Did They Mind the Gap? The Distance between the BQ and Quebec Voters Over Time[*]

Jean-Philippe Gauvin

Université de Montréal

Chris Chhim

McGill University

Mike Medeiros

Université de Montréal

Abstract

Due to a crumbling of the Bloc Québécois' (BQ) electoral support, the results of the May 2, 2011 election were stunning for a party that had dominated Quebec's federal electoral landscape for years. Whereas most commentators concentrated on what had happened in the 2011 election itself, a more thorough and grounded interpretation of the results should examine not only the evolution of the BQ electorate over time, but also the party's positioning. Consequently, the relationship between party and voter merits a more detailed study. Has the gap between the typical BQ voter and the party increased, decreased, or stayed the same over time? Making use of Canadian Election Studies and BQ platforms covering the period from 2006 to 2011, this paper explores the ways in which the BQ electorate, as well as BQ issue positions, might have evolved throughout the party's history. Empirical results suggest that ideological distances between the NDP and Quebec voters have indeed decreased over the years, whereas the Bloc has distanced itself from voters. Regression analysis show that ideological distances between party and voters are a significant predictor of vote.

On 17 April 2011, in the middle of a federal election campaign, Gilles Duceppe was invited to speak at the Parti Québécois convention. The Bloc Québécois (BQ) looked as if it was coasting to another successful electoral result, once again on its way to dominate federal politics in Quebec. Duceppe stated in his speech: "Avec un Bloc fort à Ottawa, le PQ au pouvoir au Québec, tout redevient possible [With a strong Bloc in Ottawa, the PQ in power in Quebec, everything becomes possible]" (Nicoud, 2011). Although these words were warmly welcomed by the supporters present, they might have drastically changed the dynamics of the campaign and the future of his party (Fournier et al., Forthcoming).

On election night two weeks later, the BQ was left with only a four seats; Duceppe was defeated in the riding he had ruled over for two decades; and the New Democratic Party (NDP), historically an afterthought in Quebec, was the new dominant force in Quebec federal politics. This success led them to become Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in Ottawa. The political ground had shaken as an "orange wave" had rolled through Quebec. These results left many citizens, pundits, and political scientists wondering what had happened. How did the fortunes of the BQ and the NDP reverse in Quebec?

This paper seeks to explore this question in order to better understand the results of the last federal election in Quebec. We do so by examining voter-party congruence between the BQ and the NDP within the Quebec electorate in the last three federal elections (2006-2011). Specifically, voter-party congruence is explored through a three-dimensional model, examining voter-party congruence on economic, social, and centralization ideological dimensions. In essence, this study aims to understand if the parties "minded the gap" with the electorate in Quebec. The findings, firstly, highlight that examining the structure of partisan competition in Quebec through a three-dimensional framework leads to a richer understanding of electoral behaviour in Quebec. They also, secondly, demonstrate that the evolution of voter-party congruence on the federal stage in Quebec is a factor in determining vote choice, which helps to better understand the performance of the BQ and the NDP in the most recent Canadian federal election.

The paper will proceed in three parts. First, we will briefly review the literature on the role that ideology plays in linking voters to political parties. We will also touch upon the uniqueness of partisan competition in Quebec and why a slightly more intricate view of the political space should be considered. Next, we carry out an empirical analysis making use of election survey data and political party manifestos from the past three Canadian federal elections in order to position both parties and voters within the same political space in Quebec. We are particularly interested in the distance between the median voter in Quebec and how their relationship with various political parties has evolved over time. Our conclusion will make an argument for seeing partisan competition in Quebec in a different light and highlight the importance of the voter-party linkage.

The Ideological Link

For several decades, researchers have attempted to explain the factors leading individuals to vote for a party or a candidate. The result has been a rich body of academic literature

that sheds light on a complicated process and highlights how multiple variables influence vote choice. Few theories of vote choice emphasize the multifaceted nature of voting better then Campbell and colleagues' (1960) seminal "funnel of causality". This theory presents a streamlined explanation of how long-term variables, such as socio-demographic characteristics, lead into more transient factors, such as current issues and candidates, to ultimately influence the elector's choice of party or candidate.

However, the role of ideology in this process has long been underappreciated. Erikson and colleagues (2001) found that ideological proximity is one of the strongest determinants of vote choice. This electoral impact might be explained by recent findings which conclude that ideological tendencies are developed quite early in one's life (Jost, 2006; Jost, Federico and Napier, 2009). If this is the case, then early ideological development would lead ideology to be located quite high in the funnel of causality (Dalton, 2008). Therefore, in a political era in which the electoral influence of ethnic and class divisions have been called into question, the role of ideology might be determinant.

