

Political Learning and the Pathways to Political Engagement: Experience Counts

by

Stephen E. White

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science
University of Toronto

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-73042-3
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-73042-3

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Department of Political Science

University of Toronto

2010

Abstract

This thesis addresses two central questions: How in the long run do Canadian citizens learn about politics? And how does long term experience with politics influence democratic political engagement? The theoretical framework employed in this study makes four basic assumptions about citizens: they are intendedly rational, they use cognitive shortcuts, they are adaptive, and they often face deep uncertainty about the political world. These core assumptions generate a broad set of expectations about how long term experience with politics systematically affects citizen behaviour. This evidence indicates that years of accumulated experience with Canadian politics fundamentally shapes the political outlooks and behaviours of Canadian citizens. Political experience affects whether citizens vote, whether they get the requisite political information that helps them to make reasoned political judgments, and how different considerations enter into their vote choices. Moreover, and despite their different backgrounds, long term experience with Canadian politics influences democratic political engagement among Canadian born citizens and immigrant Canadians in strikingly similar ways.

Acknowledgments

Although what you find in the pages that follow is written by me, I could not have finished it without the support many wonderful people.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Neil Nevitte, without whose mentorship this dissertation could never have been completed. Professor Nevitte taught me how to carefully craft an idea and a research project, and how to make that idea meaningful to myself and others. He also knew how to encourage, push, and persuade at precisely the right moments. He is an outstanding scholar, and an even better teacher.

My dissertation committee and external examiner were indispensable. The careful consideration and advice of Joseph Fletcher, Richard Simeon, Graham White, and Paul Abramson improved the dissertation a great deal. I appreciate all of their help.

I also want to thank the rest of the faculty and staff at the Department of Political Science, including Sylvia Bashevkin, Jeff Kopstein, Susan Solomon, and Joe Wong, with whom I had the pleasure of taking courses, and David Rayside, Grace Skogstad, and Phil Triadaphilopoulos, who made me feel welcome in both the Department and the broader Canadian political science community.Carolynn Branton and Joan Kallis made life considerably easier for at least one absent-minded and administratively incompetent graduate student.

I was fortunate enough to have wonderful experiences learning about political science at two other great universities. Mark Graesser and Steven Wolinetz at Memorial University of Newfoundland introduced me to the fields of political behaviour and comparative politics, and I owe my opportunity to pursue further studies to their tutelage. David Docherty, Barry

Kay, and Brian Tanguay at Wilfrid Laurier University are great teachers who made Canadian politics intellectually fun and exciting.

I am grateful to my fellow students at the University of Toronto for our long conversations about politics and life, for the much-needed and welcome distractions from work, and, most of all, for their friendship. What made all the difference is that I took the same road travelled by so many others. Special thanks to Chris Alcantara, Cheryl Auger, Sebastian Baglioni, Antoine Bilodeau, Paul Brykczynski, Wayne Chu, Sebastien Dallaire, Essyn Emurla, Jan Erk, Jim Farney, Erica Frederiksen, Bill Flanik, Josh Hjartarson, Petr Kafka, Juan Marsiaj, Anthony Matthews, Maura McClellan, Martin Papillon, Vincent Pouliot, Leah Soroko, deb thompson, Steve Trott, and Joerg Wittenbrinck.

Above all I want to acknowledge those fellow students with whom I commiserated and celebrated most often: Chris Cochrane, Victor Gomez, Mike Painter-Main, Luc Turgeon, and Reuven Shlozberg. I thank you for your advice and support, and for helping me keep things in perspective. A dissertation is a tremendous undertaking, but what looks large from a distance, close up is never that big.

To my loving family, who taught me that hard work and the pursuit of knowledge are both valuable, that far better than finding a job is discovering a vocation, that the occasional achievements and setbacks are both a part of what makes life meaningful: This work was shaped by your hands; I've simply made the finishing touches.

I turn at last to what are at once the easiest and hardest tasks in writing this dissertation: thanking my wonderful wife. It is easiest because this project owes more to her unflinching support than to anything else in the world. It is hardest because I simply cannot find the fitting words to express how very grateful I am for her strength, advice, encouragement,

patience, and love. Thank you, Jenn. I am glad that two journeys we began separately at the University of Toronto are now complete; I am overjoyed that the journey we started together there will carry on for so many years to come.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures	ix
List of Appendices	xi
Chapter One: The Conceptual Framework	1
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Political Socialization and Lifespan Approaches.....	5
3 Cognitive Limits and Political Learning over the Long Haul.....	9
3.1 Intended Rationality	10
3.2 Cognitive Shortcuts.....	12
3.3 Adaptation.....	13
3.4 Uncertainty.....	15
4 How Political Experience Matters	16
4.1 Habit Formation and Voter Turnout	16
4.2 Managing Informational Complexity.....	18
4.3 Coping with Electoral Uncertainty.....	20
5 Summary	25
Chapter Two: Methodological Considerations	29
1 Introduction.....	29
2 Measuring Political Experience	29
3 Data Sources.....	33
4 Analyzing and Presenting the Evidence.....	36
5 Summary	38
Chapter Three: Two Perspectives on Electoral Participation in Canada	42
1 Introduction.....	42
2 Theories of Age Dynamics and Voter Turnout.....	43
3 Data and Specific Methodological Considerations.....	54
4 Evidence.....	55
5 Discussion	62
6 Conclusions.....	65
Chapter Four: The Role of Political Experience in the Acquisition of Campaign Information.....	82
1 Introduction.....	82
2 Political Attentiveness, Cognitive Resources, and the Acquisition of Political Information.....	84
3 Data and Measures	92
4 Findings.....	94
4.1 Age, Political Experience, and the Acquisition of Information.....	94
4.2 Political Experience and Attentiveness.....	104
5 Conclusions	110

Chapter Five: Partisan Bias in Canada.....	123
1 Introduction.....	123
2 Two Images of Partisanship.....	125
2.1 Expectations.....	132
3 Data and Measures.....	134
4 Partisan Bias: the Panel Evidence.....	135
5 Partisan Intensity: the Cross-Sectional Evidence.....	140
6 Conclusions.....	143
Chapter Six: Are Canadians Rational Partisans?.....	153
1 Introduction.....	153
2 The Revisionist Model and its Empirical Implications.....	154
3 Data and Measures.....	158
4 Evidence.....	160
4.1 Age and Partisan Vote Dynamics.....	160
4.2 Noisy Signals and Partisan Vote Dynamics.....	167
5 Conclusions.....	169
Chapter Seven: Not-So-Great Expectations: Anticipating Election Outcomes.....	179
1 Introduction.....	179
2 Duverger's Law and the Role of Political Experience.....	181
3 Data and Measures.....	189
4 Evidence.....	192
4.1 Perceptions of Party Competition.....	192
4.2 The Effects of Expectations on Vote Choice.....	197
5 Conclusions.....	202
Chapter Eight: Conclusion.....	215
1 The Main Contributions.....	216
1.1 Understanding Why Political Experience Matters.....	216
1.2 A Unique Comparative Approach.....	217
1.3 Extending and Applying New Theories of Political Experience to Canadian Politics.....	218
2 The Broader Implications of this Study.....	221
2.1 Theories of Socialization and the Life Cycle.....	221
2.2 The Political Integration of Immigrants.....	222
2.3 Democratic Citizenship.....	223
References.....	238

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Age Composition of the Canadian Population, 1981-2006	27
Table 2.1	The Canadian Election Studies	41
Table 3.1	Reported Voter Turnout by Birth Cohort, 1968-2004	73
Table 3.2	Predictors of Voter Turnout, Canadian Born Citizens, 1968-2004.....	74
Table 3.3	Predictors of Voter Turnout, Foreign Born Canadians, 1968-2004.....	76
Table 3.4	Predictors of Voter Turnout, Including Political Engagement, Canadian Born Citizens, 1968-2004	79
Table 3.5	Predictors of Voter Turnout, Including Political Engagement, Foreign Born Canadians, 1968-2004.....	80
Table 3.6	Voter Turnout by Prior Voting Behaviour, Canadian Panel Data	81
Table 4.1	Predictors of Campaign Information Levels, Canadian Born Citizens, 1997-2004.....	115
Table 4.2	Predictors of Campaign Information Levels, Adult Immigrants, 1997-2004.....	116
Table 4.3	Summary of Results for Interaction Models	118
Table 5.1	Question Wording, The Sponsorship Scandal Index	148
Table 5.2	The Impact of Stable Partisanship on Opinion Change, 2004-2006 CES Panel.....	151
Table 6.1	Summary of Results, Age Interactions.....	176
Table 6.2	The Estimated Effects of Partisanship and Party Evaluations by “Noise” Levels, 1993-2004	177
Table 6.3	Summary of Results, Noise Interactions	178
Table 7.1	Perceptions of Parties’ Chances of Winning in the Local Constituency by Age	206
Table 7.2	Predictors of Perceived Local Constituency Competitiveness	207
Table 7.3	Summary of Results for Interaction Models	211
Table 7.4	Models of Vote Choice, Liberal versus NDP Outside Quebec, and Liberal versus Conservative in Quebec.....	212

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 The Relative Importance of Current and Prior Political Information	28
Figure 2.1 Distinguishing between Age and Exposure to Canadian Politics, Canadian Born and Foreign Born Citizens	40
Figure 3.1 Percentage Turnout in Canadian Federal Elections, 1945-2006.....	72
Figure 3.2 Turnout by Age in Three Election Periods, Canadian Born Citizens	75
Figure 3.3 Turnout by Years in Canada in Three Election Periods, Immigrant Canadians	77
Figure 3.4 Turnout by Years in Canada in Three Election Periods, Canadian Born Citizens and Immigrant Canadians	78
Figure 4.1 Levels of Campaign Information by Age and Years in Canada, 1997- 2004	114
Figure 4.2 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Age and Years in Canada, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004.....	117
Figure 4.3 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Attentiveness and Age, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004.....	119
Figure 4.4 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Attentiveness and Age, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004.....	120
Figure 4.5 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Attentiveness and Years in Canada, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004	121
Figure 4.6 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Attentiveness and Years in Canada, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004	122
Figure 5.1 Monthly Numbers of Major Canadian Newspaper Articles Mentioning the Federal Sponsorship Scandal, February 2004 to January 2006.....	146
Figure 5.2 Numbers of Major Canadian Newspaper Articles Mentioning both the Federal Sponsorship Scandal and the Liberal Party, February 2004 to January 2006	147
Figure 5.3 Opinions about the Sponsorship Scandal by Partisanship, 2004	149
Figure 5.4 Opinion Change about the Sponsorship Scandal by Partisanship, 2004-2006	150
Figure 5.5 Predicted Probabilities of Expressing “Very Strong” Partisan Attachments by Party Type, Canadian Born Partisans, 1993-2004	152
Figure 6.1 The Estimated Effects of Partisanship on Vote Choice by Age, Canadian Born Voters Outside Quebec, 1993-2004	173
Figure 6.2 The Estimated Effects of Party Evaluations on Vote Choice by Age, Canadian Born Voters Outside Quebec, 1993-2004	174
Figure 6.3 The Estimated Effects of Partisanship and Party Evaluations on Vote Choice by Age, Quebec, 1993-2004	175
Figure 7.1 The Spread of Perceived Party Chances by Age, Canadian Born Citizens, 1993-2004	208
Figure 7.2 The Spread of Perceived Party Chances by Years in Canada, Immigrant Canadians, 1993-2004.....	209

Figure 7.3 The Spread of Perceived Party Chances by Years Prior to Migration, Immigrant Canadians, 1993-2004	210
Figure 7.4 The Impact of Expectations on the Probability of Voting NDP versus Liberal, Canadian Born Voters Outside Quebec,1993-2004.....	213
Figure 7.5 The Impact of Expectations on the Probability of Voting Conservative versus Liberal, Canadian Born Voters in Quebec,1993-2004.....	214

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Variable Construction	227
Appendix B: Additional Tables and Figures.....	234
Appendix C: Data Source Acknowledgements.....	236

Chapter 1

The Conceptual Framework

1 Introduction

Young Canadians seem to vote less than their elders. Knowledge about politics appears to be distributed differently among younger and older Canadians. New political parties have had an enormous impact on the Canadian electoral landscape, presenting voters with new choices. The ways in which these dynamics seem to influence citizen choices, and how citizens exercise those choices, seem quite disconnected. And researchers often approach the questions of why young Canadians are less likely to vote than their elders, why young Canadians know less about politics than their elders, and why Canadians turn to new political parties from very different perspectives. But, at one level, these dynamics generate the same set of questions under different guises: How in the long run do Canadian citizens learn about politics? And how does long term experience with politics influence democratic political engagement? This thesis addresses these questions.

Political scientists have long acknowledged that throughout their lives people take advantage of opportunities to learn from their exposure to politics, and that political outlooks and behaviours are shaped by their accumulated experiences with politics (Alwin, 1995; Converse, 1969, 1976; Sears and Levy, 2003). But systematic empirical inquiries into how that learning happens are strikingly rare, and there are practically none in Canada.

This study will demonstrate that years of accumulated experience with Canadian politics fundamentally shapes the political outlooks and behaviours of Canadian citizens. Political experience affects whether citizens vote, whether they get the requisite political information that helps them to make reasoned political judgments, and how different considerations enter

into their vote choices. Moreover, and despite their different backgrounds, long term experience with Canadian politics influences democratic political engagement among Canadian born citizens and immigrant Canadians in strikingly similar ways.

By democratic political engagement I mean the ability to recognize and pursue one's interests by making reasoned political choices. These aspects of citizen behaviour – electoral participation, information acquisition, and decision-making, deserve close attention because they are essential requirements for democratic citizenship. As Nie and his colleagues (1996: 15) explain:

In order for democracy to function, individual citizens must first be able to identify and understand their preferences and political interests. Engagement in politics entails surveillance of the current political landscape and requires attentiveness to and knowledge of politics. Citizens must then also be capable of pursuing and protecting their interests by electing and petitioning representatives in democracy.

These dimensions of “citizen competence” (Kuklinski, 2001; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001) are at the heart of healthy democratic politics.

Voting in free and fair elections is the single most common form of democratic political action. Electoral participation is a cornerstone of democratic citizenship, not least because it levels the political playing field. There are significant disparities between citizens when it comes to many other forms of political participation, in part because some citizens have more resources at their disposal than others, and because some are more motivated to act than others. Those disparities are muted in elections because each citizen is limited to one vote. Elections thus present citizens with an equal opportunity to convey support for the political system and the political community, and to express their political preferences.

To take full advantage of that opportunity, citizens must be able identify and pursue their own political interests. First and foremost, they need to become aware of what is at stake in

elections by acquiring information about the current political issues and the policies proposed by parties competing in elections. Citizens then have to give some thought to which of the competing electoral alternatives will best serve their interests. In other words, citizens need to reason through their vote decision, weighing different considerations about the parties or candidates against one another and then estimating which party or candidate is most likely to provide them with what they want, either for themselves or for others.¹

If citizens with long-term exposure to Canadian politics do differ systematically from those with comparatively brief exposure, it could have important implications for understanding long-term dynamics in Canadian political behaviour, not least because of the country's ever-changing demographic composition. Table 1.1, for example, shows the age composition of the Canadian population aged 15 and older between 1981 and 2006. Clearly, Canada's population has aged considerably over the last 25 years, and the expectation is that it will continue to age over the next several decades. In short, the ranks of those who qualify as political "novices" in the Canadian electorate, those who have fewer years of experience with Canadian politics, are shrinking. At the same time as the number of "experts" is growing.

