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Citation

Pennings, P. (2000). The Consequences of Ministerial Recruitment for the Functioning of Ministerial Cabinets in Western Europe. *Acta Politica*, 35: 2000(1), 86-105. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450711>

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The Consequences of Ministerial Recruitment for the Functioning of Cabinets in Western Europe

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Abstract

The selection of ministers has far reaching consequences for the functioning of cabinets. When ministers are selected by means of closed procedures, this often favours the internal candidates who are best equipped to guarantee cabinet stability. Whether these candidates really exert this positive influence depends on the economic tide. The differential impact of internal and external ministers becomes more profound when the economic conditions are deteriorating. These findings indicate that there is not a one-to-one relationship between ministerial selection and its consequences. Most consequences are conditional and cannot be seen apart from the political-institutional and economic context of policy-making. The analysis shows that it is not decisive who is selected as a minister, as long as three conditions are met: the nominating party is united, the candidate is experienced, and the economic conditions are favourable. As these conditions are not always met simultaneously, quite systematic variations do emerge in the functioning of cabinets which are partly the result of different recruitment procedures.

1 Introduction

The selection of candidates is a unique task of political parties with many consequences for the functioning of parties and cabinets. However, the focus in the literature is predominantly on the determinants of candidate selection and rarely on the consequences (Ranney 1981; Gallagher and Marsh 1988). In this paper the focus will be on the consequences of the selection of ministers for the functioning of cabinets, in particular cabinet duration.

We can distinguish three types of consequences of candidate selection that are particularly relevant for ministers:

First, the type of candidate selection (i.e., more or less centralized) affects the *responsiveness and accountability* of parties, meaning the way parties react to changing economic conditions and public preferences and how they try to fulfil their mandate (Keman 1997; Pennings 1997). Parties are expected to be in the best position to fulfil a mandate when centralized candidate selection

procedures are followed (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Royed 1996).

Second, there are consequences for the *legislative-executive relations*. Some cabinet ministers, for example, lay more emphasis on their role vis-à-vis the parliament than others. Ministers who have a good relationship with the parliament seem to be more effective. Thus, the political stability of a cabinet partly depends on the way it interacts with the parliament and this interaction depends on the way the members of the cabinet handle the relationship. By selecting candidates, parties may try to influence the legislative-executive relation (Strom 1997).

Finally, there are consequences for the *policy-making process*: by selecting a candidate with a certain policy profile (e.g., more or less in favour of European integration, state intervention, etcetera), a party may steer the policy-making process in a certain direction. Being policy-seekers, most parties seek to achieve policy effects by means of selecting certain candidates (Pennings 1998). Whether these intentions behind the selection of candidates have real world consequences depends on many more factors.

Ministers form an important category of candidates as they are crucial for the functioning of cabinets and their policy output (Blondel and Thiébaud 1991; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993; Laver and Shepsle 1994). Ministers are certainly the most suited group for analysis when one is interested in the consequences of candidate selection. But, it is equally important to realize that ministers are not representative of all political candidates. The power to choose cabinet ministers in Europe rests mostly with party leaders, although prime ministers and other party leaders may veto an occasional controversial nomination (De Winter 1995: 130; Gallagher et al. 1995: 34). This is a major difference from the selection of parliamentary candidates (Norris 1997). Only in the Netherlands and the British Conservative Party are parliamentary party actors more important ministerial selectors than party organizational actors (De Winter 1995: 130).

It is hard to measure the consequences of ministerial recruitment in a way that allows both comparisons and generalizations. Idiosyncratic character traits and social capabilities of individual ministers might very well affect the functioning of cabinets, but cannot be modelled into a general scheme of the consequences of ministerial recruitment. This is, however, not a major obstacle for empirical research as long as the focus is not on the impact of individuals, but on more general and aggregated characteristics of ministers (Marsh 1993; McAllister 1996).

It will be argued below that the consequences of ministerial selection are affected by the political-institutional and the economic context in which cabinets are operating. The analysis shows that it is not decisive who is selected as a minister, as long as three conditions are met: the nominating party is united, the candidate is experienced, and the economic conditions are favourable.

As these conditions are not always met simultaneously, quite systematic variations do emerge in the functioning of cabinets which are – indirectly and to a certain extent – the result of different recruitment procedures. The next section will discuss the methodological approach that is used to measure the impact of ministerial recruitment on the functioning of cabinets.

2 Hypotheses, methodology and data

In *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government* (1994: 8–9) Laver and Shepsle discern three hypotheses related to the determinants of policy-making by Western cabinets:

1. the partisan composition of cabinets is decisive for policy outcomes ('party government');
2. the allocation of cabinet portfolios among parties determines government policy ('party or ministerial government');
3. the allocation of cabinet portfolios within parties affects the policy-making ('ministerial government').