Ideology can work very much like ethnicity or class as a heuristic shortcut which helps individuals navigate what can sometimes be overwhelming political landscapes by using their political likes and dislikes (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1993; Budge, 1994); this would in turn allow individuals to develop not only positive feelings toward a party or candidate but negative ones as well (Medeiros and Noël, Forthcoming). Voters use the ideological distinctiveness of political parties to decide for which party to vote for (Nie, Verba and Petrocik, 1979; Neuman, 1986; Rusk, 1987). Ideology thus becomes a crucial element that binds political parties and voters.

Having established that voters tend to choose candidates who are ideologically closer to themselves, it is only normal that, in turn, political elites would want to maximize their electoral chances by responding to changes in public opinion (Downs, 1957; McDonald and Budge, 2005; Kang and Powell Jr, 2010; Warwick, 2011; Wlezien and Soroka, 2012). Johnston and colleagues (1992) describe this process as a veritable loop of influence between the electorate and politicians, where parties chose strategies based on the opinion structure of voters. This results in a response from the electorate, which is ultimately followed by parties revising their original positions. To put it simply, ideology helps shape political landscapes both in what is offered and what is demanded (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2006).

Most often, ideology is presented through a one-dimensional left-right axis. As Albright (2010) explains, this is done in order to simplify the complexities of politics and to allow for comparisons. Yet, the true explicative utility of one single ideological dimension to position and explain politics has been called into question. Early on, Stokes (1963) called the existence of a single dimension of politics as simply being false. This point of view that a one-dimensional ideological axis' is unable to account for important political cleavages in societies and thereby leads to a significant loss of information is shared by several scholars (Seliger, 1975; Castles and Mair, 1984; Inglehart, 1990; Grendstad, 2003; Benoit and Laver, 2006; Albright, 2010). Due to the aforementioned shortcomings of the one-dimensional ideological axis, many scholars have pushed forward and analyzed politics through two ideological dimensions (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Seliger, 1975; Janda, 1980; Inglehart, 1990; Evans,

Heath and Lalljee, 1996). Generally, these two dimensions have been presented in terms of a left-right economic dimension, measuring the desired degree of governmental economic intervention and acceptable income differences between individuals, and a liberal-conservative social values dimension, measuring the acceptance of social change and individual rights.

Nonetheless, even a two-dimensional political optic might not suffice to truly capture the political landscape of a specific country or region. Barnea and Schwartz (1998) state that the "unique history, geography, and social circumstances of each country sometimes introduces issues into the political debate that give rise to additional dimensions on which parties adopt different ideological stands." These multiple dimensions are at once shared by both the electorate and its representatives (Frognier, 1976). Consequently, the complexity of political landscapes leads to a call to not only go beyond the one-dimensional analysis model, but also require to go beyond the two-dimensional model as well.

No situation might warrant going beyond the two-dimensional optic more than electoral landscapes in which ethno-regional divides are salient factors. For example, in sub-state regions with strong regional identities (often in opposition to the central state), the centre-periphery dimension of politics can come to the forefront of electoral competition. Opinions on this scale can range from complete centralisation to complete decentralisation (i.e. independence). Contemporary movements in areas such as Catalonia, Scotland, Quebec, and Flanders have shown that in some instances relations between a central state and its regions may be a politically sensitive issue (Keating, 2001) In such cases, a third dimension should be added to the analysis to account for this additional axis of competition. As a result, the positioning of parties along this decentralization dimension is important for electoral success (Young and Bélanger, 2008). On the other side of the voting relationship, the sovereignty dimension may serve a vital political information role in allowing voters to disentangle and decide between parties who are similar on the left-right and/or liberal-conservative dimensions (Pallarés, Lago and Muñoz, 2006). Therefore, not only is it important to go beyond the one-dimensional view of ideology, it some cases, up to a third dimension becomes a critical element in understanding a political environment, especially when it comes to understanding the complexities of voter-party congruence.

Federal Elections in Quebec in 3D

Canada is an example of a place where one or two political dimensions do not appropriately capture the political dynamics at work because of the national unity question revolving around Quebec. The province is a place in which the sovereignty dimension is quite salient; and, therefore, would greatly benefit from a three-dimensional approach to modelling party competition.

Ideology plays an important role in Canadian politics. Cross and Young (2002) state that the country has been distancing itself from its traditional brokerage model, in which the impact of ideology is said to be limited and is "increasingly displaying characteristics of a more ideologically structured politics." This situation goes beyond the left-right divide, both in terms of economic and social preferences, and incorporates a centre-periphery dimension.

