Strong Institutions, Weak Parties:

The Paradox of Canadian Political Parties*

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Imagine a party system where the national leader of a party gives up his position to become the leader *of a different party* in a subnational legislature.

Initially, we might dismiss such an event as a quirk in the crazy world of politics. But when it happens *twice in three years and the two former national leaders wage a fierce electoral battle against each other*, there is a clear message that we are dealing with a loosely structured party system. In late 1995, Lucien Bouchard of the Bloc Quebecois gave up his position as leader of the opposition in Canada's federal Parliament to become the Premier of Quebec and leader of the governing Parti Quebecois. In April 1998, Jean Charest resigned as leader of the Progressive Conservative (PC) party in the federal Parliament to become the head of the Liberal party in Quebec.

Bouchard's new position reflected a strategic decision to position himself as the leader of an independent Quebec. Charest's move pointed to a hope that he would emerge as the savior of a Quebec federated with Canada, boosting his own sagging political fortunes in *some* party. His old party had dominated Canada for much of the 1980s, but had been reduced to two seats in the 1993 federal elections and had failed to regenerate itself significantly in 1997.

Both leaders' strategies point to what is perhaps the most salient feature of Canadian political life: Canada has one of the weakest party systems of any major democracy, *even though its institutions would lead us to expect a strong party system*. Unlike almost any other country, Canada's federal and provincial party systems have little in common. Citizens feel free to vote for one party at the federal level and another at the provincial level. They also feel free to identify with different federal and provincial parties. A lot of the time Canadians have

little choice. For much of the twentieth century, voters in Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec faced different sets of choices at the federal and provincial levels. But even when they have faced the same parties at both levels, Canadians have been fickle partisans. Not only do many support different parties at different levels, they also feel free to shift their party allegiances at each level. The loyalties can shift easily because they are not anchored in ideologies. Canadian parties, I shall argue, are not ideological because Canadians are not ideological. Canadians are divided more on questions of national unity and the major Canadian parties have sought to find ways to bridge these gaps, especially by downplaying other conflicts that might make for greater ideological distinctions.

The American Political Science Association's Committee on Political Parties bemoaned the irresponsibility of American parties in 1950. Fifty years later we look back at the APSA Committee's report and see that its concerns may apply better to Canada than to the United States. Over a century ago Woodrow Wilson (1913, originally published in 1885) worried that the American Congressional system did not promote strong parties as well as a parliamentary system does. Canada has a parliamentary system, and its parties are almost perfectly cohesive (Thomas, 1996, 277).

Yet, despite this outward appearance of vibrant partisanship, the Canadian party system fails most of the tests the APSA Committee set forth. Not only must an "effective" party system be cohesive, it must also be based upon a strong basis of party organization in the constituencies, a unity of purpose of parties throughout the nation, and differences in viewpoints between the major parties (APSA Committee on Political Parties, 1950, 1-3,18-19, 21-22, 46).

Canadian parties fail in every respect other than cohesion in legislative voting. The parliamentary parties largely don't exist outside Ottawa. Local party organizations control their own affairs, with only rare interference from the center (or the centre, as it is spelled above the 49th parallel). This localism is carried to extremes for federal and provincial parties. The APSA Committee worried that the California and Iowa Republican parties might take different positions on major issues, but it did not consider that federal and provincial parties that bear the same label might take positions that are hostile to each other. A federal party might even form an alliance with a party competing against its provincial namesake. Given this fluidity of party labels, it should hardly be surprising that party politics in Canada is not based upon ideology. The two major parties are "brokerage" institutions that are not readily distinguished by their policy positions.

Canadian parties thus seem to be very much like the American organizations that the APSA Committee, and many other observers, found so unsatisfactory. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Lord James Bryce (1916, 29) found the American party system wanting:

> ...the two great parties were like two bottles. Each bore a label denoting the kind of liquor it contained, but each was empty.

Not long afterward the Canadian political scientist G.V. Ferguson held that the two main parties "are great, nation-wide,easy going, omnibus vehicles, whose occupants often have difficulty in recognizing their fellow passengers or in understanding why the driver of the bus let them in" (1927, quoted in Meisel, 1992, 328). At mid-century, the great Canadian analyst of politics, Robert MacGregor Dawson (1949, 509) wrote of his country's party system:

> Platitudes are wrapped up in an elaborate coating of words and symbols in the

what a small extent the party is committed to definite action.

has another that makes them ideological eunuchs, a federal system. Yet, the United States too

and

cally distinctive in recent years. Structure, alone, is insufficient to account for the weakness of

Canadians to intertwine issues of ideology with partisanship. A coherent ideological party

society. I shall show how this "federalism of the mind" rather than of institutional structure

patterns of partisan respresentation will help make my case.

Canadian parties are weak because Canadian identity is weak. Canadian history has

not even agreement on what the proper question is. Most Quebec residents argue that the

Thus, Quebec, as the lone Francophone dominated province, has a status above and beyond

English nor French, hold that the country is a compact among the provinces. They are strongly

opposed to special status for Quebec.

The history of Canadian political parties has been intertwined with the struggle to establish a sense of national unity and culture in Canada–or at the very least to hold this fragile country together. Canada is a vast country with tremendous distances between the core and the periphery. The Prairie provinces have historically seen themselves as far removed –economically, socially, and politically–by their more prosperous and more powerful neighbors in Ontario and Quebec. Quebec has seen itself isolated linguistically. And the Atlantic provinces are poor by comparison with the rest of Canada.

So much Canadian policy-making from Confederation in 1867 onward has been designed to bring the country together. The country's first Prime Minister, John A. MacDonald, is as close to a national hero as Canada has. Engelmann and Schwartz (1975, 293) write:

> Confederation itself was...designed to united diverse peoples, regions, and interests. Other similar themes were the need for a national railway network, and the appeal of westward expansion

Brodie and Jenson (1989, 31) add: " The Canadian situation compels political parties to harmonize competing interests and, in so doing, try to perform the heroic role of promoting social stability in a divided polity."

Canadian parties have sought to be all things to all people in an attempt to forge a sense of national unity. Both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives occupy the same centrist ground in federal politics–alternating between "a kind of liberal conservatism and a kind of conservative liberalism" (McAllister, 1989, 508). While the Liberals tilt slightly to the left and the Progressive Conservatives slightly to the right, it is often difficult to tell who is

governing by the policy agenda of the day. The PC's initiated such public programs as the Canadian National Railway, the Ontario hydroelectric corporation, and the Canadian Broadcasting Company (Scarrow, 1965, 62).

There is little evidence that the party in power shapes the level of either taxation or spending or responses to such economic problems as inflation or unemployment (McAllister, 1989, 497). The Tories of the 1980s moved right on the economy, but foresook its stated opposition to deficit spending once in office (much like the Republicans in the United States); they also endorsed bilingualism and multiculturalism (Flanagan, 1995, 40-41). The current Liberal government came to power in 1993 promising "jobs, jobs, jobs," but has been just as ruthless as its PC predecessor in cutting the federal budget.

Parties serve as "brokers" between the many interests in Canadian society, holding the country together, rather than as centrifugal forces tearing it apart with appeals to class, region, or ideology (Clarke et al., 1991, 9-10). Both parties are committed to national unity, to redistribution from the wealthy center to the poorer peripheries through "transfer payments," and to an activist welfare state. These policies of redistribution help ensure that there is a weak class basis for Canadian parties (Clarke et al., 1991, 50; Englemann and Schwartz, 1975, 165; Scarrow, 1965, 72).

Over time, one federal party has been most successful in establishing itself as the party of government and national unity, the Liberals. The dominant pattern in Canadian politics is "between majority and minority Liberal governments" and "the line between the government and the Liberal party has become tenuous" (Meisel, 1992, 342). The Liberals have received more votes than any party in 13 of 17 elections since 1945–and 75 percent of the time they

have gathered more votes than *all other parties* (Nevitte et al., 2000, 67).