One of their conclusions is that the third factor, being the selection of individual ministers, is less influential than the first two factors. The reason is that ministers' room to manoeuvre strongly depends on the partisan composition and on the portfolio allocation. Parties seek to function as unitary actors and ministers are expected to act as loyal agents of parties. Internal conflicts are kept within. Whether minister X or Y is selected is not decisive for the policy-making process as long as they are part of the *same* party and this party is acting as a *unitary actor*. Given these restrictions, the impact of individual ministers on the functioning of cabinets is mainly that they have *agenda power*, i.e., the ability to determine whether a proposal is to be put on the agenda, as well as the ability to shape the substance of proposals that have found their way onto the cabinet agenda (Laver and Shepsle 1994: 298; Dudley and Richardson 1996). Ministers have, in other words, a near monopoly on policy initiation (Gallagher et al. 1995: 28).

The conclusion of Laver and Shepsle is plausible, but it does not tell us much about the specific interactions between cabinets, cabinet parties, ministers and the socio-economic and political-institutional context of policy-making. Their finding is too general and merely based on the findings of country studies and not on a systematic empirical investigation. This paper provides a systematic analysis of how the ministerial recruitment matters for the functioning of cabinets. In the end, it does not deny Laver and Shepsle's main conclusion, but it does add a more specific answer about the relationships between the type of candidate selection, the type of minister, and the functioning of cabinets.

In order to be able to understand the consequences of ministerial selection,

a range of hypotheses is needed to structure the research. The following three assumptions will structure the data analysis:

1. The main distinction between the selection procedures of European parties is between open and centralized methods of candidate selection (Ware 1996; Krouwel 1999).
2. Open selection procedures are biased toward the appointment of extra-parliamentary ministers ('outsiders': ministers with no or little political or ministerial experience). Closed procedures on the other hand enhance the appointment of internal candidates ('insiders': ministers with a long-standing ministerial career) (Katz and Mair 1992; Krouwel 1999).
3. Insiders will be best equipped to maintain political stability by means of efficient conflict management within cabinets (Blondel and Thiébaud 1991).

One methodological concern which is intrinsically linked to the combined study of these hypotheses is that different units of analysis are linked to each other, these being the characteristics of: 1) *parties* (i.e., the procedure of candidate selection); 2) individual *ministers*; and 3) *cabinets*. Without establishing these linkages it is impossible to study the consequences of candidate selection in a comparative manner. At the same time we have to be aware of the causal inference problem when the functioning of cabinets is intrinsically linked to individuals as these represent different units of analysis.

In order to avoid differences in the units of analysis for each hypothesis and analysis, two multi-level (stacked) datasets are constructed. One holds data on parties and is used for Table 1 and Figure 1.¹ The other dataset² combines data on ministers and the context in which these ministers are functioning, namely:

1. The type of *candidate selection* procedure and other characteristics of the parties to which the ministers belong (Krouwel 1999) (see hypothesis 1).
2. Social and political background of 1599 *individual ministers* in twelve European countries (Blondel and Thiébaud 1991) (see hypothesis 2).
3. Data on the duration and termination of *cabinets* (Woldendorp et al. 1993) and on the political and economic conditions of ministerial policy-making (Pennings et al. 1999) (see hypothesis 3).

The universe of discourse comprises Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. For these twelve countries the available data on candidate selection, ministers and cabinets is satisfactory. The dataset comprises all ministers and their individual characteristics for 301 post-war cabinets in the period 1945–1985 (n=4820 ministers). The data on an individual minister is repeated for each occasion that this minister is part of a cabinet. This data format has the advantage that it enables the analysis of the consequences of ministerial selection: ministers

and their characteristics are the units of analysis. One has to be aware, however, that there is an unequal distribution of ministers over parties which will affect the results of the analysis. This unequal distribution is inevitable and in line with reality, because the parties are not all represented by the same number of ministers (if any). The implication of the data format is that the consequences of ministerial selection are analysed relative to the number of ministers per party.

The data on ministers is derived by Blondel and colleagues from 'Who's whos' and biographies issued by the parliaments (the original file holds 2899 ministers in 18 European countries) (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993; Blondel and Thiébaud 1991). The main shortcoming of this file is the limited time period (1945-1985). The number of valid cases, however, is sufficient to warrant a comparative and generalizable overview of the consequences of the ministerial recruitment in Western Europe.