An equally important motivating reason for exploring the impacts of long-term exposure to Canadian politics concerns specific unresolved empirical and conceptual puzzles and outstanding research questions that confront Canadian political science. The first set of puzzles directly concerns the nature of the relationship between age and electoral

¹ Popkin (1991: 7) describes the process this way:

[Reasoning voters] have premises, and they use those premises to make inferences from their observations of the world around them. They think about who and what parties stand for; they think about the meaning of political endorsements; they think about what government can and should do. And the performance of government, parties, and candidates affects their assessments and preferences." Lupia and McCubbins (1998: 2) are more succinct, describing reasoned choice as "the ability to predict the consequences of actions.

engagement. Specifically, why do young Canadians exhibit comparatively low, and apparently declining, levels of voter turnout? And why do they acquire less campaign information during elections? Uncovering the effects of long-term political exposure has less obvious but just as significant implications when it comes to the second set of research questions. The first of these is the debate about the nature of partisanship in Canada, namely, whether and how the concept of party identification applies in the Canadian context. The second concerns Maurice Duverger's (1954) "wasted vote" theory, and why so many Canadian voters, when they make their vote decision, appear to eschew expectations about local candidates' chances of winning. As the following analysis will demonstrate, thinking about the effects of long-term exposure to Canadian politics produces several non-intuitive and empirically testable hypotheses that shed new light on these puzzles.

The place to begin is with the theoretical framework which informs this study. This point of entry outlines how each of these empirical and conceptual questions is tackled. It starts by comparing different approaches to examining how political behaviour evolves at the individual level over long periods of time, and then identifies the core assumptions that guide this investigation. This introduction concludes by identifying specific expectations about how long-term political experience conditions Canadian political behaviour.

The empirical and theoretical scholarship on the sources of political behaviour in Canada is robust, but precisely how Canadians learn about politics, and how their performance on core dimensions of democratic citizenship change over long periods of time, has received remarkably little attention. Part of the reason for this inattention is that customary approaches to the study of political behaviour over the long haul, in Canada and abroad, see it as something shaped principally by experiences outside of the realm of politics. The

theoretical framework employed in this study stands in sharp contrast to those other approaches in that it views firsthand experience with politics as a systematic and influential determinant of citizen performance.

2 Political Socialization and Life Span Approaches

Theories of political socialization argue that most of the foundations of political behaviour are set relatively early in life, when people develop political orientations that mediate their future political behaviour. These general predispositions affect how people respond to political stimuli, and a large body of literature suggests that these predispositions are acquired principally through such social networks as family, school, and the local community, as well as the mass media. They include support for the political system (Easton and Dennis, 1969), tolerance (McClosky and Brill, 1983), partisanship (Campbell et al., 1960, 1986; Hyman, 1969), political efficacy (Almond and Verba, 1963; Easton and Dennis, 1967), elements of ideology (Percheron, 1977; Percheron and Jennings, 1981), and other core social, economic and political values (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995; Crête and Favre, 1989; Flanagan, 1982; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997; Inglehart and Flanagan, 1987; Closky and Zaller, 1984; Nevitte, 1996, 2002; van Deth and Scarborough, 1995).

Exactly when political orientations are internalized remains a source of some debate, but the general consensus is that most core dispositions are initially learned some time between adolescence and early adulthood, the “impressionable” or “formative” years, and once they are formed political orientations remain relatively stable all through life. Searing and his colleagues (1976) refer to this as the *primacy principle* of political socialization theory.

More significantly, theories of political socialization maintain that political orientations are continually reinforced throughout life, precisely because they shape how people initially respond to political stimuli. This is the *structuring principle* (Searing, Schwartz, and Lind, 1973).

It follows from these two principles that noteworthy shifts in political outlooks and behaviours typically take place between different generations. Such social, economic, and political “shocks” as wars, economic hardship, and other sorts of social upheaval occasionally leave their mark on the core political outlooks of those who are in their formative years, setting them apart from earlier generations. These discontinuities in the social transmission of political orientations from earlier to subsequent generations, according to the socialization perspective, are a primary source of long term political change (Abramson, 1976a, 1976b, 1983; Abramson and Inglehart, 1995; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, 1984; Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997; Nevitte, 1996)

Although there is certainly evidence of generational dynamics across a variety of political outlooks, political socialization research is often criticized for overstating its case (Cook, 1985; Marsh, 1971; Niemi and Hepburn, 1995; Searing, Schwartz, and Lind, 1973). Sears and Levy observe that the political socialization approach makes “two often overly enthusiastic assumptions” about the extent to which early learning takes place, and about the long-term stability of political orientations (Sears and Levy, 2003: 87). Empirical tests of these assumptions have produced mixed results. The most frequently reported findings come from U.S. studies focusing on one particular political orientation, party identification. And the weight of this evidence seems to indicate that partisan affiliations strengthen and stabilize with age (Alwin, 1993; Cassel, 1993, 1999; Claggett, 1981; Converse, 1968, 1976; Jennings

and Markus, 1984; Jennings and Stoker, 1999; Sears and Valentino, 1997; Valentino and Sears, 1998).² Other political attitudes, however, exhibit considerably less stability (Converse, 1964; Converse and Markus, 1979; Jennings et. al., 2009; Sears, 1983). Moreover, it is not clear that party identification is transmitted through an early socialization process. Panel studies of U.S. adolescents and their parents find that initially strong parent-child similarities in party identification weaken as children enter early adulthood and their exposure to politics increases (Beck and Jennings, 1991; Niemi and Jennings, 1991). These studies also find modest intergenerational transmission of other political attitudes (Jennings and Niemi, 1974, 1981; Jennings et al., 2009). In short, the evidence from a number of studies indicates that individual-level political outlooks and behaviours undergo considerably more change over a lifetime than the original theories of political socialization anticipated.

Given this set of inconsistent findings, some political socialization researchers have called for a new research program that examines how the socialization process occurs throughout life (Sapiro, 1994; Sigel, 1989). Sapiro's (2004) recent appeal for a return to childhood development of political orientations, however, seems to signify that the political socialization approach might have come full circle.

An alternative approach to the effects of experience acknowledges that political outlooks and behaviours continue to evolve long after the pre-adult years, and instead examines how a variety of characteristics associated with chronological aging influence citizen engagement. These life span accounts argue that it is the cumulative entirety of life experiences that influences political outlooks and behaviours: citizens' priorities shift as they age, making

² The Canadian evidence is sparse, but Johnston's (1992c) analysis of party attachments in Canada uncovered a very modest age-strength relationship. Moreover, Abramson (1992) finds little support for the age-strength relationship in Britain. Abramson also argues that Converse's (1976) initial evidence of such a relationship in the United States may be confounded by period effects (Abramson, 1979).

politics, and certain political preferences, more salient at some stages of life than at others. From that vantage point age is a vital marker in the analysis of political behaviour because it "serves as the surrogate for such specific traits as marital and parental status, occupational experience and mobility, extended residence, property ownership, physical condition, and mental faculties" (Glenn, 1974).

Many analyses of the political life span of citizens focus on political participation, and specifically how and why citizens tend to be more active with age. This research shows that obstacles to political participation diminish, and the salience of politics increases, as people become older. For one, the costs of political participation decline as people move through life. Young adults, the argument goes, are typically more concerned with leaving home, finishing school, and starting careers and families than with politics, and politics often takes a back seat to these other priorities (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, 1998; Converse and Niemi, 1971; Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Strate et al., 1989). At the same time, the stakes in political engagement are also greater for older citizens than their younger counterparts (Jennings, 1979). Older adults with families, mortgages, and established careers all have a more clearly defined stake than others in political outcomes, and this stake, Jennings argues, "supplies the motivation for participation" (1979, 756). Social pressures to be politically active also surface as people settle in communities and build social networks (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993).

But these factors do not explain all of the systematic changes in political attitudes and behaviour that occur during the course of the life span, and the residual effects of age are typically attributed to "experience" with politics (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Neuman, 1986; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Strate et al., 1989). Neuman (1986: 194), for one,

notes that “age itself, or simply growing older, allows for gradual political learning.” Strate and his colleagues (1989: 450) contend that experience with politics engenders “civic competence”, which they define as “habits of knowledge acquisition relevant to politics. And Jennings and Stoker (1999: 9) describe age as “an index of political experience” which brings “an enriched set of policy views and party evaluations, and an evolution of tighter linkages between the two.” What experience with politics actually entails is not entirely clear from these accounts. Exactly why and how does experience with politics matter? Is political experience shorthand for the wealth of knowledge about politics that comes with age, or is it something else? Does political experience matter in the same way for all kinds of political behaviours? What are the processes by which citizens learn over the long term?

3 Cognitive Limits and Political Learning over the Long Haul

This study starts from the straightforward premise that individual-level changes in political orientations and behaviours over the life span actually have quite a lot to do with citizens’ interactions with the political system. More specifically, the conjecture is that citizens' levels of political engagement, and the kinds of information citizens bring to bear on their vote decisions, depend not just on their formative socialization experiences, nor on their movement through various life stages, but rather on firsthand political learning throughout life.

A substantial body of relatively recent theoretical and empirical work in political science, focusing on how citizens handle the complexity of politics, suggests there are good reasons to think that citizens react to their political environment by adjusting their attitudes and

behaviours rather slowly and incrementally. This line of research has its origins in two schools of thought, the *behavioural decision theory* (Lau, 2003), and what Cox (2004) terms the *cognitive choice* approach. The two approaches differ in some fundamental ways, particularly in their claims about whether at the end of the day citizens are basically rational utility maximizers. The core disagreement is about just how close people come to fully rational behaviour. The cognitive choice approach acknowledges that decision-makers rarely have perfect information, but still argues that people make optimal choices given their circumstances. Behavioural decision theory acknowledges that people are “basically rational” (Jones, 2002: 273), but tends to emphasize how people’s cognitive limits lead systematically to suboptimal choices.³ That said, these two approaches nonetheless also share many similar assumptions about how individuals cope with the often difficult job of being citizens. To understand why we ought to anticipate systematic long-run changes in citizen behaviour, this study draws from the core theoretical premises of these literatures: these are assumptions about intended rationality, the use of cognitive shortcuts, adaptation, and the important role of uncertainty in political judgment and decision making (see Jones, 2002; Lau, 2003).

3.1 Intended rationality

Individuals, to use Simon’s term (1955: 114), are “intendedly” rational. Individual behaviour is fundamentally goal-directed, but the complexity of the specific environment in which people make choices and take actions (the “task environment”) often exceeds their cognitive

³ Some scholars working from a cognitive choice perspective contend that the differences between the two approaches are overdrawn (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). I agree that for many practical and theoretical problems the argument about how optimally citizens behave is not especially important: when it comes to politics, citizens probably come closer to optimality than do people in many other domains, but still fall considerably short of perfect optimality.

capacities (Jones, 2002: 272). Except in relatively rare instances, a detailed means-end calculus of decision making does not guide people's choices and actions. Instead, the decisions and behaviours of individuals and organizations in many different contexts are routinely suboptimal, and they are suboptimal in systematic ways. The world of politics is one such complex task environment (Elkins, 1993; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991), and thus the assumption is that although citizens are goal-oriented, they often fall short of being fully rational political actors.

This is not to say that citizens are essentially slow-witted. Simon, for one, claims that there are actually only a few inherent cognitive limitations to people's abilities to deal with complex problems (Simon, 1996). If citizens behave suboptimally when it comes to politics, it is because they have many other concerns in life of equal or greater precedence. Behavioural decision theory contends that people have a hard time making trade-offs among their political objectives and other goals in life, not least of all because the human mind is not built for multi-tasking in some domains: conscious thought and attention are usually sequential, so that people can only attend to goals one at a time (Jones, 2002, 274; Bendor, 2003, 437). Individuals typically cope with competing priorities by *satisficing*, or making choices and taking actions in specific domains, including politics, which are not necessarily optimal but are "good enough" according to some internal standard (Bendor, 2003; Jones, 1999, 2002; Simon, 1955).

From a cognitive choice perspective, the average citizen's lack of effort when it comes to politics is a much more deliberate choice. People weigh the benefits of pursuing different objectives against the costs associated with attending to each one, including the costs of searching for information (Downs, 1957). People are cognitive misers; they minimize the

time and effort they invest in domains where the net benefits of careful thought and action are relatively low, because, as Lupia and McCubbins bluntly state, “survival requires rational choices of goods and services and rational allocations of our scarce cognitive resources” (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998: 24). Certainly, the evidence from a wide variety of countries is that politics simply is not all that important to most people. The 1999-2002 World Values Surveys, for example, asked people in some 80 countries how important family, work, friends, religion, leisure time, and politics are in their lives. Politics ranked dead last in nearly every country (Inglehart et al., 2004).

Regardless of which these two perspectives comes closer to the mark, the central message of both is that citizens face significant cross-pressures. Most citizens have reasons for their political choices and actions; that is, politics is not merely symbolic for them. At the same time, however, few are rarely willing to devote a great deal of time and effort to politics.

3.2 Cognitive Shortcuts

How do people resolve the inbuilt tension between the desire to make the "right" political choices – for example, choosing which political information to pay attention to, choosing whether to vote or abstain, or choosing which party or candidate to support – and the desire to do so without expending too much effort? A core assumption made by proponents of both bounded rationality and cognitive choice approaches is that people frequently use simplifying strategies when confronted with complex task environments. More specifically, they rely on cognitive shortcuts, or *heuristic principles*, in order to form judgments and decide on courses of action. Mondak succinctly puts it:

When forming a judgment through application of heuristic principles, the decision maker does not engage in detailed analysis of all available information. Instead, cognitive heuristics allow the decision maker to focus attention on a few specific aspects of information, and ignore other aspects. Thus, the process of constructing a judgment is simplified because it requires less cognitive effort. (1994: 219)

Cognitive psychologists have identified how basic heuristic principles apply across a wide variety of domains, but within political science the focus has mostly been on what heuristic devices help citizens overcome information shortfalls in making political judgments and decisions, particularly within the electoral context. These cognitive shortcuts can take a variety of forms. Voters can focus, for example, on the characteristics of party leaders and candidates - from basic demographic characteristics to personality traits - to assess how they will perform if elected (Brady and Sniderman, 1985; Cutler, 2002; Kinder et al., 1980; Kinder, 1986; Popkin, 1991; Rahn et al., 1990). Retrospective evaluations of incumbent governments are also voting cues (Fiorina, 1981). And some suggest that partisanship provides an important heuristic cue (Fiorina 1981; Shively 1979). Still others argue that core values and ideologies allow voters to develop positions on relatively complex issues (Downs, 1957; Feldman, 1988; Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Zaller, 1991).

3.3 Adaptation

Despite the complexity of the environment facing publics, citizens have a strong capacity for learning even when they rely largely on heuristics. Jones observes that "most human behaviour is explained by the nature of the 'task environment.' Given enough time, human thought takes on the shape of the task facing it – that is, human thought is adaptive and basically rational" (2002: 273). The key to learning in any setting, according to behavioural decision theory, is getting a handle on the task environment: the more exposure one has to

the task environment, the less cognitive limitations actually matter (Jones, 2002; Newell, 1990). Behavioural decision theorists often use the game of chess as an example to illustrate this point. A chess match is considerably less complex in the endgame, when there are only a few pieces left on the board, than it is at the start. Consequently, chess masters play the game much differently from chess novices in the less complicated endgame than they do at the start of the game. For example, “A chess master suffering from a significant material disadvantage in the endgame will resign, because he knows that his opponent will win and nothing can be done about it,” whereas a novice, being unable to recognize the problem, “will often play the game out to the bitter end” (Bendor, 2003: 436). Even the most seasoned chess players still use decision-making shortcuts; the point is that they use different and more effective ones than novices.

