative measures of dispersion, such as the standard deviation, shows the same decrease of government cohesion over time.

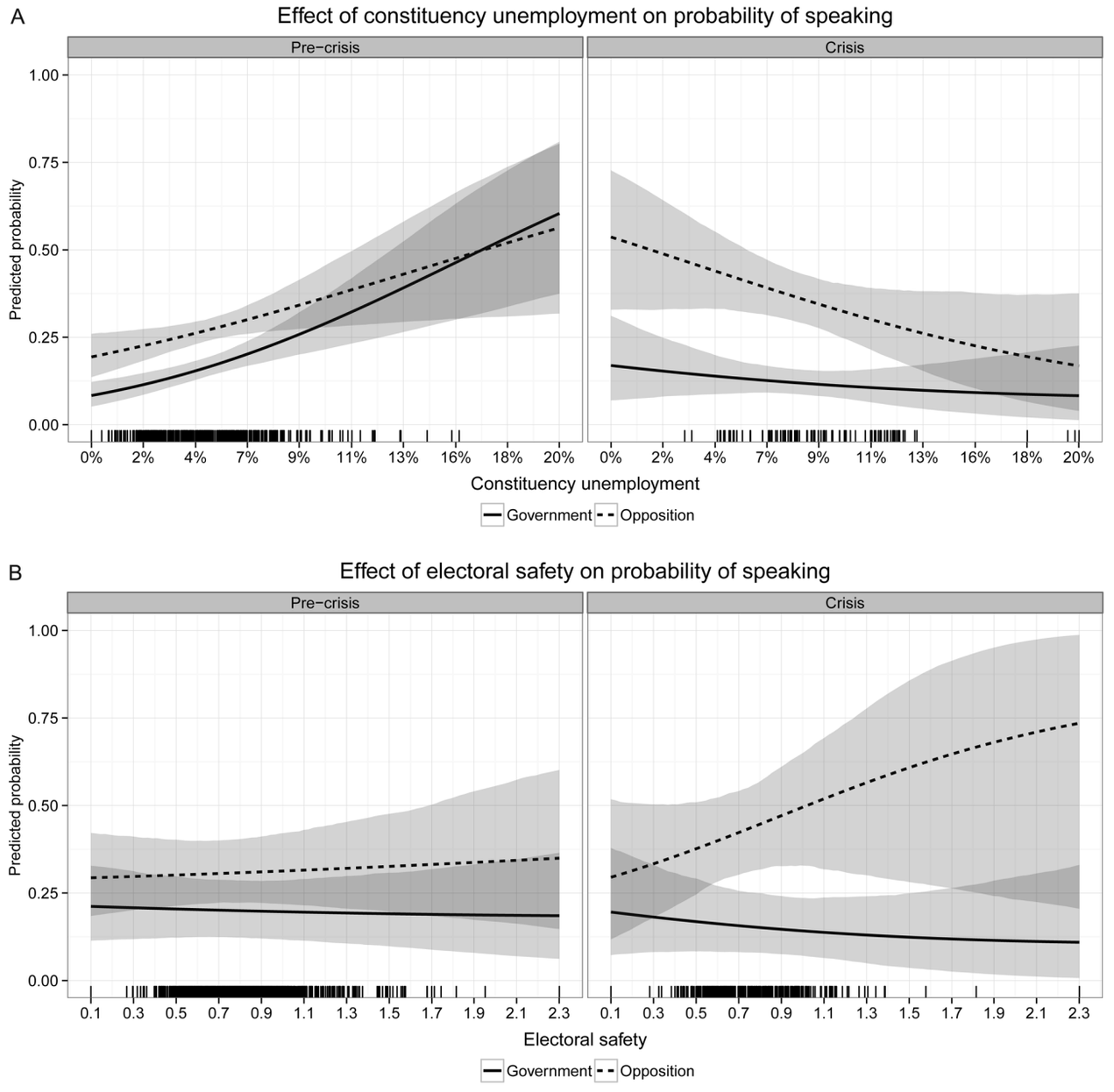

Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of speaking conditional on constituency unemployment rate (*top panel*) and electoral safety (*bottom panel*) before and during the economics crisis. Shaded area indicates 95% credible interval.

trend lines in this plot reinforce our observation that government cohesion has decreased during the crisis. Since the onset of austerity budgets beginning 2009, government cohesion visibly decreases at the same time that the opposition positions became more similar.

To summarize, we find evidence that the financial crisis has driven apart the typical expressed support for the budget by cabinet ministers, who are constrained by the doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility, versus their nonministerial government colleagues. In the following subsection, we take a closer look at the source of this intraparty division and provide evidence that TDs from counties that are hit particularly hard by the crisis take more anti-government positions.

