Affective Polarization in the Canadian Party System 1988-2015

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Abstract

This paper brings three decades of broadly consistent survey data on survey respondents' feelings about the parties as evidence of affective polarization. It also presents evidence about policy differences among the parties and makes an explicit link between elite and mass data with multi-level modelling. The paper shows that affective polarization is real and also demonstrates its connection to the ideological landscape. But it also shows that conceptual categories originating in the US must be adapted to Canada's multi-party system and to the continuing contrasts between Quebec and the rest of Canada. It suggests that accounts of Canada's 20th century party system may not apply to the 21st century.

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Are Canadian parties and voters going down the same road as their US counterparts? Polarization seems like a regular media trope and a handful of academic studies suggests that the media are on to something. Party positions are increasingly irreconcilable and have acquired a moralistic tone. Voters may be responding in kind. Supporters of a given party are coming to see their rivals less as competitors and more as denizens of non-overlapping moral universes. To the extent that this is true, the implications are worrisome. But the evidence is fragmentary and more suggestive than definitive.

This paper brings three decades of broadly consistent survey data on survey respondents' feelings about the parties to bear on the question. It also presents evidence about policy differences among the parties and makes an explicit link between elite and mass data. The paper shows that affective polarization is real and also demonstrates its connection to the ideological landscape. But it also shows that conceptual categories originating in the US must be adapted to Canada's multi-party system and to the continuing contrasts between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Background

Scholarly evidence on polarization among Canadian parties and voters is accumulating. In the realm of affect, Cochrane (2014, Figure 8.4) argues that partisans' feelings about parties other their own have become consistently more negative. The media have also picked up the scent. For instance, *Macleans* magazine sees antipathy to the other side on both the right[1] and the left.[2] Finger pointing at the other side mostly reinforces the picture. From the centre-left, Justin Trudeau blames polarizing rhetoric on the Conservatives.[3] Conservatives respond in kind and see the media as imposing an American lens on the Canadian case.[4] The notion receives backhanded support by claims that it does not apply to particular domains, the environment for example.[5]

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[1] https://www.macleans.ca/politics/one-in-four-canadians-hate-their-political-opponents/

[2] https://www.macleans.ca/politics/this-is-whats-wrong-with-canadas-left/

[3] https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/08/20/world/politics-diplomacy-world/2019-canada-election-will-fight-polarization-trudeau-warns/#.XOVUadP0l0s

[4] In this case, Chris Alexander: https://thetyee.ca/News/2017/09/11/Canadian-Media-Polarization/ .

[5] https://theconversation.com/busting-the-myth-that-canadians-are-polarized-on-climate-and-immigration-117240

If so, then Canada is becoming more like the US, and the portents are troubling. In the US, Democrats and Republicans just do not like each other, and the affective gap has only widened (Iyengar et al. 2012). Where public expressions of feeling toward ethnic and religious groups are constrained by considerations of social desirability, no such restraint operates for disdain toward political parties. In this realm, anything goes:

> Unlike race, gender, and other social divides where group-related attitudes and behaviors are constrained by social norms … there are no corresponding pressures to temper disapproval of political opponents. If anything, the rhetoric and actions of political leaders demonstrate that hostility directed at the opposition is acceptable, even appropriate. Partisans therefore feel free to express animus and engage in discriminatory behavior toward opposing partisans. (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, 1)

Requiring respondents to invest in partisan judgment exacerbates rather than attenuates the level of affective polarization (*Ibid.*, 6).[6] Partisan bias is greater than racial or religious bias (Iyengar et al. 2012, Figure 3). And it extends beyond the world of public policy to opinions about, for example, inter-party marriage (*Ibid.*, Figure 4).[7]

But it is further claimed that all this has little to do with ideology. The widening of the gap between partisans finds no parallel in the gaps between self-described liberals and conservatives (*Ibid.*, Figure 2; Kinder and Kalmoe, Figure 5.3).[8] In short, increasing mutual disdain between party groups has little to do with ideas—with ideas inside voters' heads, that is. The evidence demonstrates the continuing validity of Converse's (1964) bleak picture of belief systems in mass publics. It seems to contradict Jost's (1996, 667) claim that "ideology is a 'natural' part of our psychological functioning and will always be present in one form or another" and Sniderman's and Stiglitz' (2012) argument that parties offer a reputational premium so far as their policies differ in consistent ways.

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[6] This claim is based on comparison of partisan bias between feeling thermometers and the cognitively more demanding Implicit Association Test (IAT).

[7] The suggestion that Democratic and Republican supporters are warring camps is probably exaggerated. Druckman and Levendusky (2019) present compelling experimental evidence that the focus is on elites. This includes evidence about social distance, as revealed by the marriage questions.

[8] The gap between and in- and out-group sentiment for liberals and conservatives is not trivial but is about 10 points smaller than for party groups and exhibits no trend. See also Mason (2016).

Instead, for the majority of survey respondents feelings derive not from the marketplace of ideas but from group affiliations:

> Public opinion arises ... primarily from the attachments and antipathies of group life. (Kinder and Kalmoe 2017, p.127)

Politically critical differences turn on inequality between sharply defined categorical groups and are amplified by the psychology of in-group outgroup cognition and affect.[9]

And yet for all this emphasis on voters' cognitive limitations, ideology lurks in the shadows. Consistency between respondents' party identification and their ideological self-description has increased dramatically (*Ibid.*, Fig 5.4). The pattern is one of sorting (Levendusky 2009): although the overall dispersion of Americans' policy or ideological orientations has not increased much, the issue and ideological overlap between Democrats and Republicans has shrunk. Increased consistency between party and ideology ups the affective stakes:

> [i]f political identity is a substantial driver of ingroup bias, activism, and anger, why would these things increase over time? ... the answer has largely to do with changes in the alignment of partisan and ideological identities over time. Sorting has brought our ideological and partisan identities into agreement, and this new alignment has increased the strength of those identities (Mason 2017, 130)

The US electorate has seen a net reduction of "cross-pressure,"[10] as partisan and ideological orientations are less and less likely to pull in opposite directions (Brader et al. (2014).

Back in Canada, Cochrane (2014) makes a similar case. He notes that Liberal and Conservative platforms have diverged, mostly as the Conservatives have pulled to the right (*Ibid.*, Figures 8.1 and 8.2; See also Cochrane 2010 and Johnston 2017, Figure 4.1). Voters, especially the "near elites," see the divergence (Cochrane 2014, Figure 8.3) and in various policy domains voters are sorting themselves accordingly (*Ibid.*, Figure 8.5; Kevins and Soroka 2018). Critical to the change was the emergence of Reform in the 1990s and its reverse takeover of the Conservative label. Self-reports of left-right location among party supporters have also diverged (Johnston 2014). Convergence between the Liberals and the NDP (and the NDP's own temporary breakthrough in 2011), combined with the

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[9] This is also the argument in Achen and Bartels (2016).

[10] The term originates with Lazarsfeld et al. (1948).

Conservatives' pull to the right means that the centre is emptying out (Cochrane 2014, p. 157).

Studies that are not specifically focused on polarization or on ideology point in the same direction. Caruana et al. (2015 show that in Canadians' response to the party system plenty of negative affect is in play. When scanning the pattern for negativity, McGregor et al. (2015) find that the driving force is not so much electoral competitiveness as ideological distance.