The same general idea holds when it comes to electoral politics. Political “experts”, those with a good deal of long-term experience with politics, have a greater potential than “novices” to behave optimally. The claim is *not* that the most politically experienced citizens are rational utility maximizers; Bendor and his colleagues (2009) give a formal demonstration of how even in the long run this can never quite happen when people use heuristics. But with additional experience citizens can get closer to optimal behaviour, even when they use cognitive shortcuts (Bendor, Kumar, and Siegel, 2009). *Long-term* political experience is crucial, I argue, because of the character of both citizens and the task environment: citizens rarely if ever focus all of their attention on politics, and elections are relatively uncommon events. Unlike the game of chess, opportunities to learn from elections are therefore intermittent and brief. Consequently, learning from the cumulative experiences of elections takes time.

3.4 Uncertainty

The final conjecture is that uncertainty, as an essential feature of politics, influences citizen behaviour. Uncertainty arises when a decision maker, faced with a set of alternatives, does not know the consequences of those alternatives with any degree of precision (March and Simon, 1958; Wallace, 1983: 435). Indeed, the decision maker might not even have an idea of what the consequences are of some or all the possible alternatives (Jones, 2002). When it comes to electoral politics, for example, voters facing a choice between different parties may be unsure about the consequences of one party, rather than another, taking power.

Following March (1994), I assume that citizens face two types of uncertainty in electoral politics, one associated with characteristics of citizens themselves, and one linked to the political environment. The first type of uncertainty results when citizens have incomplete available information. For instance, voters might be unsure about the consequences of one party winning an election rather than another because they do not know what each party claims it will do if elected. Facing that limitation, voters can either search for more information, or they can bypass that search by turning to readily available heuristics (Popkin, 1991). The second type of uncertainty, which is ubiquitous in politics and poses a far greater challenge for citizens, is the inherent unpredictability of the social, economic, and political environment. Voters cannot know with any sort of precision the consequences of a party winning an election, because conditions change, parties sometimes renege on campaign promises, and so forth. And once again, voters can deal with this uncertainty in a couple of ways. One option is to rely on shortcuts, particularly the expertise of others. From this vantage point it is hardly surprising that a central research question in Lupia and McCubbins' analysis of cognitive shortcuts in politics is "When is learning from others a sufficient

substitute for personal experience as the basis of reasoned choice?" (1998: 8). But another common and more economical strategy is for citizens to rely on their own previous experience. Here, the question is: which party has done the best job in the past?

4 How Political Experience Matters

The focal points of this study are adaptive behaviours and strategies that help citizens navigate electoral politics in three areas: choosing whether to vote or abstain, acquiring campaign information, and deciding which party to vote for.

4.1 Habit Formation and Voter Turnout

Many of the decisions people make on a daily basis are entirely reflexive: they involve virtually no forethought. Simon recognized these basic habits and routines as indispensable decisional cost-saving mechanisms: when people's recognition of a situation generates an automatic response, they are able to forgo otherwise costly deliberation (March and Simon, 1958; Simon, 1965).

Habits emerge slowly through repeated encounters with, and consistent responses to, the same environmental stimuli. The habit-forming process, as described by Wood and Neal (2007, 843), is quite straightforward: "people form habits as they encode these context-response patterns in procedural memory. Once formed, the habitual response comes to be primed or triggered by the perception of cues in the performance context." Habits "are the residue of past goal pursuit; they arise when people repeatedly use a particular behavioural means in particular contexts to pursue their goals" (Ibid: 844), but habitual acts are ultimately

non-rational, in that no consideration is actually given to the costs and benefits of the action (Simon, 1965; Wood and Neal, 2007).

Cognitive psychologists have confirmed that habit plays an important role in consumer purchasing decisions (Bargh and Ferguson, 2000; Dynan, 2000), food consumption (Khare and Inman, 2006), and in other everyday activities (Ouellette and Wood, 1998; Wood, Quinn, and Kashy, 2002). Certainly voting is a less regular activity, but the decision about whether to vote, or abstain, nevertheless shares many of the same features as other, more mundane choices. The costs and benefits of voting are typically quite low (Aldrich, 1993; Barry, 1978): it takes very little time and effort to cast a ballot (Niemi, 1976). At the same time, however, an individual vote also has a negligible impact on the outcome of an election (Downs, 1957; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). Consequently, the decision about whether to vote or abstain is the type of choice that appears to be prone to habit formation (Aldrich et al., 2007; Gerber, Green, and Shachar, 2003; Green and Shachar, 2000; Plutzer, 2002).

The most significant implication of habitual voting is that voters are insulated from the changes across time and contexts in the modest costs and benefits of the voting decision. Indeed, small changes in those already modest costs and benefits can make a difference when it comes to voter turnout levels (Grofman, 1993). Taking the idea of habitual voting seriously encourages a distinctive interpretation of two noteworthy and puzzling trends in Canadian political participation: the marked decline in voter turnout in Canada over the last twenty years, and the growing turnout gap between younger and older Canadians. The most prominent explanation for both of these trends is a generational account, which says that participatory norms and values have been weakly transmitted to Canadians born and raised in more recent periods than to earlier generations. Consequently, the turnout gap between older

and newer generations has widened over time, and aggregate turnout levels have declined as recent generations have entered the electorate and older ones have left through the normal process of population replacement. The alternative possibility is that the expanding age gap is a symptom, rather than a source, of aggregate turnout decline: the costs and benefits of voting have changed systematically with time, but because older Canadians tend to be habitual voters, costs and benefits are largely irrelevant to whether they choose to vote or abstain. The plausibility of both of these theories is probed in Chapter Three.

4.2 Managing Informational Complexity

If democratic citizenship entails “surveillance of the current political landscape” (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996), what exactly is it that citizens should survey? One important requirement, many observers argue, is that citizens learn over the course of election campaigns what the competing parties say they will do if they are elected (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Indeed, whether and how policies and issues matter to voters has preoccupied scholars of electoral behaviour in Canada and abroad for decades (Blais et al. 2001c, 2002b, 2004c; Fiorina, 1981; Fournier et al., 2003; Johnston et al., 1992a; Krosnick, 1988, 1990; MacKuen, Erickson, and Stimson, 1992; Nadeau et al., 2000; Page and Brody, 1972; Page and Jones, 1979; Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989). Nevertheless, there are considerable limits to how much policy information citizens gather during campaigns. Policies are not always front and centre during election campaigns. For example, the styles and personalities of party leaders are often the focus of campaign coverage (Blais et al., 2002a), and with growing regularity the so-called "horserace" receives a good deal of media attention (Fiorina, 2002: 519). Indeed, from time to time the parties themselves have strong incentives to

obscure some of their policies while raising the profile of others (Johnston et al., 1992a).⁴ Then, of course, there is the matter of the public's own limitations, above all the aforementioned reluctance of many citizens to engage in a costly search for campaign information. The upshot is that a good number of citizens do not have an easy time finding out what each of the parties stand for, and they are disinclined to take on a relatively time-consuming search for policy information.

However, there are also grounds to think that citizens with lengthy exposure to politics might be more likely than others to pick up information about party policies during election campaigns. First, citizens might build up cognitive skills over the long haul, skills that improve their abilities to successfully retain the campaign information they encounter. One school of thought proposes that citizens develop progressively complex and highly organized cognitive structures as they gain more exposure to politics, thereby increasing their capacity to integrate all kinds of new political information (Converse, 1975; Fiske, Kinder, and Larter, 1983; Fiske, Kinder, and Taylor, 1981; Markus and Zajonc, 1985; Price and Zaller, 1993). In other words, how the citizens think about politics gradually takes on the complex shape of their political environment.

Another possibility is that citizens slowly adopt more effective strategies for paying attention to politics. Lupia and McCubbins (1998) contend that most people come to learn what kinds of political information they should pay attention to through trial and error, a common heuristic whereby individuals faced with a task first consider whether previous strategies used in performing that task were successful or not, and then either repeat the same

⁴ Some parties and leaders are less tactful than others in their attempts to shift public attention away from some policy areas. In the 1993 Canadian general election campaign, for example, Progressive Conservative leader and then-Prime Minister Kim Campbell remarked that "an election is no time to talk about social policy" (Woostencroft 1994: 18).

successful strategies, or abandon them for new and untested ones (Pingle and Day, 1996; Simon, 1962: 72). People learn to ignore some information and attend to other kinds of information. They learn through trial and error to *edit* the political information to which they pay attention (Lau, 2003: 31).

Chapter Four explores each of these possibilities, as well as life cycle and generational explanations for the acquisition of campaign information.

4.3 Coping with Electoral Uncertainty

Citizens cope with electoral uncertainty by relying on past experience whenever they can, both because the costs of acquiring that knowledge have already been borne, and because the inherent uncertainty in politics makes information about the past particularly useful in forecasting future political outcomes. More specifically, the assumption is that citizens are (imperfect) Bayesian decision-makers. The logic of Bayesian learning is quite simple: people modify, or "update," their beliefs about a phenomenon by taking into account a mix of new and old information about that phenomenon.⁵

A central property of Bayesian judgment and decision-making is that the salience of new information about a phenomenon typically decreases with experience: the more prior information an individual has stored up about a phenomenon, the less updating that individual has to do. It is reasonable to assume that for most voters, the decision about which

⁵ Bartels (2002: 121-122) provides a formal model of for the Bayesian learning process in which an individual is trying to learn about an unknown parameter, μ . The individual's prior belief about μ is an estimate, normally distributed with mean μ_{t-1} and variance $1/\pi_{t-1}$. The individual integrates a new piece of evidence, x_t , distributed $N(\mu, \sigma_t^2)$, to produce a posterior belief about μ , distributed $N(\mu_t, 1/\pi_t)$. The updating process takes the form:

$$\mu_t = \mu_{t-1} \pi_{t-1} / (\pi_{t-1} + 1/\sigma_t^2) + x_t (1/\sigma_t^2) / (\pi_{t-1} + 1/\sigma_t^2), \pi_t = \pi_{t-1} + 1/\sigma_t^2$$

where the weights given to old and new information depend on their precision, represented by π_{t-1} and $1/\sigma_t^2$, respectively.

party or candidate they vote for is ultimately a decision about the expected (future) benefits these parties or candidates offer (Downs, 1957); in other words, voters assess the probabilities that parties or candidates are the best choice for them. Some voters may be better than others at determining which party or candidate best corresponds to their own preferences, but the vote choice nevertheless constitutes a meaningful decision for citizens. The Bayesian updating perspective suggests that in order to gauge which vote choice will provide the most benefits, voters rely on a mix of prior beliefs and new information about parties and candidates. From this perspective, experience matters because new information will have less of an impact on voters who have more prior information upon which they can rely. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

This model of information assimilation has received a good deal of attention in research on attitudes toward income redistribution (Piketty, 1995), assessments of politicians (Husted, Kenny, and Morton, 1995), political communication (Huckfeldt et al., 1998), campaign effects on public opinion (Bartels, 1993), and the strength and stability of partisan loyalties (Achen 1992, 2002; Bartels, 2002; Gerber and Green, 1998, 1999; Zechman, 1979). What has not yet been explored empirically is the question of how Bayesian updating affects the vote decision. Nor has any serious consideration been given to the question of how Bayesian updating might be important to such other factors influencing vote choice as perceptions of party competition.

The Bayesian learning model does not assert that voters are intuitive statisticians who calculate complex probabilities at the ballot box. Some scholars working from a rational choice framework have been more equivocal on this point, but Bayes' rule (see Hastie and

Dawes, 2001: 188-95) is merely an analogy for the way citizens incorporate new political information, which according to Bartels (1993: 268):

provides a systematic way to characterize both the relative weight of old and new information in people's current opinions and the nature and sources of the new information they have absorbed between any two opinion readings.

Most researchers working in the behavioural decision framework accept that people are imperfect Bayesians: they make errors when they try to update their beliefs in an efficient manner (Edwards, 1968; Grether, 1980, 1990; Hogarth and Einhorn, 1992; McKelvey and Page, 1990; Wells, 1992). But there is some evidence from cognitive psychology that these errors are not that substantial (Gigerenzer and Hoffrage, 1995), and recent research suggests people update according to Bayes' rule in making everyday cognitive judgments (Griffiths and Tennenbaum, 2007).

An important distinction concerns the Bayesian learning model and measures of "political knowledge," or "political information," conventionally used in voting research. Political knowledge and Bayesian updating are not one and the same. We know that political knowledge substantially affects how citizens vote (Bartels, 1996; Moon, 1990, 1992; Zaller, 1992), but measures of political knowledge used in voting research are limited in scope, and rarely capture the effects of long-term political experience.⁶ Indeed, Bayesian updating effects are likely to be quite different from those of traditional measures of political knowledge. It suggests that as citizens gain a larger stock of prior experience, they rely more on those past experiences than on current knowledge to make decisions. Hence, a politically

⁶ Jennings notes three types of political knowledge measures that are employed in political knowledge research: measures of "textbook" knowledge, that gauge understanding of how a political system functions; measures of "surveillance" knowledge, that gauge knowledge of current events and political issues; and measures of "historical" knowledge, that gauge people's recollection of historical events and personalities (Jennings, 1996: 229). Studies of the effects of historical knowledge, however, are few and far between (see Brown, 1990; Jennings, 1996).

experienced citizen could be quite unaware of current issues and events – which are commonly gauged in survey items that measure political knowledge – but nevertheless capable of making political decisions.

The remaining chapters of the dissertation examine two distinct effects of electoral uncertainty. Chapters Five and Six focus on partisanship. The conventional wisdom is that enduring party loyalties emerge from the process of political socialization. Party loyalties form part of citizens' identities, and those loyalties deepen and strengthen with the passage of time. This conventional wisdom is explored empirically in Chapter Five. An alternative view, examined in Chapter Six, sees partisan loyalties as far less deeply engrained and far more responsive to contemporary political events. Recent versions of this latter alternative, the “revisionist” theory of partisanship (Achen, 1992, 2002; Gerber and Green, 1998), take into account citizens' political uncertainty, where the impact of citizens' prior partisanship on the strength and stability of subsequent partisan orientations depends on the clarity and stability of party messages over the long haul. One empirical implication of this theory is that partisan beliefs tend to stabilize with age, because citizens with greater exposure to parties' past performance are more certain than others about the future behaviour of the parties. This theory has been tested in the United States, which has a stable, two-party system. Chapter Six empirically assesses that theory in the less “exceptional” Canadian context. In that setting the clarity and stability of party messages varies substantially across parties and across time. The main focus is on the effects that performance “surprises” -- recent and unexpected positive or negative behaviour by a party -- have on the consistency between partisanship and the vote at the individual level. The chapter empirically tests two central assumptions: The first is that consistency between partisanship and the vote is a function of the clarity and

consistency of a party's performance over the long term, and of a citizen's amount of prior exposure to party performance; The second assumption tested is that the impact of performance surprises on partisan stability is negatively associated with citizen uncertainty about the change in party performance.

Chapter Seven turns to consider a different kind of electoral uncertainty: voters' doubts about the behaviour of other voters. Duverger's (1954) pioneering work featured an important theory about the role of voter expectations in single-member plurality (SMP) electoral systems. Duverger claimed that SMP rules favour a two-party system because of two factors: a “mechanical” factor, the near-systematic underrepresentation of parties that win relatively small proportion of the vote; and a “psychological” factor, the sense among voters, upon recognizing this distortion of outcomes, that a vote for one of these smaller parties is a 'wasted' vote (Duverger, 1954).

