

DO PARTY SUPPORTERS DIFFER?

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DO PARTY SUPPORTERS DIFFER?

There is a debate, in Canada as elsewhere, about whether parties really make a difference. Much of the literature on this question looks at whether policies and spending differ according to the partisan composition of governments (see Blais, Blake, and Dion 1993). The approach adopted here is different. Using survey data from the 1997 Canadian Election Study¹, we examine the extent to which each party's voters differ in their views on the major issues of the day.

In theory, parties are supposed to present alternative perspectives on what governments should and should not do and electoral democracies give citizens the opportunity to vote for the party that best represents their own viewpoints. If both conditions are fulfilled, that is, if parties present real alternatives and if voters vote on the basis of party positions, then we should be able to observe real differences among supporters of the various parties.

Some analysts express skepticism about these assumptions. Canadian parties have been characterized as brokerage-style parties, taking middle-of-the-road and often fuzzy positions on most issues, while voters have been portrayed as making up their minds about which party to support on the basis not of party positions as such, but of leader evaluations and/or the performance of the economy (Clarke et al. 1984, 1991, 1996).² This picture of Canada's electoral politics is complemented by evidence that many voters are unfamiliar with the left-right terminology that is conventionally used to differentiate party positions in Western democracies (Lambert et al. 1986).

This is not the picture that would emerge, though, from a reading of news reports and media commentary on the so-called "fight for the right" and the prospects for a consolidation of the political parties of the right (the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party). Two assumptions are implicit in this commentary: that the electorate can be characterized in left-right terms and that Canada does have ideologically distinct parties.

The two pictures are not necessarily entirely at odds with one another. Voters do not have to be familiar with ideological terminology in order to take ideologically distinctive positions on the issues of the day. Nor do issues have to be highly salient in voters' choice of party in a given election for issue positions to differentiate each party's voters.³ The question of whether supporters of the various parties do indeed differ on the issues is thus very much an empirical one. And so is the question of whether those differences are consistent with a left-right ordering of the parties.

In order to answer these two questions, we compare the views on a wide array of issues of those who voted Liberal, Reform (the predecessor of the Canadian Alliance)⁴, Conservative, NDP, and Bloc québécois in the 1997 federal election. In particular, we want to determine whether it is possible to locate party supporters on a left-right continuum anchored by NDP voters on the left and those who voted Reform on the right, with Liberal voters in the center,

Conservative voters at center-right, between Liberal and Reform voters, and Bloc voters at center-left, between Liberal and NDP voters.

The terms "left" and "right" themselves have proved quite flexible, accommodating new issues, while retaining their older meanings (Mair and Smith 1990). At the core of the distinction are opposing beliefs about the free enterprise system and about the appropriate balance between government and the market. This is the so-called "old" left-right cleavage. In contrast to the right, the left tends to be sceptical of the workings of the capitalist system. This scepticism is reflected in support for collective action to protect the interests of labour and a greater willingness to rely on the state to provide a social safety net. In the Canadian context, this cluster of beliefs has also made for a longstanding opposition to closer ties with the United States, seen as the bastion of free enterprise. This opposition was galvanized by the negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement which was perceived to be a threat both to Canadian jobs and to Canada's social programmes (Johnston et al. 1992).

To this fundamental division over the free enterprise system has been added a series of issues that together make up the "new" left-right distinction. These issues can be grouped under four broad headings: traditionalism, gender, law and order, and accommodating diversity. The "new" right is more traditional when it comes to a variety of issues that relate to so-called "family values," such as marriage, children, and alternative lifestyles. This traditionalism is also reflected in a reluctance to accord women an equal role and a lack of sympathy for feminism and its goals. The right is also more concerned about law and order and readier to take a tough line with those who commit crimes. Finally, the "new" right is associated with an unwillingness to accommodate racial and ethnic diversity, an unwillingness that is often manifested in more negative views about immigration and immigrants.

We have selected survey items to represent each of these dimensions that together make up the left-right cleavage. In doing so, we have been guided by an in-depth analysis of issue positions and ideological orientations in the 1997 federal election which is reported elsewhere (Nevitte et al. 1999; see also Johnston et al. 1996). This analysis predictably also indicated the importance of attitudes toward accommodating Quebec. At first blush, this might appear to be an issue that simply cannot be encompassed within even the most flexible of left-right definitions. It is worth noting, however, that the parties of the "new" right in Western Europe have often served as a lightning rod for resentment of regions that are seen as a drain on the country's resources (Betz 1993; Betz and Immerfall 1998; Kitschelt 1995; Nevitte et al. 1998).