In contemporary Quebec, this can be renamed as a sovereignty dimension, with this third ideological dimension being an integral part of Quebec politics, in both provincial and federal arenas. Nationalist sentiment has played an important electoral role in Quebec long before its present-day independentist form (Lemieux, 1969). The Parti Québécois and its federal counterpart, the BQ, were not the first parties to use Quebeckers' sense of distinctiveness and desire for decentralization/autonomy to garner support in the province's political landscape. However, in recent years, positioning on the sovereignty dimensions has been shown to be the strongest determinant of vote choice in Quebec, both at the federal and provincial levels (Blais, 2002; Bélanger and Nadeau, 2009). Collette and Pétry (Forthcoming) contend that in Quebec the sovereignty axis is the most ideologically important dimension in order to distinguish the parties between them.

Yet, sovereignty is not the only salient dimension in Quebec federal politics. The economic and social dimensions have also been salient political guides (Blais, 2002; Cross and Young, 2002; Nevitte and Cochrane, 2007). All three political dimensions play important roles in the relationship between voters and parties in Quebec federal politics. This might be especially true when it comes to the BQ and the NDP (Cochrane, 2010).Both parties are portrayed as being left-of-center; in fact, so much so that Gagnon and Hérivault (2007) state that if it were not for the BQ's stance on sovereignty, it could be equated with the NDP. While ideological similarities might exist on one or two dimensions, the two parties have not come into direct electoral competition until the most recent federal election. Whereas the NDP had traditionally struggled in Quebec, the BQ had become a stable force in federal politics by integrating a broad range of Canadian issues, defending Quebec's interests in Ottawa, and staying a true sovereignist party (Young and Bélanger, 2008). On the other hand, the NDP's history in Quebec was one of disappointment, notably due to a disconnect between the party's leadership and the realities of Quebec (Whitehorn, 2007).

However, this situation seems to have been completely undone by the results of the last federal election. The once-dominant BQ has "capsized by the orange wave" (Bélanger and Nadeau, 2011) whereas the formerly insignificant NDP triumphantly uses Quebec as its new base in its attempt to push forward and form a government. But what could account for such a sudden and drastic change to the federal political landscape in Quebec? Two years after the elections, many still ponder this question and a significant explanation has yet to be offered.

Over the last decade, voting behaviour in Quebec in federal was rife with volatility (Gidengil et al., 2012). The NDP had made radical changes in attempts to woo Quebec; notably through the Sherbrooke Declaration. Could the juncture between a dynamic electorate and a changing party landscape have contributed to the shocking results? We believe that a three-dimensional examination of voter-party congruence for these two parties in Quebec might shine new light on what remains a mystery.

Two to Tango: A Voter-Party Two-Step Dance

So marginal were the NDP's fortunes in Quebec that until the Jack Layton era few electoral analyses of federal elections in Quebec even included the party. But something fundamental changed in Quebec federal politics during the 2011 election. Was the rise of the NDP and the decline of the BQ foreseeable in the parties' and the electorates' ideological stances?

Fournier et al. (Forthcoming) argue that the NDP's platforms had shown little change in the last few elections. In terms of the party's traditional economic and social stances, it is difficult to take issue with this argument. However, the NDP's position toward Quebec had in recent years undergone major changes. Three key events seem to have gradually brought Quebeckers and the NDP together. Firstly, in 2003, the party chose a native Quebecker, Jack Layton, as its leader. An additional positive factor for Layton was his ability to speak French; though not perfectly fluent, he was more comfortable with the language than the party's two previous leaders. Secondly, the NDP expressly courted Quebec voters with the Sherbrooke Declaration of 2005. In this document, the party distanced itself from its centralizing past, acknowledged the distinctiveness of Quebec, and promised to recognize the province's secession if the sovereignist option received 50%+1 of the votes in a referendum. This was a clear attempt to redefine itself as a party that was on Quebec's side. Finally, in 2007, Thomas Mulcair was elected in a by-election under the NDP banner in the Quebec riding of Outremont. The new NDP MP not only gave the party a new seat, he also gave increased attention to the party in Quebec. Contrary to the history of the party in Quebec, the 2000s were a time when the NDP was becoming increasingly more appealing in the province.

As for the BQ, the trend is quite different. After an initially difficult post- Bouchard era, the BQ returned to electoral heights in the 2004 federal election. On the winds of the sponsorship scandal, the party was able to match its success of the 1993 election. Afterwards, it has suffered a steady decline in votes, though the decline in seats was not really felt because of the vote split of federalist parties (Bélanger and Nadeau, 2006).