The impact of the system-level variable, the mechanical factor, is well documented. And it is striking that empirical tests of the individual-level variable, the psychological factor remain so few and far between. This chapter proposes a new theory and presents a simple test of the effects of Duverger’s psychological factor. The argument is that direct, repeated experience with the electoral system is a crucial aspect of the psychological factor. Experienced voters have a larger stock of knowledge about previous election outcomes, and specifically about the behaviour of other voters. Experienced voters are therefore better able to anticipate election outcomes because they are more certain about how other voters will behave. Two hypotheses flowing from this line of reasoning are tested here. The first hypothesis is that younger, less experienced voters are more likely than their older, more experienced counterparts to enter an election with weak preconceptions about the outcome;

that is, younger voters tend to be quite uncertain about the outcome of local races. The second hypothesis is that expectations about smaller parties' success or failure will have a greater impact on the vote decisions of older, more experienced voters than their younger, less experienced counterparts. The empirical analysis investigates these hypotheses, and the evidence suggests that smaller parties can survive in SMP systems in part because new cohorts of inexperienced voters continuously enter the electorate.

5 Summary

Two basic theoretical frameworks miss something about how citizens' life histories affect the ways in which they approach politics. Theories of political socialization are quite adept at explaining stability in political outlooks and behaviours over the life span, but they have trouble systematically accounting for cross-time change within individuals. And most life span accounts focus on how experiences throughout life, occurring largely outside the world of politics, influence outlooks and behaviours.

The theoretical framework employed in this study makes four basic assumptions about citizens: they are intendedly rational, they use cognitive shortcuts, they are adaptive, and they often face deep uncertainty about the political world. These core assumptions generate a broad set of expectations about how long term experience with politics systematically affects citizen behaviour.

The challenge is to develop a strategy for testing these expectations. It is to that task that we now turn.

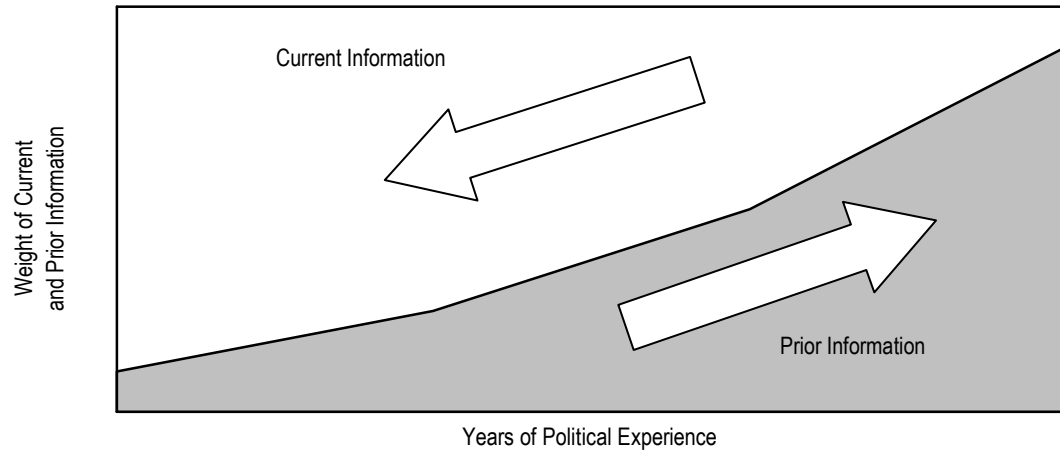
CHAPTER ONE TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.1 Age Composition of the Canadian Population, 1981-2006 (%)

Age Group	Census Year					
	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
15-24	19	17	14	13	13	13
25-34	17	18	18	16	13	13
35-44	12	14	16	17	17	15
45-54	10	10	11	13	15	16
55-64	9	9	9	9	10	12
65+	10	11	12	12	13	14

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2007.

Figure 1.1 The Relative Importance of Current and Prior Political Information to Citizens' Vote Decisions, by Years of Political Experience



Chapter 2 Methodological Considerations

1 Introduction

The main goal of this chapter is to outline the general methodological considerations that inform the subsequent analyses in chapters three through six. Each of those chapters contains its own particular discussion of the methods used to address the specific research questions posed. But there are the larger common elements of research design and presentation that shape the entire project. The focus is on how the effects of political experience are measured, how those effects are distinguished from rival explanations, which empirical data are used in the analyses, and how the evidence will be presented.

2 Measuring Political Experience

The pivotal independent variable of the study is political experience, understood as an individual's years of exposure to Canadian politics. The ideal research design for a study about intraindividual development in attitudes or behaviours would incorporate longitudinal data, more specifically a prospective panel design in which data are collected for each variable of interest at several distinct time periods, the same subjects are analyzed, and a comparison is made between attitudes and behaviours in different periods (see Menard, 2002: 2). Unfortunately, such evidence is quite hard to come by, not least because of the prohibitive costs of collecting longitudinal data. In any case, longitudinal research designs are not without their own problems associated with the repeated collection of information from the same individuals over long time periods. Principal among these issues are panel

attrition and panel conditioning, both of which may systematically bias longitudinal evidence. It becomes difficult to make valid inferences about intraindividual development when respondents who are lost in subsequent waves of data collection (attrition) differ systematically from those who are retained (Ibid: 39). Moreover, repeated testing might cause respondents to think more carefully about attitudes and behaviours than they would otherwise (conditioning), which can also bias panel evidence (Cantor, 1989; Kalton, Kasprzyk, and McMillan, 1989; Menard, 2002: 42-43).

The alternative research strategy is to rely on cross-sectional data. With these kinds of data the best estimate of a citizen's level of political experience is simply their age. The central argument of the preceding chapter is that voters learn from those political events and experiences to which they have been exposed. Since older citizens have lived through more elections than younger citizens, they should, in most cases, have more of this election experience upon which they can draw.

A person's age, however, can also be construed as a proxy for an assortment of other individual characteristics. And distinguishing the effects of those characteristics from the consequences of political experience is a crucial analytical undertaking for this study. There are strong aforementioned theoretical reasons to suppose that any differences in political attitudes and behaviours associated with age are rooted in something other than political experience. Theories of political socialization, for instance, suggest that age differences are actually code for disparities in the early formative experiences of citizens raised in different historical periods (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, 1984; Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997) rather than the amount of experience with politics they have. Theories of the life span imply that age-related changes in political outlooks and actions are a

byproduct of other systematic developments that occur throughout the life course (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Jennings, 1979; Strate et al., 1989).

The following analysis adopts a quite distinctive approach to resolving the problem of distinguishing between various age-related effects. That approach is a synthesis of two strategies employed productively in past research on political behaviours and attitudes (Black et al., 1987; Finifter and Finifter, 1989; Niemi and Barkan, 1987; Niemi et al., 1984, 1985). One strand of research considers how the political orientations of newly enfranchised electorates and citizens in new democracies develop over time (Mishler and Rose, 2007; Niemi and Barkan, 1987; Niemi et al., 1984; Rose et al., 2008). In this case, entire publics are a testing ground for exploring how political attitudes and behaviours evolve with experience. But a second strand of research investigates the extent to which immigrants' arrival in their new host countries transforms their political attitudes and behaviours (Black et al., 1987; Finifter and Finifter, 1989; Niemi et al., 1985). The emphasis in these studies is typically on the links between immigrants' past political orientations and their outlooks in the early years after migration to a new political system.

The approach adopted here examines the impact of age on the political outlooks and behaviours of citizens who spent their formative years in Canada, and compares it with those who did not: namely, immigrant Canadians who arrived in the country as adults. The political attitudes and behaviour of immigrants are a potentially valuable source of information for at least two reasons. First, the conventional socialization argument does not apply in quite the same way to this group. Adult immigrants' formative years, by definition, were spent in other countries. And in the majority of cases, those political settings were vastly different from those of their new host country. The clear implication is that they

should be relatively immune to the kinds of generational effects that influence the outlooks of citizens born in Canada. A central claim of theories of political socialization is that the agents of socialization are critically important in determining the content of political outlooks. Immigrants who arrive in Canada as adults cannot have been exposed to precisely the same mix of social forces as those born within Canada. To the extent that age-related effects serve as a proxy for generational differences in political socialization, those effects should not be present in the adult immigrant population.

Second, immigrants arrive in Canada at different ages. The central methodological implication of that observation is that number of years of immigrants' experience with Canadian politics is not perfectly correlated with their age. By analyzing immigrant voters the effects of experience with politics and other factors associated with biological aging can be disentangled. This can be done, analytically, by distinguishing between two potentially relevant life phases for immigrants: the time before they arrived in Canada, and then the time after (Figure 2.1). Political experience will be measured by years of residence in Canada. Life span effects, however, are indicated by years of residence in Canada *combined with* the number of years an immigrant lived prior to arriving in Canada. If life span factors are what really matter, then both parts of immigrants' lives should be influential. Consider the following example: if voter turnout increases with age because of developments over the life span that occur largely outside the political realm (for example, basic psychological maturation, starting and raising families, and so on), then additional years prior to *and* after migration should both be associated with a higher probability of voting. Alternatively, if other age-related attributes are largely immaterial, then the effects of additional years prior to migration should be quite weak when compared to the effects of additional years in Canada.

This analytical approach to exploring the effects of political experience is employed throughout this study. But it is more important for addressing some empirical questions than others. There are particularly strong theoretical reasons to think both voter turnout and the acquisition of campaign information are related to life span factors and/or political socialization.

3 Data Sources

To explore the effects of political experience, this study relies on data from the Canadian Election Studies (CES).⁷ These are large, nationally representative surveys of the Canadian electorate, and they have been conducted in every Canadian general election since 1965. The number of respondents surveyed, the sampling method used, and time period in which each of these surveys were conducted is summarized in Table 2.1. Before the 1988 general election, these election studies relied on face-to-face personal interviews gathered from multistage stratified cluster samples. After 1988, however, the studies gathered data from telephone interviews, and random digit dialing procedures were used to select households. And after 1988, the CES also collected responses both during the campaign periods and after the elections.

The particular surveys used in each chapter were selected with a pair of goals in mind: first, to maximize the number of potential cases available for analysis and, second, to maximize the number of comparable survey items available for analysis. Many of the hypotheses tested in the following chapters involve interaction effects, but multicollinearity is a source of concern when estimating such effects, and there are rarely enough cases in any

⁷ Blais et al., 2000, 2004, 2007 ; Clarke et al., 1977, 1982; Johnston et al., 1992b, 1995; Lambert et al., 1984; Meisel, 1969 .

single cross-sectional sample to obtain reliable estimates. The most straightforward solution to the problem of multicollinearity is to increase the number of cases for analysis. And because each individual CES survey contains a relatively small number of adult foreign born Canadians, it is also a challenge to obtain reliable estimates of immigrant behaviour. To respond to this potential problem, the analysis exploits the cross-time comparability of the CES surveys by pooling several CES datasets. That strategy improves the precision of these estimates. The first goal must be balanced against the second, which is to ensure an adequate number of comparable survey items are available for the analyses. The different CES contain many comparable measures, but the number of equivalent items across these surveys diminishes as the coverage of surveys expands.

The decision about which CES surveys to pool is guided by the specific research questions that drive each chapter. Chapter Three explores cross-time dynamics in voter turnout and abstention. That analysis utilizes pooled data collected for nine different election studies between 1968 and 2004. In other chapters, where cross-time comparisons are not essential to the analyses, rely mostly on pooled CES data from 1993 to 2004. These surveys are used primarily because they are among the most recent large-scale surveys of Canadian political behaviour, and because they contain the largest number of comparable measures.

The 1993 to 2004 surveys also cover a politically significant period in the history of electoral competition in Canada. During that period electoral competition was particularly volatile and the federal party system unstable (Carty, Cross, and Young, 2000). Between 1963 and 1993, Canada's federal party system was dominated by two parties with broad national support, the Liberal and Progressive Conservative (PC) parties. A social democratic party, the New Democratic Party (NDP), also sustained considerable voter support during

this period, although it never achieved levels of electoral success enjoyed by the other two parties (Ibid; Johnston et al., 1992a). That party system collapsed dramatically in the 1993 general election (Carty et al., 2000; Docherty and White, 2004). Two new parties emerged in that contest: the conservative, western-based Reform party and the *souverainiste* Bloc Quebecois (BQ) in Quebec. The rapid success of these two parties coincided with a sudden decline in the electoral fortunes of the PC party and the NDP. These dynamics transformed the federal electoral landscape. Since 1993, Canada has experienced a bifurcated federal party system. The BQ competes exclusively in Quebec, and, arguably, it has been the dominant party in that province since the 1993 election. Outside Quebec, six different parties competed for seats in the House of Commons between 1993 and 2004. The Liberal Party and the NDP were important players in every election during that period. The Liberal Party formed majority governments in three consecutive elections (1993, 1997, and 2000) and a minority government in another (2004). The centre-right has been much less stable: the Reform Party, in an attempt to merge with like-minded conservatives in the PC party, transformed itself into the Canadian Alliance in 2000. In 2003, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party formally merged to create the Conservative Party of Canada.

For all of these reasons, CES data from 1993 onwards are useful for pooled data analyses.

All analyses using CES data employ weights. National sample weights are used for most analyses. Where regions of Canada are analyzed separately, of course, regional weights are employed.

4 Analyzing and Presenting the Evidence

Throughout this study, the goal is to follow King, Tomz, and Wittenberg's (2000) advice, namely, that statistical results should be expressed in ways that convey precise estimates of substantively interesting empirical relationships. They should include clear assessments of uncertainty about those estimates. These recommendations are worth following closely for a combination of reasons. First, this study focuses on evidence about relationships drawn from binary and ordered logit estimation procedures. The reason is straightforward: many of the dependent variables examined in the following analyses are categorical, and nearly all of the hypotheses tested entail a multivariate approach; but parameter estimates generated using these procedures are notoriously difficult to assess intuitively (Menard, 2002), and should be transformed into more meaningful quantities.

Second, many of the empirical relationships explored in this study are *conditional*. At issue is understanding how variable z modifies the relationship between variable x and y . Evaluating the uncertainty of estimates of these interaction effects needs to be approached cautiously. Particularly, the central question of interest is: how and why does experience with Canadian politics affect the relationship between, for example, attentiveness to politics and the acquisition of campaign information (Chapter Four), partisanship and vote choice (Chapters Five and Six), and expectations about parties' chances of winning the election and vote choice (Chapter Six). Conventional tests of statistical significance do not go far enough when it comes to these interaction effects (Brambor, Clark, and Golder, 2006; Friedrich, 1982)⁸; instead researchers should also assess the reliability of estimated effects of an

⁸ Wald tests of significance are employed throughout the study to assess the statistical significance of interactions.

independent variable (x) on a dependent variable (y) at different values of the conditioning variable (z).⁹

For this combination of reasons, the approach followed in most of the analysis is to transform raw statistical evidence into more easily interpretable findings. Parameter estimates from multivariate models are converted into predicted probabilities, and are presented alongside their associated 95 percent confidence intervals. This strategy is appealing because readers can interpret for themselves the substantive relationship between, for example, age and voter turnout, by examining how the estimated probability of turning out to vote changes at different ages. Reader can also evaluate for themselves how accurate these estimates are by examining the confidence intervals, which show just how closely the relationships in the sample reflect those of the true relationships within the Canadian population.