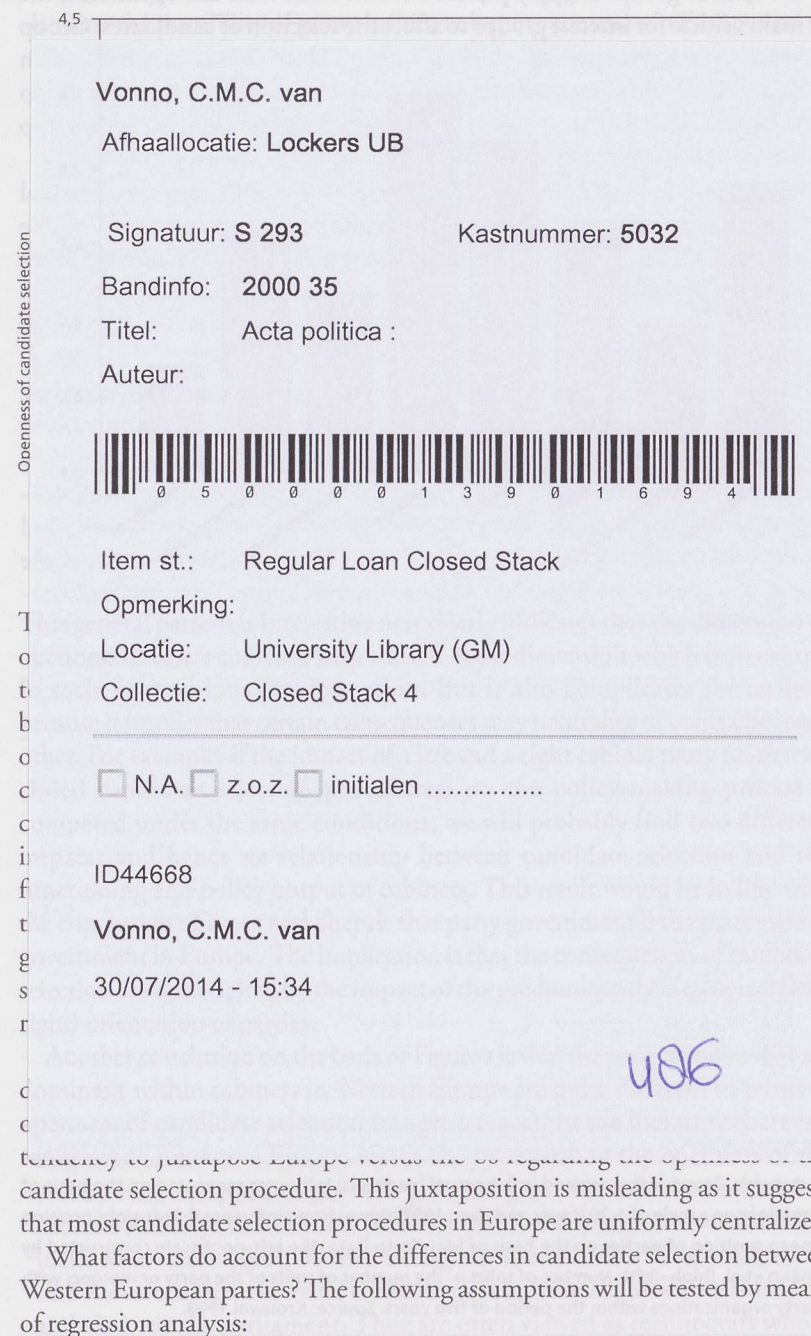
3 The openness of candidate selection

The first hypothesis refers to the main independent variable in this paper, namely the type of candidate selection. As indicated by the work of Norris we can divide candidate selection along two main dimensions: the bureaucratic-patronage dimension versus the centralized-decentralized dimension (Norris 1996). Within the context of Western Europe, the second dimension is the most important one, as most parties are modern mass parties within relatively long democratic traditions. Additionally, this second dimension can be operationalized most easily and is therefore most suited for the analysis.

The operationalization of the type of candidate selection procedure is based on Krouwel's adaptation of the data on candidate selection as compiled by Katz and Mair (1992). The scale ranges from 1 (closed) to 7 (open), where 1 means that the incumbent party leader selects the parliamentary candidates and 7 that the members of the party formally have the right and opportunity to participate in the selection procedure in open primaries, referenda or polls among all party members. I have reformatted this scale into five groups in order to make them comparable in size. The interpretation, however, remains the same: the higher the score, the more open the candidate selection is.

The party families in Figure 1 are ordered from left to right on the basis of the Klingemann et al. scale (1994) (n=564). Parties and party families that can not be grouped on the left-right scale or are not widely represented in cabinets are omitted. The figure shows that initially the more a party family is positioned to the right, the more open the candidate selection procedure is, however, after a certain point the procedure becomes more centralized again. The main exceptions to this 'rule' are the social democratic and the conservative parties.