This brief overview of the recent changes to the BQ and the NDP in Quebec, along with the importance highlighted of voter-party congruence, allows us to put forward a hypothesis in order to explain the electoral fortunes of both parties in Quebec during the 2011 federal election:

H1: *Voter-party congruence helps to explain recent results of federal elections in Quebec. Specifically, the NDP and the Quebec federal median voter moved closer together whereas the BQ became more distant from the Quebec federal median voter.*

Data

In order to test our hypothesis, the electorate and the parties were positioned along a social dimension, an economic dimension and a centralization dimension. The electorate's positions were discerned from election survey data and the political parties were positioned via content analyses of party manifestos. The measures of both parties and voters were then standardized

onto the same scale in all three dimensions, thereby allowing us to track any changes in the gap between parties and voters over the past few federal elections.

Measuring Voters' Ideology

Ideological positions for voters were first obtained using data from the Canadian Election Study (CES). However, using longitudinal national election data can be challenging in two ways. Question wording is not always systematic across the years, so using electoral data in a longitudinal manner limits comparability, as questions either change their wording or disappear altogether over time. Also, the wave (campaign, post-election, web or mail-back) in which the survey question finds itself can also heavily impact comparison because of the difference in respondents for each wave. These disparities make it difficult to compare answers across elections. In spite of these structural limitations, we were successful in selecting questions that are not only consistent across CES surveys, but also adequately capture the economic, social, and centralization attitudes necessary to test our hypothesis .

As mentioned earlier, using three scales rather than a traditional one-dimensional left-right self-placement continuum can provide a more nuanced picture of the Quebec partisan landscape. However, this approach is not without its own methodological issues. Fournier et al. (2011) offer a convincing demonstration that the impact of ideological self-placement is conditional on the placement of the question in the survey. Powell (2009) also finds that voters tend to respond to this question in terms of a local discourse, and thus usually place themselves toward the centre of the continuum. These findings emphasize the importance to go beyond subjective self-placement and look at more objective ideological dimensions in the form scales to improve internal and external validity.

Consequently, we created three distinct summative scales in order to measure the three dimensions of Quebec ideology: social, economy and centralization. In order to maintain comparability, the scales were created with the same items for each election. We analysed the vote in Quebec for the last three federal elections, namely 2006, 2008 and 2011. Previous CES surveys did not offer enough comparable questions; therefore, it was not possible to examine a longer period. All scales were validated using factor analysis and then tested for reliability.

The first scale aims at measuring the social dimension of liberal and conservative positioning. The second scale seeks to ascertain the economic dimension of left and right positioning. For this dimension, we use Gidengil et al. (2012) "market liberalism index". The third scale garners the centralization dimension of ideology in Quebec. While closely related to sovereignty, it also includes items connected to issues of centralization and the balance of power between the federal government and the provinces. All items were rescaled from -1 to 1 so that -1 represented, liberal, left and decentralization positions respectively and 1 referred to conservative, right and centralization placements respectively[1].

Together, the three scales offer three important components of the ideological map in Quebec. While the scores of individuals on those scales are informative by themselves,

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[1]For more information into the composition of the scales, please see the Appendix.

political parties' ideological positioning must be added to the map so as to have a clearer idea of partisan competition in the Quebec electoral space.

Measuring Parties' Ideology

In order to position political parties on the aforementioned three-dimensional space over time, political party manifestos were used as a way of obtaining a non-reactive and reliable means of tracking party positioning over time. Given that manifestos are approved by party elites and ratified in party conventions, they can be seen as authoritative statements of a political party's positions. Furthermore, electoral manifestos are issued at regular intervals; this means that we can longitudinally examine changes in party positioning by looking at one consistent source. While some criticism often levelled against studies making use of political party manifestos focuses around the idea that no voter ever really reads a party manifesto or that manifestos are too vague to bind parties to do anything once in government (Hofferbert, Klingemann and Volkens, 1995), others have responded that the media is able to serve as a vehicle for the content of electoral manifestos during election campaigns. While there are downsides to using electoral manifestos as a way of positioning political parties, they are outweighed by their benefits in terms of methodological consistency and source reliability that may not be present in other techniques for measuring political parties' positions, such as elite interviews or expert surveys (Castles and Mair, 1984; Laver and Hunt, 1992).