Different items used different response categories. Feelings about various groups, for example, were measured on a 0 to 100 scale, while other items employed an agree/disagree format or offered fixed response alternatives (such as "do more", "do less", or "about the same as now"). In order to facilitate comparison of the items among themselves, we have transformed all our measures so that they are on an identical scale. The scale goes from -1 to +1, with zero indicating a neutral or a standpat position on the item in question. The numbers should not be interpreted in absolute terms. What matters are how party supporters are ordered and whether they are far apart or close together. Details of the questions and response categories can be found in the appendix. In discussing the results, we refer back to these response categories, rather than

using the rescaled values. All the numbers reported in this chapter exclude don't knows and refusals.

Table 1 shows the mean position of each party's voters for each item on our -1 to +1 scale, as well as the mean value for the whole sample. The more positive (negative) the value, the more right (left) wing the mean position. The overall range on each item is also shown. The overall range is the difference between the two polar parties. The significance level indicates the likelihood of obtaining differences like the ones observed in our sample if there were really no differences between each party's supporters in the electorate at large. For each issue domain, we begin by describing the overall distribution of opinion for the electorate at large and then look at the ordering of party supporters.

[Table 1 about here]

1. Business

Overall, Canadians appear to be fairly well disposed towards business. On the question of how much should be done for business, as many as 46% say "more" and only 19% opt for "less", and the mean rating given to big business on a 0 to 100 scale (59) is clearly favourable. At the same time, though, Canadians do not unequivocally endorse business practices. An overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) agreed with the assertion that the profits of Canadian banks are a scandal. But perhaps the most telling indicator of Canadians' ambivalence towards business and the capitalist system in general comes from the finding that 61% disagree with the view that "when businesses make a lot of money, everyone benefits, including the poor".

This last question best captures respondents' general orientations towards free enterprise and it is on this question (see Table 1) that the predicted left-right distribution of party supporters most clearly emerges (though Reform and Conservative voters are indistinguishable). The situation is more ambiguous with respect to the other three questions, which relate to opinions on business as such rather than general orientations towards the system. Now it is only the left that appears to be set apart, while supporters of the other parties all take more or less the same position. On the first two questions, only NDPers differ from the rest and even they are not particularly ill-disposed toward business. With respect to bank profits, on which opinion is generally unfavourable, there is a small cleavage between NDP and Bloc voters and the rest.

The degree of divergence among parties, then, is relatively modest. It is strongest with respect to general orientations towards the working of the system, with a range of 0.52 on our -1 to +1 scale. Fully 81% of NDPers reject the idea that everyone benefits when business makes money, but the percentage drops to 53% among Reformers and Conservatives.

2. Unions

The data indicate that unions have a more negative image than business. When it came to how respondents felt about unions and whether unions should have more power or less, the average response was relatively negative. Unions received a mean rating of slightly below 50

(45) on a 0 to 100 scale, and only 13% of our respondents said that unions should have more power, while nearly half (49%) argued that they should have less.

Not surprisingly, NDP voters are most favourable to unions. The anti-union pole, however, is occupied not by people who voted Reform but by Conservatives. Liberal voters are faithful to their image of being centrist, and Bloc voters come up between Liberal and NDP supporters, as befits a left-of-centre party. The overall ranking of the parties is thus close to the standard assumption, except for the fact that those who voted Reform are outflanked on the right by Conservatives. The overall range of opinions about unions could be characterized as relatively wide. For instance, the percentage of respondents who believe that unions should have less power goes from 21% among NDPers to 62% among Conservatives.

3. Social programs

Most Canadians (60%) say that protecting social programs is a very important issue. This is why an overwhelming majority opposes cuts in health care (81%) and education (79%). Resistance to cuts in unemployment insurance is also fairly strong (47%). More people (66%) are willing to consider cuts in welfare payments, though, perhaps because Canadians have mixed feelings about people on welfare (average rating of 45).

Predictably, the two most extreme positions are held by NDPers and people who voted Reform. The Liberals and the Conservatives are more or less indistinct. As for Blocists, they are not too distant from the NDP in their opposition to cuts, even though they do not express such overwhelming support for the general idea of protecting social programs.

Generally, the standard hypothesis about the distribution of party supporters tends to be confirmed. The exception is that the Conservatives are as centrist as the Liberals. Differences between the parties are relatively small with respect to education and health but they are more substantial in the case of welfare. Cuts in welfare were approved by as many as 76% of Reformers but by only 47% of NDPers.

