RELIGION AND IDENTITY:
THE DENOMINATIONAL BASIS OF CANADIAN ELECTIONS

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Abstract: This paper accounts for the rise and fall of the denominational bases of the Canadian party system. Ecological analyses for the years before 1921 and survey analyses for the years since World war Two suggest that the key to the religious difference was not religion as such but conflict over the content of Canadian identity. The zone of contestation from 1900 to 1965 was over how British the country was, with implications for overseas war and for the internal symbolism of the state. Since 1965, identity conflict has shifted and the system's denominational basis has correspondingly evaporated. The paper also considers implications beyond the case.

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> For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
> Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
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> Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
> Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
>
> Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
> From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;
>
> Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
> With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;
>
> Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.
>   - Tennyson, *Locksley Hall*, lines 119-28

> *Ab amicis nostris, libera nos Domine*
>   - Albert Lacombe, OMI to Adélard Langevin, Bishop of Saint Boniface

For years, the best single predictor of major-party support in Canadian elections was religious denomination. Catholics were much more likely than non-Catholics to support the Liberals and shun the Conservatives. The effect could not be resolved into the ethnic makeup of the denominations, nor into immigrant-native differences. But the effect was as elusive in its origins as in its persistence. And from 1965 on, it died a lingering death.

This paper argues that the essential source of the relationship had little to do with faith, morals, ecclesiology, or institutional interest. Rather, the critical mediator was the ethnic conception of the Canadian nationality, as distinct from the ethnicity of its individual members. For most of the 20th century the identity focus was Canada's connection to Britain, primarily for its foreign policy implications but also for the symbolism of nationality. An implication is that as the "British Connection" has diminished in importance, so has the religious connection. Concomitantly, as the identity focused shifted, the system's ethnic bases followed suit. The paper's understanding of Canadian identity and of its competing component identities is explicitly constructivist. Constructivist approaches are increasingly being wed to analytic and systematic empirical investigation (Chandra 2006; Abdelal et al. 2009).

In the absence of substantive information on voters' opinions, the argument rests on the time path of group differences in relation to major events. Evidence comes from ecological regressions of late 19th- and early 20th-century census and electoral data, from Gallup data from the 1950s to the 1980s, and from Canadian Election Studies from 1965 to the present. The argument has implications beyond the case: for comparable party systems elsewhere, for the normative claims of our electoral system, for our understanding of the logic of party strategy, and for the strength of the Liberal party.

The very earliest survey-based study of the Canadian electorate revealed the power of religious denomination in structuring the vote (Meisel 1956). Laponce (1969, 1972, 1974) confirmed and generalized the pattern and made it clear that religion could not be resolved into region or language. Irvine (1974) and Irvine and Gold (1980) confirmed Laponce's findings and extended them to show the nullity of immigrant-native differences as the magic explanatory bullet. The Irvine papers nonetheless argued that the cleavage was "stale," merely the residue of earlier, presumably substantive issue divisions perpetuated into the present by prepolitical socialization within families. Johnston (1985) showed the illogic of that argument, and Johnston (1991) proposed a midrange model to capture the geographic conditioning of religious and class differences. The results were mixed, as was also true for an updated version of the argument (Bélanger and Eagles 2006). Mendelsohn and Nadeau (1997) and Bittner (2007) show that the cleavage persists among inattentive voters, not among those seriously engaged with current issues.

The last two references point to the central puzzle: no one has come up with a convincing, contemporaneous account of the substantive *reasons* for the difference, a claim made with special force by Blais (2005).[1] After reprising most of the earlier sociological findings, he also reports a comprehensive assessment of issue differences from the 2004 Canadian Election Study (CES)--and comes up empty. So, while the research record provides some accounting arithmetic, the root cause remains as elusive as ever. And in truth the very origins of the difference are lost in the mists of history. Anecdotes about nuns patrolling the streets on election day singing that Heaven is blue and Hell is red simply do not cut it analytically, not least because they indicate the opposite party alignment from the one to be explained.

In the absence of consistently-measured opinion data for recent years, much less for the relationship's originating period, the only way to address the question is by historical reconstruction. I show that the pattern originates with the 20th century and the intrusion of geopolitics into Canadian domestic affairs. The critical consideration is that before 1960 the projection of Canadian influence in the world was in alignment with the British Empire and Commonwealth. Support for a high-profile foreign policy, especially when it involved armed conflict, was greatest among ethnoreligious groups for whom a British definition of Canada was most plausible, and vice versa. This definition also mattered for the internal symbolism of the polity, and symbolic issues lingered past 1960. But as their British content faded, so did the religious division. Instead, party contrasts shifted, so to speak, with the identity margin.

To substantiate this claim, I need to flesh out the following propositions:

- Specifically religious issues were rarely energized by the national parties and when they were, this followed rather than initiated the religious alignment.

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1 Although it is somewhat off the main thread, it is worth underscoring Blais's finding that religious involvement increases the Catholic/non-Catholic gap in Liberal support. This stands directly contrary to a claim by Irvine and Gold (1980), although given the general thrust of Blais' argument, this only deepens the mystery.

- The time path by which religious divisions were energized corresponds to the intensity of calls for overseas intervention. Documenting the rise of the religious cleavage early in the 20th century is possible only with aggregate data. Post-1945 development can be gauged with survey data.

- Religious denomination was pertinent to the ethnic conception of the Canadian nationality, especially as Canada was called to intervene abroad.

- The case is strengthened if I can show that as the identity margin shifts from the Britishness of Canada successively to struggles over the French fact, postwar Southern European immigration, and post-1970 non-European immigration, group differences that correspond to these shifts also successively displace religious denomination and each other as factors in the vote. By implication, groups whose arrival on the scene was mainly pre-World War Two should be implicated in partisan division weakly, if at all, and mainly in reaction against later-arriving groups. This too requires survey data.

This paper focuses on events and patterns outside Quebec, although Quebec is commonly implicated. The question it addresses is a puzzle to a great extent because it is *not* explained away merely by reference to Quebec or to French Canadians. As it happens, in some of the periods I consider, Quebec francophones behaved like Catholics elsewhere in Canada and for the same reasons. Showing that the patterns in question can be found even outside Quebec confirms the centrality of religious denomination. And at certain periods, the patterns in Quebec diverged from those in the rest of Canada; for these times, having Quebec in the analysis would confuse the issue.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

For my purposes, identity has two basic dimensions, *content* and *contestation* (Abdelal et al. 2009). Along the way, I will touch on each component of identity that Abdelal and his colleagues identify: constitutive norms, social purposes, relational comparisons, and cognitive models. The order of presentation will be roughly historical, however, not analytic. The narrative will also bring out contestation, over identity in general and of the relative salience of competing components. The primary agents on the landscape are Canada's parties, but the shifting context of domestic interest groups, international migration, and geopolitics is also relevant.