Figure 1 The openness of candidate selection per party family (ordered by left-right)



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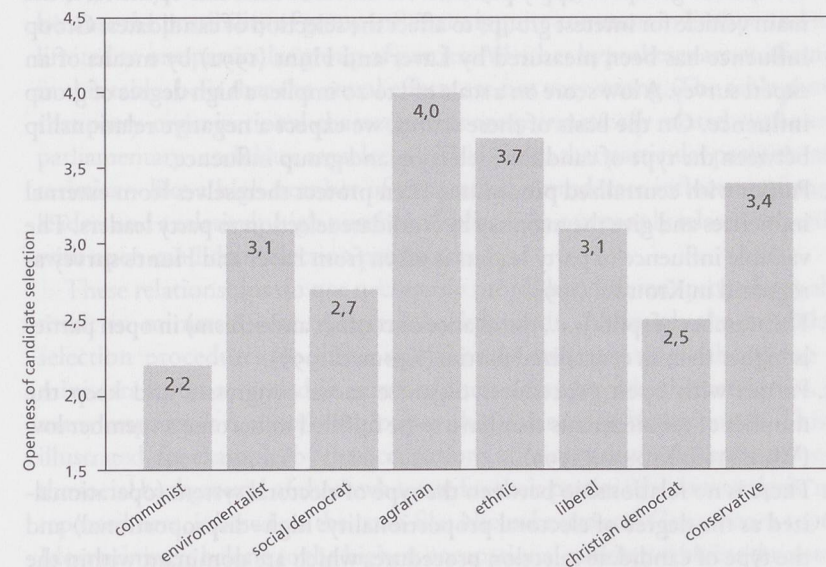
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This general pattern is interesting as it clearly indicates that the dimension of openness does *not* coincide with the left-right dimension which is so central to socio-economic policy-formation. But it also complicates the analysis because it implies that certain consequences may neutralize or contradict each other. For example, if the impact of a left and a right cabinet party (*both* with closed candidate selection procedures) on the policy-making process is compared under the same conditions, we will probably find two different impacts and hence *no* relationship between candidate selection and the functioning and policy output of cabinets. This result would be in line with the conclusion of Laver and Shepsle that party government is the main type of government in Europe. The implication is that the consequences of candidate selection are outweighed by the impact of the predominantly ideological (left-right) orientation of parties.

Another conclusion on the basis of Figure 1 is that the party families that are dominant within cabinets in Western Europe are quite different in terms of openness of candidate selection (range: 2.2-4.0). In the literature there is a tendency to juxtapose Europe versus the US regarding the openness of the candidate selection procedure. This juxtaposition is misleading as it suggests that most candidate selection procedures in Europe are uniformly centralized.

What factors do account for the differences in candidate selection between Western European parties? The following assumptions will be tested by means of regression analysis:

1. Most parties with open procedures are characterized by a strong ability to use outside groups to apply pressure. At the same time this openness is the main vehicle for interest groups to affect the selection of candidates. Group influence has been measured by Laver and Hunt (1992) by means of an expert survey. A low score on a scale of 1 to 20 implies a high degree of group influence. On the basis of these scores, we expect a negative relationship between the type of candidate selection and group influence.
2. Parties with centralized procedures often protect themselves from external influences and give the main say in candidate selection to party leaders. The variable influence of party leaders is taken from Laver and Hunt's survey as reported in Krouwel (1999).
3. The number of splits (i.e., the chance of conflict and schism) in open parties is higher than in centralized parties (Krouwel 1999).
4. Parties with open procedures organize more congresses and keep the number of requirements that have to be fulfilled to become a member low (Ware 1996; Krouwel 1999).
5. There is no relationship between the type of electoral system (operationalized as the degree of electoral proportionality: high=disproportional) and the type of candidate selection procedures which are dominant within the parties of each system (primarily because candidate selection is a characteristic of parties and not of electoral systems).

Table 1 Regression of the type of candidate selection on party-organizational and electoral variables (adj. R²=.244)^a

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.21	1.60		2.00	.051
Number of congresses	.27	.14	.25	1.94	.058
Influence leaders (Laver & Hunt '92)	-.05	.03	-.23	-1.63	.110
Group influence (Laver & Hunt '92)	.12	.06	.27	2.17	.034
Gallagher least-squares index of disproportionality (Lijphart '94)	-.07	.05	-.19	-1.47	.147
Left-right position (Krouwel '99)	.00	.01	.03	.20	.843
Number of splits (Krouwel '99)	1.69	.73	.29	2.33	.024

a) Sources: Krouwel 1999; Lijphart 1994; Laver and Hunt 1992

Explanation: Only those parties were selected that were in government before 1984 and have a score on candidate selection. Number of congresses is: number of congresses to be held according to the official statutes. Group influence and influence of leaders is: influence measured on the basis of expert opinions on a scale of 1-20 (Laver and Hunt 1992) (low=strong influence!). Left-right position is: the mean position of parties on the basis of Manifesto Data, the left-right scale constructed by Klingemann et al. (high=left). Number of splits is: the number of splits of the party or mergers with other party organizations within the period of five years. Source: Krouwel 1999.