In sum, the media are not just making this up. Something is clearly going on. To the extent that it is real and substantial, it has implications for the policy process. In the US case, increasing divergence between Democratic and Republican elites, which both feeds and feeds on the sorting of their respective mass bases, has flattened Congressional voting patterns onto a single dimension. The reduces the scope for coalitional bargaining and widens the so-called gridlock interval (McCarty et al. 2006).[11] Hetherington and Rudolph (2015) show how polarization has diminished inter-party trust. Trust is a key to vote-trading, which commonly requires that one side wait for the other side to deliver on the trade. Distrust forces compromises into the immediate moment, which makes them altogether less likely. Congressional productivity is in significant decline even as contestation over the very rules of the game has sharpened.

But is Canada there yet? The Canadian evidence to date still mainly comprises disconnected observations. In the most comprehensive account (Cochrane 2014) the connections are gestural. He observes, for instance, that antipathy between party identification groups has grown. But the sharpest contrasts are between the 1990s and before, just when the Canadian Election Studies moved to the telephone[12] and stabilized (mostly, see below) the measure of affect. The shift could be a measurement artifact. He notes the correspondence between this affective widening and the increasing ideological

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[11] The concept of the gridlock interval originates with Krehbiel (1998), and refers to the ideological distance bracketed by the threshold for breaking a filibuster in the Senate and the 2/3rds majorities required to override a Presidential veto. It can in principle be applied to any supermajoritarian system, as for example by Crombez and Hix (2015) to the European Union and by Raddatz (2017) to the old province of Canada, 1841-67. If changes to the Canadian Senate stick or evolve further, the concept may come into play in 21st-century Canada.

[12] In 2015, the Canadian Election Study added on online component, which is present in my estimations for that year. On correspondences between the telephone and online components, see Breton et al. (2017).

gaps among the parties. No direct link between party policy and polarized affect is identified. The country is presented as a single electoral entity, when it is arguably (at least) two, Quebec and the rest of Canada (Johnston 2017).

In the rest of this paper, I delve further into description of the affective domain, focussing on the period of common measurement, 1988 to the present. I present Quebec and the rest separately, with an eye both to differences and possible convergence. Finally, I employ multi-level modelling to link voters to the party system.

Affective polarization: the landscape

As a major role for this paper is descriptive inference, substance and method proceed in parallel. The indicator of partisan affect is the so-called feeling thermometer, which ranges from 0 to 100 with 50 supposedly the point of indifference.[13] Thermometer ratings are very good predictors of the vote, not just casual expressions of sentiment.[14]

In this section, I show three aspects of possible polarization: the overall dispersion of feelings for each party; the shape of each party's affective distribution; and the extent to which opinion is contingent on party identification. All comparisons proceed in parallel between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

The dispersion of party ratings

Feelings about parties seem to have become more polarized, although the pattern is not clear for all parties nor for the entire period. The first indicator is the standard deviation for feeling thermometers, party by party. This is the most straightforward representation of dispersion in a distribution.[15] The evidence is in Figure 1. The biggest single increase for most parties, both inside and outside Quebec, seems to have occurred in 1997. It is difficult, however, to come up with a substantive reason for this timing. Perhaps there was some compounding of the partisan ill-feeling in the aftermath of the electoral

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[13] As Table A1 shows, the word thermometer has not been used in the CES since 1988. The current reference instead is to a "scale/échelle," but otherwise ascribing the same meanings to scale values. There is a more significant wording shift in 1997 that may account for an oddity in Figure 1. See below.

[14] A logistic regression in a Canadian Election Study multi-year merged file of the Liberal vote, 1988-2015, on thermometer ratings for Liberals, Conservatives, and the NDP yields correct predictions 78 percent of the time. The percentage for the Conservatives is 82 percent and for the NDP, 85 percent.

[15] For an extended discussion of alternative indicators, see Nuesser et al. (2016).

earthquake of 1993. The biggest polarization gain was experienced by the Liberals, and this may reflect the mere fact that they were now the government. Their closest rival in polarization gains was Reform, and here the gains may reflect the fact that Reform was now a known quantity, in contrast to 1993 (Jenkins 2002).[16] But all parties underwent some apparent polarization, even the Conservatives and the NDP, both of which were rather hapless at this point. The real story is probably one of measurement, as 1997 signals a change in wording. In 1988 and 1993, the query refers to the spans running from 0 to 50 and from 50 to 100. Starting in 1997, the wording focus shifts to extreme values, 0 and 100.[17]

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In any case, 1997 is only a small part of the story. And the action appears mostly on the political right. The mere appearance of Reform and the Bloc Québécois increased polarization within their respective regions, as each new party evoked markedly more differentiated response than any of its rivals. The merger of Reform and the Progressive Conservatives incorporated this polarization into opinion on the new Conservative party. Outside Quebec, a sharp discontinuity appears between 2000 and 2004, and gains in Conservative dispersion continue right down to 2015. In Quebec, the break is in 2008. For the Liberals and NDP, no or only tiny increases appear after 1997. Indeed, the Liberals appear to have become less of a pole of disagreement.

Patterns of liking and disliking

Figure 2 tells a similar story from a different angle. Here the images are kernel density plots—essentially, smoothed histograms—by year and party. In 1988, opinion on each party was symmetric and unimodal. Over succeeding elections, opinion becomes less symmetric, as the leftmost tail—the zone of disapproval—lifts. That is, the biggest growth is in the numbers who really dislike at least one party. For some parties the distribution in later years verges on bimodal. This is especially true in Quebec, where both Conservatives and the Bloc evoke highly polarized response. For the Conservatives this pattern also holds outside Quebec.

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[16] For the record I use "Reform" to cover both the party of that name and its de facto equivalent in 2000, the Alliance. Reform seems to be the term of art that lives on to describe the total electoral phenomenon.

[17] Exact wordings can be found in Table A1. The shift of emphasis to end points produced a slight flattening in the middle of cumulative vote probability distributions (analyses not reported in this paper).

Moderation by party identification

This brings us to party identification as a moderator of affect, in Figure 3. The figure plots trends in mean ratings of each party contingent on party identification. Each box represents a party as an object of evaluation, with the parties ordered from left to right.[18] Within each box is a smoothed plot with its associated 95-percent confidence interval for each party identification group. Smoothing is by local polynomial fitting.[19]

The rest-of-Canada story in Figure 3 would be familiar to a student of US politics, except for its multi-party nature. The presence of the NDP means that in one sense the Canadian system was already as polarized in 1988 as the US one became only in the last decade. Conservatives' feelings about the NDP and New Democrats' feelings about the Conservative party were as negative then as Democrats' and Republicans' feelings about each other had become by 2008 (Iyengar et al. 2008, Figure 1). New Democrats' opinion about Conservatives appears to have worsened slightly.

Where differences have sharpened most consequentially, however, is between Liberals and Conservatives. In this Reform was a transitional element: Liberals' (and New Democrats') opinion of Reformers was especially negative. For the Conservative party as rebranded in 2003, feelings converged on the pre-existing level for Reform sentiment. Each identification group repelled the other party, although the dynamics are especially striking for the Conservatives. Not only do identifiers with the new Conservative party like their own party more than before, they have pushed the Liberals down to virtual parity with the NDP. Liberals, for their part, now like the NDP much more than they do the Conservatives, where before 2000 the Liberals were indifferent between these parties.

In Quebec, as mentioned, the mere appearance of the Bloc was a polarizing force. The Bloc has persisted as an object of negation, indeed has become only more so. But its positioning relative to other parties has shifted. From the beginning the Liberals placed the Bloc last and have not slackened in their negativity. Early on, Conservatives' feelings for the Bloc wre not much more negative than their feelings for the Liberals; this reflects

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[18] The basis of the ordering is average positioning in CMP left-right data (Volkens et al. 2018). See below for more details on this paper's rendering of the CMP data.