The Non-Starters: Faith, Morals, Ecclesiology, and Interest

Unquestionably, religion--and religious disagreement--was central to Canadian life until quite recently. At the middle of the 20th century, Canadians were among the world's most church-going peoples and had been for some decades. In the late 19th century, denominational differences were visible in a wide range of policy questions: "undue influence" from clerics in elections (Ward 1950, p.158); observance of the Sabbath; temperance and the regulation of alcohol; marriage with a deceased wife's sister (a central issue in capital accumulation); and the public funding and regulation of separate schools for Catholics.[2] These issues were arguably trial runs for the current

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2 Separate schools were not merely stalking horses for linguistic separation. On the complexities of language and religion in Ontario, see Prang (1960) and Gaffield (1987), Chapter Six.

politics of "deep diversity" (Taylor 1991). Three of the most intense and protracted controversies in the 1880s and 1890s pitted Protestants directly against Catholics: the disposition of Jesuits' Estates in Quebec; the Manitoba schools controversy; and Northwest schools.[3]

But each of these disputes illustrates why religious identity as such was *not* the basis of wholesale party alignment in the period. Before 1900, religion (and language) divided parties internally and did not polarize them against each other. Siegfried (1966) captured the parties' usual *modus operandi* with precision:

> Aware of the sharpness of certain rivalries, they know that if these are let loose without any counter-balance, the unity of the Dominion may be endangered. That is why they persistently apply themselves to prevent the formation of homogeneous parties, divided according to race, religion or class--a French party, for instance, or a Catholic party, or a Labour party. The clarity of political life suffers from this, but perhaps the existence of the federation can be preserved only at this price. (p. 113-14)

This is, of course, an early statement of the brokerage-party thesis, where the task is reconciliation of opposites, not exacerbation of divisions. Besides, energizing these issues would have opened ideological or identity fissures within each party's coalition.

This did not prevent provincial politicians or provincially-minded federal ones from rubbing at the sores, and the same was true in spades for their extra-parliamentary allies. The disposition of the Jesuits' Estates, for instance, stirred deep passions in both Ontario and Quebec. But Macdonald and Laurier struggled mightily to contain the passions, and neither sought to exploit them even covertly (Miller 1979). Much the same was true with the Manitoba Schools controversy. Within Manitoba, both parties shared an interest in abridging Catholic rights, although from different motives (Crunican 1974; Hall 1981, Chapter Five). In national politics, in contrast, both parties converged in trying to mute division. The controversy occasioned tactical moves and a struggle for net advantage, ultimately secured by the Liberals. But on each side, manoeuvring was subtle and delicate as each party risked being disembowelled from within; ultimately, something like this happened to the Conservatives. The Liberal victory in 1896 was not the result of an electoral tide, but was a complex and contradictory thing with notable third-party insurgencies (Crunican 1974, especially Chapters Eight and Nine). And in that year, Manitoba tensions entered into federal Liberal ranks with the translation of Clifford Sifton to national politics. The denominational basis of schooling in the Northwest Territories had episodically intruded into that arena in each of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s , as the Catholic

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3 Coalitions that formed around these issues also overlapped the divisions over the North-West Rebellion and the execution of Louis Riel. Critically, the Riel controversy touched off the decade-long realignment of federal forces in Quebec as well as the election of Honoré Mercier, to whom fell the task of settling the Jesuits' Estates. But the Riel controversy was not specifically religious in nature, not least as Riel himself was apostate for an extended period.

position alternately strengthened and weakened (Lupul 1974).[4] Matters came to head with the Alberta and Saskatchewan autonomy bills in 1905. The Laurier government inserted separate school guarantees over the objections of politicians in the region. Superficially, then, the party system seems to have divided right at the denominational boundary. But the 1905 controversy is arguably an exception that proves the rule. Although it could be be styled as a departure from the earlier urge to compromise, close inspection suggests that debate was not over Catholics' access to denominational schools as such but over what denominational privileges to protect, given the recent history of flux. Laurier seems clearly to have been moved by the plight of the Catholic minority but also hoped that clarity would prevent a recurrence of the Manitoba crisis. Moreover, the move induced fissures within the Liberal party, as Clifford Sifton felt compelled to resign from cabinet. But even his dissent should not be overstated. Sifton resigned over the lack of central inspection and over a financial formula that underscored the separateness of the new system, but he did not oppose the continuation of Catholic privileges such as they were in 1905. Laurier removed the offending clauses and thereby brought Sifton back on side (Hall 1985, pp. 169-79), much to the chagrin of bishops. The point stands: domestic contestation over specifically religious questions was toxic for parties and they strove mightily to quell it.

Canada in the Empire.

Instead, the secret to understanding the role of Catholic religion in Canadian elections lies in the country's "British Connection." The turn of the 20th century saw that connection transformed as Canada reached toward an international personality. The web of implications for party politics was tangled, as nationalist visions competed with each other and with alternative colonial sensibilities. Many Canadian nationalists wanted to loosen the imperial bond, but also wanted to weaken sectarian and ethnic divisions within the country. Sifton was like this, as was J.W. Dafoe, long-time editor of the Winnipeg *Free Press* (Hall 1985; Cook 1963). Imperialists in the period also saw themselves as nationalists, but of a more muscular variety. They wished Canada to act upon the global stage, including militarily, and believed that the appropriate way to do so was as part of the British Empire, conceived as, among other things, a league of self-governing nations. Extreme elements advocated imperial federation but most were more pragmatic (Berger 1970). In tension with these competing nationalisms were two variants of colonialism. One seems obvious, and was expressed most pithily by the Orange Lodge. Canada was not so much a nation among British nations, but British full stop. And this British Canada was Protestant; I return to this below. The other variant saw Canada as a diverse place, in which different proto-national groups coexisted. This Canada had overarching interests within North America, and advocacy of those interests was helped by the British connection (Penlington 1965). But the country was too incoherent internally for national questions to be forced any more than absolutely necessary. This

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4 Although on language rather than religion, debate on a bill to amend the North-West Territories Act was diagnostic of the brokerage challenge. The intent of the bill was increase the territories' control of their finances but died on the order paper when D'Alton McCarthy used the occasion to attempt to abolish French as an official language in the region. As Thomas (1978) put it, McCarthy's initiative "touched off one of the most notable debates in Canadian parliamentary history, as well as taxing to the utmost Macdonald's ingenuity in maintaining unity among the divergent elements in his party. The issue was equally embarrassing to Laurier, for anything which appeared to be a concession to McCarthy's position would threaten his still tenuous hold on French-Canadian opinion, while to appear as the supporter of French-Canadian nationalism would damage hi position in Ontario and other English-speaking areas" (p. 185).

Canada could give sympathetic consideration to aid for the "mother country," especially in its hour of peril, but on terms that would leave Canada less than a full co-belligerent (Cook 1961).

The critical election was 1900, when Canada arguably made its appearance on the global stage:

> It was the South African war that produced [the heroic] phase of the imperial movement in Canada…. when it was a question of taking part in the war, by reason of the principles of imperialism, the Ottawa government found behind it a country violently divided." (Siegfried 1966, p. 201)

Laurier resisted Canadian involvement but his hand was forced. His reluctance, combined with war fever in urban English Canada, provoked intense attack and counter-attack (Beck 1968, pp. 94-5; Miller 1993, Chapter Two). Although war fever died down and the war itself eventually ended,[5] its political legacy endured. Civil-military issues simmered into the new century, including the dismissal of two aggressively imperialist militia commanders (Penlington 1965). Even more divisive was the founding of the Navy in 1910. The naval service was condemned on one hand as too great a concession to imperial pressure and on the other as too little for the Empire.