The frequency of minority governments has two countervailing consequences. On the one hand, minority status (or even bare majorities) makes party cohesion critical. A member who votes against her party can bring a government down (Thomas, 1996, 256). On the other hand, the fragility of a coalition makes compels the opposition to mimic the policy stands of the governing party. A campaign too heavily invested in ideology may scare off voters and put the governing party, generally the Liberals, back in power again. The dominance of the Liberals as the governing party also forces the PC's to move to the center. Parties don't become preeminent by being far away from public opinion. Minority parties are unlikely to upset the status quo by challenging the prevailing ideology.[1]

There *are* ideological appeals in Canadian politics. Sometimes an issue grabs the federal electorate *and divides the two major parties*, as the APSA Committe on Political Parties hoped might happen. Energy in 1980 (Uslaner, 1989) and trade in 1988 (Clarke et al., 1991, 81; Johnston et al., 1992) are the most prominent examples. The energy issue persisted for more than a decade: The Liberals adopted a National Energy Programme in 1980, and the Tory (PC) government elected in 1984 proceeded to dismantle most of it. The trade issue badly split the two parties, but the reborn Liberal majority in 1993 got religion and pursued an open market agenda with almost the same fervor as its PC predecessor.

Most of the time, ideological appeals have been left to minor parties, representing a hodge-podge of left- and right-wing populism. It is often difficult to tell the difference between where the left leaves off and the right begins. The Progressive Party started as a farmer-labor alliance in Alberta and then broke into the United Farmers of Alberta and two smaller factions

that ultimately joined with the federal Liberals. The United Farmers were the spiritual and organizational predecessors of the right-populist Social Credit and the left-populist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The CCF ultimately became the New Democrats, with ties to farmers and unions. Social Credit, with its fundamentalist message, took root throughout the West, becoming the leading provincial party in Alberta and alternating in power with the New Democrats in British Columbia for about a half century (see Dawson, 1949, 511-516). It begat the contemporary Reform party in federal politics.[2]

Federal politics has, until recently, been dominated by the two major parties. The more ideological minor parties are relegated to the fringes of federal politics. Even then, their appeals are not always as pure as their rhetoric sometimes makes them seem. The New Democrats appeal to voters who are demographically rather similar to those of the major parties; in recent years, they have downplayed their ideology just as the two bigger parties do (Pammett, 1987; Tanguay, 1992, 473). And much of the rhetoric of the populist parties is often difficult to categorize on a standard left-right continuum. The Reform party, which began in the 1990s as a protest against demands by Quebec for more autonomy and became the official opposition in 1997, has brought forth much conservative rhetoric. Yet, its leader, Preston Manning, denies that it has an ideological foundation (Flanagan, 1995, 34) and its party identifiers are more centrist than rightist (see below).

All Politics Is Provincial

There is a place for ideology in everyday politics in Canada. It is the provincial party system. The issue of national unity is not pressing in provincial politics, so the gloves are off. Provincial parliaments don't worry about issues such as transfer payments. Provincial politics

is mostly about a struggle for power with Ottawa over which level of government is best equipped to handle the welfare state, which is mostly funded with federal dollars but run from the provinces. The question of whether there will be an activist government has been long decided at the federal level. How active the welfare state will be and who will benefit is a battle fought at both levels, as in the contemporary debate in Alberta over the partial privatization of the National Health system. These issues endure regardless of party ties.

The APSA Committee on Political Parties (1950, 2) argued that "national, state and local party leaders have a common responsibility to the party membership." In Canada, provincial premiers feel free to back programs that they believe will benefit their constituents, regardless of which party is in power in Ottawa. This weakens the party system by divorcing federal and provincial parties from a common worldview (Simeon, 1972, 31-35). "Red Tory" Bill Davis, the Premier of Ontario, supported the energy policy and the attempt to "patriate" Canada's Constitution by Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau in the 1980s, even as other PC Premiers (and the national PC party) were fighting Trudeau fiercely.

There has never been much of a Progressive Conservative party in Quebec provincial politics, largely because the federal Tories established rapport with the Credistes (the Quebec branch of Social Credit), the Union Nationale, and the Parti Quebecois (PQ). There are both federal and provincial wings of the Liberal party in Quebec, but their close relationship ended in 1964 when they took divergent paths on the issue of greater autonomy for the province. Both are now minority parties in Quebec, with separatist parties on the ascendance. The Parti Quebecois is the dominant force in federal politics and the Bloc Quebecois is the governing provincial party. Until the party lost a refendum on "sovereignty association" in 1995 and the

BQ leader Jacques Perizeau was forced to resign, the two parties were considered more rivals for dominance in an independent Quebec than partners in a liberation movement. Bouchard stepped down from the PQ to become BQ leader in 1995, forging a unity between the two movements. In Ontario, the federal Liberals often made deals with provincial PC legislators to hold down competition in each others' areas of strength (Dyck, 1996, 167-171, 178).

While federal politics has been until 1993 largely a two-party contest between the Liberals and the PC's, provincial politics have been anything but mirror images of federal conflicts. From 1911 to 1979 and again from 1980 to 1984 and 1993 to the present the Prairies have not elected a provincial government of the same party that controlled the federal House of Commons (Smith, 1981, 41-42). The Prairies were dominated by an assortment of left- and right-wing populist parties. For much of the post-war era British Columbia provincial politics was a contest between a party that barely contested federal politics (the New Democrats) and one that had largely been banished from federal elections (Social Credit). Quebec has also had a succession of provincial parties based upon first right-wing nationalism (the Union Nationale) and then left-wing nationalism (the PQ).

The Canadian party system is bifurcated. Of the three parties that compete at both the federal and provincial level, only one has an integrated party organization. Only for the New Democrats does membership in a provincial party automatically lead to membership in the federal party. Federal and provincial leaders work together to forge a common ideology and provincial leaders play a key role in selecting federal leaders. But the NDP is distinctly a minority federal party. It averages about 10 percent of the seats in the House of Commons. What strength it has is at the provincial level, so it is not surprising that provincial membership

is primary.

The Tories are a "confederal" party, with very limited ties between the federal and provincial parties. Each raises its own money, recruits its own candidates, selects its own policy positions, and is effectively an autonomous institution. The Liberals might best be described as a loose confederation (like Canada itself)–not quite as split between federal and provincial wings as the Tories but also not quite as unitary as the New Democrats (Dyck, 1996, 162-163).

Even the federal parties are relatively weak compared to the expectations of the responsible party model. While the APSA Committee was loathe to recommend dropping primary elections as the preferred method for nominating Congressional candidates, it did call for national regulation of primaries (1950, 70-71). As in the United States, Canadian nominations for federal office are decentralized–not just to the provincial level, but to each constituency (riding). Nominations for each seat in Parliament are made by the constituency associations, mostly with little interference from the federal party. Occassionally, federal leaders *will* intervene–as when Tory chief Kim Campbell turned aside four PC MP's who were under criminal indictment. At other times, party leaders might "parachute" star candidates into constituencies, but these are rather uncommon occurrences (Mishler, 1978, 582; Pelletier, 1996, 153-154). Constituency associations often are not supportive of maverick legislators (Frank, 1987, 101). Yet there are few mavericks and most members, recognizing that they are not career politicians, focus more on pleasing the folks back home through constituency service rather than focusing on policy issues (Atkinson and Thomas, 1993, 445).

The weak ties between federal and provincial parties lead to a pattern of representation

that militates against party government. Party labels mean different things at different levels. And voters feel free to choose one party to represent them at the federal level and another at the provincial level–and to identify with one party in provincial politics and another in federal contests. Blake (1985) has referred to this as Canada's "two political worlds."