Perhaps the most well-known example of using manifestos to measure positions of political parties over time is the Manifesto Research on Political Representation project (MARPOR), more commonly known under its old name of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). The project makes use of quantitative content analysis of political parties' electoral manifestos from over 50 countries from 1945 to the present (Volkens et al., 2013; Klingemann et al., 2006; Budge et al., 2001). While this award-winning project is certainly remarkable for its rigor and consistency for such a time-intensive endeavour, numerous criticisms have nonetheless been levelled at the project. Most importantly, Laver and Garry (2000) point out that MARPOR coding does not always make use of bipolar (or tripolar) coding schemes; the range of policy positions does not explicitly range from fully "pro" to fully "con", with a well-defined "neutral" in between. One example relevant to this study is the MARPOR coding for federalism (code #301), which is defined as "support for federalism or decentralisation of political and/or economic power"; the antithesis of this code is not explicitly defined and is certainly needs to be defined if one is looking to position political parties on a scale of centralization. While this has been addressed by the researchers at the Regional Manifesto Project (RMP), the project is still in its early stages and only covers regional elections in Spain and the United Kingdom from 2008 to the present (Alonso, Gomez and Cabeza, 2013).

In order to position political parties, we have used the WordScores approach put forth by Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003). This technique is certainly a powerful "language-blind" technique that uses "words as data" for deriving policy dimensions from any type of political text and consists of generating dissimilarity and similarity matrices for sets of political texts. This approach has been had a great deal of success in scaling political parties' positions in a variety of contexts (Laver and Benoit, 2003; Klemmensen, Hobolt and Hansen, 2007). For

the purposes of this study, we obtained Bloc Québécois and NDP French-language electoral manifestos from the 2006, 2008, and 2011 Canadian federal elections in digital format, from which the actual text was extracted. We then selected a series of "reference texts" against which all the political party manifestos in our corpus would be compared. In order to assign these texts a particular reference score, we consulted an expert survey conducted by François Pétry, which evaluated political parties' positioning on a variety of issues for the 2008 Canadian federal election. Thus, the manifestos issued by the political parties for the 2008 election can be assigned a series of issue-specific reference scores provided by Pétry's 2008 expert survey. This is particularly important, as these reference scores allow the WordScores program to calculate a score of how similar a given manifesto is when compared with the reference texts. Thus, it is possible to generate a measure where to position the 2006 Bloc Québécois manifesto along the economic axis using the reference scores assigned to the 2008 Bloc Québécois, NDP, Liberal, and Conservative manifestos. Consequently, we were able to use a quantitative and computer-assisted technique to position Bloc Québécois and NDP electoral manifestos covering the period 2006-2011 along our three main axes of interest. This will allow us to not only track changes in the party's positioning over time, but also to bring in electoral data to longitudinally map the gap between party and voters.

Using Scales as Axes in a 3D Coordinate System

Most studies usually use ideological scales as predictors in regression models, combined with a series of controls (Gidengil et al., 2012; Fournier et al., Forthcoming). The variables are usually unconditional independent variables, meaning that their substantive interpretation will always capture the effect of a single predictor while controlling for the effects of the other predictors. But the scales used in this paper are related to each other by the fact that they are three mutually-constituent components of ideology in Quebec. Thus, modelling their effect as unconditional independent variables would be incorrect.

Instead, we conceive the scores obtained from the scales as sets of coordinates in a three-dimensional system. In other words, the scales are used as axes in a 3D Cartesian space. This enables us to pinpoint the position of voters and parties in the same ideological space. But more than a simple visual representation of voter and party ideology, this approach allows us to measure the ideological distance between voters and parties. This is done by measuring the magnitude of the vector that connects an individual to a party in the 3D environment where Soc_i and Soc_p are the scores on the social axis for a given individual and party, $Econ_i$ and $Econ_p$ are the scores on the economic axis for a given individual and party and Cen_i and Cen_p are the scores on the centralization axis for a given individual and party. The score derived from this formula is used as the ideological distance from one individual to a specific party. Therefore, each voter has different distance scores, one for each party. Those distances can then be used in regression analyses as independent predictors.

$$d\overrightarrow{IP} = \sqrt{(Soc_p - Soc_i)^2 + (Econ_p - Econ_i)^2 + (Cen_p - Cen_i)^2}$$