Throughout the study, a consistent range of years of experience is employed to produce these estimated probabilities. That range consists of the most plausible and substantively interesting set of values for Canadian born citizens and immigrant Canadians. Estimates are generated for Canadian born citizens between the ages of 18 to 78, and for immigrant Canadians who have lived between zero and 50 full years in Canada, and who lived outside of Canada between zero and 30 years over the age of 18.¹⁰

⁹ The standard errors from which tests of statistical significance are calculated are *conditional* standard errors when it comes to interaction effects (Brambor, Clark, and Golder, 2006; Friedrich, 1982). Consequently, the statistical significance of the interaction term in a multivariate model of any kind is not always meaningful (Brambor, Clark, and Golder, 2006; Norton, Wang, and Ai, 2004).

¹⁰ Very few immigrant respondents who arrived in Canada as adults lived for more than 50 years in Canada, or more than 30 years outside Canada before migrating.

5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline the general strategy for gauging the effects of political experience on Canadian political attitudes and behaviour. I have presented a comparative approach to assessing the effects of long-term exposure to Canadian politics on political behaviour. I have also described the data that will be utilized, and provided a rationale for selecting these data. Finally, I have sketched out how the empirical evidence will be presented in subsequent chapters. With these broad methodological considerations in mind, we move on to examine empirically how and why political experience matters.

CHAPTER TWO TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Distinguishing between Age and Exposure to Canadian Politics, Canadian born and Foreign born Citizens

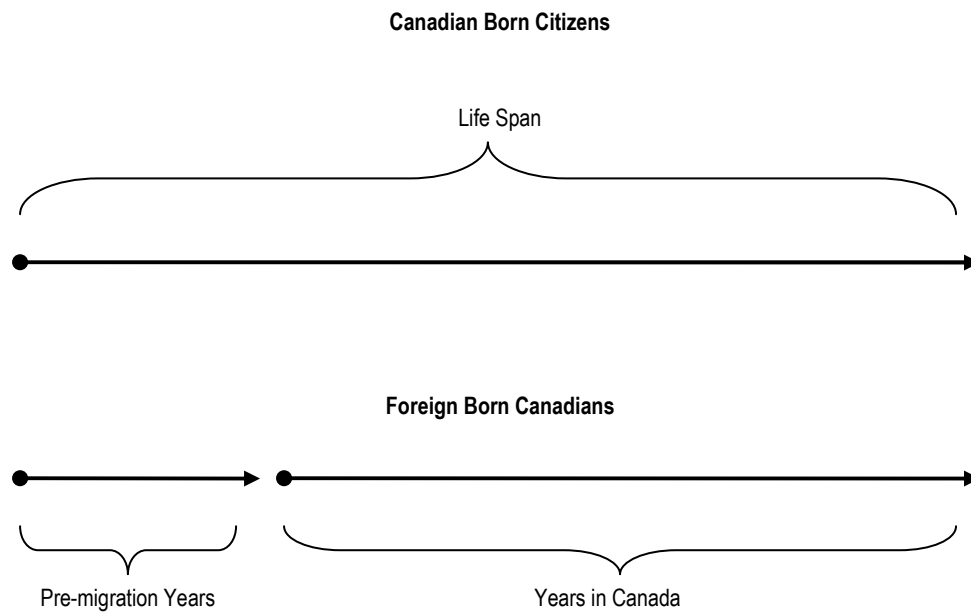


Table 2.1 The Canadian Election Studies

Survey Year	Sampling Universe	Sampling Procedure	Interview Method	Number of Cases	Survey Period
2004-2006 Panel Study	2004 CES respondents	N.A.	telephone	1,999 (campaign period); 1,566 (post-election)	Campaign period (November 30, 2005-January 22, 2006); Post-election (January 24, 2006 - March 27, 2006)
2004	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	Random digit dialing (RDD)	telephone	4,323 (campaign period); 3,138 (post-election)	Campaign period (May 23, 2004-June 27, 2004); Post-election (July 5, 2004-September 19, 2004)
2000	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	telephone	3,651 (campaign period); 2,870 (post-election)	Campaign period (October 24, 2000-November 26, 2000); Post-election (November 2000-April 2001)
1997	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	telephone	3,949 (campaign period); 3,170 (post-election)	Campaign period (April 27, 1997-June 1, 1997); Post-election (June 1997 - July 1997)
1993	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	telephone	3,775 (campaign period); 3,340 (post-election)	Campaign period (September 10, 1993-October 24, 1993); Post-election (October 27, 1993-November 21, 1993)
1988	Canadian citizens aged 18 and over	RDD	telephone	3,609 (campaign period); 2,922 (post-election)	Campaign period (October 4, 1988-November 20, 1988); Post-election (November 1988-January 1989)
1984	Population of Canada aged 18 years and over	Multistage stratified cluster (MSC)	face-to-face	3,377	Post-election (October 1984-February 1985)
1979	The Canadian electorate in 1974	MSC	face-to-face	1,375 new respondents; 1,295 respondents from 1974 survey	Post-election (1979)
1974	The Canadian electorate	MSC	face-to-face	2,562	Post-election (August 4, 1974 - December 21, 1974)
1968	The Canadian electorate	MSC	face-to-face	2,767	Post- election (July 1968 - January 1969)

Note: Three surveys are omitted: The 1965 Canadian National Election Study, which includes a variable that indicates which age group respondents belong to, but does not record their age in single years; the 1972 study, which has the same age variable problem, (and also did not have any principal investigators); and the 1980 Canadian National Election Study, a panel study that re-interviewed respondents from the 1979 election survey.

Chapter 3

Two Perspectives on Electoral Participation in Canada

1 Introduction

Electoral participation is declining in Canada, and the evidence suggests the problem of voter abstention among the youngest group of eligible Canadian voters in particular has worsened in recent years. Canada experienced a turnout decline over the last two decades of a magnitude not typical of most advanced industrial democracies. Turnout levels in Canadian federal elections have fluctuated considerably over the years.¹¹ However, there was a marked pattern of decline in turnout over consecutive elections between the 1988 contest, when turnout was 75 percent, and the 2004 election, when turnout reached a low of only 61 percent (Figure 3.1). To be sure, citizens are turning out to vote in dwindling numbers in other political systems; but the size and timing of these declines varies a great deal, and they are generally far more modest in other systems than in Canada.¹²

The prevailing explanation for the comparatively steep decline in Canadian turnout is that more recent generations of Canadians are disengaged politically; they do not share as strong a sense of duty about voting as older generations. But is the decline in voter turnout among Canadians the result of a generational shift in the way citizens are socialized politically, or is the widening gap in electoral participation between younger and older Canadians a symptom of something else entirely? This chapter explores this question using data from the Canadian Election Studies over nine elections covering a 36-year time span.

¹¹ Figure 3.1, for instance, shows marked decreases in turnout in the federal elections of August 1953, July 1974, and February 1980. As others have observed (Blais et al., 2004a), these were summer or winter elections, which tend to produce lower turnout levels (Nevitte et al., 2009).

¹² Franklin (2002), for one, examined turnout levels in 23 countries, including Canada, between 1945 and 1999, and found an average decline of only 4.4 percent over that period.

The chapter begins by unpacking two theories that supply different accounts of the turnout decline: the socialization and habitual voting perspectives. Investigating these rival explanations for the widening turnout gap between young and old Canadians presents challenges for researchers. After outlining these challenges, attention then turns to a possible solution to that problem: comparing Canadian born citizens to a group of Canadians for whom the effects of socialization and years of experience with Canadian politics can be more easily distinguished, namely, immigrants. That potential solution generates a particular set of testable hypotheses. The methodological considerations guiding the analysis are outlined in the second section, and the empirical results from the hypotheses tests are presented in the third section. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for long-term democratic health of Canada.

2 Theories of Age Dynamics in Voter Turnout

There are two distinct interpretations of the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians. The first perspective, which has received the most attention in the Canadian case, concerns generational socialization. The core assumptions of generational theories of political socialization suppose that most social and political predispositions are shaped in the "formative years" of life and that those predispositions deepen and intensify over a relatively short period earlier in life. There is some debate about precisely when these predispositions deepen and intensify but most argue that this takes place somewhere between early adolescence and young adulthood. The conventional expectation is that once learned, these predispositions are highly resistant to change thereafter (Beck and Jennings, 1991; Easton and Dennis, 1969; Eckstein, 1988; Greenstein, 1965; Hess and Torney, 1967; Jennings, 1987,

2002; Niemi and Jennings, 1991; Sears and Funk, 1999; Sears and Valentino, 1997; Valentino and Sears, 1998).

The specific conjecture of a number of scholars (Blais et al., 2004a; Gidengil et al., 2004) is that newer generations of Canadians no longer share the same sense of civic duty as older generational cohorts. Many observers agree that a sense of obligation to fulfil one's responsibility as a member of a democratic society is an important motivation behind voting (Blais, 2000; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968), and that this norm is transmitted and internalized by citizens through the standard process of political socialization (Blais et al., 2004a). Certainly there is evidence from Canada and elsewhere that younger citizens are now less likely than their older counterparts to believe it is their duty to cast a vote. The implication is that the recent turnout decline in Canada is a symptom of a breakdown in the socialization process: the usual agents of socialization – the family, school, and the broader social environment – have failed to transmit the civic duty norm to recent generations of Canadian citizens.

The evidence from Canadian election surveys spanning nearly four decades appears to be consistent with such an interpretation. Table 3.1, which reports turnout levels by birth cohorts in nine federal elections between 1968 and 2004, clearly indicates that there are the consistent disparities in voter turnout between Canadians born in different periods.¹³ The average turnout levels for each birth cohort, presented in the final column of the table, confirm turnout is considerably lower among those born between 1960 and 1964 than among previous generations, and there is a steady decline in turnout among subsequent birth cohorts.

¹³ As with most election surveys, reported turnout levels are systematically higher than actual turnout levels. Although reported turnout is biased upward, there is little evidence to suggest that bias is correlated with individual characteristics (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995). The likely impact of higher reported levels is to underestimate the effects of all independent variables on turnout.

The data also indicate a progressive widening of the turnout gap between older and more recent birth cohorts. Between 1960 and 1979, the difference in turnout levels between the youngest and oldest birth cohorts is quite modest: turnout is less than 10 percent higher among the oldest cohort compared to the youngest in 1968 and 1979, and the youngest cohort of eligible Canadian voters actually exhibited the highest turnout rate in 1974. In 1984, however, turnout was about 20 percent higher among the oldest birth cohort than among the youngest, and by 1997 the gap had grown to approximately 30 percent. The pattern emerging from these data strongly suggests that aggregate turnout in Canadian federal elections has dropped substantially since the late 1980s primarily because of gradually shrinking numbers of voters among generations of Canadians born after 1960.

A more detailed analysis of these data led Blais and his colleagues (2004a) to conclude that the turnout decline is attributable to generational dynamics. In their carefully specified model of turnout, they distinguish between four generational cohorts and between two election periods (the periods before and after the aggregate decline in turnout began in Canadian federal elections). They demonstrate that after citizens' ages and the period in which the elections took place are accounted for, the era in which citizens were born emerges as a strong and significant predictor of turnout. Specifically, when citizens' ages and the period in which they were questioned are controlled, Canadians born in the 1960s (the so-called "Generation X") were significantly less likely to vote than earlier birth cohorts. Moreover, Canadians born after the 1960s were even less likely to turn out to vote. The entry of these more recent generations of citizens into the electorate, and the coincident exit of earlier birth cohorts, appears to explain most of the decline in turnout since the early 1990s (Ibid). There are no time series data to verify a generational decline in either psychological

engagement with politics or a sense of duty, but most of the turnout gap does appear to be explained by the fact that younger Canadians are less engaged in politics, and less likely to hold the belief that voting is not only a right, but also a duty.¹⁴

If the supporting evidence is circumstantial, the socialization argument is nonetheless entirely consistent with well-documented birth cohort differences in other political orientations and behaviours. The most notable of these is the erosion of the long-term foundations of electoral politics, particularly party loyalties and social cleavages, among the youngest generations of citizens in most advanced industrial democracies during the last half-century (Beck, 1984; LeDuc, 1984). There are also claims that distinctly lower levels of political knowledge among the youngest voters are also a generational phenomenon (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). At the same time, the emergence of what some call “new politics,” a shift towards new social movements and new forms of political participation, also seems to exhibit a generational component (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, 1984; Dalton, 2006; Inglehart, 1990).

The socialization perspective suggests that the root of the problem lies in the diffusion of political norms to younger generations; thus, the relatively recent decline in turnout may well signal the beginning of a long term trend. As Pammett and LeDuc (2003: 3) observe:

...if the social and political forces that are driving turnout down are of a longer-term nature, the problem of low voter participation could continue to plague the political system for years to come. If, for example, there is a consistent pattern of declining turnout across the generations, we might predict that electoral participation would continue to decline into the future, simply as a result of normal demographic processes of population replacement.

¹⁴ Using data from the 2000 CES, Blais et al. (2004a) and Rubenson et al. (2004) show that voters' interest in the election and the strength of their sense of duty to vote accounted for most of the turnout gap between younger and older Canadians.

That said, there are also good reasons to suppose the causes of the growing turnout gap between young and old may not be quite as deep-rooted in political norms and values as the socialization perspective suggests.

Whether systematic variation in norms of civic duty is a source or a consequence of age differences in turnout is not entirely clear. The socialization argument certainly assumes that a strong sense of civic duty and interest in politics motivates turnout. But an equally plausible conjecture is that the strong link between civic norms and turnout reflects citizens' post-hoc rationalizations about the decision to vote or abstain.

More importantly, there is a rival explanation for the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians. That competing account focuses not on norms and broad orientations towards politics, but rather on how inexperience with voting makes younger citizens particularly responsive to changes in the character of elections. And unlike the socialization account, this alternative explanation sees the age gap as a by-product of widespread turnout decline, rather than as the primary source of that decline.

The central claim from this alternative perspective is that turning out to vote becomes a habit with experience. Thus older voters who have taken more opportunities to vote in the past may be less sensitive than their younger counterparts to circumstances that might inhibit turnout. Scholars of voting behaviour have long recognized an inertial quality in voting behaviour; for many voters, going to the polls appears to be an automatic, decision-free act. Some of the earliest research regarding electoral participation leaned on the possibility that reinforcement might explain the behaviour of persistent voters, although the precise reasons behind the voting habit in those early formulations were “undertheorized” (Plutzer, 2002: 43). It now seems clear that psychological reinforcement is the chief mechanism by which

voters become habitual voters (Aldrich et al., 2007; Gerber, Green, and Shachar, 2003: 548). In effect, the positive feedback that people receive from voting keeps them going to the polls (Gerber, Green, and Shachar, 2003; Green and Shachar, 2000). Older citizens have had more opportunities to vote, and thus they are more likely than younger citizens to have developed the voting habit. And because turning out to vote becomes a habit as voters accumulate experience, older voters are typically insulated from the election dynamics that could lower turnout.

Younger citizens, by contrast, are a group for whom voting has not yet become a habit, and are perhaps susceptible to environmental conditions that can encourage voter abstention. A multitude of contextual factors are known to influence voter turnout, including the competitiveness of elections (Franklin, 2004; Johnston, Matthews, and Bittner, 2007), the number and kinds of electoral choices citizens are offered (Blais, 2000; Blais and Carty, 1990), the economic environment (Blais, 2000; Moon, 1991; Rosenstone, 1982), and electoral laws (Blais and Carty, 1990; Franklin, 1996; Powell, 1982).

The empirical record, in fact, is broadly consistent with that claim. In a study of 22 elections in European countries between 1999 and 2002, for example, Fieldhouse and his colleagues (2007) found that the turnout gap between younger and older citizens was generally wider in elections where overall turnout was relatively low. The clear implication, they conclude, is that young people are more responsive than older citizens to short-term contextual factors affecting turnout across countries (Ibid: 818).