Explaining intraparty differences

What explains differences in expressed positions among members from the same party? As discussed above, we conjecture that legislators are cross-pressured by their constituents to act against the government's policies and by the need to implement austerity measures and to stick to the official party line. The magnitude of this dilemma is different for each dep-

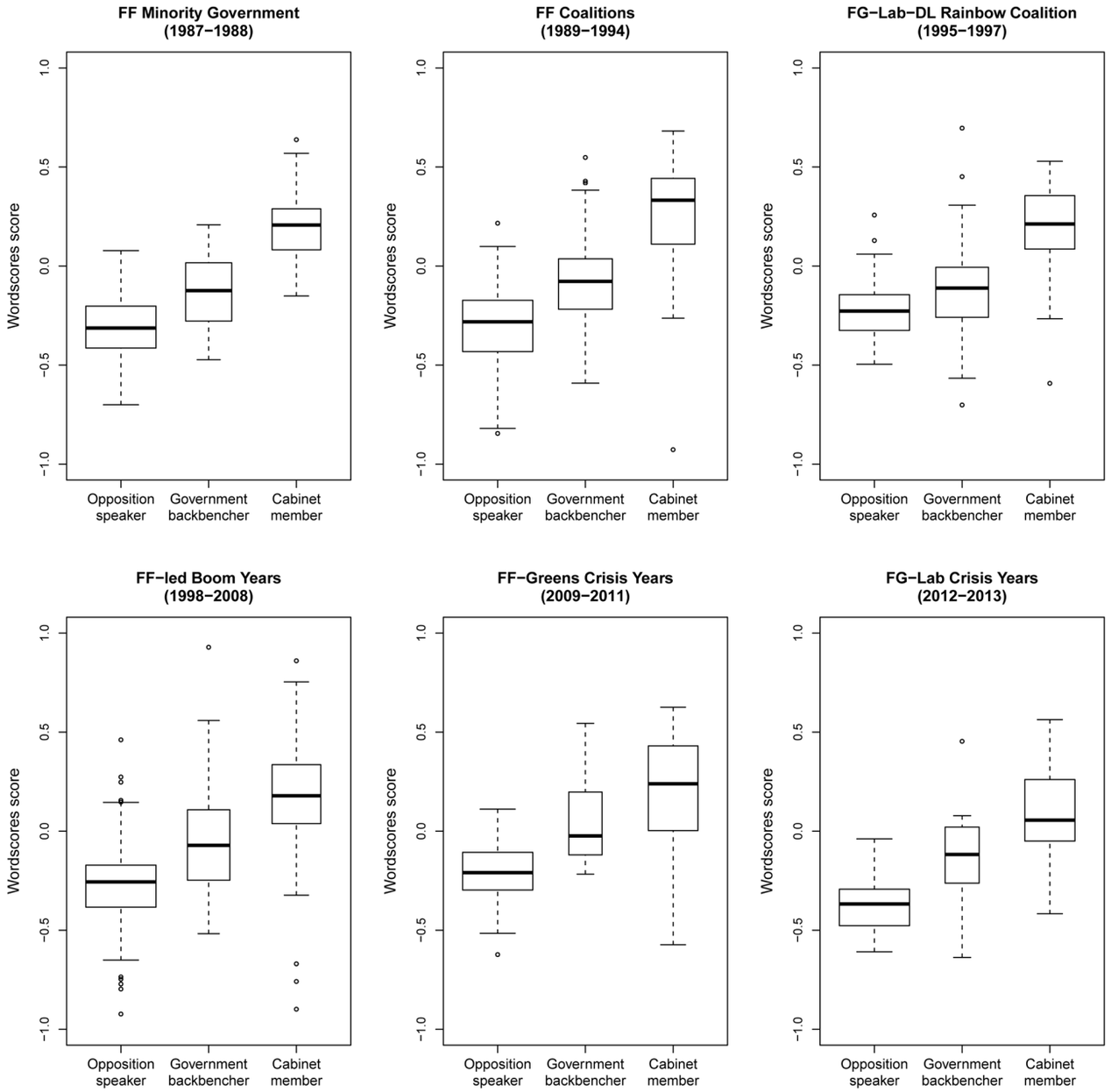

Figure 4. Boxplots of estimated Wordscores positions of budget support for cabinet members, government backbenchers, and opposition members. Box width is proportional to group size.

uty. First, we expect that expressed positions to the government budget are a function of office positions, with cabinet members being the most supportive legislators. Second, we expect that legislators from districts that are more vulnerable to austerity are more pressured to oppose the government's austerity measures. Third, we expect that legislators from safe districts are more immune to party pressure and hence more able to freely express their opposition to austerity measures.

To explain expressed government dissent, we estimate a hierarchical linear regression. We index speaker-year observations $i \in 1, 2, \ldots N$ and individual legislators $j \in 1, 2, \ldots M$. Our dependent variable y_i is the Wordscores estimate for each speaker-year observation i. We again estimate varying intercepts α_j that are normally distributed with mean μ_α and variance σ^2_{TD}:

$$y_i \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_i, \sigma^2), \tag{8}$$

$$\mu_i = \alpha_{j[i]} + X_i'\beta, \tag{9}$$

$$\alpha_j \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_\alpha, \sigma^2_{\text{TD}}). \tag{10}$$

The results of this model are summarized in figure 7 (and detailed in table B2 in app. B). As expected, cabinet