4. The United States and International Trade

General feelings towards the United States are positive, with Canadians giving our southern neighbour a mean rating of 57. The dominant view (56%) is that ties with the United States should remain about as they are now. Few (17%) think that these ties should be weakened. A clear majority (63%) believes that free trade with the U.S. has been good for the Canadian economy. Consistent with these views, assessment of the overall impact of international trade is relatively sanguine: 63% think it creates more jobs than it destroys.

On these questions, the main cleavage is between NDP and Bloc voters, on the one hand, who tend to be less pro-American, and the Liberals, the Conservatives and people who voted Reform, on the other hand. There is one small exception. The Conservatives come out as the most supportive of the free trade agreement. This is not surprising since the deal was struck by the former Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. Bloc voters are also particularly

supportive of free trade with the United States, perhaps because it is perceived to facilitate the road to sovereignty.

The standard classification tends not to be supported in this case. There is the predictable cleavage between the left and the right but no cleavage between the center and the right. Differences between the parties are also somewhat muted. For instance, the percentage who believes that Canada should have more distant ties with the U.S. goes from 13% among Conservatives to 30% among NDPers.

5. Traditionalism

On most of the questions tapping so-called family values, Canadians could be characterized as moderately traditional. There is strong support (75%) for the general view that we would have fewer problems if traditional family values were given more emphasis. This could well explain why 59% of the sample are opposed to allowing homosexual couples to get legally married. A small majority also agrees that new lifestyles contribute to the breakdown of society (55%). Nonetheless, 63% disagree with the statement that only married people should have children, 59% believe that abortion should be a matter of personal choice (only 9% think it should be never permitted), and 57% disagree with the notion that men are less patient and giving than women when it comes to caring for babies and small children.

The pattern of responses to these questions is a familiar one. NDPers are the least traditional, followed by Blocists (the latter are least traditional with respect to marriage), while people who voted Reform are the most traditional. Liberals and Conservatives are in the middle, usually very close to each other. As with social programs, the usual classification of party supporters appears to be adequate, except for the fact that the Conservatives are in the center and not on the right.

Differences between party supporters turn out to be particularly large. For instance, while 55% of Reform voters shared the view that only married people should have children, the percentage is only 12% among Bloc supporters.

6. Women

Many voters are inclined to accept the claim that women's concerns need to be given special attention. A small majority agrees (59%) that there is discrimination against women in the job market and 57% think that we need more women in Parliament to protect women's interests. Fifty-four percent of Canadians disagree with the view that society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children. Most Canadians (60%) support the idea that more should be done for women in general and there is strong rejection (86%) of the suggestion that having a job could be less important for women whose husbands are already employed. Nonetheless, there is ambivalence about feminist groups, whose average rating is only 44, about the same as for unions.

On all of these questions, NDPers and Blocists come out as more favourable to women's issues and Reform voters as the most opposed, with the Liberals and the Conservatives systematically in the middle. On this issue dimension, the standard left-right classification is mostly borne out. The exceptions turn out to be the Conservatives, who are as centrist as the Liberals, and the Blocists, who are as leftist as the NDPers.

Differences of opinions among the parties are substantial. The percentage who said that more should be done for women, for instance, was only 38% among Reform voters but as high as 84% among Blocists.

7. Crime

Canadians are concerned about crime. Most respondents (69%) told us crime was a very important issue for them. Perhaps because of this concern, they tend to give the police high ratings (68). When it comes to choosing between the tough and the soft approach to dealing with crime, Canadians lean towards the former. More opt for tougher sentences (60%) than for rehabilitation (35%) to deal with young offenders, and a majority (62%) supports capital punishment. But Canadians are also tough with gun-owners: a majority (56%) supports the strong position that nobody except police officers and the military should be allowed to have guns.

On the first four questions, those who voted Reform stand out as most concerned with crime and more willing to be tough, while NDPers and Blocists are softest. The Liberal and the Conservative voters again occupy the middle ground. On the question of guns, the Reform Party was the only party among which a majority (63%) opposed a ban on guns. People who voted Reform are tough with criminals but soft on gun-owners and the reverse is true of NDPers and Blocists. On the issue of guns, however, the toughest of all are the Liberals: 65% favour a complete ban on guns (except for the police and the military).

With respect to guns, the distribution of party supporters does not fit the standard left-right continuum. On the other questions, however, the hypothesis is supported, though there is not much difference between Bloc and NDP voters and the Conservatives are as centrist as the Liberals. Differences of opinions are important. Only 40% of NDPers opted for tougher sentences for young offenders, compared with 76% of Reformers.