Between 17 and 33 percent of Canadians have identified with different federal and provincial parties. A bare majority are "fully consistent" identifiers, favoring the same party at both levels (Stewart and Clarke, 1998, 100).[3] Split party identification is strongest, of course, in the provinces where the party system does not mirror the federal system– historically, Quebec and British Columbia (Blake, 1982). Across all provinces split identification is strongest among people with weak ties to Canada, who are least committed to the idea of national unity that underlies the brokerage party system (Uslaner, 1990).

Split identification rose dramatically in 1993 with the fall from grace of the Tories. The decline of the federal PC's set in motion a realignment that led to a significant decrease in split partisanship by 1997. Many voters deserted the Tories throughout Canada. Many Quebec voters aligned their partisanship, choosing both the BQ and the PQ. Of almost equal import was the rejuvenation of the provincial Liberal party in British Columbia. In 1997 more BC residents identified with the Liberals than with any other provincial party and almost two-thirds had consistent identification, compared to the overwhelming majority who were split identifiers in 1979 (Uslaner, 1990, 975).

Despite the decrease in split identification, Canadian party systems remain unaligned. Currently only two of the eleven provinces and territories have federal and provincial governments of the same party--Liberals in Newfoundland and Tories in Alberta (see Table 1).[4] The

Liberals, the majority party in the federal Parliament, controls only two provinces. The official opposition, the Reform party, has no provincial presence. The overall correlation between

negative (tau-c = -.163, gamma = -.212).

Table 1 about here

The correlations between the shares of seats at each level are no more reassuring. In

There is a modest positive correlation for the PC's (.243). Only the fate of the NDP is similar at both levels (r = .632). There doesn't seem to be much ideological coherence either. The

than where the New Democrats win many seats (r = .075).

Federal systems don't have to be so politically distended. In the United States,

states with partisan legislatures, almost half (24) have single-party control of both legislative chambers at the state level the same party controlling a majority of the Congressional delegation (see Table 2). Only 14 percent have one party dominant at the state level and another at the federal level, most commonly with Republican state legislatures and Democratic

there is still an incomplete realignment. Republicans have become dominant in Congress, while state legislatures remain comfortably in Democratic hands–or are split between the parties.

correlation between majority status in the states and the Congress is higher for the American

states (tau-b = .398, gamma = .570) than for Canada. When I exclude the South, it becomes much higer (tau-b = .550, gamma = .787).

Table 2 about here

Two countries with federal systems have very different party systems. The APSA Committee on Political Parties found the American party system wanting. Its members worried that federal system might give too much power to local leaders and make it difficult for parties to present a unified image to voters. Between 1950 and the 1990s, however, the American party system became far more polarized even as the constitutional system remained the same. To the north, the Canadian party system remained "dealigned" (Clarke et al., 1991, 50), with different parties dominant at the federal and provincial levels. Even with a greater alignment of party labels in parts of the country (Quebec and British Columbia) in the 1990s, voters persistently refused to make the same party dominant at both levels.

The Logic of Party Identification in Canada

Voters who "*base their electoral choice upon the political performance of the two parties, as indicated by the programs they support and the candidates they succeed in putting forward...may well be [the force that] will decide the question of our country's progress in the direction of a more responsible party system....It is this group that occupies a place of critical importance in supporting a party system able to shoulder national responsibility.*" (APSA Committee on Political Parties, 1950, 90-91, italics in original). Split partisanship reflects an underdeveloped party system, the APSA Committee would certainly argue.

Split party identification is just one part of a syndrome of weak partisanship, according

to one view of party identification in Canada (Clarke and Stewart, 1985; Clarke et al., 1991, LeDuc et al., 1984). Meisel (1975, 67) argues: "The concept Party Identification...may be almost inappicable in Canada....party identification seems to be as volatile in Canada as the vote itself." Partisanship is not a long-term force in Canada, on this view. Canadians are not only fickle to their parties between levels, but they also are not loyal over time: 59 percent of Canadians had the same party identification over the course of a three-wave panel compared to 68 percent in the United States and 73 percent in the United Kingdom. Less than half of Canadians had consistent party identifications and votes between 1974 and 1979 (LeDuc et al., 1984, 475-476).

Party identification is a short-term force in Canada, responding not to deep-seated cleavages such as ideology or class. Instead, partisanship in Canada reflects the politics of the day, especially the personalities of party leaders. The most frequent reason people change their partisanship is reactions to party leaders (Clarke and Stewart, 1985). Canadian parties don't send out ideological messages. Citizens have little basis for their vote choice other than the images of strong or weak leadership.

Not everyone sees Canadian partisanship as so weak. There is an alternative vision that sees partisanship in Canada as basically similar to that in the United States–but measured incorrectly (Johnston et al., 1992, 81-82). Party identification is fairly stable in Canada, given the range of choices of voters have at different levels (Blake, 1982).

Both views have elements of truth about them. Canadians have weaker partisanship than Americans. The moderation of both politicians and voters makes the sort of party system envisaged by the APSA Committee on Political Parties unlikely to develop in Canada.

Partisanship in Canada is unlikely to take root because the key issue that has confronted the country–national unity and the perennial problem of what to do about Quebec's status–is not a simple left-right or class issue.

The traditional cleavages in Canadian politics are core versus periphery issues–the domination of the Prairies by two provinces (Ontario and Quebec) that together control a majority of seats in the federal Parliament, the inequality of wealth between Ontario and British Columbia, on the one hand, and the rest of Canada (especially the Atlantic provinces) on the other, and the perennial problem of what do about Quebec's demand for special status, or now even independence. Some of these issues might fit into traditional left-right conflicts. However, Atlantic Canada has never developed a strong radical movement, while the Prairies have been home to competing populist traditions on the left and the right, with different outlooks on social issues. So even more ideological provincial parties have tried to branch out to reach voters of different ideological persuasions.

The Canadian party system rests on a weak foundation of citizen ideology, even compared to the presumably moderate American electorate. Figures 1-9 show the distributions of ideology in Canada and the United States, first for the full electorate and then by federal party identification.[6]

Figures 1-9 about here

In each figure I show the mean on the seven-point scale used in the American National Election Study, adjusted for the Canadian cases (where the scale has 11 points). Both the Canadian and American electorates are rather moderate, with a slight tilt to the right of center.

Quebecois. Yet, for each of these parties, the modal voter is at the center of the political spectrum. The differences among most Canadian parties are matters of degree rather than of

The Canadian Liberal party is not quite so liberal. Like the full Canadian electorate, it tilts slightly to the right. It also looks about as close to a normal distribution of ideology as we

identifiers are very much like all Canadians–minus ideologues on the left and the right. The adjusted mean ideology score is 4.204 for all Canadians and 4.218 for Liberal party identifiers.

of the political spectrum. Even the Reform party, which has a significant conservative component, is basically a moderate party. Even for the Bloc Quebecois, there are more

There is one Canadian party with a strongly ideological following. The New Democrats are a left-wing party. There are no NDP identifiers to the right of center–but the NDP

role of ideology in mainstream Canadian politics.

Ideology divides American partisans to a far greater extent. The Democratic mode is

for Canadian Liberals. Republican identifiers, on the other hand, are more extreme than any other partisans in either country. Their mean score is 5.291 on the seven-point scale; their

further to the right–and considerably so–than New Democrats are to the left.[7]

Ideology is a much stronger predictor of party identification in the United States than in Canada. The correlations of ideology and party preference among Democrats and Republicans in the United States are tau-c = .519 and gamma = .764. For Canada, the correlations for Liberals and PC's are .203 and .337, respectively. There is actually a weaker relationship bewteen ideology and Liberal-Reform identification (tau-c = .172, gamma = .304). There is a powerful relationship between ideology and NDP-Reform identification (tau-c = .628, gamma = .908). However, these two parties comprise only a quarter of all party identifiers in the sample–and even then half of NDP partisans and 60 percent of Reform adherents did not place themselves on the left-right scale.