South Africa was a rehearsal for the Great War. In parliament, support for a belligerent role was nearly unanimous. Not unanimous was support for conscription. For nationalists-cum-imperialists, conscription was an obvious step. For many anglophone Liberals, the choice was more agonizing, but the destination was the same. For Sifton and Dafoe, the war was Canada's war; the country was allied with Britain not because of sentiment but because Canadian and British principles were the same.[6] For Laurier, the war was Britain's war. This did not preclude direct Canadian military involvement, but the basis of that involvement was indeed sentiment. Canada was not itself a principal belligerent and thus was not obliged to commit its all. Also, he saw the call for conscription and for Union government was the leading edge of imperial centralization (Cook 1961). On this basis, the issue induced a split in Liberal ranks to the short-term net benefit of the other side.

The classical party division reasserted itself with the resumption of peace. Stacey (1981) describes the 1921 election as heralding a revolution in Canadian foreign policy. On collective security, Borden's deep involvement with the founding of the League of Nations was a natural extension of his view of the Empire as itself such a league. Mackenzie King, in contrast, resisted Canada's election to the Council of the League, as this might force great-power responsibilities on the country (Stacey 1981, p.65).[7] The parties divided sharply over the Chanak Incident, the last gasp of a coordinated imperial foreign policy. On the transformation of Empire into

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5 It ended slowly and only after a protracted guerilla period, in which Canadians, mainly from the West, did much of the dirty work (Miller 1993).

6 Significantly, in Berger's (1970) account of turn-of-the-century Canadian imperial thought, Sifton does not have an index entry. And after the War, Dafoe and Sifton alike opposed further integration of Canadian and British foreign policy; for them, Canadian nationalism was *not* a stalking horse for imperial centralization.

7 Interestingly, his Quebec lieutenant, Ernest Lapointe, urged the contrary, on the grounds that being in a position to shape events was a better insurance policy. Lapointe's argument had an echo in the late 1930s. See below, note 9.

Commonwealth, the parties were similarly distinct, although also careful in stating their position. In the 1926 Imperial Conference that set the stage for full sovereignty, Mackenzie King played a pivotal role. But as he did not want to provoke pro-Empire opinion, he declined to deploy the language of independence; his emphasis was on equality of status (*Ibid.*, p. 85). When the report of the committee formed to implement the 1926 conference (the report that led to the Statute of Westminster) was tabled, C.H. Cahan spoke for the Conservatives:

> … I am persuaded that it is in the best interests of Canada that the British commonwealth of nations, which is commonly known as the British Empire, should remain a subsisting political unit, and not merely a free association of independent states (*Ibid.*, p. 119).

His party did not force a vote on the question, however. The Conservatives had also opposed the 1927 decision to open a full Embassy in Washington (*Ibid.*, p. 91).

As World War Two approached, party divisions remained relevant. The Ethiopian crisis of 1935, like the founding years of the League of Nations, illustrated the potential for imperial sentiment to shade into more generalized support for collective security. The crisis began while R.B. Bennett was still Prime Minister. Canada's representatives to the League, Howard Ferguson (former Premier of Ontario) and W.A. Riddell, supported sanctions against Italy. Mackenzie King opposed them and forced an about-face in mid-crisis (*Ibid.*, p. 179). Because he knew that in the event of war Canada would enter, he did all he could to postpone it.[8] His orchestration of the run up to war was brilliant. On 30 March 1939, King, the Protestant anglophone, committed his government to voluntary enlistment and Lapointe, the Catholic francophone, declared the inevitability of Canada's involvement (*Ibid.*, p. 243). For the actual declaration of war, the task of setting out the reasons was also given to Lapointe (*ibid.*, p. 262). The Conservatives, for their part, argued for a more aggressive approach all along and for the formation of a "national" government, implicitly questioning the legitimacy of the Liberal government in waging total war (Granatstein 1967). The war itself re-energized conscription as a central issue. This time, it fell to the Liberals to implement the policy but they did so without enthusiasm and only after many contortions (Granatstein and Hitsman 1977).

Crypto-imperial questions lingered into the 1950s, with the Suez crisis as the climax. Although hindsight identifies the crisis as a triumph of Canadian diplomacy, Canadian opinion at the time was closely divided. A Gallup poll reported on 12 November 1956 indicated that more Canadians supported the Anglo-French invasion than opposed it (Hilliker and Donaghy 2005, pp. 30-31).[9] If Suez was the climax, the foreign policy of John Diefenbaker and Howard Green was the anti-climax. The new government set out to try to align Canada with Britain, only to find that the former mother country was longer interested (Robinson 1989). Perhaps it is fitting that

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8 This produced contortions that echoed the earlier issue of joining the League Council:
> A European war, with Britain as a belligerent, was for him the ultimate catastrophe. No effort should be spared, nothing left undone, to try to prevent it. If that meant abandoning previous convictions about the unwisdom of attempting to influence British foreign policy, so be it. (Eayrs 1965, p.54)

9 For brilliant and acerbic critiques of the Liberal reaction to Suez, the Toronto *Telegram* columns of Judith Robinson (1957) are quite unmatched. Although their tone is unabashedly anglophile and Tory, their content anticipates themes in the left version of Canadian nationalism that emerged a decade later.

Canada's last attempt to influence British foreign policy was to resist that country's attempt to join the European Union.

The Empire in Canada.

If by 1960 the "British Connection" was no longer vital to Canada's international personality, the decade that followed was critical for struggle over the *internal* manifestations of the connection. The high point was 1964-5, the debate over the maple leaf flag and its electoral aftermath. As with Suez, hindsight is a fallible guide to opinion at the time. Once again, opinion was evenly divided and the balance of party advantage shifted back and forth. Although the Conservative party lost the debate, the 1965 election brought the party a small net gain in the popular vote (Johnson 2005).

Issues with explicit or implicit British/anti-British content lingered past 1965, among them metrication, official languages policy, and multiculturalism. But Britishness as such was not the only or even the main pole of resistance to these initiatives. The last policy for which the British Connection was a primary driver of resistance was unification of the armed forces. In a wonderful irony, considering the circumstances of its birth, contestation was especially fierce over the incorporation of the Navy, often reviled for being more "Royal" than "Canadian" (Milner 2005, pp. 280ff).

Religion and Empire

What has all this to do with religion? I want to argue that in the mass public support for aligning Canada's international involvement with Britain reflected the degree to which Canada was idealized as a British place. This idealization was more likely if the person was Protestant; this is still probably true. At its crudest, idealization might be nothing more than claims about the country's "true" ethnic makeup. But it can also carry normative content, as in claims about, for example, individualism, self-reliance, transparency, and fair dealing. Religious identification is not merely a proxy for ancestry in the British Isles. It can cut through such ancestry, even as denominational identification or membership can combine ethnic categories, and still be relevant to idealization of Canada's ethnic character.