The relative impact of these factors is shown in Table 1 (adjusted R²=.244; n=747). Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed by the regression results, probably because the possibility of group influence is quite common in Europe and not limited to one particular group of parties. All other hypotheses are confirmed in this table, be it that the causal effects are not very strong. The table shows that party-organizational characteristics are *systematically* related to the way parliamentary candidates are selected. This means that particular party characteristics – like a high number of congresses, a moderate influence of party leaders and a relatively high number of splits – are commonly related to parties with open candidate selection procedures.

These relationships do not necessarily mean that different procedures also result in ministers with different backgrounds. Although the candidate selection procedures do differ significantly among parties, the group of ministers is not so varied in terms of their demographic characteristics. In many respects, it is a *uniform* group with similar social backgrounds. This is illustrated, for example, by the occupations of ministers which hardly relate to the social background of those who vote for their parties (the data analysis, not reported here, is based on the ISMP-file: Nieuwbeerta and Ganzeboom 1996). Most ministers belong to the highest occupational rankings whereas the voters are much more diverse. The same goes for sex (ministers are predominantly male) and for education (generally a higher level).

In this section it has been shown that the openness of candidate selection is related to some of the organizational characteristics of parties. Western European parties are not uniformly centralized, as is frequently suggested in the literature when Europe is compared with the USA. There are significant differences between parties and party families. How these differences matter is the main subject of the following sections.

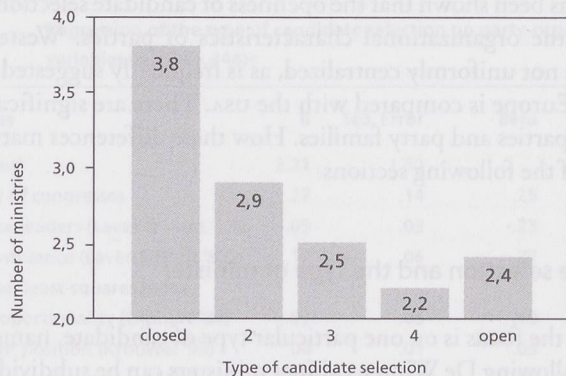
4 Candidate selection and the type of minister

As explained before, the focus is on one particular type of candidate, namely cabinet ministers. Following De Winter, cabinet ministers can be subdivided into two different types: 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (De Winter 1991). This is a crucial distinction, because it affects the responsiveness and accountability of parties, the legislative-executive relations, and the functioning and policy output of cabinets. Why is this so? Mainly because it is expected that insiders will be best equipped to play the political game in ways that enhance the cabinet stability. Centralized parties with closed procedures will be most inclined to select ministers with a long ministerial career. The outsiders will find it more difficult to avoid conflicts and confrontations within the cabinet and vis-à-vis the parliament. They are often viewed as technocrats who are

unable to establish a personal link between executive and legislative (De Winter 1991: 44). Parties with open procedures are most likely to select external ministers. This is not to say, however, that internal recruitment is solely limited to centralized parties. *All* parties nominate and select insiders as they are essential for party cohesiveness (Laver and Shepsle 1994: 302).

The type of minister that is recruited is not solely a function of the candidate selection procedure but also of political traditions and institutions. In several European countries, including the Netherlands, the political elites preferred depoliticized cabinets for a long time in order to appease social conflicts. In that case, ministers are recruited as independent experts in order to neutralize politically sensitive portfolios in coalition governments. The politics of accommodation in the Netherlands was furthered by means of the inclusion of representatives of organized social groups in cabinets in order to strengthen elite integration. Additionally, in the Netherlands, as in Scandinavia, there is a constitutional rule that stipulates that members of parliament who are appointed ministers have to resign from parliament when they take office. The most politicized cabinets are found in Denmark, Italy and Ireland, whereas more technocratic-managerial cabinets are found in the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria (De Winter 1991; Döring 1994; Andeweg and Nijzink 1995).

Figure 2 The number of ministries per individual minister per type of candidate selection

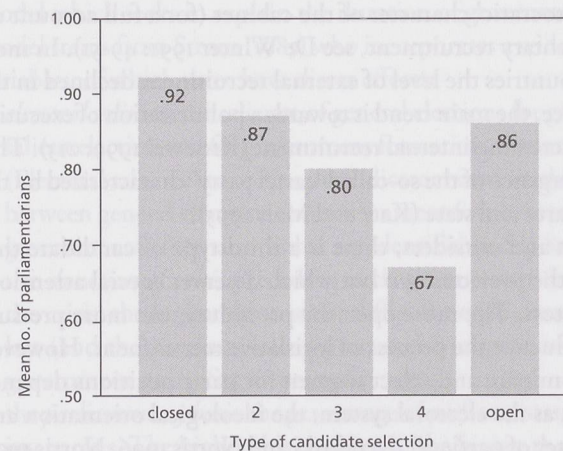


The degree to which ministers are insiders is operationalized by the number of ministries an individual minister has held (based on the definition given in Section 2). Figure 2 shows that the more closed or centralized the candidate selection procedure is, the more parties are inclined to select internal candidates with a relatively long career as a minister. However, as was stressed in Section 1, this relationship is not direct because the selection of ministers is different from 'ordinary' members of parliament as they are nominated by party leaders. Yet, the empirical relationship found in Figure 2 suggests that