[19] The plots are smoothed so as to highlight the trends for each party. For detailed year-specific plots of the same data see Figure A1.

the fact that Quebec Conservatives were historically more pro-Quebec than Quebec Liberals were; for Quebeckers, the Liberals were the party of Canada (Johnston 2017, Chapter 4). In the 21st century, in contrast, Quebec Conservatives came to dislike the Bloc quite as much as Liberals have all along. Now, only NDP identifiers place the Bloc anywhere other than last. Through all this the National Question is apparent, although with one major shift in its shape: Quebec Conservatives are no longer drawn to nationalist positions, less tempted to play the francophone/francophobe ends against the middle (*Ibid.*).

Otherwise, the structure of party feeling in Quebec is bending toward that in the rest of the country. In 1988, Liberals' opinion on the NDP was strikingly negative, almost as negative as for the Bloc. After 2000, however, Quebec Liberals' feelings about the NDP warmed dramatically even as their feelings for the Conservatives cooled modestly. New Democrats, who in 1988 were indifferent between Liberals and Conservatives, slowly and modestly upgraded the Liberals. For their part, Liberals have come to see the NDP as their clear second choice. Even Blocistes are moving toward the rest-of-Canada pattern: they now rank the NDP clearly second and the Conservatives, clearly last.

Ideological polarization: the landscape

The reordering of the affective landscape does seem to follow reordering of the ideological landscape, as shown in Figure 4. This figure tracks the left-right positions of the relevant parties. The underlying data are from the Campaign Manifesto Project, or CMP (Volkens et al 2018). The measure is the CMP summary left-right scale, which aggregates party platform commitments across the broad range of policies that populate our conventional understanding of the ideological stakes.[20] As differences among individual years contain considerable noise,[21] the indicator in the figure is a moving average of two consecutive

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[20] Cochrane (2014) makes a strong case that the aggregation offered by the CMP (and used in this paper) does not quite correspond to the real structure of left and right. I was not able to restructure the index on his suggested lines, however.

[21] Lowe et al. (2011) are eloquent on the noise in the measure. In their view, the noise does not originate in measurement error so much as in the way manifestos are written. They conjecture that each manifesto is written by a quasi-random subset of persons drawn from the larger pool of potential writers. The more statements written about an issue, the more representative of the full range of opinion and commitment in the party and the less noisy the product should be. From this they derive confidence intervals, and these suggest that parties' real positions vary less from year to year than their actual platforms suggest. As an example for the Canadian case, see Johnston (2017, Figure 4.1).

election years, 1984-88 to 2011-15. Reform appears only twice and the Bloc series does not start until 1997.

In one sense, polarization in manifestos is not that dramatic, not since the 1980s at least. The Conservative party has pulled to the right, but much of that movement since 2000 was a "course correction" relative to the 1990s. The party was already clearly to the right in the 1980s but in its wilderness years drifted toward the centre. In those years the system's right flank was occupied by Reform. After 2000, with the reincorporation of Reform, the Conservative party shifted back to the right and after 2010 reached an historical extreme.

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

In contrast, neither the NDP nor the Bloc contributed to polarization in a left-right sense. Rather, the NDP exhibited a largely unbroken movement toward the centre.[22] On this dimension, the Bloc came in pretty close to the centre. Its polarizing force was on a second dimension, the National Question.

The critical fact in Figure 4 is that, relationally speaking, the big parties emptied out the *de facto* centre. Although the Liberals exhibit, in an absolute sense, no net long-term shift, movement of the other parties leaves the Liberals now close to the NDP.[23] Considering that over most of this period, the Liberal vote considerably outweighed the NDP vote, ideological polarization of the system as a whole may be said to have increased. (The 2011 election does not alter this story; it merely switched the relative sizes of the Liberals and NDP with only modest impact on system-level polarization.)

Ideological sources of affective polarization

The impressions created by affective shifts in Figure 3 and ideological ones in Figure 4 are strikingly similar. This section tests if they can be connected explicitly through multi-level modelling. To get there I first have to make some design choices.

Cochrane (2014) makes a similar argument. Taking a moving average seems like a simple approach to the problem.

[22] In truth, the big polarization shifts occurred before the period captured in this paper. The Conservative move to the right began in the 1970s, even as the Liberals and NDP remained in place. Before the 1970s the Liberal and Conservative parties were essentially indistinguishable.

[23] Indeed, their CMP positioning for 2015 (masked by the smoothing) is consistent with the popular perception that the Liberals outflanked the NDP.

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First, some partitions and exclusions are required. All estimations must be partitioned between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Some parties must be excluded but differently between Quebec and the rest. Although Reform stands out as a critical player in pushing the system to the right, its hour upon the stage was too short to give it role in estimations. In Quebec, the NDP was too weak over most of this period to merit attention. Instead its place is taken by the Bloc. Each estimation in this section has affect for one party as its dependent variable.

Party positions are specific to each year but, obviously, are common to all respondents for that year. The relationship is clearly hierarchical and recursive, such that multi-level modelling is an appropriate approach. At least it is in principle. It is a concern that we have only nine observations per party at the election-year level. In such a situation, confidence intervals estimated by maximum likelihood tend to be underestimated and point estimates can be biased away from zero (Stegmueller 2012). An alternative is to use Bayesian estimation, a more efficient way of mobilizing sparse information. The downside of resorting to the Bayesian strategy is securing graphical output that speaks to my substantive interest. Accordingly, all estimates in this paper are by maximum likelihood but all have been verified for the correspondence to Bayesian quantities. Fortunately, for each estimation the correspondences are close, not least for comparison of ML confidence intervals with Bayesian credible distributions. In the estimations, intercepts are allowed to vary as random effects, but slopes are not.

What then should appear at the level of the election year? In principle, the locations of all parties could be relevant to estimations for each. To Liberal evaluation, for example, relative distances between that party and both the Conservatives and the NDP may be relevant. But entering positions as distances makes for very convoluted interpretation. Just entering absolute positions for all parties may focus on the wrong quantity. Instead, the simplest—and still coherent—approach is to focus on the left-right location of the party of the dependent variable but make affective response contingent on respondents' party identification. Given the party ordering in Figure 4, the following are the contingent implications:

- For feeling toward the Conservative party, Conservative identifiers should like the party more, the further to the right its location. The opposite should be true for other identifiers.
- For feeling toward the NDP, NDP identifiers should like the party more the further to the left is its location. The opposite should be true for other identifiers.
- For feelings toward the Liberals and the Bloc, Conservatives should like each party the further to the right it is. New Democrats should like it the further to the left it is.

- The expectation for Liberal and Bloc identifiers' affect toward their own parties is indeterminate.

Given the prominence of the National Question in Quebec, these patterns should be sharper in the rest of Canada than in Quebec.

As an account that aims to go beyond description, the strategy is pretty minimal. One distribution that takes a certain temporal form is tied to another one that has a similar temporal form. This is not deeply troubling as the correspondence hardly seems accidental. But the connection would be more plausible as a causal one if the relationship is also moderated by a factor that is related to the reception of political messages. One such factor is the intensity of party identification. If the general intuition is that elite policy polarization drives the polarization of mass feeling, this must happen through communications channels. Given the ideational content of policy differences, the channels should be formal ones, print media especially. Attentiveness to media on political questions is powerfully moderated by partisanship. The most powerful motive for such attention is to seek reinforcement of predispositions. We should expect, then, that the more intense a person's partisanship the more responsive he or she should be to signals about policy. This expectation is consistent with logic employed by Cochrane (2014, Figure 8.3) where he talks about "near elites." Hence:

- Any clearly expected effect on the previous paragraph's list should have its impact amplified by the intensity of partisanship.