From this vantage point, the precise reasons why aggregate turnout levels are diminishing in Canada and elsewhere have not yet been fully settled. Some argue the culprit is a recent decline in the competitiveness of elections: many young voters are alienated by the lack of

competition in election contests (Franklin, 2004). In Johnston and his colleagues' (2007, 737) estimation, a considerable part of the decline in youth electoral participation in Canada during the 1990s was attributable to this absence of competition combined with a lack of habitual voting among young citizens. They contend electoral competition declined in Canada during the 1990s because party system fractionalization meant that the Liberal Party of Canada was the only player that could reasonably be expected to form a government (Ibid).

Whatever the specific sources of the declining utility of voting might be, this perspective suggests that turnout has dropped more substantially among younger Canadians than their older counterparts because of the joint effects of a changing electoral environment (a period effect) and habitual behaviour among more experienced voters (an age effect). Thus whether the trend will be short-lived or long-lasting depends on just how entrenched are those contextual changes.¹⁵

These two perspectives, then, offer distinct interpretations of the relationship between age and electoral participation, and suggest quite different explanations for the decline in turnout. Indeed, Hooge, Kavadias, and Reeskens (2006) offer compelling evidence that variations in political socialization and differences in the context in which elections take place have unique effects on people's willingness to vote. Their analysis of adolescents in 27 countries shows that such factors as the child's sociodemographic background and the level of civic education provided at school have strong and significant effects on their expressed willingness to vote in the future. Specific political system characteristics, however, had no

¹⁵ For example, in making the case that the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians is a consequence of period-specific changes in party system competitiveness, Johnston and his colleagues speculate optimistically that pre-1993 turnout levels might soon be restored: "the system's renewed competitiveness, with the rebirth of a Canada-wide Conservative party, gives reason for hope" (2007: 743).

significant effects (Hooge et al. 2006: 12-18). Voting norms, the evidence suggests, are learned in the early years, whereas the specific features of elections only come into play later in life.

The challenge, then, is to discriminate empirically between the effects of socialization and habitual voting on the turnout gap. From each perspective the pivotal independent variable is age, but the precise interpretation of the age variable poses significant methodological difficulties. Distinguishing between generational and other age-related effects is a challenge in empirical research not least of all because of the fundamental Age, Period, Cohort (APC) dilemma: as long as there are competing theories which suggest that a person's position in the life cycle (Age), the time at which they are interviewed (Period), and the era in which they were born (Cohort) are important determinants of some attitude or behaviour, it is hard to rule out statistically any two potential explanations in a multivariate model (Blalock, 1966, 1967; Glenn, 2005; Mason et al., 1973). Any two of these independent variables turns out to be a perfect linear predictor of the other independent variable. Thus a researcher who knows a person's year of birth and the time at which they were interviewed, for example, will always know that person's age as well. Consequently, an apparent birth cohort effect could also be a combined age and period effect. In fact, the statistical methods typically used to distinguish between these factors work only when the model used to measure APC effects is precisely correct. As Glenn demonstrates, even a minor error in the functional form of the APC models "leads to estimates that are vastly at odds with the real effects" (2005:14-15).

The problem is intractable as long as the only time series information available to a researcher is age, year of birth, and period of study. Thus, even a multivariate statistical

model that includes carefully specified measures of life cycle, period, and generation, is unlikely to discriminate accurately between rival explanations, unless one explanation is so implausible that it can be ruled out beforehand and excluded from the model. The growing turnout gap poses this very same difficulty because, on the one hand, there is a compelling birth cohort theory about a declining sense of duty to vote. On the other hand, however, there is an equally credible theory rooted in combined age-related and period effects.

Any attempt to probe the effects of both socialization and habitual voting must confront the APC dilemma, but that is no easy task. The only way out of the APC problem, according to Converse (1976) and Glenn (2005), is to make use of “side information” – that is, to consider the additional empirical implications of one or more of the APC theories to make a more persuasive case for the plausibility (or implausibility) of one or more of those theories. The obvious implication that flows from the socialization account is that birth cohort differences in Canadians' sense of civic duty can explain away most of the generational turnout gap. But a reasonable test of that account requires time series data that tap Canadians' sense of duty to vote. Unfortunately, there are no such cross-time data available. At the same time, testing the habitual voting explanation has also been difficult. There is compelling evidence that less politically experienced citizens are indeed more responsive to shifts in the balance of the costs and benefits of voting, but the significant point is that source of any such shift has not been fully identified.¹⁶ A variety of period-specific factors could be discouraging youth turnout. On the other hand, maybe generational changes in socialization are in fact doing all of the explanatory work.

¹⁶ Although Johnston, Matthews, and Bittner (2007: 743) find that turnout levels among younger voters are more sensitive to the competitiveness of elections, they allow “We account for only a modest fraction of the meagre turnout drop in the CES.”

An alternative approach, one which might help to resolve the problem of distinguishing between age, period, and birth cohort effects is to examine the impact of age on turnout among those citizens who spent their formative years in Canada, and compare it with immigrant Canadians, who arrived in the country as adults. For reasons already explained, immigrants' political socialization is quite different from that of Canadian born citizens, and so the generational socialization argument cannot apply to the former group. It follows that since the generational argument presumes that an influx of new, politically disengaged generations are responsible for the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians, then there should be no evidence of a widening turnout gap among adult immigrants of different ages.

Indeed, by the logic of the generational explanation, immigrant Canadians should exhibit distinct turnout dynamics even if generational decline in norms of civic duty is a more widespread phenomenon that is not unique to Canada. Many immigrants to Canada come from countries without democratic political systems, and it is hard to imagine that democratic norms such as a sense of duty to vote are inculcated in the same way, and have declined at roughly the same rate, among immigrants who were first socialized politically elsewhere. Moreover, despite evidence that advanced industrial countries follow similar trajectories when it comes to broad cultural changes, the speed and scope of those changes are distinct from country to country (Cochrane, Nevitte, and White, 2007). Therefore, the relationship between age and turnout will be generally weaker, and the cross-time change in that relationship should be far less discernable, if generational differences in political socialization are the major source of turnout decline.

Recall, however, that in the alternative account for the widening turnout gap between young and old, prior experience with voting rather than age *per se* does the explanatory work. Age is not a suitable proxy for prior voting experience when it comes to Canadian immigrants from non-democratic countries of origin. Indeed, age may not necessarily be associated with habitual voting for those immigrants who hail from countries with political systems that are very similar to Canada's. Even if immigrant Canadians developed a habit of voting in their countries of origin, it is not clear whether that habit survives the discontinuities of moving from one political context to another, or whether habitual voting is instead context specific.

A more thorough test of the two theories, then, is to consider the impact of length of residence in Canada on immigrants' turnout levels. First of all, if greater prior experience with voting encourages habitual voting, then lengthier residence in Canada should lead to higher turnout levels among adult immigrants, all else being equal. Indeed, it is reasonable to expect that the impact of additional years of exposure to Canadian elections on the likelihood of immigrants turning out to vote should be *greater* than the impact of additional years of age on turnout among Canadian born citizens. This is because length of residence is a less noisy measure of electoral experience than age: immigrants' amount of prior experience with Canadian elections can be distinguished from the effects of being socialized in different eras of Canadian politics, as well as from the effects other life cycle factors. Thus, the first expectation is:

H_{3.1}: The effect of length of residence on turnout is stronger among adult immigrants than among Canadian born citizens.

Secondly, if firsthand experience with voting becomes habitual, and that habit in turn shields seasoned voters from factors specific to the election context which might otherwise encourage abstention, then irrespective of how old immigrants are, additional years of exposure to Canadian elections should be associated with higher turnout levels. In effect, immigrants' length of residence in Canada should exhibit a cross-time pattern that is similar to that of age among Canadian born citizens. The expectation is:

H_{3,2}: The effect of length of residence in Canada on immigrant turnout levels increases across election periods.

3 Data and Specific Methodological Considerations

In order to test the hypotheses concerning the effects of political experience on the turnout gap, the analysis draws on data from the Canadian Election Studies, 1968-2004.¹⁷ These include a number of comparable items in each survey, and they also include a sufficient number of foreign born respondents to make reliable comparisons between Canadian born and foreign born citizens.

Elections are divided into three periods. The evidence of cross-time variation in the turnout gap between younger and older age cohorts, presented initially in Figure 2, suggests three distinct election periods should be compared. The first period is from 1968 to 1979, when age cohort differences are quite modest. The second period to consider is from 1984 to 1993. This is the period when age cohort differences first emerged. The third period is after

¹⁷ Blais et al., 1997, 2000, 2004b ; Clarke et al., 1982; Johnston et al., 1991, 1995 ; Lambert et al., 1984; Meisel, 1969. These merged data were provided by Antoine Bilodeau, Department of Political Science, Concordia University.

1993, when the age gap widened even further. Any single election provides too few immigrant cases for reliable comparison with the Canadian born group, and so the data are pooled. The pooled data from each these three-election periods yield an adequate number of immigrant respondents (N=689, 453, and 534 in the first, second, and third periods, respectively) to judge against the considerably larger samples of Canadian born cases (N=6,135, 6,030, and 6,729 in each respective period).

4 Evidence

The starting point is the evidence concerning Canadian born citizens. Binary logit is used to estimate the predictors of voter turnout. The analysis proceeds in two stages for each election period. At the first stage, age is entered in the model as the key predictor of turnout, along with controls for the specific election in which each respondent was interviewed, and for two other resources commonly associated with higher turnout: education and income.¹⁸ The relationship between age and the vote is typically curvilinear, with large increases in turnout in the earlier years of adulthood. Thus in addition to a standard, linear measure of age in years, the squared product of age is also included in the model to capture the curvilinear features of the relationship between age and turnout. The initial model is:

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1AGE + \beta_2AGE^2 + \beta_3PRIMARY + \beta_4POSTSEC + \beta_5HIGHINC + \beta_6LOWINC + \beta_7ELEC1 + \beta_8ELEC2$$

¹⁸ Two dummy variables capture the effects of education: the first is "PRIMARY", where 1 = primary education or less, and 0 = all other levels of education; the second is "POSTSEC", where 1 = some post-secondary education or higher, and 0 = all other levels of education. Income level is also represented by two dummy variables: "HIGHINC", where 1 = the highest income categories with approximately 20% of respondents, and 0 = all other income categories; and "LOWINC," where 1 = the lowest income categories with approximately 20% of respondents, and 0 = all other income categories.

where

$$\Omega_{Vote}(x_i) = \Pr(y = 1 | x_i) / \Pr(y = 0 | x_i)$$

A second stage adds controls for election interest and partisan intensity to the initial model; these variables take into account the potential influence of varying levels of psychological engagement with politics on the original relationship between age and turnout.¹⁹ Young people are less interested in politics, and less partisan, than their older counterparts for a variety of reasons.²⁰ And because psychological engagement with politics is also an important determinant of whether or not people turn out to vote, it is necessary to isolate its effects from other age-related factors. Measures that capture the effects of partisanship (PID) and interest in the election (ELECINT) are incorporated at this stage. The model is:

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1AGE + \beta_2AGE^2 + \beta_3PRIMARY + \beta_4POSTSEC + \beta_5HIGHINC + \beta_6LOWINC + \beta_7PID + \beta_8ELECINT + \beta_9ELEC1 + \beta_{10}ELEC2$$

The logit estimates presented in Table 3.2 tell a story similar to the birth cohort data presented in Table 3.1, only here the “time” variable is years of age rather than period of birth, and income and education levels are held constant. Although the McFadden’s R^2 statistics indicate that these models perform modestly when it comes to predicting turnout, of greater interest are the relationships between age and turnout, controlling for other factors.

¹⁹ Interest in the election (ELECINT) is coded 0 = "low interest", 0.5 = "moderate interest", and 1 = "high interest." Following Blais et al. (2002a), partisanship (PID) is coded 1 = "very strong" and "fairly strong" partisans, and 0 = "not very strong" partisans and those who do not identify with a party.

²⁰ Younger citizens are concerned with such personal goals as establishing careers and starting families, which "are to some degree incompatible with devotion of attention to broader events" (Converse with Niemi, 1971: 461). Older citizens, in contrast, are less likely to be preoccupied with these concerns, and thus have relatively more time to devote attention to politics (Abramson et al., 1998; Conway, 2000; Strate et al., 1989). Higher levels of social integration among older citizens, it is argued, also lead to greater political interest (Nichols and Beck, 1995; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass, 1987; Teixeira, 1992). Older citizens also tend to have stronger affective ties to political parties (Converse, 1976; Dalton, 2006; Shively, 1979).

The linear age coefficients are positive in all three periods, but they are larger from 1984 to 1993, and then again from 1997 to 2004, than in 1968 to 1979. Moreover, the squared age coefficients are negative and significant in all three periods. These data indicate that turnout increases with age, but at a decreasing rate.

The total effects of age are easier to interpret when the age and age squared coefficients are considered jointly, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. The figure shows the estimated increase in the probability of voting in five-year age increments, with the turnout probability of 18 year olds treated as the benchmark, and all other factors in the models held constant.²¹ Between 1968 and 1979 (panel 3.2a), there is a very small age-related increase in estimated turnout levels of about nine percent between the ages of 18 and 78. But, between 1984 and 1993 (panel 3.2b), turnout levels rise sharply with age, especially among citizens in their 20s. The data indicate, for example, that 23 year olds are approximately 7 percent more likely than 18 year olds to vote, and 28 year olds are an additional 6 percent more likely than 23 year olds to vote. Age-related gains in the probability of voting are more modest among citizens older than 30. But these estimates suggest that Canadian born citizens who were 60 years of age or older were approximately 25 percent more likely to vote than their 18 year old counterparts. The turnout gap is even wider in the period between 1997 and 2004 (panel 3.2c). In the three elections during that period, 23 and 28 year olds were respectively 8 and 15 percent more likely to vote than were 18 year olds, and the increase in the probability of voting reached approximately 40 percent among voters over the age of 60.

²¹ Long and Freese's (2006) `prvalue` post-estimation command is employed using Stata to compute specific predictions (see Long and Freese 2006, 118-122). Using the `prvalue` procedure, estimated values and confidence intervals (95%) can be calculated for any combination of values on the independent variables. For each estimated value in Figure 3.2, all control variables are held constant at specific values. The two AGE variables are alternatively set at the different values shown in Figure 2 to produce the final estimates. AGE and AGE² are varied simultaneously to capture the non-linear effects of age (to estimate campaign information levels for those with ten years of experience, for example, AGE is set at 10, and AGE² is set at 100).