8. Immigrants

Four questions probed Canadians' sentiments towards immigrants: should we admit more or fewer immigrants? do immigrants make sufficient efforts to integrate into Canadian society? do they make an important contribution to the country? and should we look after people born in Canada first?

Views about immigrants can be characterized as ambivalent but tilted towards the negative side. Half the respondents (48%) think we should admit fewer immigrants (only 9% would like more) and agree with the assertion that immigrants should be treated, in effect, as

second class citizens. As many as 64% believe that immigrants do not really try to integrate. But a strong majority (75%) thinks that immigrants make an important contribution to Canadian society.

In all cases, NDPers emerge as the most pro-immigrant and in three cases out of four Reformers were the least supportive. Liberal and Conservative voters are systematically in the center and are hardly distinguishable. Finally, and contrary to expectations, Blocists tend to side with people who voted Reform. This might reflect a perception that Quebec immigrants are inclined to integrate into the anglophone community and to oppose sovereignty.

The findings tend to support the hypothesized ordering for Reform, the NDP and the Liberals, but not for the Bloc, whose supporters are close to the position of Reform voters on this issue, nor for the Conservatives, who turn out to be as centrist as the Liberals. As for the amount of divergence, it is best described as moderate. For instance, the percentage wanting fewer immigrants ranged from 35% among NDPers to 56% among Reformers.

9. Quebec

The last domain to consider is the "Quebec" issue. How do Canadians outside Quebec react to issues dealing with Quebec? General feelings towards Quebec are slightly positive: the average rating is 55. There is resistance, however, to the idea of giving Quebec any special rights. Only one voter out of three thinks Quebec should be recognized as a distinct society (though one out of three among those opposed would change their mind if this keeps Quebec in Canada). There is the feeling, shared by 69% of the sample, that we have gone too far pushing bilingualism in Canada and an overwhelming majority (83%) disagrees that Quebec has the right to separate unilaterally.

It might be argued that the Quebec issue is qualitatively different from the others that have been considered and that there is no reason to expect a similar rank ordering of the parties. Yet, Table 1 indicates that, as on most issues, NDPers and those who voted Reform occupy the polar positions, and that Conservative and Liberal voters occupy the center. The only exception is with respect to Quebec's right to secession, where supporters of all the parties share similar views.

Differences of opinion among the parties are substantial. For instance, willingness to recognize Quebec as a distinct society ranged from 18% among Reformers to 48% among NDPers.

Conclusions

We began by posing two basic questions. First, do party supporters differ in their views about various issues? Second, are these differences consistent with a left-right ordering of the parties with NDPers occupying the left, Blocists the center-left, Liberals the center, Conservatives the center-right, and people who voted Reform the right?

It turns out that differences among parties vary from one domain to another. They are particularly substantial with respect to traditionalism: five of the seven questions yielded a range greater than .40 on the -1 to +1 scale. The differences tend to be smaller, though, with respect to business, unions, and the United States. The median range on the 42 questions listed in Table 1 is .39 on the -1 to +1 scale. We can illustrate what this means in terms of the original response categories by looking at the actual distribution of responses to an item on which the range corresponds to the median, namely the question about whether immigrants make an important contribution. The two polar parties on this question are the Bloc and the NDP. Fully 86% of NDPers agree with the statement, compared to only 61% of Blocists, a difference of 25 percentage points. The difference between Liberal and Conservative voters on this question is almost nil: the percentages agreeing are 77% and 79%, respectively. Perhaps the most telling indicator is that the average difference between pairs of supporters on this question is 11 percentage points. We may thus surmise that on a typical issue, the typical difference (in the level of agreement with a given position) between supporters of pairs of parties is about 10 percentage points. All in all, party differences are not huge but neither are they inconsequential. To return to the assumptions about electoral democracy with which this chapter began, these findings suggest that people with different views about the issues do vote for different parties and that the party system does reflect differing viewpoints. The range of differences expressed, however, is relatively modest.

Our second question was concerned with the order of party supporters on the various issues. The conclusion is that the standard depiction of each party's supporters on a left-right scale, from NDPers on the left to Blocists, to Liberals, then Conservatives, and finally people who voted Reform on the right, generally makes sense. The exception is the Conservatives.

On all nine dimensions considered here, NDPers occupied the left pole, and on six of them Reformers occupied the opposite pole.⁵ Intriguingly, Reformers were *not* the most "rightist" on several of the issues that define the "old" left-right cleavage, such as the role of unions and business and our links with the United States. The ideological distinctiveness of people who voted Reform is much more evident when it comes to issues associated with the "new" right than with the "old" right.