Average Effects

Figures 5 and 6 give the results for all partisans in the rest of Canada and Quebec, respectively. The top row in each figure depicts marginal effects, the quantities to which the observable implications just outlined apply. Marginal effects do not signify how much the variable matters in the history of the party system, however. A unit effect may be great but not matter much if the positions actually taken by the party vary by only a small amount. So, each figure also presents modelled values for the actual range spanned by each party's platforms.

For *Canada outside Quebec* in Figure 5, the patterns are broadly but not perfectly consistent with expectations. Conservative identifiers are indifferent to the NDP's location. As we know from Figure 3, they just do not like that party, and now it appears they are unpersuaded by its move toward the centre. For the NDP, Liberal identifiers like the NDP more the further right it is. In ideological space rightward movement brings the NDP closer to the Liberal camp. When aggregated, impact from the NDP's rightward shift on Liberal identifiers' feelings is critically important. Liberals shift from being quite

hostile to the NDP to being clearly on the positive side of the ledger. Curiously, the same relationship holds, although more weakly, for NDP partisans. If this relationship is real, it implies that NDP identifiers situate themselves, on average, to the right of their party.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Patterns are clearest, however, for the Conservative party. Conservative identifiers are indifferent to the position of their own party. New Democrats and Liberals, in contrast both react negatively to the Conservative party's rightward shift. For Liberals, this moves them from mere indifference to outright hostility. For New Democrats, the hostility is only deepened but the scale of the shift is roughly the same as for Liberals.

For feeling toward the Liberals, there is little to say. Despite the fact that contrasting expectations seemed reasonable for NDP and Conservative identifiers, all identification groups have a positive coefficient on rightward movement but none of these coefficients plausibly differs from zero.

For *Quebec* in Figure 6, the pattern is consistent with that in the rest of the country in one key particular: Blocistes react negatively to rightward movement by the Conservatives. The policy range spanned by the Conservative platforms is considerable, and movement across the full range knocks about 10 points off the Blocistes approval scale. For other identification groups, including Conservatives themselves, the reaction seems to be basically indifference.

[FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

Movement by the Bloc provokes a reaction from each identification group, but the reaction seems perverse. Rightward movement by the Bloc annoys each group. This is mildly surprising for Blocistes themselves, but the strongest negative reaction is from Conservatives. But then the range spanned by the Bloc is not great, and by no construction could that party be said to have made a net shift over its lifespan.

Moderation by partisan intensity

Figure 7 displays the impact of partisan intensity on receptiveness to the ideological message. The two most telling images from Figures 5 and 6 are tested for the moderating impact of partisan intensity. These are for feeling toward the NDP and the Conservative party in Canada outside Quebec.

[FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE]

For the NDP the results are weak and to the extent anything serious is going on, perverse. The basic Liberal response to NDP positioning is moderated consistently with expectation: strong Liberals respond more positively to NDP rightward movement than

do weak ones. But differences among Liberal identifiers are weak, indeed officially nonexistent. Conservatives, who altogether are lukewarm to rightward shifts by the NDP, are quite differentiated by partisan intensity. But they are differentiated in the "wrong" way: it is weak identifiers who are most moved by NDP shifts. The actual direction makes sense, but not the differential susceptibility of weak partisans.

For the Conservatives, in contrast, the patterns make complete sense. Recall that in Figure 5, the action is all on the NDP and Liberal side and amounts to repulsion of the Conservative party in function of its shift to the right. For both parties, partisan intensity amplifies the impact of the signal. The difference in impact between weak and strong partisans is striking. Even on the Conservative side, the pattern is highly suggestive: the amplification here is in the positive direction, as it should be. But at no level of intensity is the coefficient significantly different from zero.

Discussion and Conclusions

Recapitulation

Affective polarization in the Canadian party system has evolved along lines quite like those in the US system. Feelings about all parties exhibit more variance than they did in the 1980s. Although some of this apparent polarization is probably a measurement artifact, most of it is not. The simple addition of Reform and the Bloc Québecois in 1993 added to the turmoil. The story for the long run is polarization in feeling toward the Conservatives.

This expansion has not simply increased the overall dispersion of sentiment. It has transformed a world of symmetric evaluation with the one clear mode roughly at the point of indifference into a skewed world in which the proportion who despise any given party outnumbers the proportion who are enthusiasts. This transformation is especially dramatic for the Conservatives for whom the mode at the negative end of the spectrum rivals that on the positive side. This is true both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. In Quebec, this also describes feeling toward the Bloc Québécois.

Not surprisingly, feeling toward a party is powerfully affected by respondents' party identification. It should also not be surprising—although gazing upon the pattern still has a certain shock value—that in one sense the Canadian system was already as affectively polarized in 1988 as the US system only became two decades later. The reason for this is the long-standing presence of the NDP. As a party of the social democratic left it presented a challenge and a goad to a capitalist social order that, arguably, the Democratic party in the US never has. It is also useful to bear in mind that the NDP received 20 percent of the 1998 federal vote and that as of 1991 governed provinces

comprising a majority of the country's population. So although it is a "third" party it is hardly a trivial one.

The dynamic stories, however, lie elsewhere on the landscape. One involves antipathy between the Conservatives and all others. Feelings about the Conservatives dropped among both Liberals and New Democrats, even as Conservatives grew fonder of their own party. Conservatives, for their part, went from being almost indulgent toward the Liberal party to disliking it as much as they do the NDP. This is a shift fully comparable to the change in the affective gap between US Democrats and Republicans.

The other dynamic story is one of convergence in one sense but divergence in another. New Democrats may have grown fonder of Liberals; certainly they have not become any less so. Liberals have clearly become fonder of the NDP. The widening of the gaps between Liberal and Conservative supporters and the narrowing of the gaps between Liberal and NDP supporters has fundamentally transformed the affective landscape. Given the predictive power of these ratings, Liberals and Conservatives have become less likely to vote for the other party. Liberals in turn have become more available to vote for the NDP.

Also as in the US, the affective landscape looks very much like the ideological one. As with Republicans in the US (McCarty et al. 2007), the active ingredient in forcing issues has been the Conservative party—more precisely, the Conservative interest with its various personae now united as one. What would less familiar to US observers is movement on the centre and the left. The NDP, on the left flank, has actually converged on the centre, which is to say that it has kept the distance between extremes roughly constant. In doing so, it has closed the gap with the historically centrist Liberals. By staying put, the Liberals have allowed the gap with the Conservatives to widen and that with the NDP to narrow.

The aggregate correspondence between the affective and ideological patterns translates into a cross-level causal story. Or at least the evidence is suggestive and plausible. Patterns are clearest outside Quebec and clearest for the parties that occupy the ideological flanks, the NDP and the Conservatives. This is truest of all for the Conservatives, appropriately perhaps given that, as mentioned, this is the party that drives overall polarization.

Further Implications

This paper's findings are also relevant for disciplinary debates over voter cognition and motivation. It is silent on how ideologically informed voters are. Canadians may be as "innocent," to paraphrase Kinder and Kalmoe (2017), of ideas as their US counterparts.