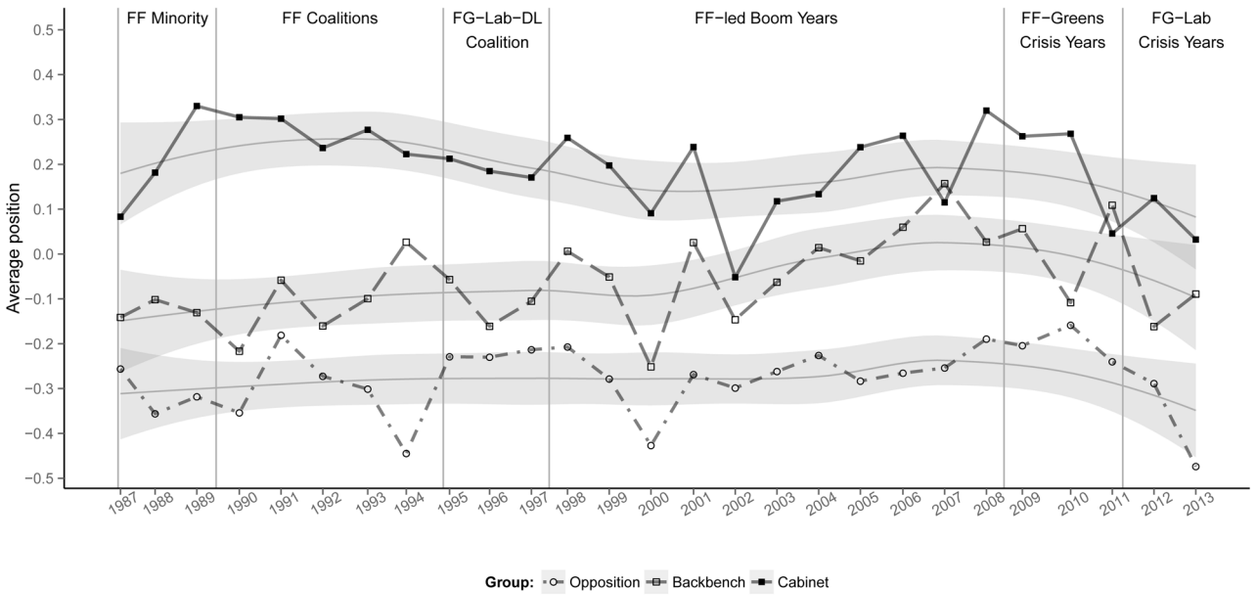

Figure 5. Average Wordscores estimates of budget support for cabinet members, government backbenchers, and opposition members. Solid gray line indicates LOESS trend with 95% confidence band.

members are the most pro-budget speakers. Bound by collective cabinet responsibility, their mandate is to defend the government budget during economic good times as well as bad. Government members without a seat in the cabinet express less pro-government positions, but they are still more pro-government than opposition speakers, the control group.

When the unemployment rate in a speaker's constituency increases, however, his or her expressed support for the budget visibly decreases, especially among government backbenchers and especially during the economic crisis years. This result is indicated clearly in the top panel of figure 8, which shows fitted values estimated from the model. While there is no effect of constituency unemployment rate pre-crisis, an increase in unemployment decreases government support during the crisis. The magnitude of this effect is substantial. Increasing the unemployment rate by 10 percentage points, from 3% to 13%, which corresponds to the value

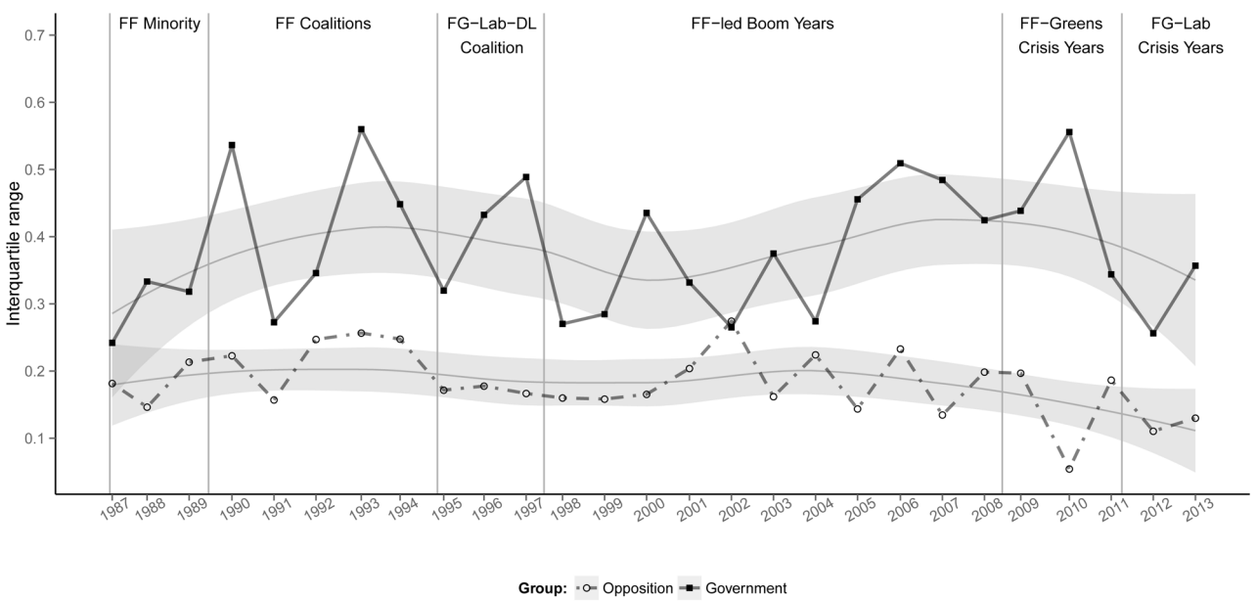

Figure 6. Interquartile range of Wordscores estimates of budget support for government members and opposition speakers. Solid gray line indicates LOESS trend with 95% confidence band.