The hypothesis that Blocists occupy the center-left of the political spectrum is generally confirmed. There is one important exception, immigration, and in this instance Bloc voters sided with Reformers. The most plausible reason for this finding is the historical pattern of immigration in Quebec and the place of immigrants in the nationalist debate.

The view that Liberal voters are centrist is also generally supported in the sense that Liberals are very seldom to be found at one of the poles. But clearly the Liberals do not have the monopoly of the center. On most issues, there is hardly any difference between Liberal and Conservative voters (see Table 2). Perhaps the best illustration of this is the percentage in favour of cuts to social programs which is almost the same among the two groups (differences are between two and five percentage points). There is one exception and this concerns views about unions, where Conservative voters come out as the most "rightist". On all of the other issues, there is little to support the characterization of Conservative voters as clearly to the right of

Liberals. And on the majority of dimensions, Conservative voters are much closer to Liberal voters than they are to people who voted Reform. This is especially true of issue domains that relate to the “new” left-right distinction, such as traditionalism, gender, law and order, and accommodating diversity.

[Table 2 about here]

When it comes to ideology, then, there is very little difference between Conservative and Liberal voters. In this sense, the portrait of the two parties as brokerage parties, competing for the median Canadian voter, remains intact. This is only a very partial picture of Canada's electoral politics in the 1990s, however. Despite a brief flirtation with brokerage politics in the 1988 federal election (Johnston et al. 1992), the NDP remains a party clearly to the left of the Canadian centre in its appeal. And both the Reform Party and the Bloc broke through in the 1993 federal election by refusing to play by the rules of brokerage politics. In the 1997 election, the two parties' voters continued to occupy distinct positions on many of the issues that define the left-right cleavage.

It remains to be seen whether Reform's successor, the Canadian Alliance, will be successful in attracting erstwhile Conservative voters. As we have seen, Conservative supporters are typically closer to their Liberal counterparts in the center than they are to partisans of the right. Should some sort of "united alternative" emerge to challenge the Liberals' current dominance, it will likely say more about the compelling logic of brokerage politics than about any reunification of the right.

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Table 1. Comparing the Views of Party Supporters

Business						Mean	Range
How much should be done for business	NDP (-0.09)	Reform (+0.17)	Liberal (+0.19)	PC (+0.23)	Bloc (+0.25)	+0.19	0.34
How do you feel about big business	NDP (-0.06)	Reform (+0.17)	Bloc (+0.21)	Liberal (+0.21)	PC (+0.26)	+0.17	0.32
Profits Canadian banks make are a scandal	NDP (-0.72)	Bloc (-0.69)	Reform (-0.58)	PC (-0.54)	Liberal (-0.49)	-0.57	0.23
When businesses make money, everyone benefits	NDP (-0.57)	Bloc (-0.30)	Liberal (-0.14)	PC (-0.05)	Reform (-0.05)	-0.19	0.52
Unions						Mean	Range
Unions should have more power	NDP (-0.06)	Bloc (+0.15)	Liberal (+0.33)	Reform (+0.38)	PC (+0.41)	+0.27	0.47
How do you feel about unions	NDP (-0.17)	Bloc (-0.02)	Liberal (+0.13)	Reform (+0.16)	PC (+0.22)	+0.10	0.39
Social programmes						Mean	Range
Importance : protecting social programmes	NDP (-0.80)	Liberal (-0.59)	PC (-0.51)	Bloc (-0.51)	Reform (-0.34)	-0.54	0.46
No cuts : welfare	NDP (-0.44)	Bloc (-0.37)	Liberal (-0.15)	PC (-0.12)	Reform (-0.02)	-0.16	0.42
No cuts : health care	NDP (-0.91)	Bloc (-0.81)	Liberal (-0.80)	PC (-0.76)	Reform (-0.73)	-0.79	0.18
No cuts : unemployment insurance	NDP (-0.63)	Bloc (-0.56)	Liberal (-0.36)	PC (-0.34)	Reform (-0.30)	-0.41	0.33
No cuts : education	NDP (-0.90)	Liberal (-0.77)	Bloc (-0.77)	PC (-0.75)	Reform (-0.70)	-0.77	0.20
How do you feel about people on welfare	NDP (-0.09)	Bloc (+0.05)	PC (+0.07)	Liberal (+0.10)	Reform (+0.14)	+0.09	0.23
U.S. and International Trade						Mean	Range
Canadian ties with US	NDP (-0.09)	Bloc (+0.04)	Liberal (+0.09)	Reform (+0.10)	PC (+0.11)	+0.08	0.20
How do you feel about US	Bloc (+0.06)	NDP (+0.06)	Reform (+0.19)	Liberal (+0.20)	PC (+0.20)	+0.15	0.14
International trade creates more jobs	NDP (-0.07)	Bloc (-0.02)	PC (+0.17)	Liberal (+0.22)	Reform (+0.25)	+0.14	0.32
Free trade with US is good	NDP (-0.26)	Liberal (+0.16)	Reform (+0.19)	Bloc (+0.21)	PC (+0.29)	+0.13	0.55
Traditionalism						Mean	Range
Only married people should have children	Bloc (-0.66)	NDP (-0.42)	PC (-0.23)	Liberal (-0.19)	Reform (+0.12)	-0.22	0.78
Men are less patient when caring for children	NDP (-0.21)	Bloc (-0.19)	Liberal (-0.12)	PC (-0.11)	Reform (-0.01)	-0.10	0.20
Fewer problems if more emphasis on traditional family values	NDP (+0.18)	Bloc (+0.28)	Liberal (+0.39)	PC (+0.41)	Reform (+0.58)	+0.39	0.40
Newer lifestyles contribute to breakdown in society	NDP (-0.19)	Liberal (-0.00)	Bloc (+0.01)	PC (+0.06)	Reform (+0.39)	+0.09	0.58
How do you feel about gays and lesbians	NDP (-0.24)	PC (-0.00)	Bloc (+0.01)	Liberal (+0.02)	Reform (+0.21)	+0.04	0.45
Homosexual couples allowed to legally marry	NDP (-0.14)	Bloc (-0.02)	PC (+0.24)	Liberal (+0.25)	Reform (+0.50)	+0.23	0.64
Abortion : choice	Bloc (-0.71)	NDP (-0.70)	PC (-0.57)	Liberal (-0.47)	Reform (-0.39)	-0.50	0.32