Not only are Canadian party identifiers more moderate than their American counter-parts. They also see their parties *and their leaders* less in ideological terms than Americans do. In both Canada and the United States people were asked to rank the parties on a left-right ideological scale and to evaluate (on feeling thermometers) the leaders (Presidential candidates) of the parties. In a responsible party system, voters should see parties as mirror images of each other. Liberals (Democrats) should see their party on the left and Progressive Conservatives (Republicans) on the right–and vice versa. And Liberals should have a positive view of their leader, Prime Minister Jean Chretien, and a negative view of other party leaders, especially Progressive Conservative chief Charest and Reform leader Manning. I display the results of these comparisons in Table 3.

Table 3 about here

American partisans do conform to this requirement of the responsible parties model.

vice versa. The correlation is not overwhelming, but fairly strong for survey research (r = -.476). And Americans' evaluations of their party leaders is highly shaped by partisanship.

Canadians are not so polarized about party or leader images. In most cases people who believe that the Liberals are a liberal (conservative) party also see the PC's in the same way (r

direction, suggesting a lack of ideological coherence in partisan perceptions. In only case do we see anything even approaching a modest negative correlation–for perceptions of the Reform

like Liberal leader Chretien also like PC chief Charest (r = .396), which may explain why Charest was able to bolt his federal party and become an instant hero to Quebec Liberals.

negative. There is only one slightly modest negative correlation, between evaluations of Chretien and Bouchard (r = -.131), a surprising finding since both are from Quebec and have

The Canadian results may be attenuated since each of these correlations are for all respondents to the 1997 election study. They are broken down by party identification. When I do so, there is more support for an electorate that fits the responsible party model, but

Reform (r = -.344) to the Liberals (r = -.238). But they see little difference between the

Liberals and the Tories (r = -.264). Bloc Quebecois identifiers see the two "right-wing" parties as further from their own party's ideology: The correlation with the PC is -.332, with Reform, -.330. The Liberals are slightly closer (r = -.241) and there is no pattern with the NDP (r = .010). Reform identifiers see the NDP as ideologically distant (r = -.465), but they are in tune with the Tories (r = .266) and not that far away from the Liberals (r = -.082).

The two traditionally dominant parties, however, do not see each other as ideologically distinct. There remain positive correlations between how Liberals see Tories and how Tories view liberals. The Liberals do see themselves as close to the NDP, a view not reciprocated, and the PC's see themselves as near the Reform party.

There seems to be a bare modicum of support for the responsible party model in Canada from party perception data. The leader evaluations offer less support. Of the 18 correlations of leader evaluations stratified by party identification, only three are negative and two of them are less than -.05. There is only one moderate negative correlation (r = -.217) between evaluations of the NDP and BQ leaders for Bloc identifiers. Some of the positive correlations are rather robust, especially the evaluations of Liberal and PC leaders by each others' partisans (r = .414 for Tory identifiers and .338 for Liberal identifiers). Tory identifiers who like their own federalist Quebec leader Charest also have positive evaluations of the BQ chief (r = .351), while NDP identifiers who rate their own leader highly also (strangely) have positive evaluations of Reform leader Manning (r = .312).[8]

Responsible Parties in North America?

Fifty years after the APSA Committee lamented the lack of party responsibility in the United States, its authors can look back and feel reassured that American parties have become

more ideological and distinctive, both in Congress (Rohde, 1991) and in the electorate. The American parties have become *so* divided in world views that they have bypassed the view of government and opposition in parliamentary systems to become what often seems like mortal enemies (cf. Uslaner, 2000). Americans have never been comfortable with the form of partisanship we see in parliamentary systems and the idea of a loyal opposition. An opposition party with a divergent ideology has become disloyal almost by definition. The impeachment of Clinton and the ugly rhetoric that accompanied it are the most prominent examples.[9]

Overall, there has been little ideological coherence in Canadian politics. Canadian parties are still more cohesive than American parties in the legislature. The parliamentary system makes sure that parties will stick together in voting on the floor, but it does not guarantee that the parties will take distinctive positions. The capacities of Canadian parties to flip flop on issues is rather remarkable. The out-party has traditionally denounced whatever the in-party has done while in office. But once the outs become the ins, they govern pretty much the way the past government did.

Much of the weakness of the Canadian party system can be traced to the federal system. The APSA Committee report (1950, 26) warned about the dangers of federalism in the United States:

> ...the party system is weighted much more heavily toward the state-local side than is true today of the federal system...The gap produces serious disabilities in government.

Today the American party system is much more clearly aligned nationally, with the exception of the South. And even there we see Republicans gaining in lower-level offices, culminating a

regional realignment.

There is also some evidence of a clearer link between federal and provincial party systems in Canada. The two provinces that have long had distinctive provincial party systems now have their federal and provincial party systems in greater alignment. The Parti Quebecois in Quebec now has a federal counterpart, the BQ. The Liberals have emerged from the politically dead in British Columbia to become real rivals (albeit on the right) to the NDP.

Yet, the Canadian party system has something of a push-me pull-you style. As BC and Quebec become more aligned, Saskatchewan and Ontario are less connected to the federal system. The official opposition to the NDP in the former province is now the Saskatchewan Party, a breakaway group of former Liberals and Tories. Two-thirds of all federal Liberal MP's come from Ontario and the Liberal party has 101 of 103 seats (98 percent) in the province, and there are *no* PC members from Ontario in the federal parliament. But the Liberals have barely more than one-third of the seats in the Tory-dominated provincial legislative assembly. The Liberals also have but a lone seat in the Prince Edward Island assembly–the PC party has 26 of 27 seats–but hold all four slots in the delegation to Ottawa.

Yet, the federal system alone cannot account for the persistent refusal of many Canadians to vote for the same party at the federal and provincial levels. Canadians resist aligning their partisanship because both they and their parties are fundamentally moderate. There is a widespread agreement on many policies designed to foster national integration–ranging from the national health system to redistribution from the wealthier to the less well off regions.

It is not federalism <u>per se</u> that produces a weak and dealigned party system in Canada.

Rather, it is the role that federalism plays in Canadian political life that is the key to the puzzle. Canadian culture and politics are a continuing drama about national integration–how to achieve it and whether it is desirable.

Ironically, as the issue of Quebec's status becomes more prominent in Canadian politics, the party system may become more prominent. The traditional out-party, the Progressive Conservatives, have virtually disappeared from Canadian politics. Its successor as the principal opposition was first the Bloc Quebecois (in 1993-1997) and then the Reform party (1993-2000). The Bloc emerged as the party advocating Quebec independence and the Reform party was born out of Western protest against special status for Quebec.

Political turmoil always follows eras when national unity becomes the subject of political campaigns. Trudeau tried to enforce a sense of national unity, first through his energy program and then through a new Canadian constitution. This led to the demise of his Liberal government and the ascendance of a Tory government that promised to restore much power to the provinces. But the Tories were not much more successful at solving unity issues than the Liberals and these concerns temporarily faded into the background. When they came back in 1993, the Tories were the party that paid the price, eclipsed in Quebec by the BQ and in the West by the Reform party.

Once more the issue of unity seems to be receding. In the past year, the Western wing of the PC party has merged with the Reform party to become the Canadian Alliance. This new party is both the official opposition in Parliament and also seems to be certain to become the second party for the immediate future. Little is left of the old Tories, except its former and present leader, Joe Clark. And now the Reform party has been transformed. Its successor is

no longer simply a populist party that tilts to the right and fought battles on the turf of opposition to Quebec's demands. Instead, the message of its new leader, Stockwell Day, is one of Christian social conservatism, sharp tax reductions, and appeals across the country, including Quebec (Brooke, 2000). The new party seems a throwback to the old Social Credit party. Out of protest against Quebec may come an ideologically-based party that focuses on issues other than national unity.