the nomination of ministers is not just an arbitrary choice among experienced politicians. The party-organizational profile, including its candidate selection procedure, is systematically linked to the selection of ministers who come from either inside or outside the party. This linkage is important because of the far-reaching consequences for the functioning and policy output of cabinets, the evolution of legislative-executive relationships, and the responsiveness and accountability of parties.

What makes insiders a special group of ministers and why does their selection have consequences? One explanation stems, again, from the predominance of party government in Europe. Insiders can be expected to be very loyal to the party and well acquainted with all the formal and informal rules and traditions of parties and decision-making in cabinets. This knowledge and experience is important because of the *twin roles* of a cabinet minister as head of a government department and as a party representative. The doctrine of 'collective cabinet responsibility', meaning that every minister is bound by cabinet policy (Gallagher et al. 1995: 27), demands from ministers that they know how to both combine *and* to separate the responsibilities of parties and cabinets. As ministers are often presenting policy proposals to the cabinet, their policy position is essential in cabinet decision-making and consequently also for the fulfilment of party pledges. Parties and cabinets can only be successful when ministers are. As the goals of parties and cabinets are not always the same, ministers are crucial actors in reconciling these goals when necessary. Parties will seek to select ministers that are best equipped to fulfil the party goals within the complex and demanding arena of cabinet decision-making.

Figure 3 Number of parliamentarians per selection type



The means are based on the recoded variable v15 (0,3,4=0)(1,2=1)

Parties with closed procedures tend to select more ministers from parliament than parties with open procedures (as shown in Figure 3). The most open type of candidate selection is an exception to this rule. Hence, the relationship between the selection method and the type of minister is corroborated on the basis of two different operationalizations of the type of ministerial candidate. When interpreting the scores in Figure 3, one should realize that the number of ministers is not equally spread among the parties. For example, the Belgian *cvr* dominates the most open category of candidate selection. As Belgium is also a country where nearly all ministers have a parliamentary background (see Table 2), this explains the high mean scores of the number of parliamentarians in the most open category.

Table 2 The parliamentary background of ministers per country: no. of parliamentarians

Country	swe	nor	den	fin	bel	net	fra	ita	ger	aut	uk	ire	Total
Mean	.61	.53	.82	.66	.92	.53	.85	.96	.72	.73	.94	.99	.81
N	246	251	302	376	572	220	826	869	342	151	266	148	4569
Std. Deviation	.49	.50	.38	.47	.27	.50	.35	.19	.45	.45	.25	.12	.39

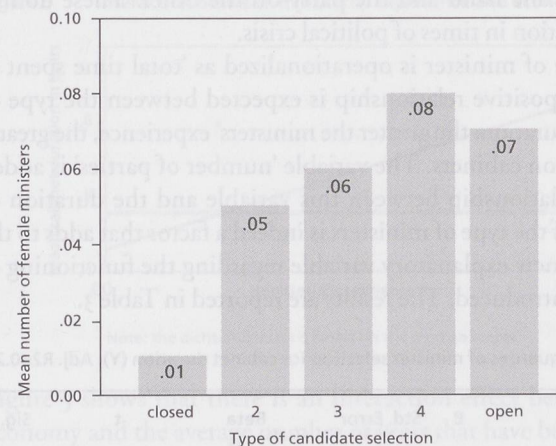
Legend: means are based on the dichotomization of variable v015 in the Blondel-file (0,3,4=0)(1,2=1)

Table 2 shows the mean number of parliamentarians among the ministers in Western European countries (1=parliamentarian, 0=non-parliamentarian). Whereas in Ireland, Italy and the UK almost all ministers are or have been parliamentarians, they form only about a half of the ministers in the Netherlands and Norway. In Ireland and the UK this constitutes a characteristic of the Westminster model (the PM chooses parliamentary colleagues) and in Italy it is part of the 'partitocratic' character of the cabinet (for a full account on variations in parliamentary recruitment, see De Winter 1991: 49-51). In most Western European countries the level of external recruitment declined in the post-war period. Hence, the main trend is towards a politicization of executive power by means of increasing internal recruitment (Krouwel 1999: 213). This is in line with the emergence of the so-called 'cartel party' characterized by the interpenetration of party and state (Katz and Mair 1995).