Women						Mean	Range
Women should stay at home with children	Bloc (-0.30)	NDP (-0.24)	Liberal (-0.14)	PC (-0.14)	Reform (+0.19)	-0.10	0.49
How much should be done for women	Bloc (-0.61)	NDP (-0.52)	PC (-0.43)	Liberal (-0.39)	Reform (-0.18)	-0.39	0.43
How do you feel about feminists	NDP (-0.12)	Bloc (-0.02)	Liberal (+0.09)	PC (+0.15)	Reform (+0.24)	+0.12	0.36
Should lay off women whose husbands have jobs	NDP (-0.69)	Bloc (-0.65)	PC (-0.65)	Liberal (-0.64)	Reform (-0.50)	-0.62	0.19
Difficult for women to get jobs when equal abilities	NDP (-0.28)	Bloc (-0.16)	PC (-0.15)	Liberal (-0.12)	Reform (+0.08)	-0.13	0.36
More women in Parliament to protect women's interests	NDP (-0.25)	Bloc (-0.16)	PC (-0.13)	Liberal (-0.12)	Reform (+0.07)	-0.09	0.32
Crime						Mean	Range
Importance : fighting crime	NDP (+0.47)	Bloc (+0.48)	PC (+0.62)	Liberal (+0.64)	Reform (+0.68)	+0.63	0.21
Deal with young offenders of violent crime	NDP (-0.17)	Bloc (-0.12)	PC (+0.17)	Liberal (+0.31)	Reform (+0.58)	+0.25	0.75
Capital punishment is never justified	NDP (-0.08)	Bloc (+0.02)	Liberal (+0.15)	PC (+0.25)	Reform (+0.50)	+0.20	0.58
Feel about the police	Bloc (+0.17)	NDP (+0.33)	Liberal (+0.42)	PC (+0.42)	Reform (+0.45)	+0.37	0.28
Only the military and the police allowed to have guns	Liberal (-0.31)	Bloc (-0.24)	NDP (-0.20)	PC (-0.08)	Reform (+0.21)	-0.12	0.50
Immigrants						Mean	Range
Canada should admit more immigrants	NDP (+0.20)	Liberal (+0.33)	PC (+0.35)	Bloc (+0.40)	Reform (+0.49)	+0.39	0.29
Should look after Canadians born here first	NDP (-0.19)	Liberal (-0.02)	PC (+0.05)	Bloc (+0.17)	Reform (+0.18)	+0.05	0.37
Too many recent immigrants do not want to fit	NDP (-0.10)	Liberal (+0.14)	PC (+0.24)	Bloc (+0.34)	Reform (+0.39)	+0.23	0.49
Immigrants make an important contribution	NDP (-0.50)	Liberal (-0.34)	PC (-0.34)	Reform (-0.26)	Bloc (-0.11)	-0.30	0.39
Quebec (outside Quebec only)						Mean	Range
Quebec be recognized as distinct society	NDP (-0.21)	Liberal (-0.07)	PC (-0.07)	Reform (+0.42)		+0.08	0.63
How do you feel about Quebec	NDP (-0.23)	Liberal (-0.19)	PC (-0.17)	Reform (+0.04)		-0.09	0.27
Gone too far pushing bilingualism	NDP (-0.06)	Liberal (+0.21)	PC (+0.32)	Reform (+0.69)		+0.33	0.75
Quebec has the right to separate	NDP (+0.52)	Reform (+0.62)	Liberal (+0.62)	PC (+0.66)		+0.59	0.14