The Canadian Alliance seems to have a choice before it: Either it remains a protest party, following its roots in the Reform party, or it becomes an alternative governing party, as the old PC party was. If it takes the first course, it will remain peripheral. Yet, if it takes the second course, it cannot remain so ideologically distinct from the national consensus. Sooner or later national unity, Western grievances, and especially the status of Quebec will reemerge as key issues in Canadian politics. As long as they play such a prominent role, they will eclipse issues that might forge a partisan realignment along ideological lines. Just as Americans don't know how to handle a loyal opposition, Canada was not built for responsible parties.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Seats by Party for Federal and Provincial Parliaments in Canada: Majority Status

Provincial party

Federal party	Liberal	PC	NDP	Parti Quebecois	Total
Liberal	1 **(-.249)**	2 **(.162)**	1 **(-.430)**	0	4
PC	0 **(.l97)**	1 **(.243)**	0 **(-.126)**	0	1
NDP	1 **(.205)**	1 **(-.322)**	0 **(.632)**	0	2
Reform	0 **(-.081)**	1 **(.143)**	2 **(.075)**	0	3
Bloc Quebecois	0	0	0	1	1
Total	2	5	3	1	11

tau-c = -.163 gamma = -.212

Figures in parentheses are simple correlations between federal and provincial party compositions in parliaments.

TABLE 2

Distribution of Seats by Party for National and State Legislatures in the United States

State Legislatures: 49 States

Congress	Democratic	Split	Republican	Total
Democratic	12 **(24.5)**	4 **(8.2)**	5 **(10.2)**	21
Split	5 **(10.2)**	3 **(6.1)**	2 **(4.1)**	10
Republican	2 **(4.1)**	4 **(8.2)**	12 **(24.5)**	18
Total	19	11	19	

tau-b = .398 gamma = .570

State Legislatures: Non-South

Congress	Democratic	Split	Republican	Total
Democratic	11 **(30.6)**	3 **(8.3)**	4 **(11.1)**	21
Split	0 **(0.0)**	1 **(2.8)**	0 **(0.0)**	1
Republican	1 **(2.8)**	4 **(11.1)**	12 **(33.3)**	18
Total	12	8	16	

tau-b = .550 gamma = .787

TABLE 3

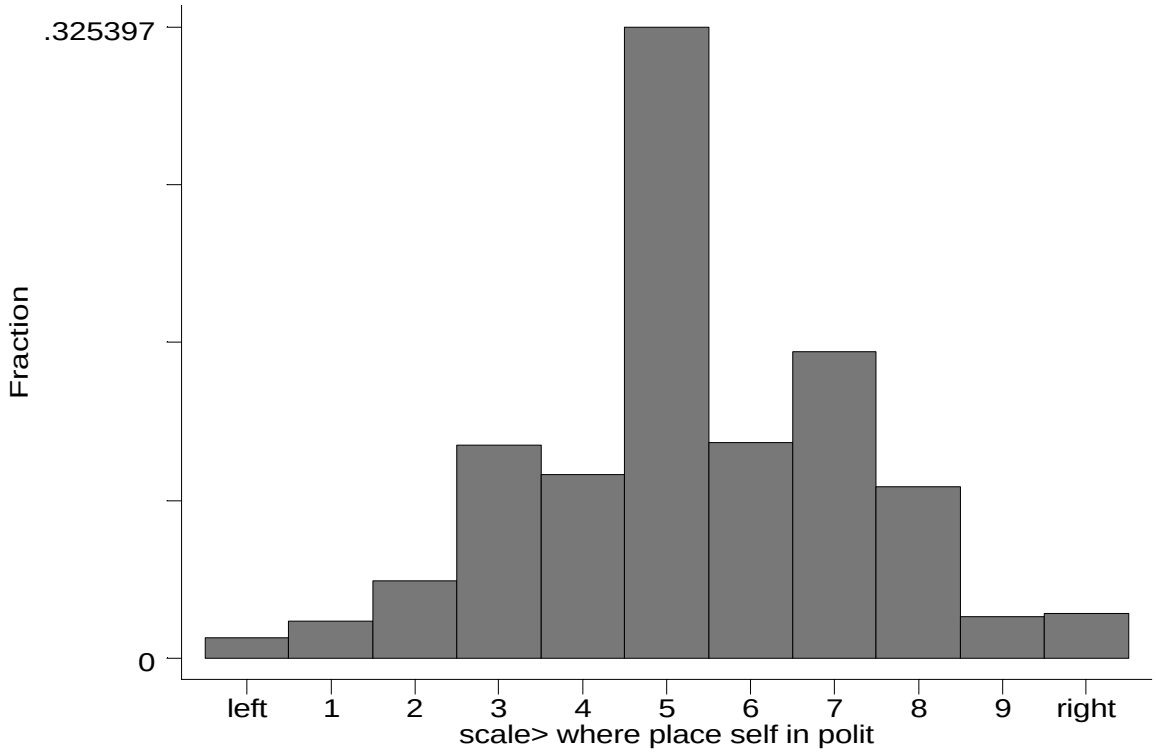
Public Perceptions of Party Ideology in Canada (1997) and the United States (1996)

	Liberals	**PC**	**NDP**	**Reform**	**Democrats**
PC	.320 *(.396)*				
NDP	.189 *(.274)*	-.011 *(.313)*			
Reform*	-.078 *(.031)*	.329 *(.163)*	-.186 *(-.016)*		
Bloc Quebecois**	-.043 *(-.131)*	.147 *(.032)*	.079 *(.127)*	.355	
Republicans					-.476 *(-.450)*

* Evaluations of Reform leader Preston Manning not asked in Quebec.
** Evaluations of Bloc Quebecois leader Giles Duceppe asked only in Quebec.

Figure 1

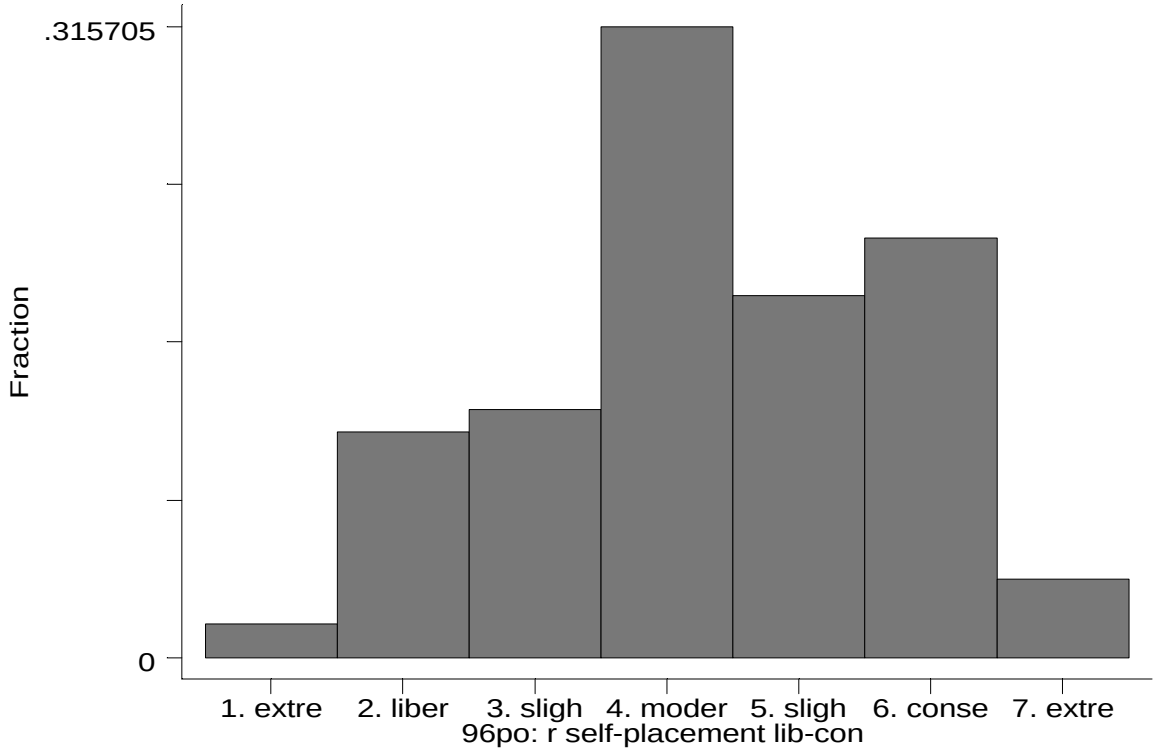
Left-Right Distribution of the Canadian Electorate:
1997 Canadian Election Study