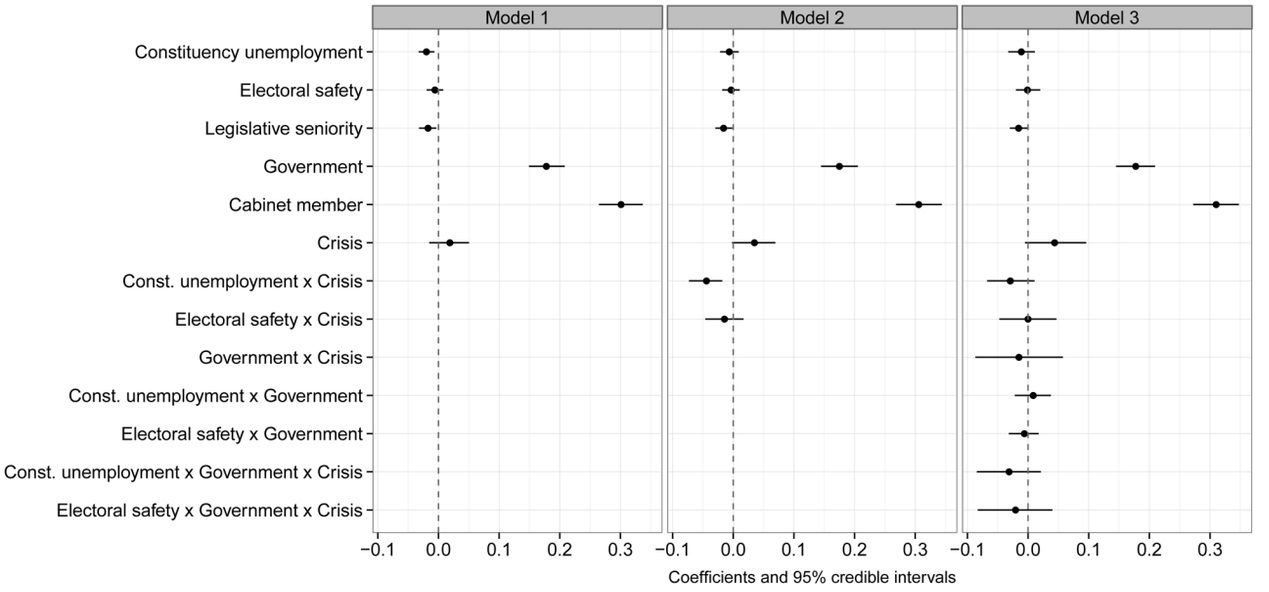

Figure 7. Coefficient plots for multilevel linear regression models of position taking. Continuous measures are *z*-transformed.

range that includes most of the observations during the crisis, decreases the estimated Wordscores score by about 0.3 points, which corresponds to about one standard deviation on the estimated scale. For unemployment rates above 20%, the highest observed rate in our sample, the average government backbencher is estimated to express the same level of opposition as the average opposition member. Finally, turning to the effect of electoral safety (bottom panel of fig. 8), we again find no systematic effect as indicated by the relative wide credible intervals on the fitted values.

A joint model of speaker selection and expressed dissent

The fact that not all legislators participate in the budget debate points toward a potential selection bias. We have already found clear evidence that government backbenchers are less likely to speak on budget debates during the crisis. If those who speak are not selected randomly, our estimates of speaker positioning from the previous section might be biased and inconsistent. More precisely, if there are unmeasured factors that explain both speaker selection and expressed positions, these unobserved factors would be correlated with the observed measures in the outcome equation regardless of whether or not they are correlated in the full sample.

For example, suppose that TDs' opposition or support of the budget also depends on their attitude toward the EU, with those opposing foreign intervention into their country's fiscal matters also opposing the austerity measures. Suppose "attitude toward the EU" is uncorrelated with government status in the population. That is, if speakers were drawn randomly, our OLS estimate for government status would be unbiased and consistent. Now suppose that those with negative attitudes toward the EU make a greater effort to be included in the debate. As a result, the unmeasured factor might be correlated with government status in the outcome equation, even though this is not the case in the population. To see this, consider that opposition members are, on average, more likely than government backbenchers to speak and that some of them will happen to have positive attitudes toward the EU. Government backbenchers in this example, however, must have a negative attitude toward the EU because otherwise they are unlikely to be included in the speaker sample. As a result, we would overestimate the "true" level of backbench opposition.