The first point is that ancestry from Great Britain (in the sense of the point of emigration for the eponymous ancestor) is neither necessary nor sufficient for a reaching a British idealization of Canada. Consider Canadians of Irish ancestry. It is common now to assume that such persons are mainly Catholic and that, before 1900 at least, Catholics who were not French were mainly Irish. In fact, most Canadians of Irish ancestry are Protestant, and most are descended from families that immigrated before the Famine.[10] In the formative period, such persons did not hesitate to call themselves Irish. And just as Protestants in Ireland tended to see it as a British place, it was

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10 In the 1820s and 1830s, absolute numbers of Irish migrants to British North Ameica exceeded those to the US. Although Catholics predominated among the Irish in Quebec and Newfoundland and constituted narrow majorities in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (*Ibid.*, Figure 7.10*,* p. 226), the Irish populations of these provinces was swamped by the mass of Irish immigrants to Ontario. It also seems that among the Irish, Catholic immigrants were more likely than Protestants to move on to the US, and this movement probably effaced some of the short-term famine-induced shift toward Catholics (Houston and Smyth 1990, p. 73). The plurality denomination among all Canadian Irish was Anglican, with Methodists a close second and Presbyterians a major group only in the Maritimes (*Ibid.*, Table 7.2, p. 229).

natural for many to transfer such thinking to Canada. The chief organizational expression of this sensibility was the Orange Lodge:

> Orangeism and Irishmen were especially suited to British North America, for a society was being created there in the image of a British colony, not an independent separate state. Britain's first colony had been Ireland, and out of that tradition of colonial connection Orangeism had emerged. (Houston and Smyth 1980, p. 185)

In short, the chief Irish contribution to the early years of contestation over the nationality was to supply the organizational weapon for the assertion of a Canadian colonial mentality. But it was a contribution specific to Protestants. Also worth noting is that the Orange Lodge expanded beyond its origins (*Ibid.*, p.181). It was among the first to admit including Aboriginal persons-- provided they were Protestant.

On the other side, persons of Irish descent dominated the Catholic community only in Ontario (Perin 1990, Chapter One) and there only tenuously. A significant fraction of German-Canadians were Catholic, as were many persons of Scottish ancestry, especially in Atlantic Canada and Eastern Ontario. Immigration after 1900 complicated the picture further (Perin 1995; Fay 2002). And with interfaith marriages, the Catholic community came to include many persons with non-stereotypical ancestry, and yet who were socialized into the minority subculture.

The impact of religion goes beyond undigested ethnic sensibility. Certain forms of Protestantism articulated a morally strenuous vision of society. In agitation over South Africa, for instance. a major component of expressed pro-war opinion was from progressive Protestants, among whom was Frederick Scott, Anglican priest, blue-water poet, later chaplain of the 1st Division, and father of F.R. Scott, one of the founders of the CCF (Miller 1993, pp. 17ff). The war was seen as a call to a higher form of citizenship and for the transcendence of narrow regional or sectarian loyalties. Arguments like this were even more prominent in the Great War. Methodist agitation was especially vocal, and as the war advanced was increasingly linked to Social Gospel concerns and to calls for the conscription not just of manpower but of wealth (Bliss 1968). One postwar offshoot of this agitation was Church Union. Another was the CCF. In the interim, Methodist pulpits could be heard urging Canada to offer military support to Britain in the Chanak crisis (Stacey 1981, p. 28).[11]

It may not be an accident that the passages in this section are mostly about Protestants. Catholics appear mainly in the shadows, as *not* endorsing any of the sentiments of enlarged nationality or global military role. Outside Quebec, the Church's posture was mainly defensive, and often publicly supportive (Fay 2002).[12] Below the radar, however, the sensibility of Catholics may have been less belligerent and less persuaded of the universalistic claims for combat.

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11 On a less ideological note, Anglicanism seemed to be a necessary condition for admission to Navy wardrooms (Milner 2005 p. 274 and p. 284n4).

12 Fay's comprehensive history of the Church in Canada has essentially nothing to say about foreign policy and war. The exception is a few pages (pp. 240-44) on conscription in which the emphasis lies mainly on the Church's support for the war effort.

The Identity Margin

In any case, all this seems more like history than political science. Since 1965, the identity margin has shifted. The decline in the relevance of the British Connection was not instant, to be sure. The connection lingered at least as subtext in several policy domains. Among these domains were what might be called "the project of French Canada," with its subtly different manifestations in Official Languages policy and in Quebec-Canada relations, and multicultural policy. In a zero-sum world, the more French the country is deemed to be or the more Quebec is recognized as distinct, the less British Canada can be. The greater the value attached to minority cultures, the less value attached to the British one. Still as attention turns to *favourable* targetting of non-British groups by certain parties (but not all), we might see specific ethnic groups emerge on the electoral landscape and supplant the big religious battalions.

This does not assume that motives are pure. Getting political parties positioned on this landscape does not require us to impute unsullied cosmopolitanism to any of them. Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), for instance, remind us that diversity can be "sold." In immigration policy, such pragmatic motives are not new. Clifford Sifton's chief objective as Laurier's Minister of the Interior was to see the West settled by farmers suited to the region and this made him largely indifferent to their ethnic makeup. But it required him to face down local opinion, which was very negative, especially about "Galicians," as Ukrainians were then called (Hall 1981, pp. 264ff), and Doukhobors (Hall 1985, pp. 69ff). As he did not see immigration from the Far East as helpful to settling the Prairies, he readily acquiesced in anti-Asian legislation (Hall 1981, p. 263).

Whatever the parties' motives, if the empirical section shows specifically ethnic differences to strengthen as religious ones wane, this should help validate the interpretation of the older pattern: that the division between Catholics and Protestants was driven by disagreement over Canada's ethnic character. This waning of religious difference would be the bookend for its waxing in the early 20th century.

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EMPIRICS

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Emergence

Tracking the early history is possible only with riding-level data. Fortunately, in this period census data were captured by parliamentary constituency, as a primary objective of the census was to order representation. After the 1921 census, data ceased to be captured by riding.[13] But the critical period is covered. Figure 1 plots ecological regression coefficients and their accompanying confidence intervals for elections from 1878 to 1921 inclusive. Estimation of implicitly individual-level relationships with aggregate data is controversial. Strictly speaking the situation is indeterminate, but for the question at hand the method suffices. In these estimations, the intercept (not shown) represents the party's share among non-Catholics. The slope shows the Catholic - non-Catholic difference in party share, thus indexing the cleavage itself. This setup and interpretation assume that the relationship is constant across geographic

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13 Census data at the riding level became available in 1961, thanks initially to scholarly labour and eventually to Elections Canada.

units, a claim that Johnston (1991) and Bélanger and Eagles (2006) contest. It also assumes that there is no aggregation bias, also implausible (Achen and Shively 1995, pp.82-93). Even without aggregation bias, social gravitation may reinforce individual differences, introducing another dose of positivity into the coefficient.[14] But alternative estimation strategies either rest on equally implausible assumptions or yield unhelpfully vague results.[15] In the end, my emphasis is on the presence or absence of a consistent pattern, and it helps that survey-based estimates in the next section are broadly consistent with the aggregate ones here.