Adjusted mean on seven-point scale: **4.204** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.185**

Figure 2

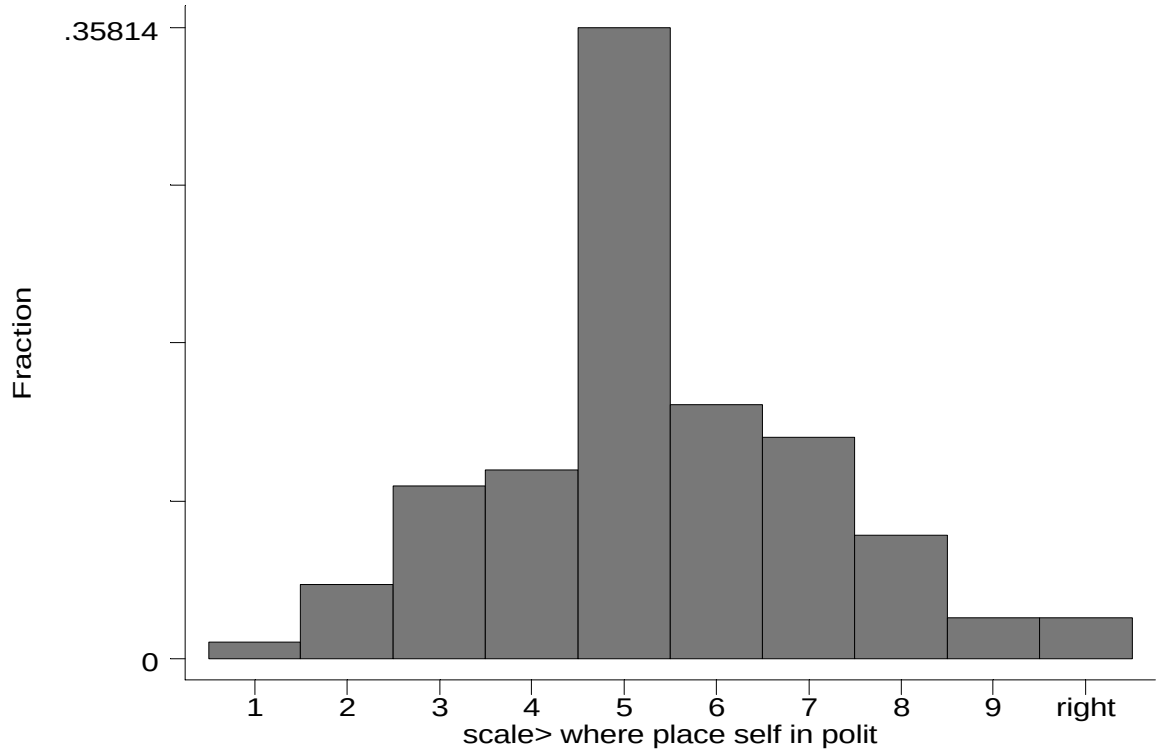
Left-Right Distribution of the American Electorate:
1996 American National Election Study



Mean on seven-point scale: **4.323** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.404**

Figure 3

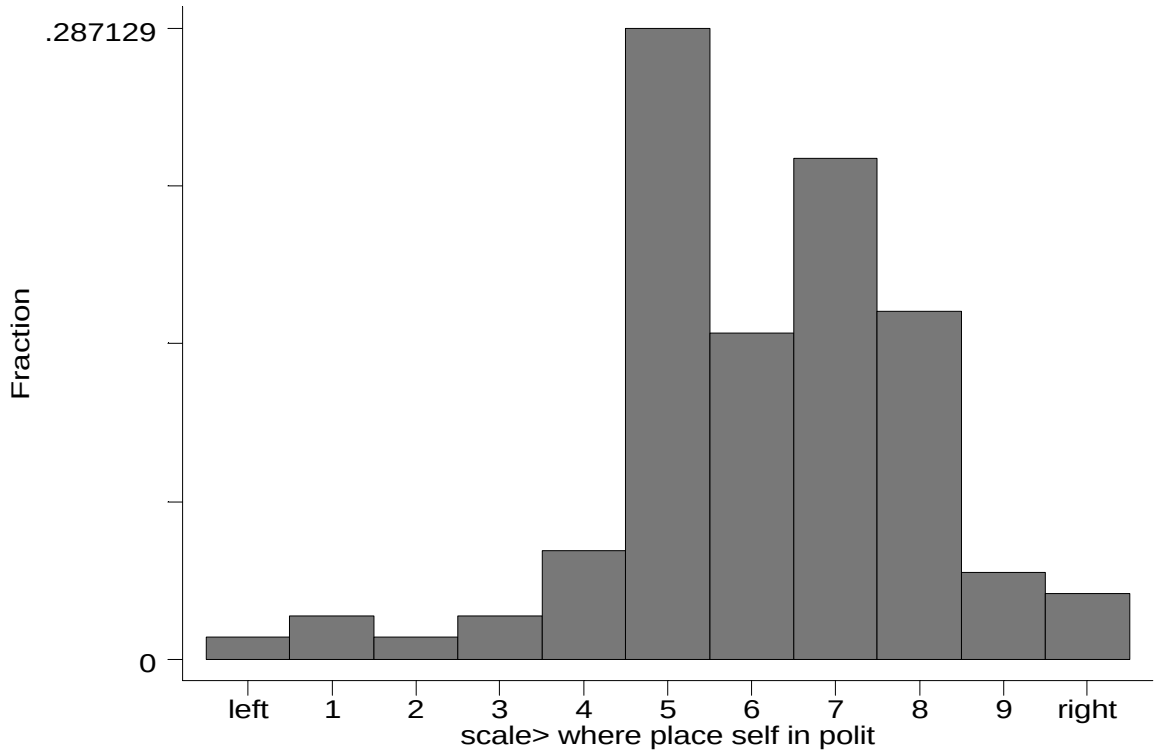
Left-Right Distribution of Canadian Federal Liberal Party Identifiers:
1997 Canadian Election Study



Federal Liberal identifiers are 44.5 percent of all Canadians with a party identification.
Adjusted mean on seven-point scale: **4.218** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.103**

Figure 4

Left-Right Distribution of Canadian Federal Progressive Conservative Party Identifiers: 1997 Canadian Election Study