But US observers who emphasize the increased role of ideology in motivating the vote do not claim that voters' psyches have changed. What has changed is the balance in between-party versus within-party variance in the parties themselves. The same seems to have happened here. In Mason's (2017) or Brader's et al (2014) terms, the scope for cross-pressure has actually increased at NDP-Liberal boundary. But at the Liberal-Conservative boundary that scope has shrunk.

This represents a fundamental transformation of the party system. The polarized pluralism that is central to Johnston's (2017) account of Canadian politics in the 20th century no longer captures the essence of politics in the 21st century. At least it no longer does for politics outside Quebec—and even in that province things may be changing. Behaviourally, the volatility for which the country is famous may be undergoing a fundamental change of character. Increasingly it is taking on a "within-bloc" form (Bartolini and Mair 1990): exchanges among parties of the right or among parties of the left but not across the left-right boundary. Such volatility is not symptomatic of dealignment. The picture in this paper is radically incompatible with such an account, as it also is with so-called "valence" accounts of politics (Clarke et al, 2009). The new form of volatility is, however, accompanied by increased risk—or increased cost--of coordination failure. In the 1990s, this was a problem on the right. Since 2004 it has plagued the left. On the right, the solution was merger. The left prefers to debate electoral reform.

If some journalistic commentary registers the new tensions in the system, most commentators still do not. To the extent that their focus is on stylistic similarities among parties in parties irrespective of substantive programmes and enactments, the real stakes in the game are missed. For scholars attention should focus more closely to mechanisms and time paths. To this end, students of elections and students of party organization need to join forces.
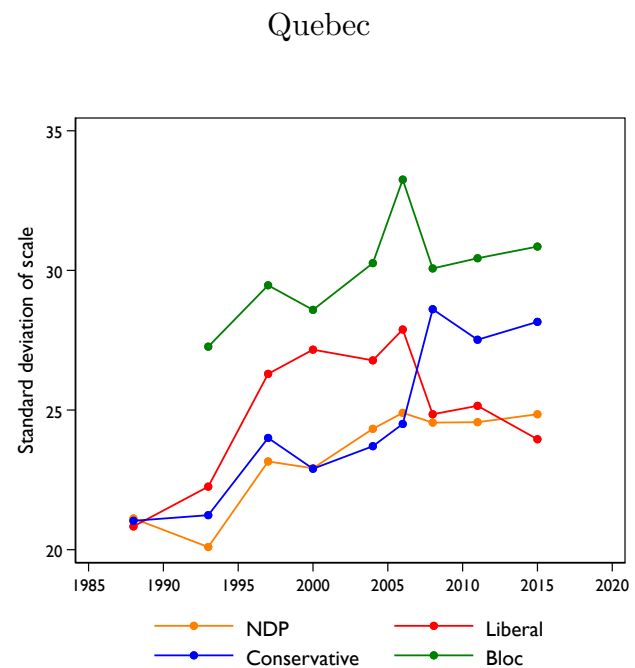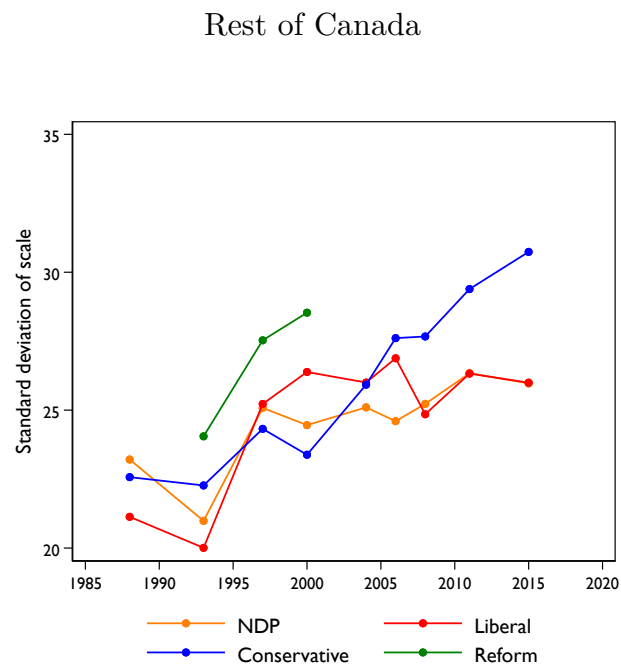
Figure 1. Dispersion of party ratings, 1988-2015

Note: Dispersion indicator is the standard deviation. Underlying data include all respondents in each region.
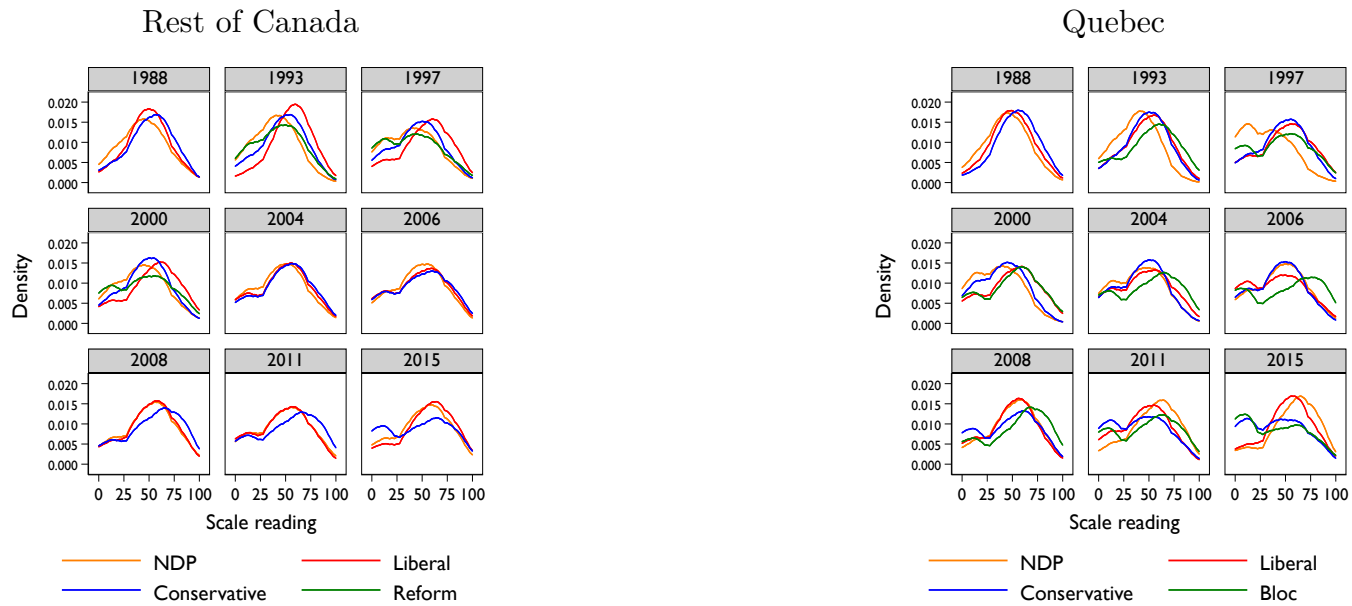
Figure 3. Density plots for party ratings, 1988-2015