And the results are exactly as implied in the earlier narrative. Before 1900, the situation is basically indeterminate. Liberal coefficients tend to be negative and Conservatives ones to be positive, but only in 1891 are the coefficients significantly different from zero and from each other. All this is so notwithstanding the bitterness of ethnoreligious conflict. The 1900 election marks the first point that coefficients reverse in sign and pull apart in way that is unaltered by later elections. Although there is a hint that 1896 sits on a trend of which 1900 is but the culmination, the simplest interpretation is that 1900 marks the break with the past. The next three elections continue the pattern. If there was fallout from the 1905 Autonomy bill controversy, it is barely perceptible. There is a hint that the Conservative coefficient became more negative in the next, 1908 election, but that is about all.

The next break also comes right where it should, with the 1917 conscription election. The denominational cleavage may have doubled (or more) in width. This must be interpreted with care, as the choice was strictly speaking between "Government" and "Opposition" candidates, where many Government candidates were former Liberals. All opposition candidates were also Liberals, so in a sense the Liberal base was being reduced to its Catholic core. But growth in the Unionist share relative to the Conservative 1911 starting was similarly constrained along denominational lines. The 1917 election reduced the denominational reach of *both* parties.

The denominational divide persisted in 1921, when the Liberals returned to power and the Unionists essentially became Conservatives again. The Liberal vote was barely larger in the later year and their coalition remained narrowly founded. The Conservative base became slightly less exclusively Protestant, but mainly as the party simply shrank; its 1921 share was a low point.

Maintenance

Although we cannot know if precisely this pattern persisted over the next three decades, a religious effect of great strength did continue. When we pick up the story with survey data after World War Two, in Figure 2, the Catholic/Protestant gap remains wide.

Survey evidence comes from two sources, the Canadian Gallup Poll and Canadian Election Studies (CES). For elections before 1965, the only available source is the Gallup poll. Fortunately, Gallup (officially, the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion--CIPO) routinely asked

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14 A classic example is the contrast drawn by Butler and Stokes (1969, pp. 144-50) between mining and resort towns.

15 King (1997) proposes a solution to the problem, but this has not received universal acceptance. For stinging critiques, see Freedman et al. (1998) and Tam Cho and Gaines (2004). Freedman and his colleagues show with data where indiviudal-level relationships are known that King's method produces estimates that are no better than those from garden-variety ecological regression, of the sort reported here.

about behaviour in the last election, which enables us to pool surveys between elections. Marginal distributions for retrospective reports resembled official returns reasonably closely and remained stable notwithstanding the passage of time. For some intervals the number of respondents interviewed between elections is massive. All this enables reconstruction of vote patterns in the previous election. The first surveys to record respondents' religion were conducted in the early 1950s, enabling reconstruction of elections in 1949 and later.[16] In Gallup estimations, Catholics and persons of no religion are represented with dummy variables. Respondents' language, union membership, and farm status are also controlled, also as dummy variables. CES data become available in 1965 and cover every election (except 1972) to the present. The CES makes more controls possible, in this case for four different broad groups of European ethnicity (ancestry in France,[17] Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Southern Europe) and for non-European ancestry, as well as for union membership, farm status (until very recently), and region of residence. The ethnic coefficients drive the discussion in the next section; the economic ones do not appear in this paper but were recovered for completeness. Values are marginal effects derived from binomial probit estimations, holding values for other variables at their means. For each party, the coefficient refers to the difference in support for that party as opposed to all others; non-voters are excluded. As in Figure 1, confidence intervals for coefficients appear as vertical bars.[18]

Gallup data suggest that in elections up to 1965, the Catholic/non-Catholic gap was large and basically stable: 25-30 points for the Liberals and 20-25 points for the Conservatives. We cannot say if this is actually smaller than the pattern in 1917-21; aside from the fact that estimation proceeds at a different level of aggregation, the coefficients are from multivariate setups, as opposed to the bivariate ones of Figure 1. In the Gallup data, this means that the coefficient refers, strictly speaking, to non-French Catholics. In the CES, the reference is narrower still, to Catholics of British Isles ancestry. Considering all this, the gap seems remarkably wide. To put it in further perspective, this period's Catholic/non-Catholic gap in Canada was about as wide as the manual/non-manual was in Britain at the same time (Butler and Stokes 1969).

Disappearance

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16 For certain purposes, Gallup data can be used to reconstruct electoral coalitions back to 1940. Religious denomination is not among the available variables, however. Fortuitously, analyses in this paper start around the tine of Gallup's shift to probability sampling, or so we may hope. See Converse (1987) on the transition in the US from quota to probability in the aftermath of the 1948 debacle and Berinsky (2006) on how to deploy data from quota samples. No survey was conducted between the 1957 and 1958 elections that also asked about both religion and the 1957 vote. Canadian Gallup continued regular surveying until late 2000, but the quality of the data seems to plummet in the 1990s. Accordingly, I use Gallup data only down to the 1988 election.

17 Outside Quebec, ancestry was almost as sure a guide to party preference as active use of the language. At the same time, it enables expansion of the variance on the right-hand side of the equation, which in turn stabilizes estimates. The pattern is the opposite from Quebec, where francophones outnumber persons of *pure laine* ancestry.

18 As Gallup samples were clustered, confidence intervals as reported are probably too small. We have no PSU information with which to correct for probable design effects. As it happens, the sheer number of cases provides great reassurance. Clustering was also standard for the CES before 1988.

After 1965, however, the power of religious denomination as such began to decline. Gaps dropped to the high teens for both Liberal and Conservative voting, and declined further in 1984 and 1988. The pattern for CES data is broadly similar. The drop in the 1970s is sharper than in Gallup data, suggesting that gaps remained in the low teens through the 1980s and 1990s, with no particular trend. This reflects the fact that the CES permits a more elaborate ethnic specification, and as the next section reveals, ethnicity is stealing some of religion's power. Estimation discrepancies aside, both sources clearly indicate a drop in the impact of Catholicism, with less than half the power in the 1980s and 1990s as in the 1950s and 1960s. The gap that remained in the 1990s was basically focused on the Liberals. Reform/Alliance picked up some of the Catholic aversion to parties of the right in the 1990s, but not as efficiently as the Progressive Conservatives had done in the preceding decade.

The time path of the decline seems intuitively correct. The 1965 election followed the bruising debate over the maple leaf flag and was the last election with John Diefenbaker as a party leader. That it did not disappear completely also seems right, as the symbolic issues of the following decades still carried some British subtext.

In any case, elections after 2000 basically erased the religious gap. The reconstituted Conservatives carried the Reform/Alliance pattern forward for the 2004 election only. Over the next two elections the gap arguably reversed. For the Liberals in 2004 and 2006, the gap dropped below 10 points, and in 2008 there was simply no gap at all. In 2008, in contrast to every other election since 1896, the distinctive beneficiary of Catholic support was the Conservative Party. The newly reversed gap is tiny and not above the horizon of statistical significance. In both the weakness of the religious gap and its apparent direction, the party system has come full circle.

Multiculturalism and the Shift to Ethnicity.

Complementarily, after 1965 ethnic group differences shifted (or failed to shift, as the case may be) roughly in line with change in the focus of identity politics. This is the message of Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 focuses on French Canadians outside Quebec and, like Figure 2, uses both Gallup and CES data. For Gallup, the reference category is all non-French groups. Figure 4 uses the CES to bring out differences among other ethnic groups. For the CES, the reference category comprises persons of British Isles ancestry.