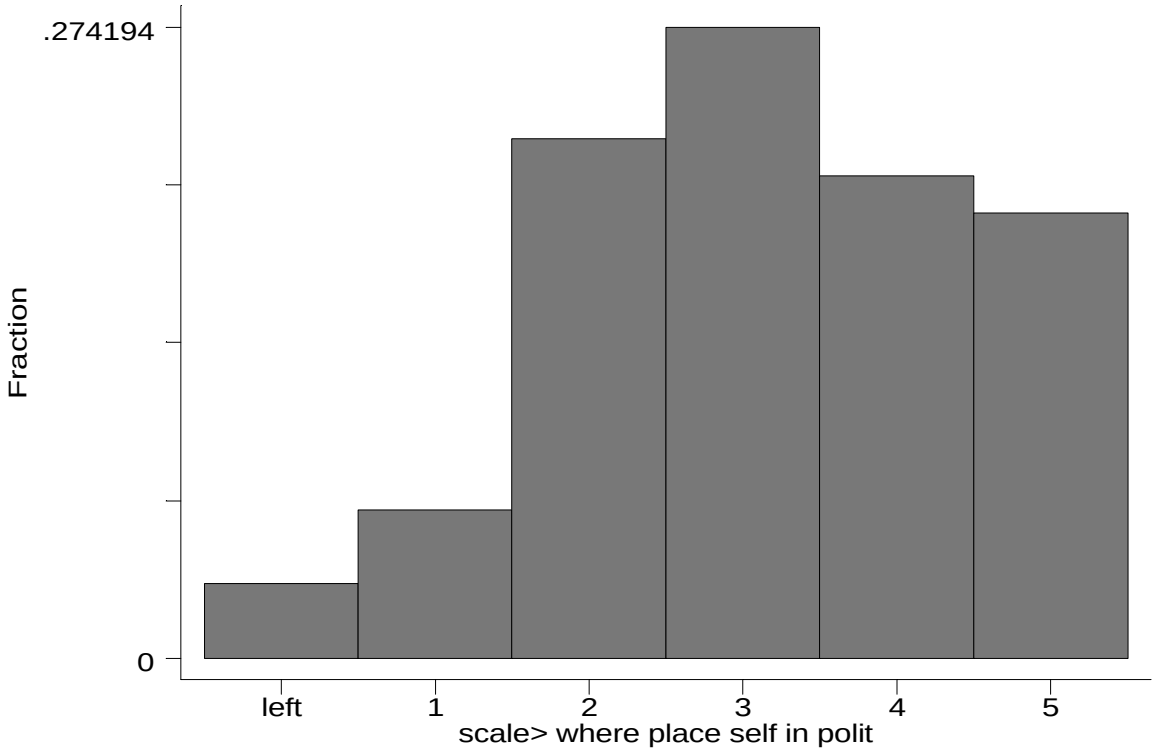


Federal Progressive Conservative identifiers are 18.4 percent of all Canadians with a party identification.

Adjusted mean on seven-point scale: **4.703** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.103**

Figure 5

Left-Right Distribution of Canadian Federal New Democratic Party Identifiers:
1997 Canadian Election Study

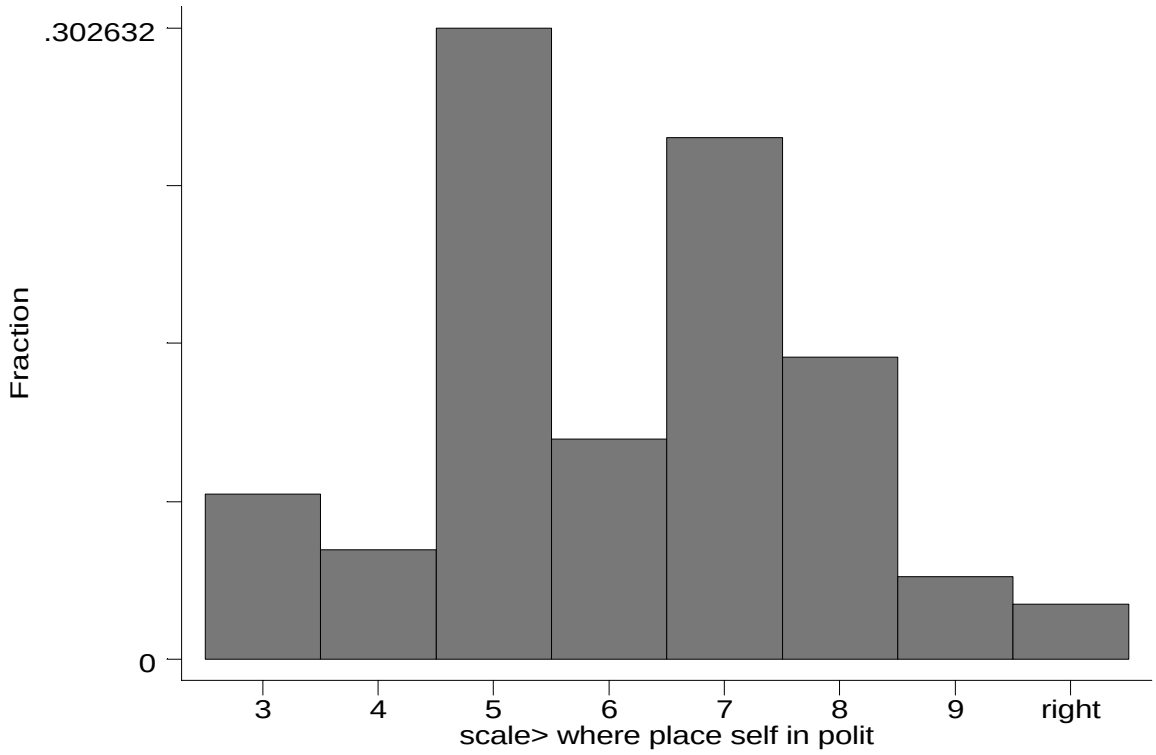


Federal New Democratic identifiers are 10.8 percent of all Canadians with a party identification.

Adjusted mean on seven-point scale: **2.833** Adjusted standard deviation: **.772**

Figure 6

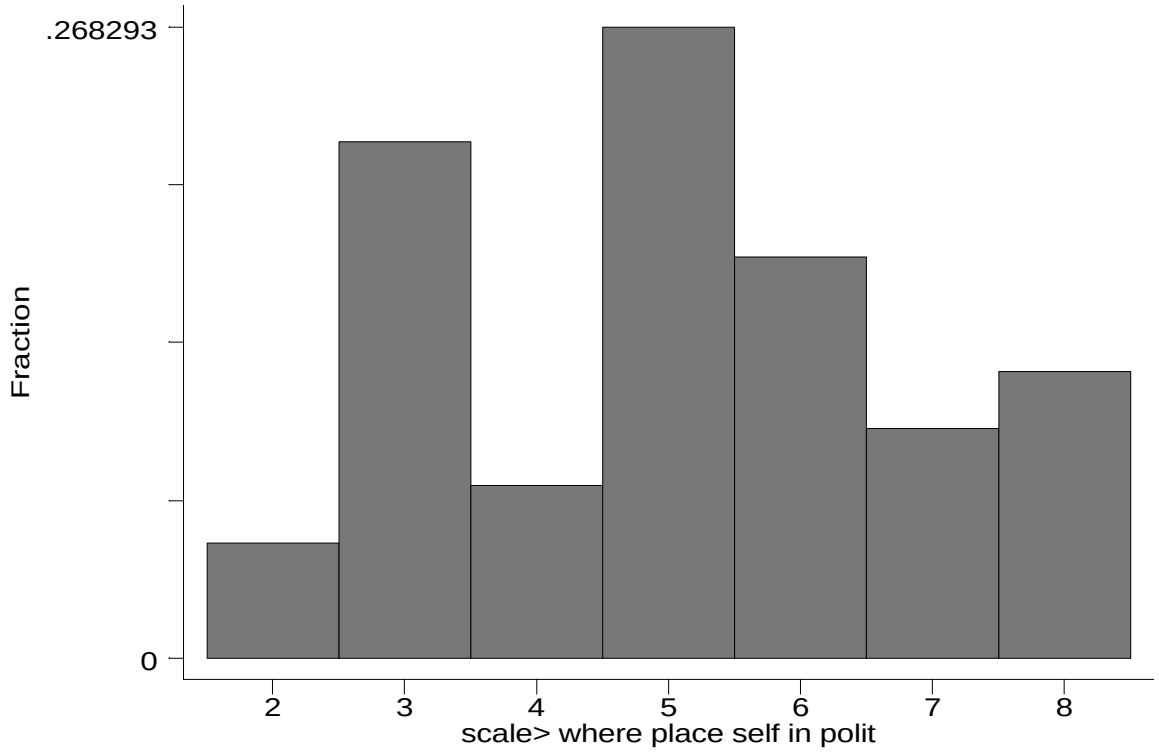
Left-Right Distribution of Canadian Federal Reform Party Identifiers:
1997 Canadian Election Study