To address this problem, we estimate a sample selection model (also called Type 2 Tobit model or Heckman model) in which we jointly estimate TDs' likelihood to speak and their expressed level of government support and opposition. Let z_i^* denote the latent dependent variable in the selection equation and z_i a dummy variable that indicates who spoke:

$$z_i^* = Z_i'\gamma + u_i, \tag{11}$$

$$z_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } z_i^* > 0, \\ 0 & \text{if } z_i^* \leq 0, \end{cases} \tag{12}$$

where Z is a matrix of all variables included in the selection model. The outcome equation is

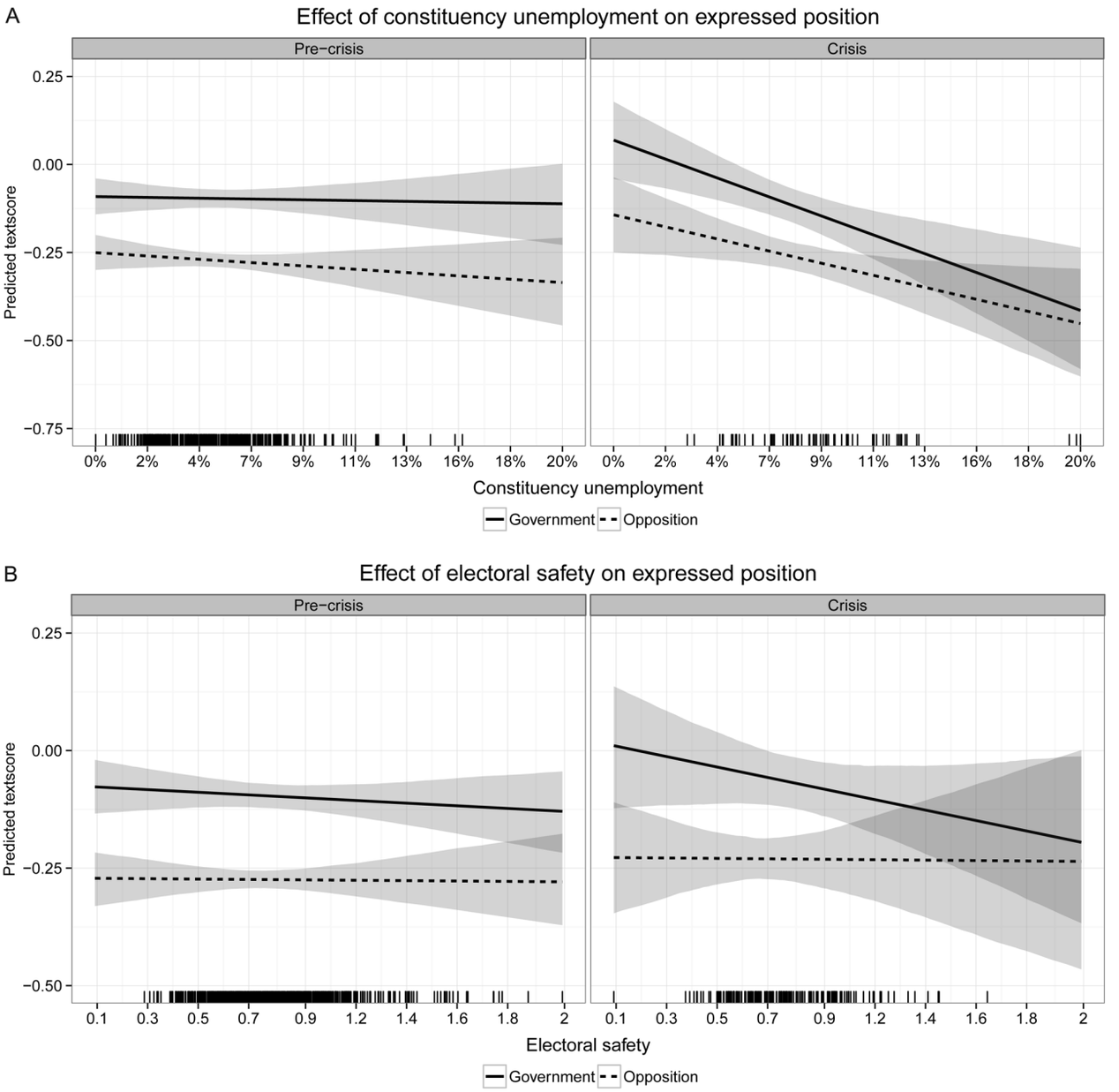

Figure 8. Predicted verbal expression of budget support conditional on constituency unemployment rate (*top panel*) and electoral safety (*bottom panel*) before and during the economics crisis. Shaded area indicates 95% credible interval.

$$y_i = \begin{cases} X_i'\beta + \varepsilon_i & \text{if } z_i^* > 0, \\ - & \text{if } z_i^* \leq 0, \end{cases} \tag{13}$$

where legislator *i*'s Wordscores score, y_i, is only observed if he or she participated in the debate. We assume that $u_i \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$, $\varepsilon_i \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)$, and $\text{corr}(u_i, \varepsilon_i) = \rho$; that is, the error terms follow a bivariate normal distribution with zero means and correlation ρ.[18] If $\rho = 0$, the error terms are uncorrelated and OLS estimators from the subsample of speakers will be unbiased and consistent. If $\rho \neq 0$, OLS estimators will be biased and inconsistent because of selection on unobservables.