Gallup data suggest that Francophones outside Quebec emerged as quite distinct only after 1960. Before 1960, their distinctiveness from the mainstream was mainly as a byproduct of their Catholicism.[19] After 1965, this ceased to be true. Gallup data suggest that the distinctiveness was quite sharp indeed: from 1968 to 1980 (all elections in which the Liberal leader was Pierre Trudeau), French respondents were 20 points more likely to vote Liberal (and less likely to vote Conservative). This distinctiveness is *relative to non-French Catholics*. Over the same period, as the preceding figure showed, the greater body of Catholics become less distinct. But the cumulative difference between French Canadians and (by implication, non-Francophone) *non-*Catholics was massive. Once Pierre Trudeau stepped down, the distinctiveness of Francophones

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19 Major-party coefficients for French in 1949 are clearly non-zero, but the point estimates are not very credible, given the massive confidence intervals.

shrank. In the CES, the Trudeau effect is not obvious on the Liberal side, although it is pretty clear on the Conservative one (clear, that is, in the 1980-84 shift).

The pattern on the rest of the ethnic field maps onto the narrative of group succession. Start with the first group to broaden Canada's ethnic mix, Northern Europeans, here defined as persons with origins in the Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Germany--Protestant monarchies (at least at the time of migration) for the most part.[20] As a rule, Northern Europeans are simply not distinct from the British Protestant reference group, as we might expect from groups that have been on the scene, so to speak, for many decades and who came from places culturally aligned with Britain since the Reformation. The 1990s brought the one moment when Northern Europeans emerged from the shadows, with support for Reform/Alliance. This may indicate backlash against more recent arrivals or against the heightened profile of French Canada.[21]

Eastern Europeans still seemed to be in the Liberal camp until 1984. The difference is modest and not always significantly different from zero. But it is consistent with the earlier record of immigration and inclusion. Recall the reaction of British Canadians to the arrival of "Galicians" and the role of Clifford Sifton in championing the new immigration pattern. It is also consistent with the narrative of multiculturalism, itself something of a Ukrainian-Canadian invention (Bociurkiw 1978). Be that as it may, the link evaporated in 1984 and has not been restored.

Down to 1984, the group that seemed most distinctly Liberal and most repelled by the Conservative party was Southern Europeans, most of whom are Italians. It may be significant that, like French Canadians, this is an almost exclusively Catholic group. This hegemonic Catholicism may in turn have reinforced the groups' sense of ethnic distinctiveness. But the distinctiveness represented by the coefficients, remember, is effectively *relative to other Catholics*. Relative to Protestant Canadians, Southern Europeans were a very distinct group indeed. This ceased to be the case in 1988, although there was a partial and temporary restoration the pattern in 2000.

The torch was passed to Non-Europeans, to "visible minorities." In part, this testifies to their growing numbers. One token of this is the confidence intervals around the non-European coefficient. In the 1960s, the intervals are massive, a reflection mainly of small numbers in the CES sample. The 1965 pattern is also telling: it is the reverse of later decades. If it is real, and not an illusion created by the sample, it testifies to John Diefenbaker as a champion of inclusion. The first Chinese-Canadian MP, Douglas Jung, was elected in the initial Diefenbaker surge of 1957. With Diefenbaker's removal from the party leadership, Conservatives apparently reverted to type. As of 2008, Non-Europeans are the sole remaining distinctively Liberal group and still quite averse to the Conservative party.

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20 The issue is slightly confused by the inclusion of Austria in this category. But most immigrants from Austria-Hungary appear in the Eastern European category. Significant minorities of persons of Dutch and German ancestry are Catholic.

21 This is not an artifact of a concentration of such Canadians in the West. The degree of concentration tends to be overstated, and the ethnic coefficients are all estimated in models that include region of residence.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The most parsimonious interpretation of the rise and decline of the denominational cleavage in Canadian elections is in terms of competition over the ethnic content of Canadian identity. This is not to say that the country's religious camps were simply composites of different ethnic ancestry groups. Outside Quebec, there has always been considerable overlap in the origins of Canadian Catholics and Canadian Protestants. Concomitantly, each religious group was ethnically diverse. But Catholics, I propose, harboured a less British view of the nationality. This cashed out in conflict over Canadian involvement overseas and over the symbolism of the state. The evidence I muster for the claim is indirect, but compelling. Some involves detailed analysis of the narratives of key political moments. Most importantly, however, I show that religious gaps wax and wane quite precisely with shifts in the locus of identity conflict. Buttressing claims from analyses that focus on religion is evidence from ethnic identification, especially for the shifts in the identity margin after 1965.

The account has implications beyond the immediate case. On denomination and party identity, the Canadian case suggests a starting point for analyses of other comparable systems. Australia had a Great War conscription crisis on the Canadian scale; indeed, the electorate rejected the move twice. The union movement was powerfully implicated in the conflict but so was the Catholic Church. Although we think of the Australian party system as quintessentially class-based, Johnston (forthcoming) shows that it also had a secondary basis in religious denomination--and that, as in Canada, this basis has attenuated. Broadly speaking, the same was--and is--true for the US (Johnston and Shafer 2008). This seems like fertile ground for comparative research.

It should not be lost on readers that the narrative in this paper has implications for normative assessment of the party system. Cairns (1968) articulated a widely held view that the system encourages division, not cohesion. The record of history is more equivocal. He lays much emphasis on Liberal rhetoric in the Quebec in the 1920s, on portrayals of Arthur Meighen as the devil incarnate with designs on the province's young manhood. Such rhetoric hardly seems helpful to the cause of national unity. Note, however, its content: it is about conscription in the aftermath of war. By this time, the Conservative party had largely wasted its assets in the province. The tone of the party system in the earlier, no less bitter conflicts of the 1880s and 1890s was very different, and Siegfried caught the early stage of the transition. So some periods in Canadian history suggest that the system encourages ethnic and sectional antagonism but other periods suggest the opposite. Why?

Where antagonism is encouraged it is not obvious that the protagonist is the winner. In foreign affairs, I think it is fair to say the Liberal party sought the centre more often than the Conservatives did. Certainly this seems true of the South African War and the Second World War, and may generally be correct for the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. The First World War is a more equivocal case, I think. If this characterization is correct, what then should we make of the Conservative party? Given the Liberal party's dominance over the entire 20th century, it is hard to accuse the Conservatives of making just a cynical electoral gamble.

Finally, in each of this paper's figures, Liberals are typically polarized against Conservatives on at least one major ethnoreligious dimension of the social structure for at least some of the time. Other parties, notably the CCF/NDP, fall in the middle. Had we focussed on the system's economic dimensions, we would have seen a different picture.[22] Controlling a pole on at least one major dimension is critical to party survival. It helped for decades that the Liberals were the party of choice for a religious bloc representing nearly half the population. Reading down the figures suggests that for the 21st century, only one group remained distinctively Liberal: persons of non-European ancestry. Of course, the last data point in this paper's exhibits is 2008.