Further to insiders and outsiders, there is a third type of candidate that partly overlaps with the previous two but which deserves special attention, namely female ministers. The more open the procedure, the more pressure groups are able to influence the process of legislative recruitment. However, the willingness to nominate and select women for party positions depends on more factors, such as the electoral system, the ideological orientation and the innovative character of parties (Lovenduski and Norris 1996; Norris 1993; Thomas 1994). This finding also corresponds with the earlier result that par-

ties with open procedures are willing to select candidates with a relatively short parliamentary experience. Figure 4 confirms the expected relationship between the method of candidate selection and the number of female ministers.

Figure 4 The number of female ministers per type of candidate selection procedure



The mean is based on the recoded variable v03 (1=0)(2=1)

5 Candidate selection and cabinet duration

Does ministerial recruitment affect the functioning of cabinets? One way to answer this question is to incorporate the type of minister into a multivariate model which seeks to explain the duration of government. One well-known model stems from Strøm (1985) who incorporates a wide range of explanatory variables, of which three have direct effects:

- *electoral salience*: the salience of general elections for government. The more salient elections are for government formation, the longer governments last. (Electoral salience is a composite indicator based on the degree of association between general elections and government formations and the pre-electoral governmental alternations that are identifiable. See Strøm 1984: 747).
- the *duration of crisis* preceding each government formation. The longer the crisis, the higher the costs of difficult negotiations, the longer cabinets last (and the previous round presumably cleared away most obstacles to government unity. See Strøm 1984: 749).
- the *parliamentary basis*: the percentage of parliamentary seats held by governing parties. The higher this number is, the higher the expected duration of cabinets.

The main distinction within the group of ministers is between insiders and outsiders. The external candidates are a mixed group of managers and specialists (i.e., a-political outsiders) and more politically-oriented outsiders who come from established pressure groups (unions, social movements). What they have in common is that they have crossed loyalties with their specialism or grass roots on the one hand and the party on the other. These double loyalties can cause friction in times of political crisis.

As before, the type of minister is operationalized as 'total time spent as minister in years'. A positive relationship is expected between the type of minister and cabinet duration: the greater the ministers' experience, the greater the stabilizing effects on cabinets. The variable 'number of parties' is added because a negative relationship between this variable and the duration of cabinets is expected. If the type of ministers is indeed a factor that adds to the explained variance, a new explanatory variable regarding the functioning of cabinets needs to be introduced. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3 The relative consequences of minister selection for cabinet duration (Y). Adj. R²=0.28.

Variables ^b	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-202.69	51.29		-3.95	.000
1. Ministerial experience	5.21	1.56	.06	3.33	.001
2. Effective number of parties	-37.22	6.74	-.11	-5.52	.000
3. Electoral salience	122.64	4.83	.51	25.37	.000
4. Duration of crisis	2.72	.22	.24	12.16	.000
5. Parliamentary basis	726.96	63.51	.21	11.45	.000

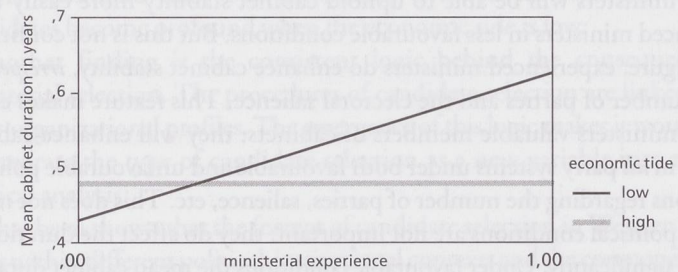
b) Legend: Variables 3-5 are operationalized by Strøm (1990). Ministerial experience is the total time spent as minister in years (Blondel & Thiébaud 1991). See Section 2 for the construction of the data-file.

The table confirms all expectations: the relations of the variables are significant and the directions of the relations are as expected. However, the type of minister does have a weak effect. One possible explanation for this is that experienced ministers only have a stabilizing effect on cabinets when the economic conditions are deteriorating. If this is correct, ministers do not have an autonomous effect, irrespective of their surroundings, but a conditional effect on cabinet duration.

The logical next question is: *when* does ministerial experience matter? Do experienced ministers enhance the lifetime of cabinets in *all* or only under *special* circumstances? If the consequences of ministerial selection depend on the socio-economic and institutional environment, then there is an *interaction effect* between the type of minister and other variables. The presence of interaction effects will be tested for both economic and institutional variables. The

economic variable is the state of the economy, operationalized by means of the so-called misery index, being the additive index of unemployment and inflation (both as a % of GDP). Figure 5 presents two lines with the means of the dichotomized scores of 'duration of cabinets in days'.