Note: Entries for each party and year are kernel density plots. Kernel = Epanechnikov. Half-width of kernel = 10. Underlying data include all respondents in each region.
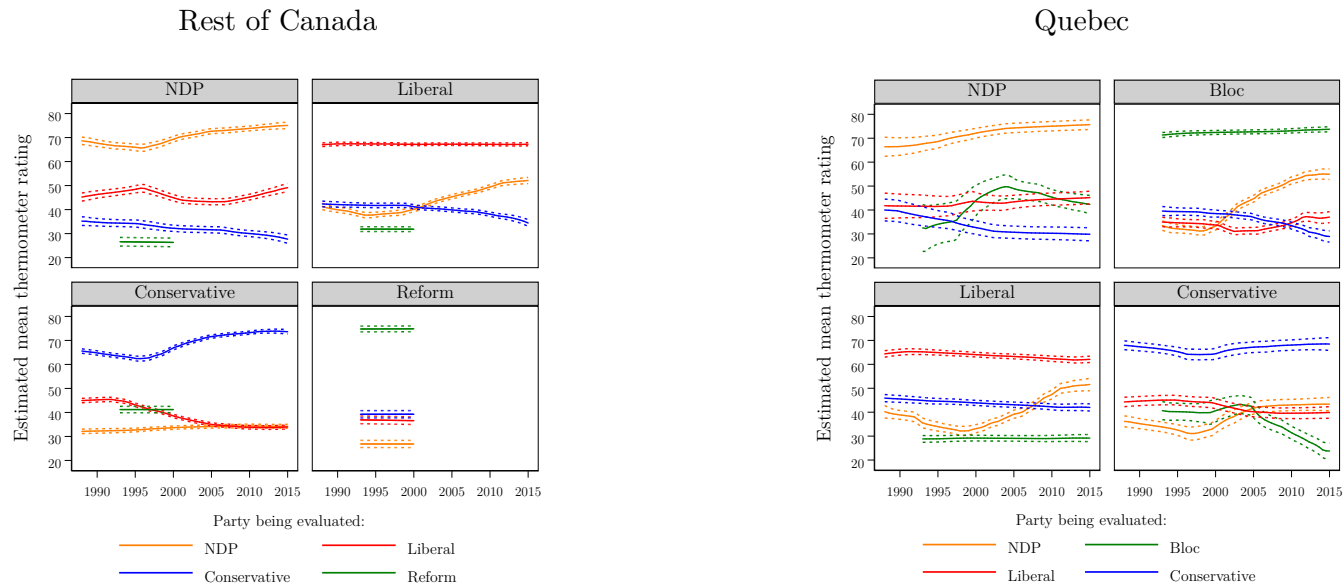
Rest of Canada   Quebec

Figure 3. Partisan sources of feelings, 1988-2015

Note: Smoothing by local polynomial fits with 95% confidence intervals based on the combined samples. Colouring within plots is keyed to the party being evaluated. Cells are keyed to the party identification of the respondent. Underlying data include party identifiers only.
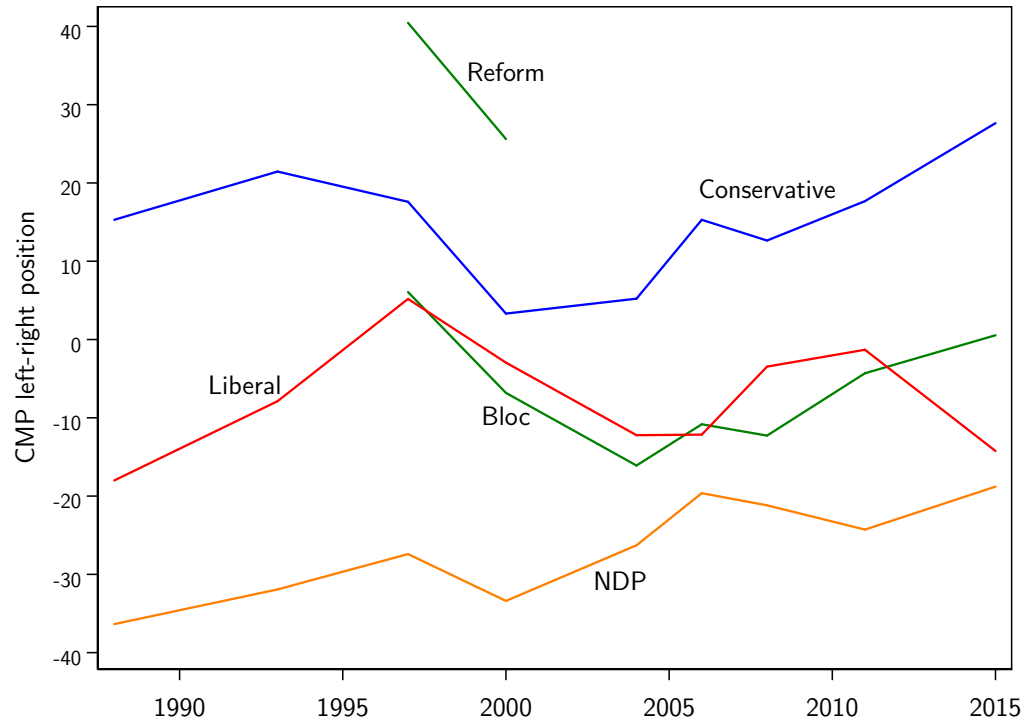
Figure 4. Left-right positioning of the parties

Note: Plots are major-party left-right position from CMP data (Volkens et al. 2018), expressed as moving averages for the current and preceding election years.
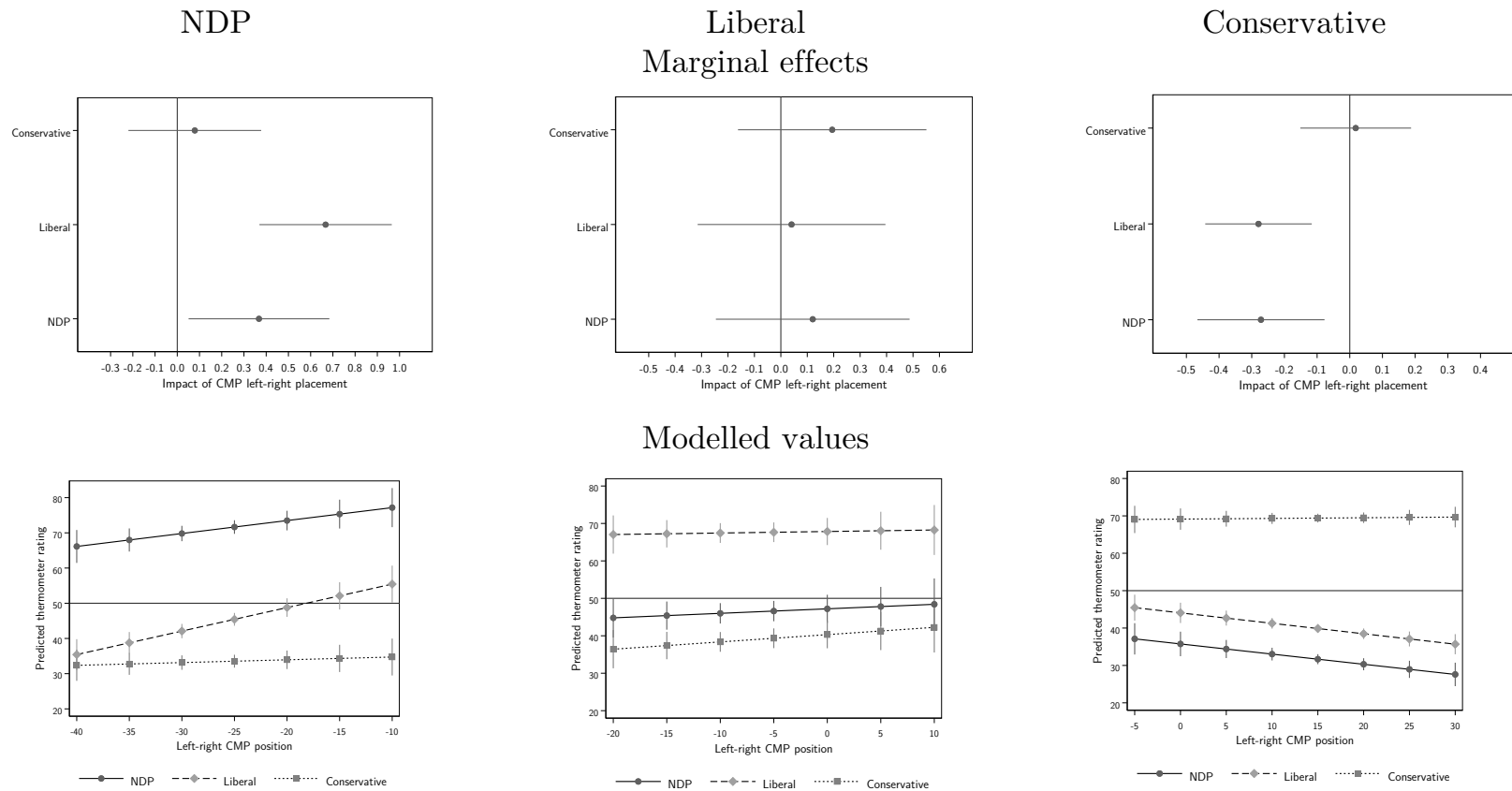
Figure 5. Parties' ideological positions as sources of feelings, Rest of Canada.