As before, we turn to Bayesian inference for model estimation and include varying intercepts for legislators in both equations. The full model we estimate is as follows:

18. The assumption of a bivariate normal distribution is a standard assumption in these types of models, though there is no theoretical justification for it. Recent advances in Bayesian semiparametric methods offer less restrictive identification strategies (van Hasselt 2011), but these are computationally more difficult to estimate.

Outcome model:

$$y_i \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_i^{\text{out}}, \tau), \tag{14}$$

$$\mu_i^{\text{out}} = \alpha_{j[i]} + X_i'\beta, \tag{15}$$

$$\alpha_j \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_\alpha, \sigma^2_{\alpha\text{TD}}). \tag{16}$$

Selection model:

$$z_i \sim \text{Bernoulli}\,(\pi_i), \tag{17}$$

$$\pi_i = \Phi\left(\frac{\mu_i}{\sigma_i}\right), \tag{18}$$

$$\mu_i = \mu_i^{\text{sel}} + \left(\frac{\rho}{\sigma}\right) \times (y_i - \mu_i^{\text{out}}), \tag{19}$$

$$\mu_i^{\text{sel}} = \delta_{j[i]} + Z_i'\gamma, \tag{20}$$

$$\sigma_i = \sqrt{1-\rho^2}, \tag{21}$$

$$\delta_j \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_\delta, \sigma^2_{\delta\text{TD}}). \tag{22}$$

Equation (19) follows from the bivariate normality assumption.

Figure 9 (and table B3 in app. B) summarizes the results for the full model that includes all variables and interaction effects from models 3 in the separately estimated models. The estimated ρ is -0.17, indicating a small, negative correlation between error terms, but with relatively high uncertainty on the estimated parameter. All other estimated coefficients are very similar in size and direction from the separately estimated models.

In figure 10, we calculate predicted Wordscores estimates from the joint model. These fitted values reflect the direct effects from the outcome equation as well as the indirect effects from the selection equation for those variables that are included in both models. The plotted results are indistinguishable from the fitted values plotted in figure 8, indicating that—based on our specification of the selection model—the non–random selection of speakers has no noticeable impact on the estimated levels of government support.

This does not mean that we can rule out entirely the possibility of selection bias in our findings. Assuming we have correctly specified the selection equation (including the assumption of bivariate normally distributed error terms), however, no such bias is present. While this is not guaranteed, we have at least provided evidence that for a reasonable set of variables we are unable to confirm a systematic bias due to selection. Moreover, our framework serves as an example for those seeking to measure or explain positions from speeches, since selection effects are almost certainly present (e.g., Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015; Schwarz et al. forthcoming). Despite not finding such a bias in our application, our approach demonstrates how knowledge of speaker selection may and should be used to test for and control possible selection bias effects.

CONCLUSIONS

Our investigation of legislative positioning over austerity debates has explored the differences in preferences for austerity expressed by legislators whose votes on the budget fail to reveal any differences in their preferences due to strict party discipline. By measuring positioning on critical budget votes, we have used textual data from speeches to reveal the heterogeneity in legislator preferences that would otherwise appear to present a common position as unitary parties. From our results we draw several conclusions.

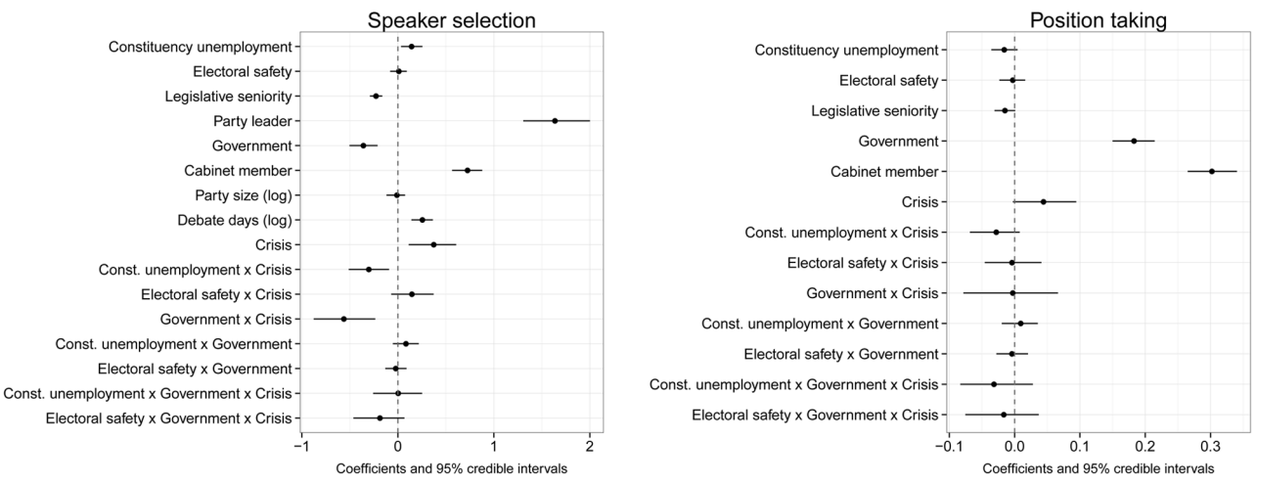

Figure 9. Coefficient plots for the effects on verbal support for the budget, from the multilevel selection model