Federal Reform identifiers are 16.1 percent of all Canadians with a party identification.
Adjusted mean on seven-point scale: **4.671** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.012**

Figure 7

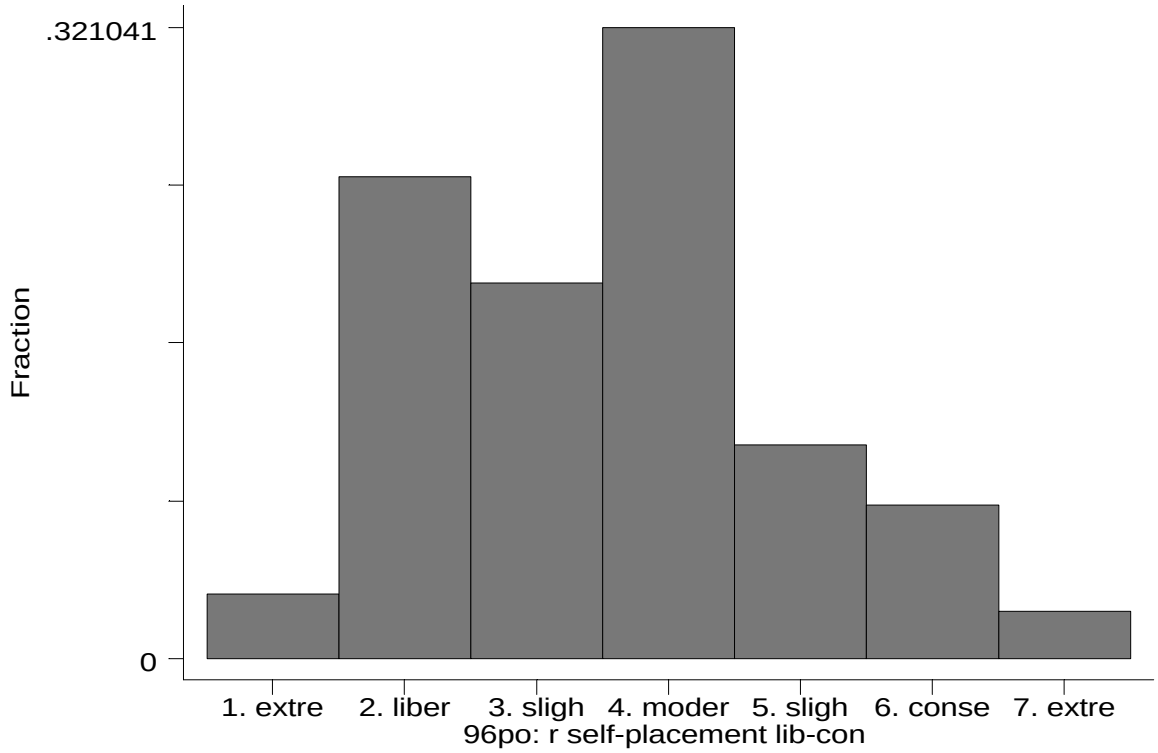
Left-Right Distribution of Canadian Bloc Quebecois Identifiers:
1997 Canadian Election Study



Federal Bloc Quebecois identifiers are 10.2 percent of all Canadians with a party identification.
Adjusted mean on seven-point scale: **4.122** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.122**

Figure 8

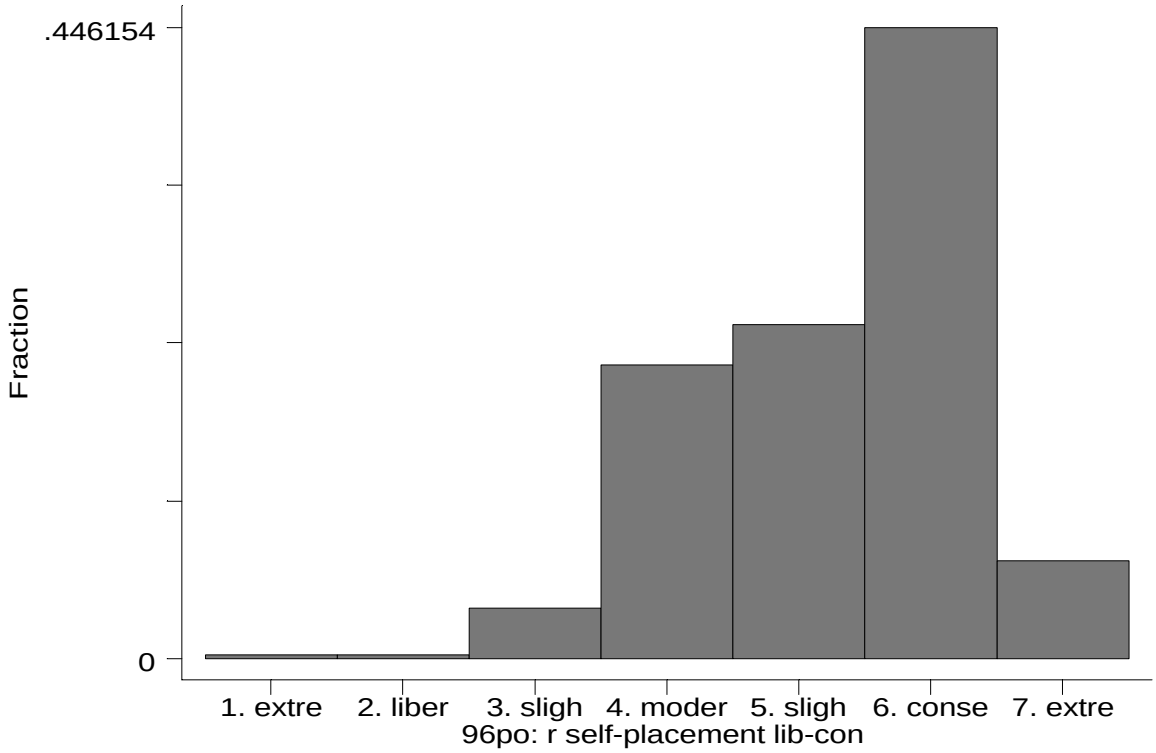
Left-Right Distribution of American Democratic Party Identifiers:
1996 American National Election Study



Democratic identifiers are 58.5 percent of all Americans with a party identification.
Mean on seven-point scale: **3.545** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.363**

Figure 9

Left-Right Distribution of American Republican Party Identifiers:
1996 American National Election Study



Republican identifiers are 41.5 percent of all Americans with a party identification.
Mean on seven-point scale: **5.291** Adjusted standard deviation: **1.014**

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NOTES

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1. The elections to the United States Congress in 1994 are a notable exception.

2. The outgoing leader of the Reform party is Preston Manning. His father Ernest was the leader of the Alberta Social Credit party.

3. In the most recent survey, the 1997 Canadian Election Study, 17.3 percent of Canadians had inconsistent identifications and just 46.6 percent had fully consistent identifications. Usually, about 10 percent of Canadians identify with a party at only one level (Stewart and Clarke, 1998, 100).

4. The data on provincial representation in Ottawa come from http://www.statcan.ca/english/State/Government/govt10a.htm and the data on party representation in provincial legislatures come from http://www.cs.cmu/edu/Unofficial/Canadiana/legislatures.html.

5. The Washington state Senate is tied, but I awarded it to the Democrats. Nevada has a nonpartisan legislature.

6. The Canadian data come from the 1997 Canadian Election Study, the American data from the 1996 American National Election Study.

7. The New Democratic mean of 2.833 is 40 percent of the way from the left extreme to the center, while the Republican mean of 5.291 is 25 percent of the way from the right extreme to the center.

8. This is especially strange since NDP and Reform party identifiers are so clearly distinguished by ideology (see above).

9. In the 1998 American National Election Study, 90 percent of Democratic identifiers opposed impeachment while 58 percent of Republicans supported it (phi = .520, Yule's Q = .854).