Notes: Columns are organized by the party being evaluated. Party indications within each plot show conditional effects for each identification group. Estimation is by multi-level regression averaged across all years, Quebec respondents excluded. Horizontal axes for the top row ranges reflect effect locations and confidence intervals; for the bottom row, ranges reflect parties' CMP positionings.
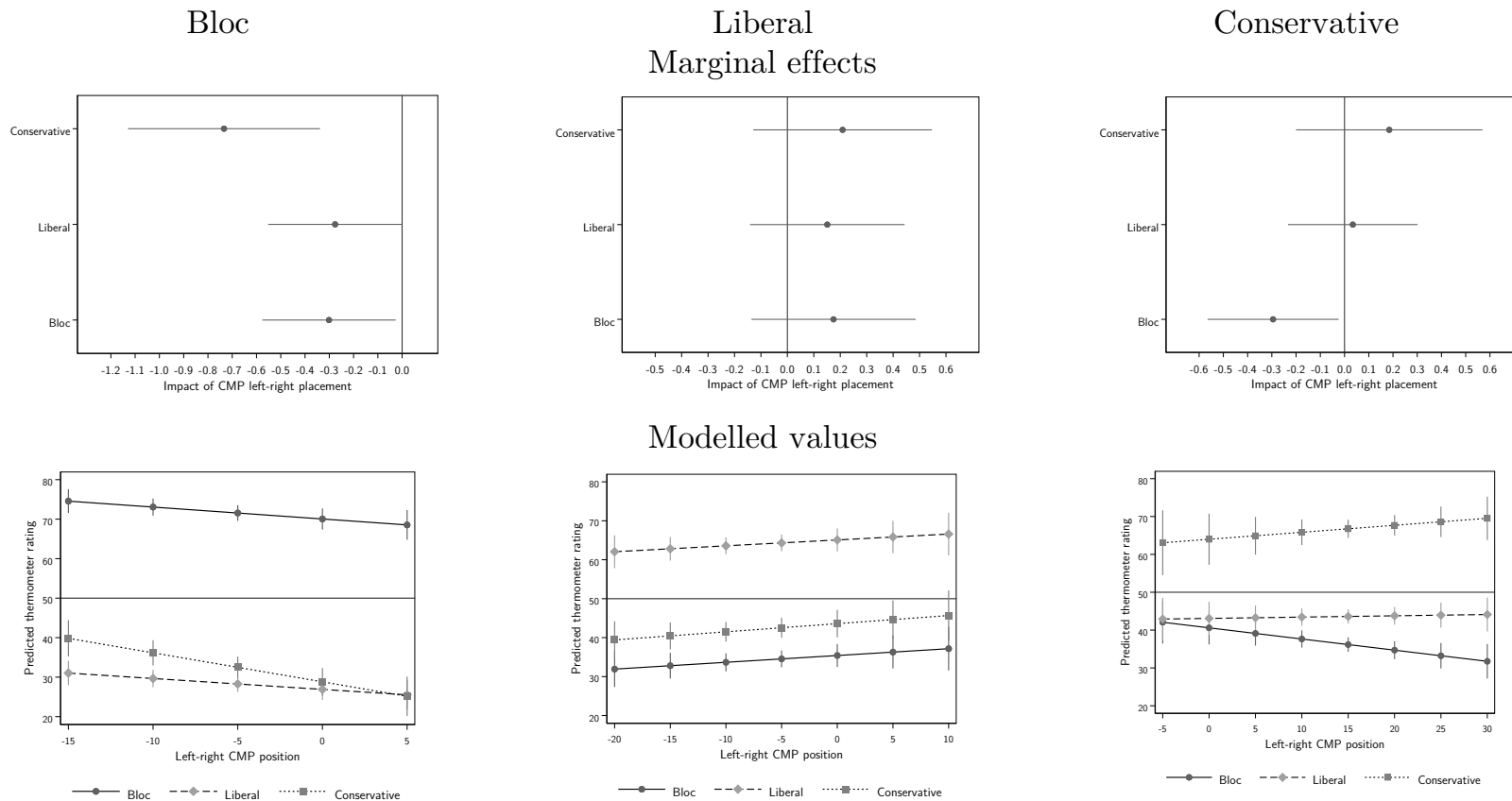
Figure 6. Parties' ideological positions as sources of feelings, Quebec.

Notes: Columns are organized by the party being evaluated. Party indications within each plot show conditional effects for each identification group. Estimation is by multi-level regression averaged across all years, Quebec respondents only. Horizontal axes for the top row ranges reflect effect locations and confidence intervals; for the bottom row, ranges reflect parties' CMP positionings.
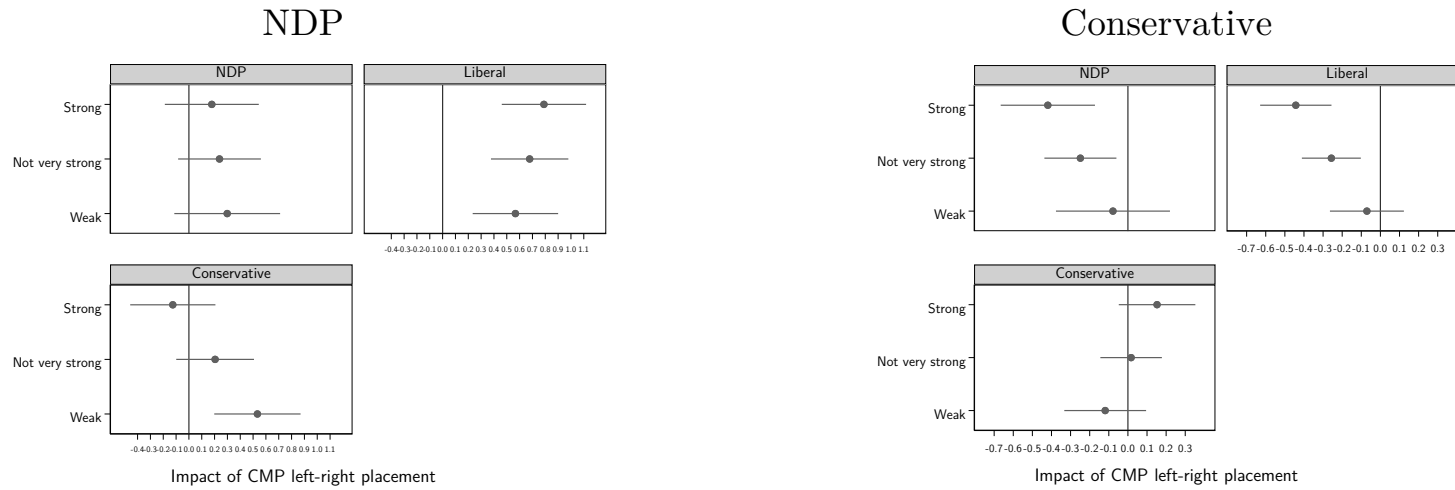
Figure 7. Conditioning of left-right policy impact by partisan intensity