Variables have been coded on a scale from -1 to +1, where -1 corresponds to a leftist orientation and +1 indicates a rightist perspective.

All mean differences are significant at the .01 level or higher, except for the final Quebec issue (Quebec has the right to separate).

Table 2. Conservative-Liberal and Conservative-Reform Differences Compared

	Conservative-Liberal Difference	Conservative-Reform Difference
Business	+0.03	+0.05
Unions	+0.08	+0.04
Social Programmes	+0.03	-0.08
U.S. and International Trade	+0.02	+0.01
Traditionalism	-0.01	-0.23
Women	-0.01	-0.21
Crime	+0.03	-0.21
Immigrants	+0.05	-0.12
Quebec (outside Quebec only)	+0.04	-0.26

Note: The column entries are the average differences in the mean scores of the respective parties on each dimension. Positive differences indicate that Conservative supporters were to the right of the other party's supporters on average, while negative differences indicate that they were to the left.

Appendix: Description of Variables

Variables have been coded on a scale from -1 to +1, where -1 corresponds to a leftist orientation and +1 indicates a rightist perspective. The numbers in parentheses indicate the value given to categories (unless otherwise specified). The codes in square brackets correspond to the variable names in the original data file.

BUSINESS:

+ How much do you think should be done for business: much more (1), somewhat more (0.5), about the same as now (0), somewhat less (-0.5), or much less (-1)? [pese2]

+ How do you feel about big business? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. [pesf1]. The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where 1 indicates the respondent really likes big business and -1 indicates she really dislikes them.

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (-1), agree (-0.5), disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1): The profits Canadian banks are making these days are a scandal. [mbsd9]

+ Do you strongly agree (1), somewhat agree (0.5), somewhat disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1) with the following statement: When businesses make a lot of money, everyone benefits, including the poor. [pese20]

UNIONS:

+ How much power do you think unions should have: much more (-1), somewhat more (-0.5), about the same as now (0), somewhat less (0.5), or much less (1)? [pese3]

+ How do you feel about unions? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. [pesf12] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where -1 indicates the respondent really likes unions and 1 indicates she really dislikes them.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS:

+ How important are the following issues to you personally in this election: very important (-1), somewhat important (0), not very important (1)? Protecting social programs [cpsa2f].

+ If you had to make cuts, would you cut spending in the following areas a lot (1), some (0), or not at all (-1)? Welfare? [pese6b]

+ If you had to make cuts, would you cut spending in the following areas a lot (1), some (0), or not at all (-1)? Health Care? [pese6d]

+ If you had to make cuts, would you cut spending in the following areas a lot (1), some (0), or not at all (-1)? Unemployment Insurance? [pese6e]

+ If you had to make cuts, would you cut spending in the following areas a lot (1), some (0), or not at all (-1)? Education? [pese6f]

+ How do you feel about people on welfare? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. [pesf5] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where -1 indicates the respondent really likes people on welfare and 1 indicates she really dislikes them.

THE UNITED STATES and INTERNATIONAL TRADE:

+ Do you think Canada's ties with the United States should be much closer (1), somewhat closer (0.5), about the same as now (0), more distant (-0.5), or much more distant (-1)? [pese4]

+ How do you feel about the United States? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike the U.S. and 100 means you really like the U.S. [pesf13] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where 1 indicates the respondent really likes the U.S. and -1 indicates she really dislikes the U.S.