Figure 1: Two-Dimensional Representations of Quebec Voters, 2006- 2011 Canadian Federal Elections
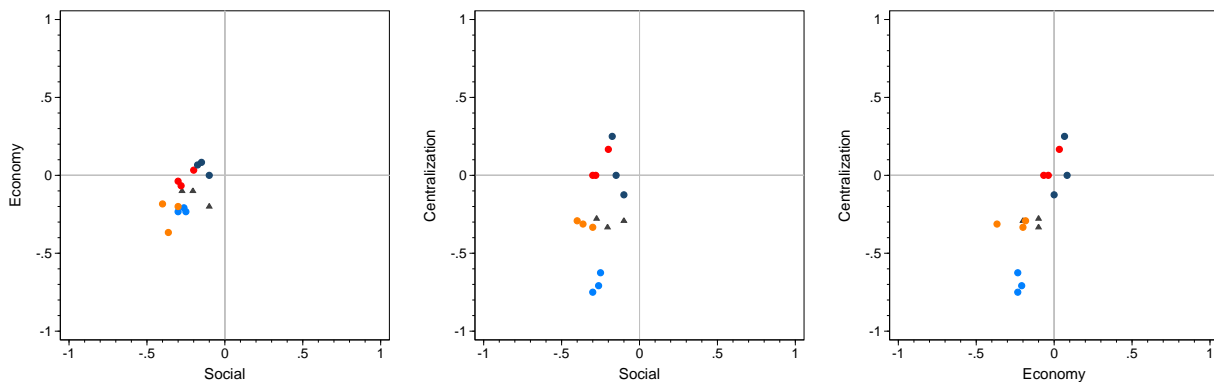

Results

It was noted in the previous sections that ideology in Quebec could not be understood in its entirety without taking a centralization-decentralization axis into account. Figure 1 provides for a more robust demonstration. This figure is a visual representation of median voters' positioning according to the party they voted for and the year in which the election was held. Each data point represents the attitudes of the median voter for a particular party during a particular election, as gleamed from CES data. Thus, each party has three data points of the same colour, corresponding to the 2006, 2008, and 2011 elections, respectively. As we see in the first graph, in Figure 1, simply scattering results across the social and economic dimensions does not provide a lot of variation. However, the two other graphs show the importance of the centralization axis in correctly assessing ideology. Voters are much more varied on that axis, which contributes in clearly defining niches for the different party electorates. This is consistent with past findings which conclude that the issue of sovereignty is a strong determinant of vote choice in Quebec at the federal level (Blais, 2002; Bélanger and Nadeau, 2009).

Putting the axes together in a 3D coordinate system offers a much better understanding of those niches. Logically, voters revolve around median voters (small grey dots), suggesting that, as expected, parties try to adapt in order to capture the median vote (Downs, 1957). As we see, party electorates are clearly entrenched in ideological positions, with little variation across years, at least for median scores. The only exception seems to be the Liberal (red) and Conservative (dark blue) electorate, which seem to have a wider dispersal across elections, while still remaining in a relatively constrained space. Liberal movement could also be due to difference in the party structure, for example different leaders for each election. Movement in the Conservative scores could be due to changes in party strategy relative to Quebec across

Figure 2: Three-Dimensional Representation of Quebec Voters, 2006- 2011 Canadian Federal Elections Voters Across Elections
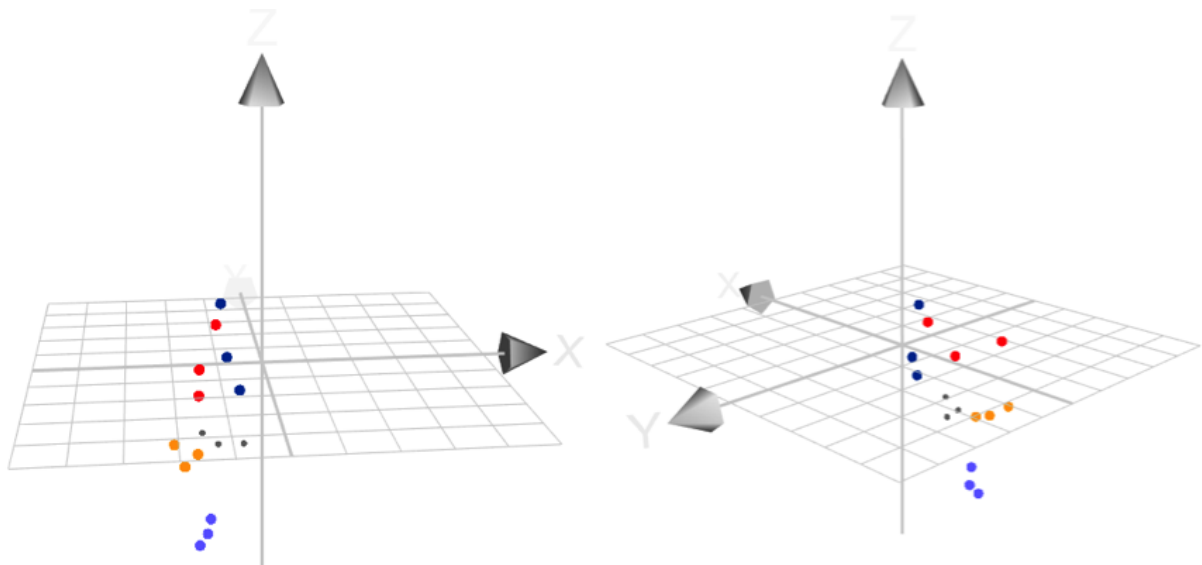
The left panel represents the the median voters position colour-coded by party and the median citizens position in grey, for the three elections. The right panel simply displays a rotated view of the figure.