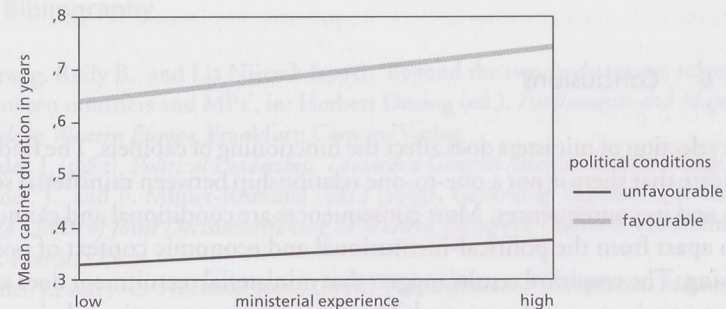
Figure 5 Interaction between ministerial experience and economic tide



Note: the dichotomization is based on the median scores

Figure 5 shows that there is an interaction effect between the state of the economy and the average number of years that have been spent as a minister. When the economy is up, the number of years do not affect the duration. But when the economy is in crisis, the number of ministerial years is positively related to the duration of cabinets. Hence, there is only a positive relationship between the years spent as a minister and cabinet duration when the economy is deteriorating. The reason has been discussed before: experienced ministers are better equipped to handle difficult situations. They also have more to lose than less experienced ministers and will be more willing to compromise. Analysis of variance indicates that this two-way interaction effect is significant ($F=18.1$, $n=2810$).

Figure 6 The non-interaction between ministerial experience and political-institutional conditions



Note: the means are based on dichotomized variables

Figure 6 presents the duration of cabinets under favourable (1) and unfavourable (0) political conditions. Favourable conditions are operationalized as a combination of a *high* electoral salience and a *low* number of effective parties. All other possible combinations between salience and parties are defined as unfavourable for cabinet duration. One would expect that in a situation with a low number of parties and electoral salience, young and relatively inexperienced ministers will be able to uphold cabinet stability more easily than experienced ministers in less favourable conditions. But this is not confirmed by the figure: experienced ministers do enhance cabinet stability, *irrespective* of the number of parties and the electoral salience. This feature makes experienced ministers valuable members of cabinets: they will enhance cabinet stability in *all* party systems under both favourable and unfavourable political conditions regarding the number of parties, salience, etc. This does not mean that the political conditions are not important: they do affect the duration of cabinets significantly. Under favourable conditions the mean cabinet duration is twice as high as under unfavourable conditions (this is shown in Figure 6). In that respect 'politics' matters as much as 'economics'.

A slightly different test of the consequences of ministerial recruitment on policy-making would be to present misery as the dependent variable and to plot it against the type of minister and the type of government. Again, the results show no interaction effect between the type of minister and the type of government (figure not shown here). Hence, the experienced type of minister coincides with a relatively good economic output, irrespective of the type of cabinet.

This type of analysis is quite straightforward, as it offers a simple and effective way to analyse the consequences of ministerial selection in a comparative, empirical and systematic manner. The analysis of interactions shows under what conditions the functioning of cabinets is affected by the recruitment of ministers. The results show quite clearly that the selection of experienced ministers does lengthen the duration of cabinets under deteriorating economic conditions.

6 Conclusions

The selection of ministers does affect the functioning of cabinets. The findings indicate that there is not a one-to-one relationship between ministerial selection and its consequences. Most consequences are conditional and cannot be seen apart from the political-institutional and economic context of policy-making. The empirical results suggest that ministerial recruitment does affect the responsiveness and accountability, the legislative-executive relations and the policy-making process, but these effects only become visible when the

economy deteriorates.

The selection of ministers by means of closed procedures favours the internal candidates. These ministers are best equipped to guarantee cabinet stability and enhance accountable policy-making and productive legislative-executive relationships. But, as has been demonstrated by means of interaction effects, whether these candidates really exert this positive influence depends on the economic tide. The differences between internal and external candidates become profound when the economic tide is low.

Another finding is the consistent logic behind the consequences of ministerial selection. The procedures of candidate selection are linked to the party-organizational profiles. The emergence of this logic makes it worth while to integrate the type of candidate selection as a new variable into modern political analysis.

It has been shown that the format of candidate selection in Western Europe varies within different political-institutional contexts and the consequences are affected by economic conditions. The type of candidate selection procedures and especially the outcomes of these procedures will become even more important due to the cleavage erosion and the increasing impact of the media. For this reason, the selection of ministers not only affects the functioning of cabinets, but also the success of parties within modern democracies.

Notes

1. This dataset stems from the dissertation of André Krouwel (1999) who I wish to thank for sharing his Ph.D. data with me and for his helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
2. This dataset originates from the project on ministers which was directed by Jean Blondel (see: Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993; Blondel and Thiébaud 1991).

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