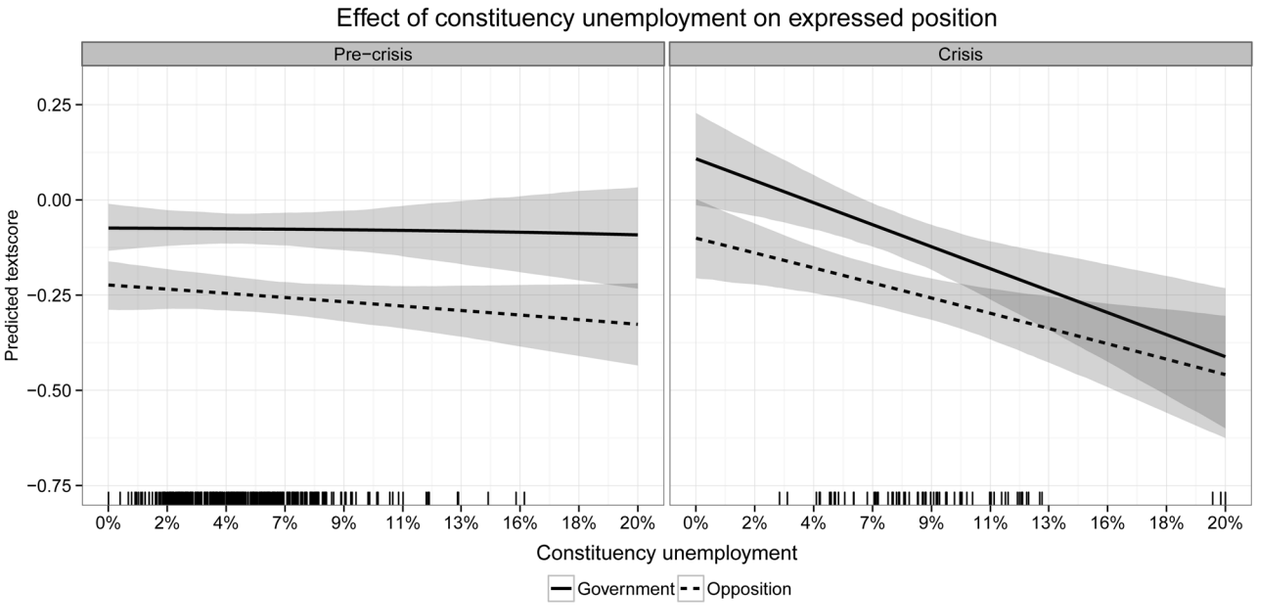

Figure 10. Predicted verbal expression of budget support conditional on constituency unemployment rate (*top panel*) and electoral safety (*bottom panel*) before and during the economics crisis, from the multilevel selection model. Shaded area indicates 95% credible interval.

First, there is clear positional information on a unidimensional latent scale of support for versus opposition to austerity measures, as expressed in the budget speeches. Our results have a high degree of face validity when compared to known legislative positions, with government ministers being most supportive of the budgets, opposition speakers most opposed, and government backbenchers in between. Text scaling as used, and specifically the supervised Wordscores approach of Laver et al. (2003), provides a valid method for measuring intraparty differences as expressed in speeches made during debates involving single-dimension positioning such as those taken in speeches over annual budgets.

Second, by fixing the scales of legislative positions each year to the positions expressed by government and opposition finance spokespersons—using the Martin and Vanberg (2007) method for rescaling unknown text positions relative to binary anchor points in the training set—we were able to compare the relative cohesion of budgetary support across different budget years. Our results show two strong patterns. First, opposition speakers were more united against budgets, while speakers from governing parties showed far more heterogeneity of expressed positions. In the effort to explain themselves or to avoid blame despite being forced by party responsibilities to vote for a budget, government legislators tended to express less cohesive views, with nonministerial speakers displaying the least amount of agreement with the government's official position. Second, with the onset of painful austerity budgets around 2009, government cohesion declined further, indicating that incentives for blame avoidance rise when there is more blame to avoid.

Third, looking at individual differences between expressed positions during some of the harshest austerity budgets, we have uncovered evidence that legislators use their speeches to express positions reflecting a balance between party and office demands on the one hand and constituency interests on the other. Legislators who occupied ministerial posts spoke more in favor of the budgets than backbench governing party legislators, a result that held quite consistently across years and changing conditions. This relationship also held for opposition parties, with party leaders tending to speak more in a median position of their parties rather than striking up more extreme positions, despite these extreme positions offering the greatest opposition to the government position.

On the side of constituency interests, we also found evidence that legislators who were elected from more vulnerable constituencies tended to express more anti-austerity positions than legislators from less vulnerable constituencies. Legislators with stronger constituency-based reasons to avoid the pain of austerity tended to oppose these measures more. We have uncovered systematic evidence that the degree of expressed support for austerity measures varies widely across party members in ways that can be explained using political and demographic variables specific to each speaker's constituency.