the years. Indeed, if the CPC made "open federalism" a cornerstone of its strategy toward Quebec in 2006 (Montpetit, 2007), promises to give more power to Quebec have ceased over the years, possibly alienating some voters. Distance between the median of the Quebec voters and conservative voters has therefore increased over the years, going from 0.26 (2006) to 0.38 (2008) and 0.56 (2011), as conservative voters adopt a more centralizing stance.

But this information only refers to voters of their respective parties. To really understand how ideological distances convert into votes, it is necessary to compare voters with party positioning. Table 1 indicates the ideological distance between the median population score for each election year and the BQ and NDP positioned derived from their manifestos. The results, in line with the hypothesis, show that smaller ideological distances facilitate support for a party. For example, in the 2006 election, the distance between the BQ platform and the median Quebec voter was smaller than in other elections. The party obtained 42.1% of the vote share. The case for 2008 is less clear. Still, the NDP reduced the margin between itself and the BQ and gained 4.6% of vote shares during the election, going from 7.5% (2006) to 12.1% (2008) and even electing an MP in Quebec during a by-election. Finally, the 2011 election also indicates that ideological distance matters. The NDP platform's distance to the Quebec median voter is at its smallest, while the party raised its vote share to 42.9%. As these results indicate, the BQ and NDP switched their proximity to the median Quebec voter from 2006 to 2011; a finding which also matches the swap in voting results between both parties.

Table 1: Distance of Median Voter to Party			
	2006	2008	2011
BQ	0.17	0.60	0.36
NDP	0.31	0.55	0.16

While those results are interesting, it is necessary to keep in mind that median scores are not the most refined indicators to measure the effects of ideological distance. Indeed, descriptive statistics offer an interesting overview of what could be, but inferential statistics are needed in order to be more rigorous. Therefore, instead of simply taking into account the distance between the median scores and the party, we estimate the following logistic regression model:

$$\ln(\frac{Pr(Y=BQ)}{Pr(Y=NDP)}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 d_i BQ + \beta_2 d_i NDP + \beta_3 Educ_i + \epsilon$$

Where we estimate the probability that an individual votes for the BQ over the NDP, and where β_0 is an intercept, $\beta_1 d_i BQ$ is the ideological distance from the individual to the BQ platform in a given election, $\beta_2 d_i NDP$ is the ideological distance from the individual to the NDP platform in a given election, $\beta_3 Educ_i$ is a control for education and where e is an error term.

Table 2 presents results of the regression across the three elections. The results further support our hypothesis. Indeed, it suggests that ideological distances played a significant role in all three elections. Since reported coefficients are log-odds, they are harder to interpret substantively. However, coefficients with positive or negative signs indicate effects on the likelihood of voting BQ. More specifically, in 2006, the more their ideological distance with the BQ grows, the less likely respondents are to vote for the BQ over the NDP, while controlling for other factors. Inversely, the more the distance with the NDP grows, the more likely a respondent is to vote for the BQ. Consequently, in 2008 and 2011, as the ideological distance between the BQ and a respondent grows, this significantly reduces the likelihood of voting for the BQ. The reverse is also true for the NDP. Hence, the closer an individual is to a party, the more likely they are to vote for this party, at least in the case of the BQ versus the NDP. The intercept is also significant for 2008 and 2011. This means that in 2008, while controlling for the effect of other predictors, respondents were more likely to vote BQ than NDP to begin with. This seems logical, as the BQ gathered nearly 40% of the vote share. The reverse is true for 2011, meaning that people were more likely to vote for the NDP, as the party gathered nearly 43% of Quebec vote shares in the federal election. Education had no significant effect in any of the three elections.