Notes: Parties being evaluated are NDP (left) and Conservative (right). Cells are sorted by party identification. Quebec respondents excluded. Horizontal axes reflect effect locations and confidence intervals;

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Table A1. Year-specific wording for thermometer queries

|		
1988	Now let's talk about your feelings towards the political parties, their leaders and their candidates. I'll read a name and ask you to rate a person or a party on a thermometer that runs from 0 to 100 degrees. Ratings between 50 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favourable toward that person. Ratings between 0 and 50 degrees mean that you feel unfavourable toward that person. You may use any number from 0 to 100 to tell me how you feel.	Parlons maintenant de vos réactions à l'égard des partis, des chefs de partis et des candidats locaux. Je vais vous lire un nom et vous demander d'évaluer cette personne ou ce parti sur un thermomètre allant de 0 à 100 degrés. Les évaluations entre 50 et 100 indiquent que vous avez une réaction positive à l'égard de cette personne. Les évaluations entre 0 et 50 indiquent que vous avez une réaction négative à l'égard de cette personne. Vous pouvez prendre n'importe quel nombre entre 0 et 100 pour indiquer vos réactions.
1993	Now, I'll ask you to rate each political party on a scale that runs from 0 to 100. Ratings between 0 and 50 mean that you rate that party UNFAVOURABLY. Ratings between 50 and 100 mean that you rate that party FAVOURABLY. You may use any number from 0 to 100.	Maintenant je vais vous demander d'évaluer chaque parti sur une échelle allant de 0 à 100. Les évaluations entre 0 et 50 indiquent que vous évaluez DÉFAVORABLEMENT cette parti. Les évaluations entre 50 et 100 indiquent que vous évaluez FAVORABLEMENT cette parti. Vous pouvez prendre n'importe quel nombre entre 0 et 100.
1997	Now we're going to ask you how you feel about each political party on the same scale. The scale runs from 0 to 100, where 0 means an extremely bad rating and 100 means an extremely good rating	Nous allons maintenant vous demander ce que vous pensez des partis sur la même échelle. L'échelle va de 0 à 100 où 0 veut dire que vous n'aimez vraiment pas du tout le parti, et 100 veut dire que vous l'aimez vraiment beaucoup.
2000-15	[And] Now [how do you feel about] the political parties. On the same scale, where zero means you REALLY DISLIKE the party and one hundred means you REALLY LIKE the party	Et maintenant, que pensez-vous des partis politiques? Utilisez une échelle de ZERO à CENT. Zéro veut dire que vous N'AIMEZ VRAIMENT PAS DU TOUT un parti, et cent veut dire que vous L'AIMEZ VRAIMENT BEAUCOUP
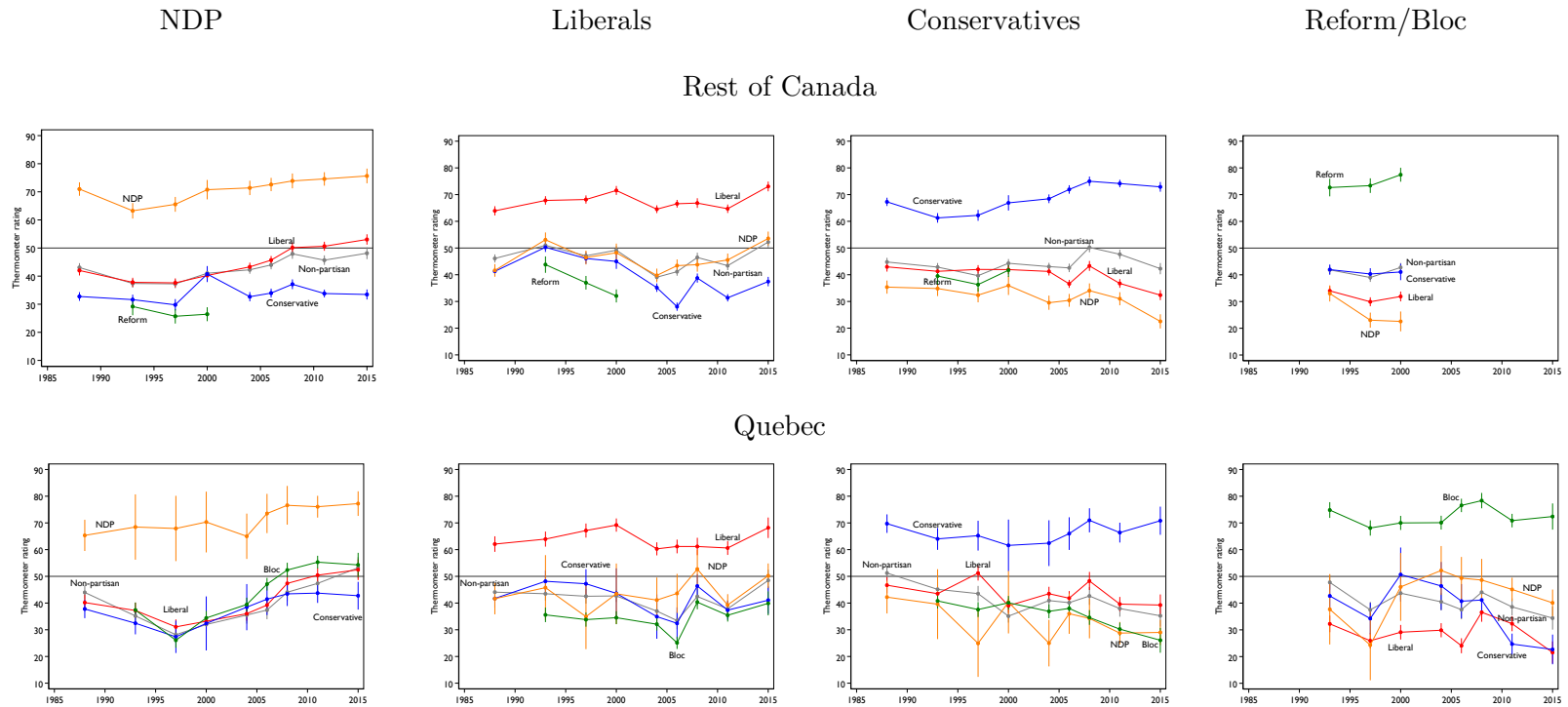
Figure A1. Partisan sources of feelings, estimates for specific years1988-2015

Note: Colours and labels indicate identification group. Single underlying estimation, all years and all identification groups for each dependent variable.