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22 Johnston (forthcoming) show some of these, with the NDP clearly anchoring a pole on the union/non-union contrast, with the Conservatives (Reform/Alliance in the 1990s) controlling the other pole.

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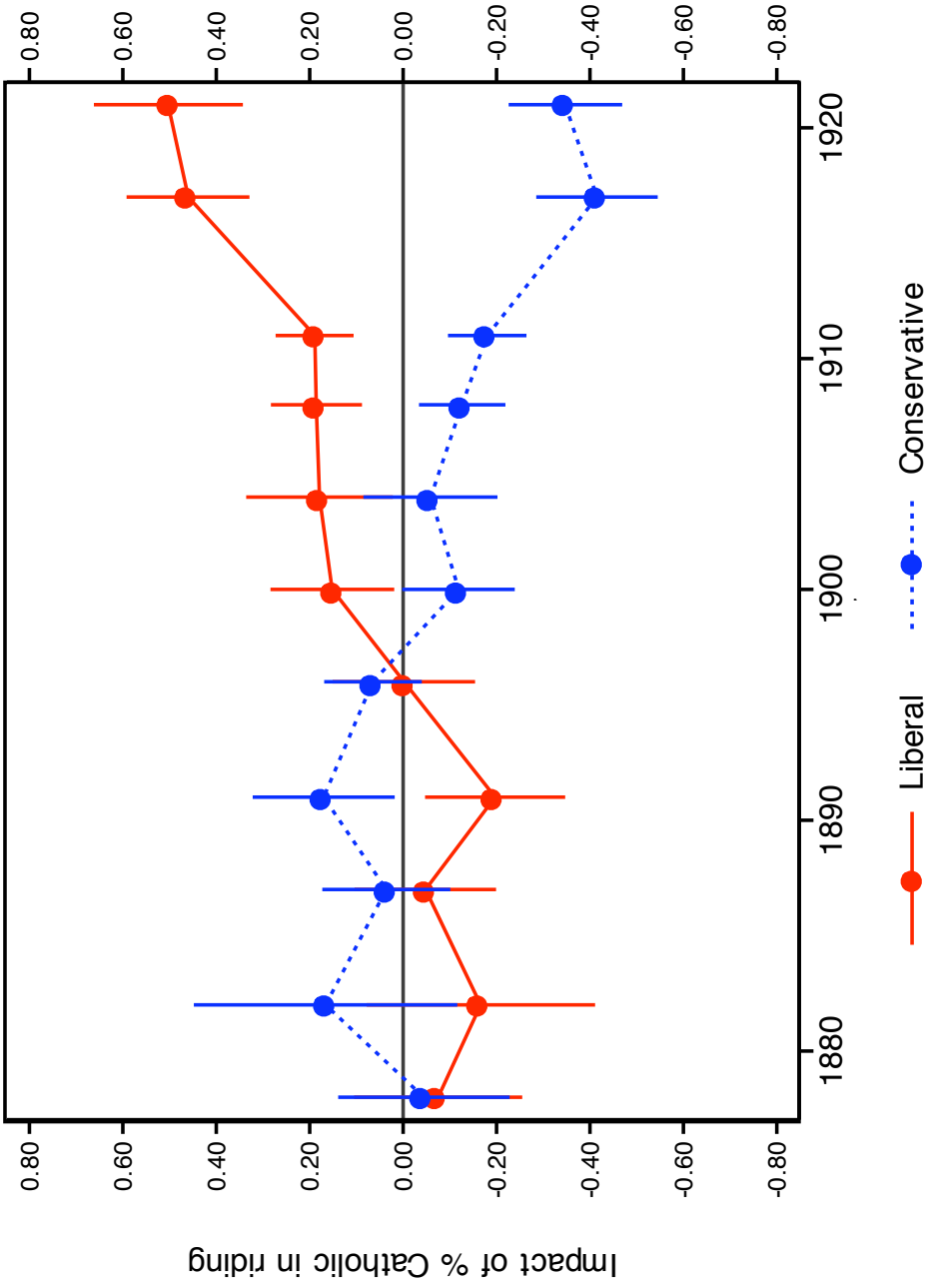Ward, Norman. 1950. *The Canadian House of Commons: Representation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Figure 1. Imperial Relations and the Priming of Religion, Canada outside Quebec

Note: Entries are values for coefficients from OLS regression. Vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. Includes ridings won by acclamation. Original estimations available from the author.
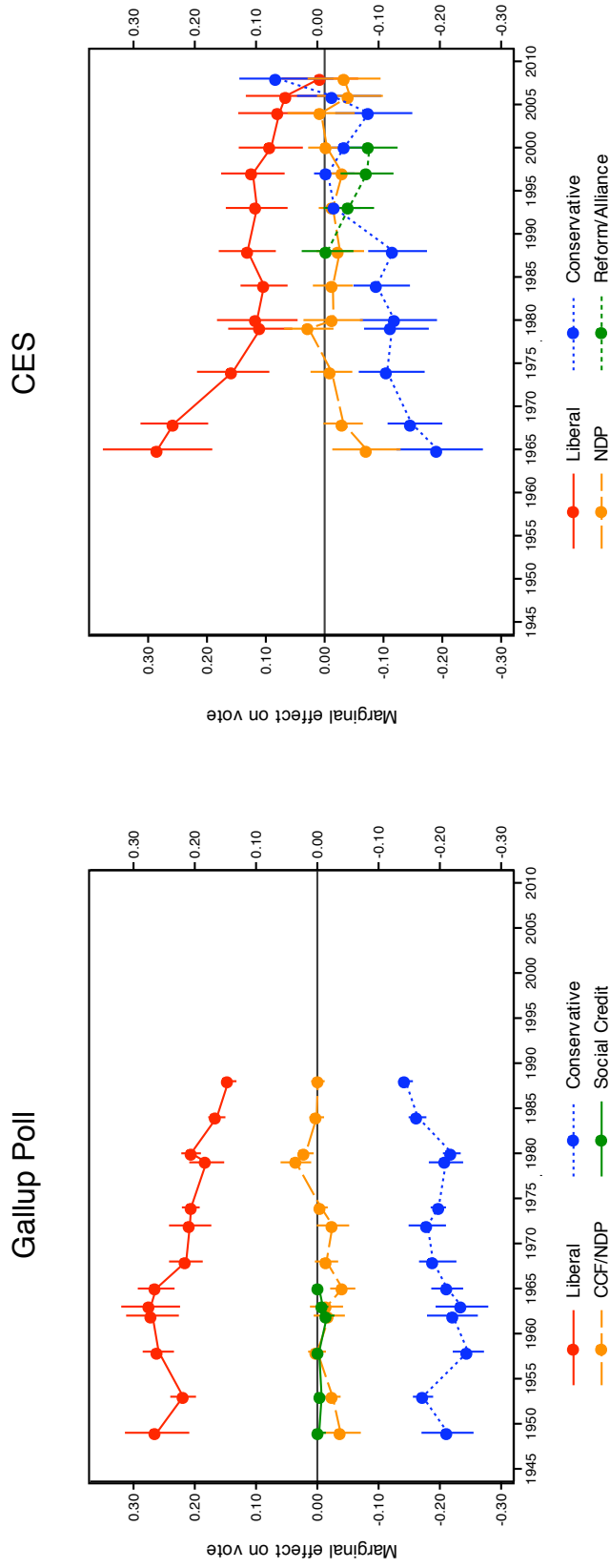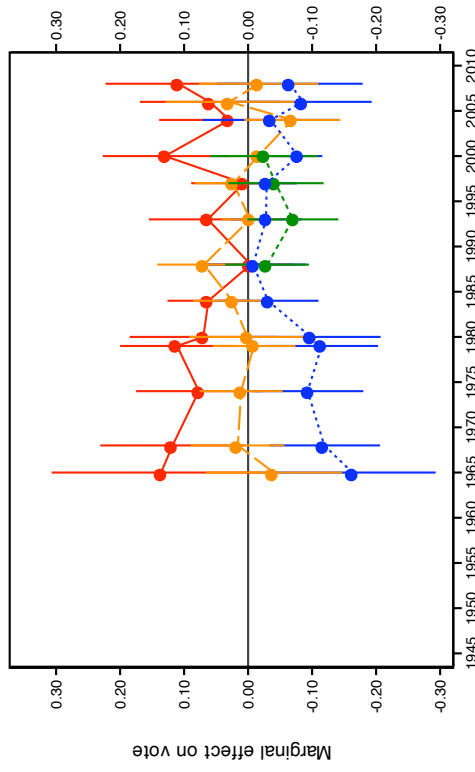
Figure 2. Catholics and Party Support, Canada Outside Quebec
Canadian Gallup Polls, 1949-88; Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2008