The critical question posed by hypotheses one and two, however, is whether years of experience with Canadian politics exerts the same influence on turnout among those whose formative political experience occurred outside Canada. The analysis of adult immigrants follows the same logic as that applied to the case of Canadian born citizens, but it includes a different set of variables. The immigrant analyses take into account the distinct effects of experience with Canadian politics on turnout by replacing the age variables with another set of measures that capture the number of years immigrants have lived in Canada, and how many years they have lived in their countries of origin. Since most experience-based gains in political learning are more likely to occur during immigrants' initial years in Canada, the squared product of the number of years an immigrant has lived in Canada is also included. The birthplaces of immigrants are also taken into consideration, because of significant differences in the origins of immigrants between the first election periods and subsequent periods. The majority of immigrants sampled from 1968 to 1979 come from "traditional" sources in Europe, whereas the bulk of immigrants sampled from 1984 to 1993, and 1997 to 2004, come from other parts of the world with cultures and political systems that are often quite different from the Canadian system (see Bilodeau, 2004). Distinguishing between immigrants from "traditional" and "non-traditional" countries of origin (NONTRAD) takes into account the possibility that some of the differences in turnout between periods might reflect changes in the composition of immigrants. The model is:

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 YRSCAN + \beta_2 YRSCAN^2 + \beta_3 PREMIG + \beta_4 PREMIG^2 + \beta_5 PRIMARY + \beta_6 POSTSEC + \beta_7 HIGHINC + \beta_8 LOWINC + \beta_9 NONTRAD + \beta_{10} ELEC1 + \beta_{11} ELEC2$$

Finally, the second stage of the immigrant models adds controls for election interest and partisan intensity:

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1YRSCAN + \beta_2YRSCAN^2 + \beta_3PREMIG + \beta_4PREMIG^2 + \beta_5PRIMARY + \beta_6POSTSEC + \beta_7HIGHINC + \beta_8LOWINC + \beta_9NONTRAD + \beta_{10}PID + \beta_{11}ELECINT + \beta_{12}ELEC1 + \beta_{13}ELEC2$$

The evidence reported in Table 3.3 shows the estimated effects of additional years in Canada, and additional adult years outside Canada prior to migration, on turnout among immigrants in each of the three election periods. The pattern of relationships between political experience and turnout that surfaces in the immigrant analysis is strikingly similar the one that emerges with respect to Canadian born respondents: the linear years in Canada coefficients are positive in all three periods, and the squared years in Canada coefficients are negative and significant in all three periods.

Once again, the impact of immigrants' length of residence in Canada on their probability of voting in each of the three periods becomes clearer when the linear and non-linear effects of years in Canada are considered jointly. The results presented in Figure 3.3 confirm that the relationship between age and turnout is largely a consequence of the length of time immigrants have lived in Canada. The data, which correspond to the evidence of the relationship between age and turnout among Canadian born citizens, show the increase in the probability of voting in five-year increments. The turnout probability among immigrants residing in Canada for one year is treated as the benchmark. These estimates demonstrate that there is a negligible effect of length of residence on turnout in the period between 1968 and 1979 (panel 3.3a), But there are striking effects in the two subsequent election periods (panels 3.3b and 3.3c). The small turnout increases associated with additional years in

Canada over the 1968 to 1979 period are more or less the same as the age-related increases in turnout among Canadian born citizens during that time: established immigrants who have lived in Canada for more than 30 years are about 16 to 17 percent more likely to vote than newcomers to Canada. The effects of length of residence on turnout in the period between 1984 and 1993, and between 1997 and 2004, are much more powerful than in the initial period from 1968 to 1979. The likelihood of voting increases dramatically in the initial 10 years in Canada, by approximately 46 and 44 percent in the 1984-1993 and 1997-2004 periods, respectively. But the effects level off with subsequent years of residence. The estimates indicate that immigrants with 50 years of experience in Canada were approximately 51 percent more likely to vote than newcomers during the 1984-1993 period, and about 59 percent more likely to vote than newcomers during the 1997-2004 period.

The data confirm that there are statistically significant differences between election periods. Figure 3.4 compares the effects of age and experience in Canada across the three election periods. It shows the estimated turnout differences between the average 18 and 78 year old Canadian born citizen, and between the average immigrant who just arrived in Canada and the immigrant with 50 years of experience in Canada. The bars above and below each point estimate, which represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval, respectively, show that additional years of experience in Canada have a significantly weaker effect ($p < .05$) on turnout in elections between 1968 and 1979 than in elections between 1997 and 2004. Additional years of experience in Canada also have a weaker effect on turnout among both groups in elections between 1968 and 1979 than in elections between 1984 and 1993, although the effects are significant only among Canadian born citizens.

The number of years an immigrant lived as an adult before moving to Canada, by contrast, does not appear to influence her likelihood of voting in Canada. Estimates derived from the coefficients presented in Table 3.3 indicate that between 1997 and 2004, even immigrants who arrived in Canada at age 48 were only 11 percent more likely to vote in than those who arrived at age 18, all else being equal ($p < 0.05$). The corresponding differences for the 1968-74 and 1984-93 periods are less than five percent, and both are statistically insignificant.

Immigrants' countries of origin have a weak impact on the relationship between age, or length of time in Canada, and turnout. It is not the case, for example, that length of time in Canada has a greater impact on turnout now than it did in the past simply because recent immigrants increasingly come from countries lacking democratic styles of political participation. Whether immigrants come from newer or older countries of origin has a statistically significant impact on turnout in only one turnout model (the last model in the 1997-2004 period). And in that case the evidence shows that immigrants from "new" countries of origin were actually *more* likely to vote than were others.²²

Finally, note that neither differences in election interest, nor psychological attachment to political parties, help to explain why the turnout gap has widened. The data presented in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show that the turnout deficit among young Canadians and new immigrant Canadians increases across time even after these factors are held constant. To be sure, taking into account interest and partisan intensity markedly improves the explanatory power of these models: McFadden's R^2 increases from 0.080 to 0.125 in the 1968-1979 period, from 0.129

²² More rigorous tests were also conducted, which excluded all immigrants originating from "old", traditional countries and analyzed only on those from new countries. The same basic patterns in the relationships between age and turnout, and length of residence and turnout, emerged from those tests as well.

to 0.215 in the 1984-1993 period, and from 0.160 to .181 in the 1997-2004 period. But a comparison of the age coefficients in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 demonstrates that although these other factors account for a small part of the relationship between age and turnout over the period from 1968 to 1979, they do not account for the across-time growth in the gap between younger and older Canadian born citizens. In fact, the differences in the age coefficients between each period remain statistically significant at $p < .0001$. The same pattern surfaces when the data concerning immigrant Canadians are compared (Tables 3.3 and 3.5). The model fit is improved considerable when interest and partisan intensity are included. But the effects of years of experience in Canada on turnout are still considerably larger in the 1984 to 1993 and 1997 to 2004 periods than in the 1968 to 1979 period, even after election interest and partisanship are taken into account.

5 Discussion

The combined evidence from Canadian born and foreign born citizens appears to support the habitual voting thesis, and casts significant doubt upon the socialization explanation for the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians. The alternative explanation for the widening turnout gap suggests that because older citizens have been presented with more and more opportunities to vote over time, they are more likely than the young to develop the habit of voting. Consequently, older citizens are less likely than their younger counterparts to abstain from voting, especially when faced with such changing conditions in the electoral context as rising decision costs or declining electoral competition. The implication was that the positive link between age and higher turnout among was not attributable to age as such, but rather to the number of years of experience with elections.

The evidence presented in this chapter provides fairly convincing support for the alternative account. Not only is turnout strongly associated with how long immigrants have lived in Canada, but the turnout gap between relative newcomers and more established immigrants widened between 1968 and 2004 at a rate strikingly similar to that of the corresponding gap between younger and older Canadian born citizens over the same period. That this parallel divergence in turnout levels, between Canadian born citizens of different ages and foreign born Canadians with varying years of experience in Canada, is somehow coincidental seems highly unlikely. A more plausible interpretation is that the growing turnout gap between younger and older voter is in some ways a product of habitual voting among older, more politically experienced citizens, and of a lack of habitual voting among younger, less politically experienced citizens. Older Canadian born citizens and well established Canadian immigrants have had comparable opportunities to develop the habit of voting in Canadian elections; younger Canadian born citizens and new immigrants to Canada have not. It is these two latter groups that seem to be more sensitive to changes in the electoral environment.

As it happens, the effect of more years of experience with Canadian elections on turnout increases across election periods in much the same way among immigrants as it does among the Canadian born cohort. The implications of these findings seem clear enough: it is difficult to see how a political socialization reading of the growing turnout gap between younger and older Canadian born citizens can be reconciled with the evidence concerning turnout among immigrant Canadians.²³ If political socialization during the formative years

²³ Another possibility was that the period in which immigrants arrived in Canada is a kind of "formative event" with consequences for immigrants' political behaviour that might be similar to generational effects among Canadian born population. If an adult immigrant's period of arrival in Canada is a decisive time in shaping her turnout behaviour, then turnout levels should decline with successive periods of arrival in much the same way

matters to turnout, then why does age have an effect on turnout among immigrants who arrived as adults that is comparable to, and possibly greater than, the impact of age on turnout among other Canadians?

What are the implications of these findings for Canada's democratic health in the future? The fear articulated by some scholarly and public observers is that aggregate turnout levels will continue to decline as newer generations who lack a sense of civic obligation to vote replace older, more dutiful ones. It turns out that fear might be unfounded. Even so, the prospects for a return to higher turnout levels are not that much better if, as a number of scholars speculate, non-voting also turns out to be habitual (Franklin, 2004; Fowler, 2006; Johnston, Matthews, and Bittner, 2007), and that conjecture is worth considering in greater detail. After all, if the young non-voters of today become permanent abstainers, then the short-range prospects for a recovery in Canadian turnout levels will remain quite low regardless of whether the electoral climate generally becomes more conducive to higher turnout in the near future.

One way to explore that possibility is to delve into the available panel data on Canadian electoral behaviour. The evidence from four panel studies, each tapping Canadians' turnout behaviour in two consecutive federal elections, is presented in Table 3.6. In this case the data strongly suggest that non-voting does not exhibit the same inertial quality as voting. The evidence is quite clear across each of these two-election panels: the overwhelming majority of voters in the initial election reported turning out to vote in the subsequent election, but a majority of those who abstained in the initial election also reported voting in

as they do for Canadian born citizens from different generations. As it turns out, immigrants are neither significantly more nor significantly less likely to vote depending on period in which they migrated to Canada.

the subsequent contest.²⁴ Indeed, these results are consistent with Plutzer's speculation that "the two inertial states [voting and non-voting] are quite different. The stability of habitual non-voting is one that most citizens 'outgrow' and is, therefore, weaker" (2002: 43). More importantly, the inference is that observers need not be quite so anxious about the possibility of swelling ranks of permanent non-voters.

6 Conclusions

Voting is a unique political act. As Verba and his colleague note, it is the "single mode of participation for which the maximum input is equalized across actors" (Verba et al., 1995: 23-24). Every citizen is limited to one vote irrespective of how much time, money, and commitment that citizen is otherwise willing to personally invest in political action. Any significant disparity in voter turnout between different segments of society is cause for concern, but it is especially troubling that young and new citizens are turning out to vote in fewer and fewer numbers. Such resources as time, money, and commitment are typically in short supply among younger citizens and new immigrants, and so elections present a rare opportunity for those two groups to pursue political interests on equal footing with other citizens.

Apprehension about the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians, however, is also related to unease about Canada's long-term democratic health. The concern of scholars and policymakers alike is that the decline in turnout among the youngest

²⁴ These effects should be interpreted with some caution. Others (see, for example, Bernstein, Chadha, and Montjoy, 2001) have noted that election surveys may well obtain samples of respondents who are atypical of the general population (i.e., more politically engaged than most people), and there are good reasons to think that problem is compounded in panel studies. Panels may "educate" participants to turn out to vote. Even so, the size of the differences is quite large, and suggests significant asymmetries between voting and non-voting would probably be present in the general population.

Canadians may well be a consequence of how recent generations of citizens have been socialized politically. Political socialization theory argues that political orientations that develop early in life continue to guide attitudes and behaviour later in life. From this perspective, young people's lack of interest, and failure to participate, in politics is rooted in the historical period in which they grew up, and their disengagement is something quite difficult to change. The most worrisome prognoses for the future suggest that today's young non-voters are a "lost generation," that this generational trend will continue, and that the trend is robust and irremediable. The more optimistic view is that by engaging young voters and making politics interesting to them, the trend can be reversed. Indeed, research that has sought to uncover the sources of youth voter disengagement in Canada consistently points to a lack of interest in, and knowledge about, electoral politics as the major causes of low turnout among the youngest eligible Canadian voters (O'Neill, 2001, 2003; Pammett and LeDuc, 2003a, 2003b).

But the socialization perspective is only one interpretation of widening turnout gap. This chapter has argued that theories concerned with how electoral participation increases and stabilizes as citizens get more opportunities to vote also offer plausible explanations for the decline in turnout among the youngest eligible voters. The specific claim is that age is a proxy for voting habit strength, and the habit is imparted through direct experience with Canadian politics. This chapter tested both the socialization and habitual voting perspectives by comparing turnout data from Canadian born citizens to that of immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults, and whose formative political experiences therefore took place in political contexts quite different from the Canadian setting. On balance, the evidence points to the growing salience of long-term experience with politics, and the attendant increase in habitual

voting that comes with that experience, as the source of the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadians. For any number of reasons, Canadians' incentives to vote have declined in recent years, but the inertia of habitual voters makes them far less sensitive to the changing incentive structure. Consequently, young Canadians and more recent immigrants have fallen behind their more experienced counterparts when it comes to electoral participation.

To be sure, the measure of immigrants' length of residence in Canada captures more than their political experiences alone; it is a surrogate for the whole of their social, political, and economic experiences in Canada. But unlike other approaches, the methodological strategy employed here provides a vehicle for unpacking the age-period-cohort problem in the absence of reliable time series data. Moreover, whereas the social and economic experiences of immigrants upon arrival in Canada are surely quite different than those of their native born counterparts – new immigrants, for instance, are more likely to confront economic hardship and social isolation than are other citizens (Portes, 1984) – immigrants' direct experiences with Canadian electoral politics are more comparable to those of people born in Canada. Within similar time frames, both groups are exposed to the same number of electoral campaigns, and have similar opportunities to learn from their exposure. Of course, the political learning curve faced by immigrants upon arriving in Canada is much steeper than it is for Canadian born citizens who are just entering the electorate. Not surprisingly, then, the relationship between immigrants' length of time in Canada and their probability of voting is much stronger than the corresponding relationship between age and turnout among citizens born in Canada.

Uncovering the sources and consequences of declining turnout in Canada and abroad is no small task. Electoral participation is unlike any other form of political participation, and citizens' propensities to vote or abstain are products of a complex set of individual-level and system-level attributes (Verba et al. 1995: 23-24). The preceding analysis contributes to the larger scholarly project of understanding long-term trends in turnout arguing for a change in our focus of inquiry. The turnout gap between younger and older Canadians has widened over the last two decades, but the evidence indicates that is a symptom rather than the cause of a more general decline in voter turnout. That core finding suggests we should shift our attention away from the deep-seated norms and values held by citizens raised in different eras, and focus instead on other long-term changes in the context in which elections take place.

To what, exactly, should we shift our attention? Johnston, Matthews, and Bittner (2007) demonstrate that electoral competitiveness accounts for a small part of the general decline in turnout since 1993. But a good deal remains to be explored. There are, of course, other potential explanations for the diminishing utility of voting that focus on broader changes in electoral environments of advanced industrial democracies. At least two possibilities come to mind. The first relates to the growing individualization of electorates. Surveying changes in electoral behaviour during the second half of the 20th century, Dalton (2000: 932) notes:

Citizens are more interested and sophisticated about political matters – but this makes them more likely to pursue their own political interests. Consequently, electoral decision making based on social group and/or party cues give way to a more individualized and inwardly oriented style of political choice.

The emergence and proliferation of diverse issue interests and policy preferences within advanced industrial publics over the last fifty years makes it increasingly difficult for political parties to cobble together coalitions of voters. By the same token, it is more difficult

now than ever before for citizens with diverse interests and demands to find parties to support.