The coefficient of discrimination (or pseudo R^2) is stable across elections, though the higher coefficient in 2008 and 2011 indicates that the two latter models have slighty better predictive power for the data[2]. These results thus allow us to accept the hypothesis (H1).

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[2]The results report Tjur (2009) as a pseudo R^2. This coefficient is preferred over more popular measures like McFadden's or Cox and Snell, because is it not based on the likelihood function and thus is more similar

Table 2: Likelihood of voting BQ rather than NDP

	2006 BQ/NDP	2008 BQ/NDP	2011 BQ/NDP
Dist. to BQ	-7.44*	-3.72***	-4.61***
	(2.90)	(0.66)	(0.57)
Dist. to NDP	9.38**	3.36***	5.95***
	(3.22)	(0.66)	(0.70)
Education	-3.24	-1.40	0.57
	(1.66)	(0.83)	(0.53)
Intercept	2.20	2.59***	-2.04***
	(1.33)	(0.79)	(0.48)
N	91	257	486
pseudo R^2	0.154	0.209	0.187

Standard errors in parentheses

Tjur's coefficient of discrimination reported as pseudo R^2

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Voter-party congruence, more specifically the distance between the electorate and the BQ and the NDP, allows to better understanding recent federal elections in Quebec; it especially allows to unravel some of the mystery surrounding the "orange wave".

Conclusion

The results of the 2011 federal election have marked the political landscape of Quebec. So drastic were the changes that they left many asking 'what happened?' How did the once dominant BQ become a shell of its once glory struggling to stay relevant whereas the once forgetful NDP presence in Quebec stormed to electoral dominance? This study sought to better understand the event so of 2 May 2011 by exploring voter-party congruence through a three dimensional ideological model.

Two main lessons can be drawn from the findings. Firstly, examining the structure of partisan competition in Quebec through a three-dimensional framework leads to richer and more nuanced explanations of electoral behaviour. Given that Quebec is a region where the centre-periphery cleavage is very prominent, this third axis should be taken into account alongside economic and social dimensions when considering the factors that influence both party competition and vote choice in the political space. As demonstrated by the differing

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to linear measures of fit. Tjur's coefficient is a difference in means of predicted values between the full model and the baseline model. For a more in-depth discussion of different pseudo R^2 measures, see Hu, Shao and Palta (2006).

axes in each of the diagrams in Figure 1, partisan competition in Quebec takes on differing dynamics depending on the ideological dimensions. When looking at only the social and economic axes, the BQ and NDP seemed to be very close to each other; however, after adding the third sovereignty dimension, the parties diverge greatly. Similarly, using the sovereignty dimension along with an economic or social axis does not provide as nuanced a view of party positioning as necessary.

The second lesson to draw from this analysis is a reiteration of the importance of voter-party congruence as a factor in determining vote choice. However, a three-dimension explanation may be useful here as well. While it may seem intuitive to state that voters will gravitate towards whichever party is closest to them, perhaps more traditional two-dimensional models were unable to account for space between voters and parties on different dimensions that were still quite important. Thus, a party and potential voters for that same party can seem to be congruent on the surface, but delving deeper into the complexities of political competition may show that the party and voters may not be so close together after all; it may be the case that a dimension that had not been accounted for merely gave the illusion of flatness and congruence when an ocean of difference separated the two entities. Nonetheless, this study is a first step in expanding upon and challenging the assumptions made in research on partisan behaviour. Further research is necessary to build upon these findings and present a more representative account of voter choices and party competition, particularly in a context where issues other than conventional economic and social matters can be salient. The results of this study seem to shine a new light on the surprising results of the 2011 federal election in Quebec. The voter-party congruence of the BQ and the NDP with the Quebec electorate greatly helps to explain the switch in electoral success of the two parties. Therefore, parties need to 'mind the gap'.

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Appendix

Social Scale
How do you feel about gays and lesbians?
How do you feel about racial minorities?
How do you feel about aboriginal people?
Do you think Canada should admit more immigrants, fewer immigrants, or about the same?

Economic Scale
When businesses make a lot of money, everyone benefits, including the poor. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

People who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not the system. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

How much do you think should be done to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor in Canada: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less, or much less?

The government should leave it entirely to the private sector to create jobs. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

If people can't find work in the region where they live, they should more to where the jobs are. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

Centralization Scale
How much should be done for Quebec: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less, or much less?

Are you very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat opposed, or very opposed to Quebec sovereignty, that is Quebec is no longer a part of Canada?

In general, does the federal government treat your province better, worse, or about the same as other provinces?

Which do you prefer: a strong federal government, or more power to the provincial governments?