Note: Entries are shifts induced by membership in group as compared with reference categories. Vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. Original estimations available from the author.
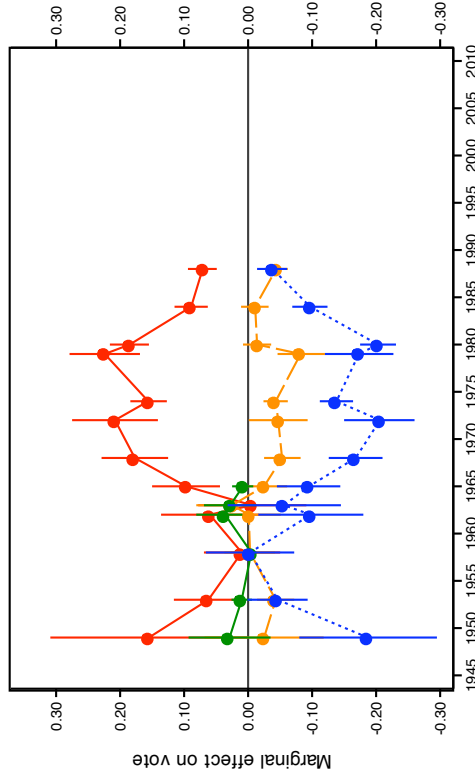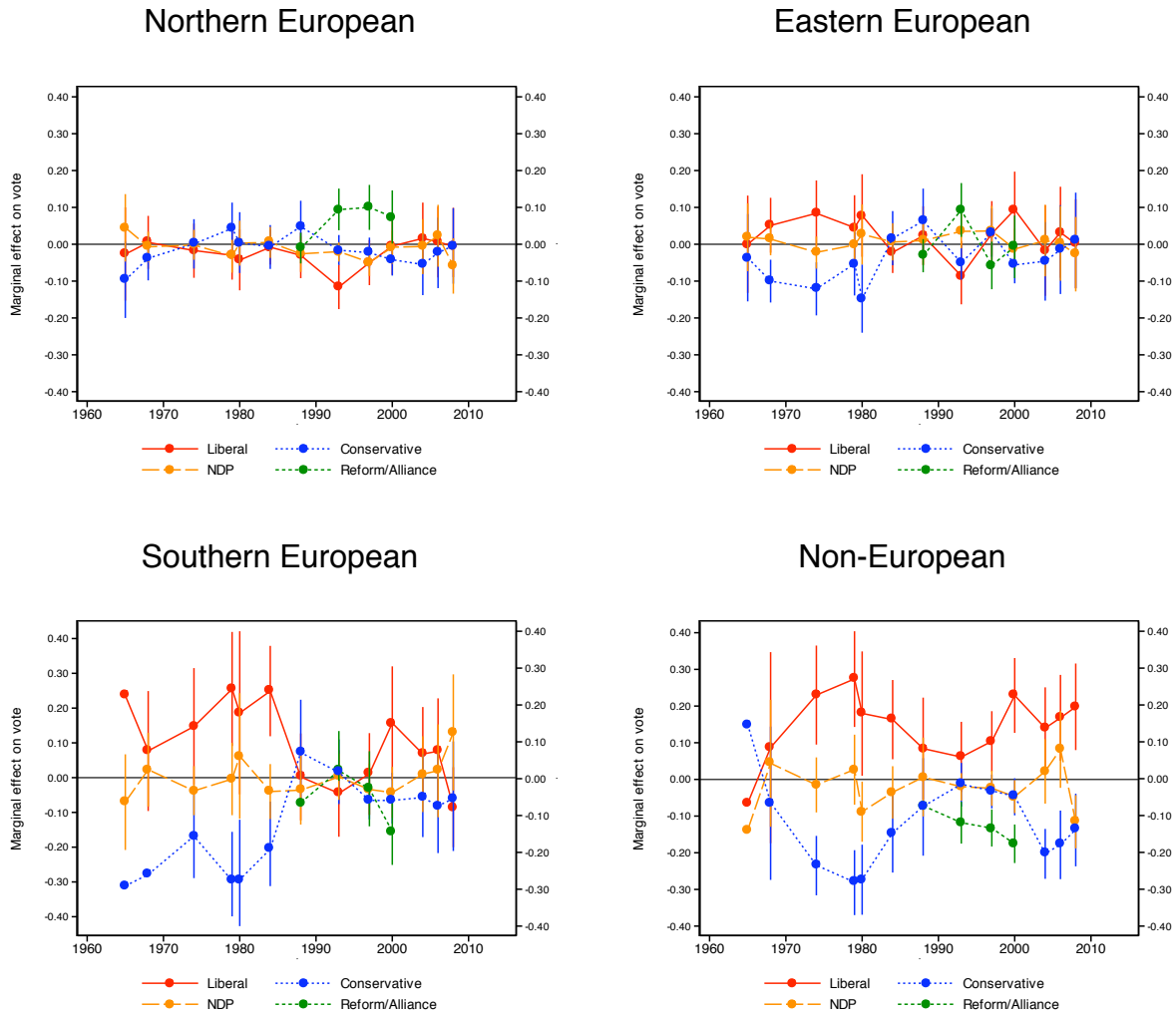
**Figure 3. French Canadians and Party Support, Canada Outside Quebec
Canadian Gallup Polls, 1949-88; Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2008**

Note: Entries are shifts induced by membership in group as compared with reference categories. Vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. Extracted from full estimations. See Appendix. Original estimations available from the author.

Figure 4. Ethnicity and Party Support, Canada Outside Quebec
Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2008

Note: Entries are shifts induced by membership in group as compared with reference categories.
Vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. Original estimations available from the author.