While our look at intraparty differences over austerity measures has focused on budget debates in Ireland, the logic

applies much more broadly to the difficult legislative choices being faced by legislatures across Europe, in particular Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Parties may demand and enforce a unified vote on budgets through strict party discipline, but these unified votes may mask significant tensions that arise from intraparty differences. While some systems may allow legislators to vote sincerely, many more are characterized by strong party discipline, especially on crucial measures such as annual budgets. In such systems, examining what legislators say, rather than simply how they vote, has the potential to reveal the extent and source of these differences.

APPENDIX A
DATA OVERVIEW

Table A1. Government Composition and Office Holders, 1987–2013

Economic Period	Debate Date	Budget Year	Government Parties	Taoiseach (Prime Minister)	Finance Minister	Opposition Spokesperson
Pre-boom	03–1987	1987	FF	C. Haughey (FF)	R. MacSharry (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	01–1988	1988	FF	C. Haughey (FF)	R. MacSharry (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	01–1989	1989	FF	C. Haughey (FF)	A. Reynolds (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	01–1990	1990	FF, PD	C. Haughey (FF)	A. Reynolds (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	01–1991	1991	FF, PD	C. Haughey (FF)	A. Reynolds (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	01–1992	1992	FF, PD	C. Haughey (FF)	B. Ahern (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	02–1993	1993	FF, Lab	A. Reynolds (FF)	B. Ahern (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	01–1994	1994	FF, Lab	A. Reynolds (FF)	B. Ahern (FF)	I. Yates (FG)
Boom years	02–1995	1995	FG, Lab, DL	J. Bruton (FG)	R. Quinn (Lab)	C. McCreevy (FF)
	01–1996	1996	FG, Lab, DL	J. Bruton (FG)	R. Quinn (Lab)	C. McCreevy (FF)
	01–1997	1997	FG, Lab, DL	J. Bruton (FG)	R. Quinn (Lab)	C. McCreevy (FF)
	12–1997	1998	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	12–1998	1999	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	12–1999	2000	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	12–2000	2001	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	12–2001	2002	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	J. Mitchell (FG)
	12–2002	2003	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2003	2004	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	C. McCreevy (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2004	2005	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	B. Cowen (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2005	2006	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	B. Cowen (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2006	2007	FF, PD	B. Ahern (FF)	B. Cowen (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2007	2008	FF, PD, Gr	B. Ahern (FF)	B. Cowen (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
Crisis	10–2008	2009	FF, PD, Gr	B. Cowen (FF)	B. Lenihan (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2009	2010	FF, Gr	B. Cowen (FF)	B. Lenihan (FF)	R. Bruton (FG)
	12–2010	2011	FF, Gr	B. Cowen (FF)	B. Lenihan (FF)	M. Noonan (FG)
	12–2011	2012	FG, Lab	E. Kenny (FG)	M. Noonan (FG)	M. McGrath (FF)
	12–2012	2013	FG, Lab	E. Kenny (FG)	M. Noonan (FG)	M. McGrath (FF)

Note. FF: Fianna Fáil, FG: Fine Gael, Lab: Labour Party, PD: Progressive Democrats, Gr: Green Party, DL: Democratic Left.

Table A2. Speaker Composition in Budget Debates, 1987–2013

Economic Period	Debate Date	Budget Year	Number of Observations	Debate Length (Days)	Number of Speakers	Cabinet Members		Backbenchers		Opposition Members	
						N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Pre-boom	03–1987	1987	166	9	53	13	25	12	23	28	53
	01–1988	1988	166	12	52	13	25	11	21	28	54
	01–1989	1989	166	5	54	15	28	11	20	28	52
	01–1990	1990	166	9	72	16	22	18	25	38	53
	01–1991	1991	166	8	86	12	14	29	34	45	52
	01–1992	1992	166	5	62	13	21	12	19	37	60
	02–1993	1993	166	10	71	15	21	26	37	30	42
	01–1994	1994	164	8	87	20	23	26	30	41	47
Boom years	02–1995	1995	166	8	68	17	25	14	21	37	54
	01–1996	1996	164	8	86	18	(21	30	35	38	44
	01–1997	1997	166	12	66	19	29	14	21	33	50
	12–1997	1998	164	12	48	14	29	9	19	25	52
	12–1998	1999	166	5	73	19	26	16	22	38	52
	12–1999	2000	166	6	53	14	26	12	23	27	51
	12–2000	2001	165	4	28	8	29	3	11	17	61
	12–2001	2002	166	3	37	10	27	11	30	16	43
	12–2002	2003	166	3	41	9	22	9	22	23	56
	12–2003	2004	166	4	56	14	25	10	18	32	57
	12–2004	2005	164	2	42	10	24	7	17	25	60
	12–2005	2006	166	2	34	12	35	1	3	21	62
	12–2006	2007	166	2	37	12	32	5	14	20	54
	12–2007	2008	166	3	53	14	26	12	23	27	51
Crisis	10–2008	2009	165	8	95	25	26	15	16	55	58
	12–2009	2010	165	5	14	4	29	1	7	9	64
	12–2010	2011	166	2	37	14	38	2	5	21	57
	12–2011	2012	165	2	55	18	33	6	(1	31	56
	12–2012	2013	166	2	43	11	26	6	(4	26	60

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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