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): International trade creates more jobs in Canada than it destroys. [mbsd11]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): Overall, free trade with the U.S. has been good for the Canadian economy? [mbsg10]

TRADITIONALISM:

+ Do you strongly agree (1), somewhat agree (0.5), somewhat disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1) with the following statement: Only people who are married should be having children. [cpsf2]

+ Do you strongly agree (1), somewhat agree (0.5), somewhat disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1) with the following statement: Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children. [cpsf3]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): When it comes to caring for babies and small children, men by nature are less patient and giving than women. [mbsg5]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family values. [mbsa9]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): Newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society. [mbsa7]

+ How do you feel about gays and lesbians? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. [pesf10] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where -1 indicates the respondent really likes gays and lesbians and 1 indicates she really dislikes them.

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (-1), agree (-0.5), disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1): Homosexual couples should be allowed to be legally married. [mbsg3]

+ Now we would like to get your views on abortion. Of the following three positions, which is closest to your own opinion: abortion should never be permitted (1), should be permitted only after need has been established by a doctor (0), should be a matter of the woman's personal choice (-1)? [pese5a]

WOMEN:

+ Do you strongly agree (1), somewhat agree (0.5), somewhat disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1) with the following statement: Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children. [cpsf3]

+ How much do you think should be done for women: much more (-1), somewhat more (-0.5), about the same as now (0), somewhat less (0.5) or much less (1)? [pese1]

+ How do you feel about feminists? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. [pesf3] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where -1 indicates the respondent really likes feminists and 1 indicates she really dislikes them.

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): If a company has to lay off some of its employees, the first workers to be laid off should be women whose husbands have jobs. [mbsa3]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (-1), agree (-0.5), disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1): Discrimination makes it extremely difficult for women to get jobs equal

to their abilities. [mbsa5]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (-1), agree (-0.5), disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1): The best way to protect women's interests is to have more women in Parliament. [mbsd8]

CRIME:

+ How important are the following issues to you personally in this election: very important (1), somewhat important (0), or not very important (-1)? Fighting crime. [cpsa2g]

+ Which is the best way to deal with young offenders who commit violent crime: give them tougher sentences (1), spend more on rehabilitating them (-1), both (0), depends (0), or corporal punishment (1)? [cpsj21]

+ Do you strongly agree (-1), somewhat agree (-0.5), somewhat disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1) with the following statement: Capital punishment is never justified, no matter what the crime? [pese13]

+ How do you feel about the police? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. [pesf7] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where 1 indicates the respondent really likes the police and -1 indicates she really dislikes them.

+ Do you strongly agree (-1), somewhat agree (-0.5), somewhat disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1) with the following statement: Only police officers and the military should be allowed to have guns? [pese12]

IMMIGRANTS:

+ Do you think Canada should admit more immigrants (-1), fewer immigrants (1) or about the same as now (0)? [cpsj18]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): We should look after Canadians born in this country first and others second. [mbsa11]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): Too many recent immigrants just don't want to fit into Canadian society. [mbsg4]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (-1), agree (-0.5), disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1): Immigrants make an important contribution to this country. [mbsd12]

QUEBEC: [only outside Quebec]

+ Should Quebec be recognized as a distinct society? Yes, no, or depends? [cpsj3] Would you change your mind if this keeps Quebec in Canada? Yes, no, or depends? [cpsj3c] If the respondent said “yes” to the first question, the variable equals -1. If the respondent said “depends” to the first question or said “no” to the first question and “yes” or “depends” to the second, the variable equals 0. If the respondent said “no” to both questions, the variable equals 1.

+ How do you feel about Quebec? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike Quebec and 100 means you really like Quebec. [pesf12] The scale was transformed to -1 to 1, where -1 indicates the respondent really likes Quebec and 1 indicates she really dislikes Quebec.

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (1), agree (0.5), disagree (-0.5), or strongly disagree (-1): We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in Canada. [mbsd7]

+ For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree (-1), agree (-0.5), disagree (0.5), or strongly disagree (1): Quebec has the right to separate no matter what the rest of Canada says. [mbsg7]

Endnotes

¹The Canadian Election Study consists of a three-wave survey conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University under our direction. The study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The data may be obtained from: www.isr.yorku.ca/ISR. During the campaign, 3,949 eligible voters were interviewed, of whom 3,170 were re-interviewed after the election and 1,727 returned a mailback questionnaire. The campaign response rate was 59 percent. For further information on the study, see Northrup (1998).

²For the counter-thesis that Canada's political parties are ideologically distinct, see, for example, Horowitz (1966) and Campbell and Christian (1996).

³For a discussion of the distinction between compositional differences and differences in the effects of issues and other factors on vote choice, see Gidengil et al. (1999).

⁴ The Reform Party membership voted on March 25, 2000 to reconstitute as the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance.

⁵ For an analysis of the relationship between the NDP and the old and new left in Canada, see Butovsky (1999).