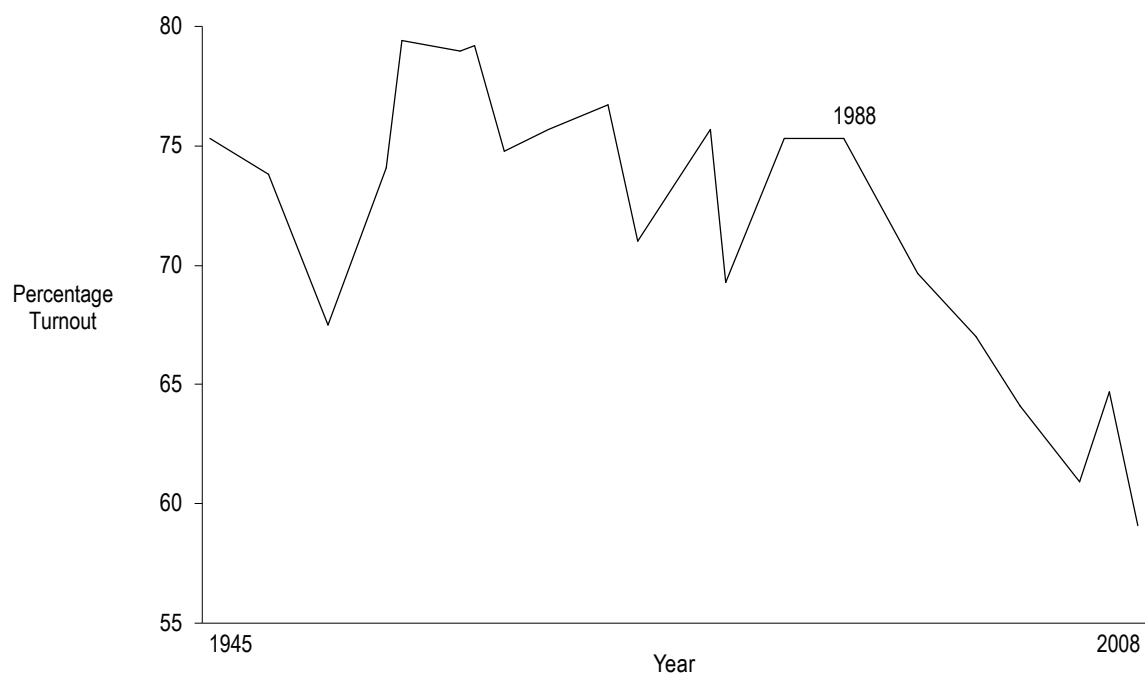
Another possibility is that the decision costs of voting, another important determinant of turnout, have increased. The theory of cognitive mobilization, for example, argues that in the second half of the last century the amount of political information available to citizens increased dramatically because of the expansion of the mass media, particularly television and the advent of 24-hour news channels, while at the same time the capacity of the average citizen to process political information grew because of the marked rise in levels of education (Dalton, 1984, 2002: 19-22; Inglehart, 1990). The optimistic view is that citizens are better equipped now than ever before with the resources and skills necessary to participate in politics. However, there are also grounds to suppose that the cognitive costs of deciding who to vote for electoral have actually risen along with the supply of political information. The conventional wisdom is that most citizens are “cognitive misers” who rarely put much effort into paying attention to politics (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Popkin, 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991), and although the expansion of the mass media and the attendant increase in the supply and availability of political information ostensibly makes it easier for citizens to acquire information, it also significantly increases the cognitive costs of navigating through that welter of information. Certainly the evidence is that levels of citizen political knowledge have become an increasingly important determinant of turnout in Canada, particularly among younger Canadians.²⁵

²⁵ Howe’s analysis indicates that the difference in turnout between citizens with low and high political knowledge was about 18 percent in 1984, but grew to 32 percent by 2000 (Howe, 2003: 21). Moreover, the turnout gap between the most and least informed has grown at a faster rate among young Canadians than among older citizens: the difference in turnout between young citizens with low and high political knowledge grew from 28 percent in 1984 to 47 percent in 2000 (Ibid).

Yet there is also evidence that young Canadians know a lot less about politics than their older counterparts. The next chapter turns to the question of why younger Canadians learn less than older citizens during political campaigns.

CHAPTER THREE TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Percentage Turnout in Canadian Federal Elections, 1945-2006



Source: Elections Canada (Canada, 2009).

Table 3.1 Reported Voter Turnout by Birth Cohort, 1968-2004

	1968	1974	1979	1984	1988	1993	1997	2000	2004	Average
Birth Cohort										
Before 1915	86	86	88	88	91	.	.	.	.	88
1915 to 1924	88	85	92	91	97	94	92	92	94	92
1925 to 1939	87	86	92	90	91	94	90	94	94	91
1940 to 1944	83	83	90	89	94	89	88	92	94	89
1945 to 1949	78	81	90	89	93	93	93	94	94	89
1950 to 1954	.	80	84	86	88	90	86	87	90	86
1955 to 1959	.	96	87	79	87	87	85	87	90	87
1960 to 1964	.	.	80	73	82	84	79	81	87	81
1965 to 1969	.	.	.	68	73	75	77	80	81	76
1970 to 1974	.	.	.	.	.	78	65	70	76	72
1975 to 1979	.	.	.	.	.	.	62	60	81	68
1980 to 1986	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	67	67

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

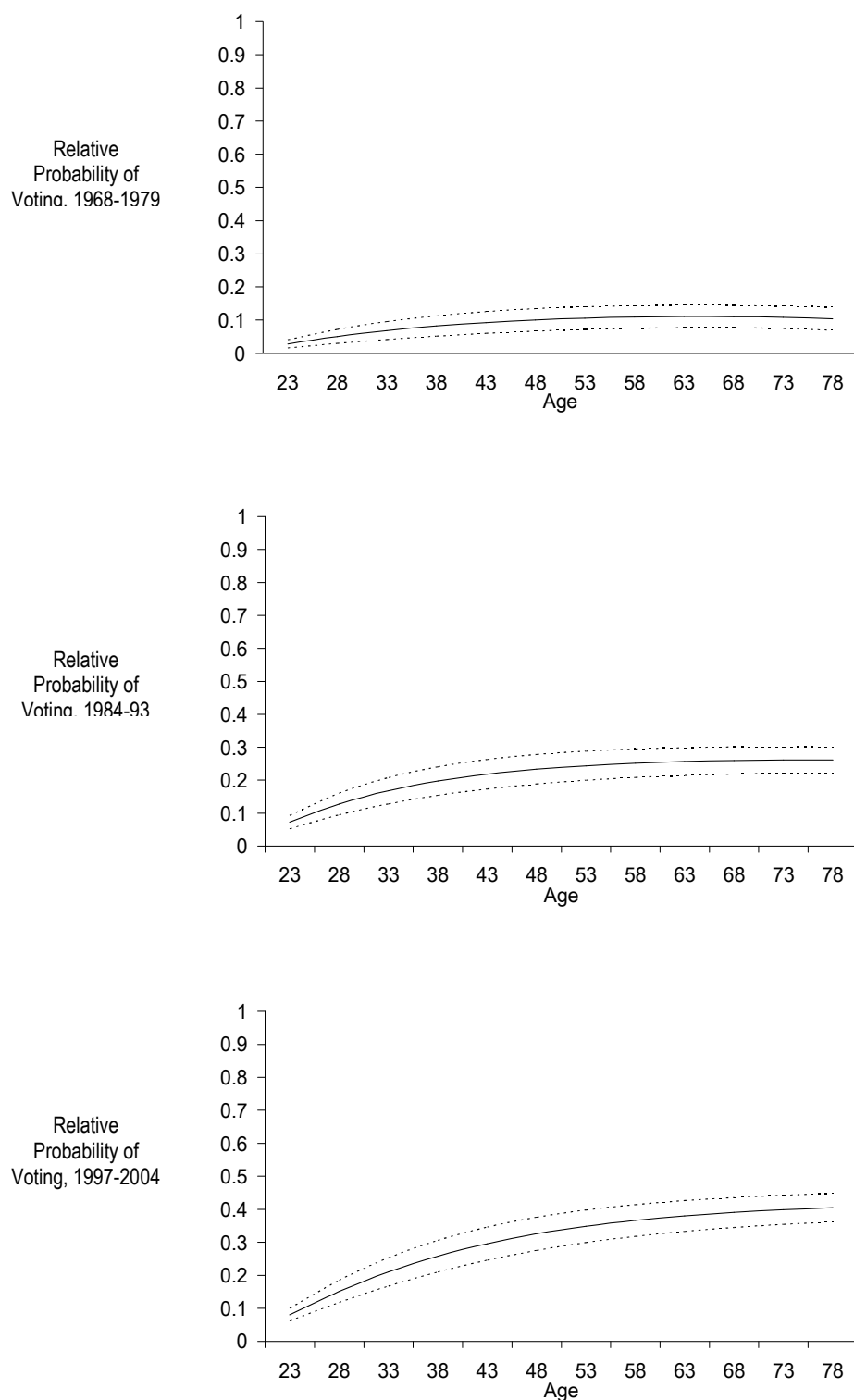
Table 3.2 Predictors of Voter Turnout, Canadian Born Citizens, 1968-2004
(Binary Logit Coefficients with Standard Errors)

	1968-1974		1984-1993		1997-2004	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Age	0.0386a	0.0074	0.0773a	0.0090	0.0696a	0.0083
Age ²	-0.0004a	0.0001	-0.0007a	0.0002	-0.0003a	0.0001
Education:						
Primary	-0.2901c	0.1161	-0.4604b	0.1455	-0.5816a	0.1676
Post-secondary	0.5576a	0.1279	0.5924a	0.0890	0.7078a	0.0742
Income:						
Highest quintile	-0.2513c	0.1067	-0.5494a	0.0963	-0.6434a	0.0887
Lowest quintile	0.3698a	0.1074	0.3847b	0.1299	0.1873	0.0974
Election year:						
1968	-0.3483a	0.0969				
1974	-0.4044a	0.0976				
1984			-0.0019	0.1014		
1988			0.2647b	0.1030		
1997					-0.0707	0.0881
2000					-0.0675	0.0897
Constant	1.4971a	0.1136	0.5455a	0.1329	-0.0766	0.1308
Model Chi ²	125.25a		229.62a		577.82a	
Pseudo R ²	0.026		0.075		0.106	
N	6,135		6,030		6,729	

a. $p \leq .001$ b. $p \leq .01$ c. $p \leq .05$

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 3.2 Turnout by Age in Three Election Periods, Canadian-Born Citizens



Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table 3.2. The dashed lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval.
 (2) Income and education levels, as well as the year of the election, are controlled.

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

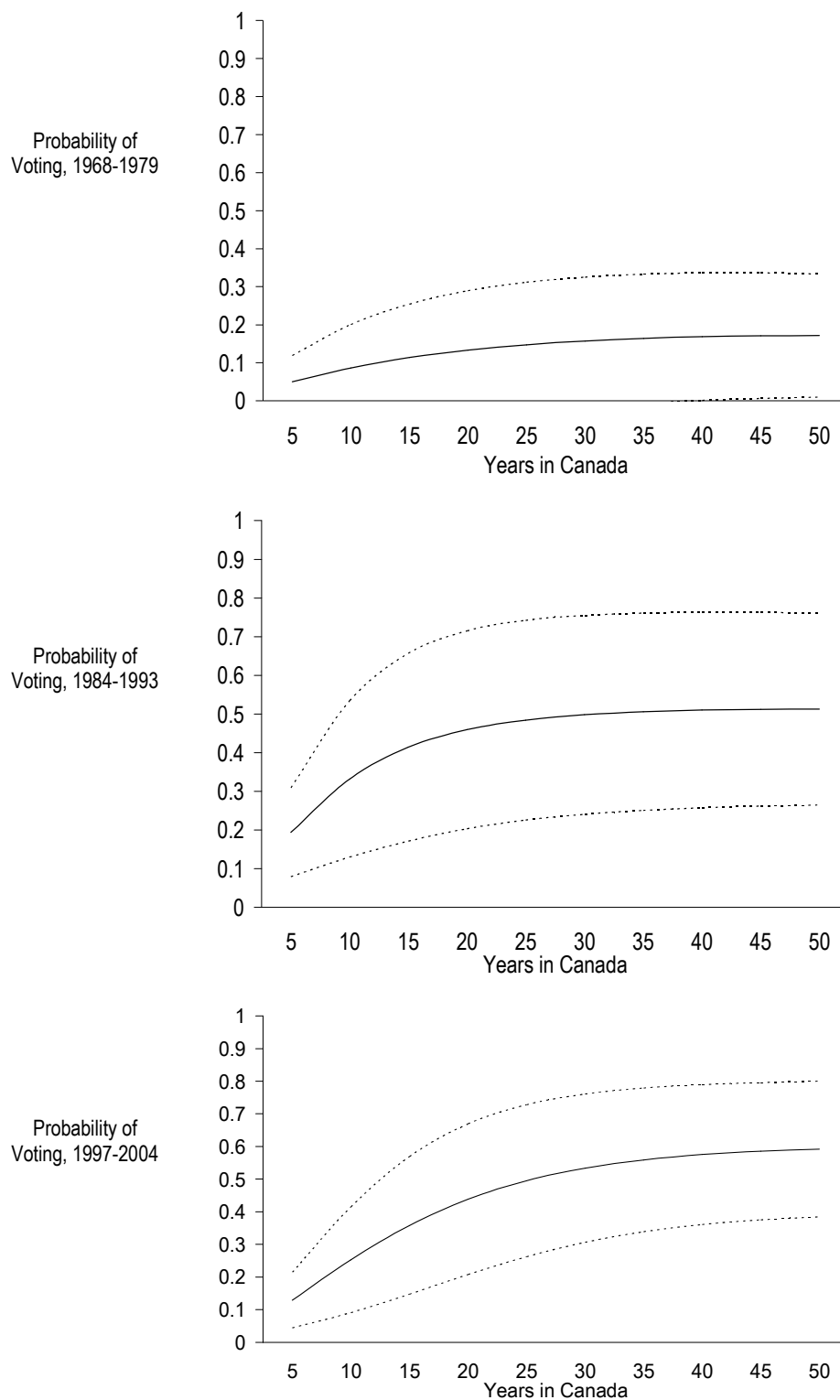
Table 3.3 Predictors of Voter Turnout, Foreign Born Canadians, 1968-2004 (Binary Logit Coefficients with Standard Errors)

1984-1993						
	Model 2		Model 2		Model 2	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Years in Canada	0.0647	0.0342	0.1692a	0.0459	0.1057c	0.0421
Years in Canada ²	-0.0007	0.0005	-0.0017c	0.0009	-0.0002	0.0008
Years Prior to Migration	-0.0061	0.0383	0.0264	0.0470	0.0530	0.0406
Years Prior to Migration ²	0.0009	0.0010	-0.0007	0.0012	-0.0003	0.0012
"New" Country of Origin	0.2479	0.2940	0.5670	0.3952	0.7735c	0.3457
Education:						
Primary	-0.6554c	0.3329	-0.5388	0.5401	-0.4437	0.8090
Post-secondary	0.2973	0.3752	0.2139	0.3674	0.2516	0.2908
Income:						
Highest quintile	-1.8853a	0.3643	-0.3338	0.4807	-0.8028c	0.3481
Lowest quintile	-0.8112b	0.2960	1.0092	0.5184	0.3354	0.3727
Election year:						
1968	-0.1439	0.3278				
1974	0.0095	0.3676				
1984			0.0379	0.4767		
1988			-0.1840	0.4649		
1997					0.2789	0.3406
2000					0.2809	0.3296
Constant	1.6791b	0.6404	-0.7569	0.7970	-1.6155c	0.6895
Model Chi ²	49.36a		40.89a		62.28a	
Pseudo R ²	0.080		0.129		0.160	
N	689		453		534	

a. $p \leq .001$ b. $p \leq .01$ c. $p \leq .05$

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 3.3 Turnout by Years in Canada in Three Election Periods, Immigrant Canadians

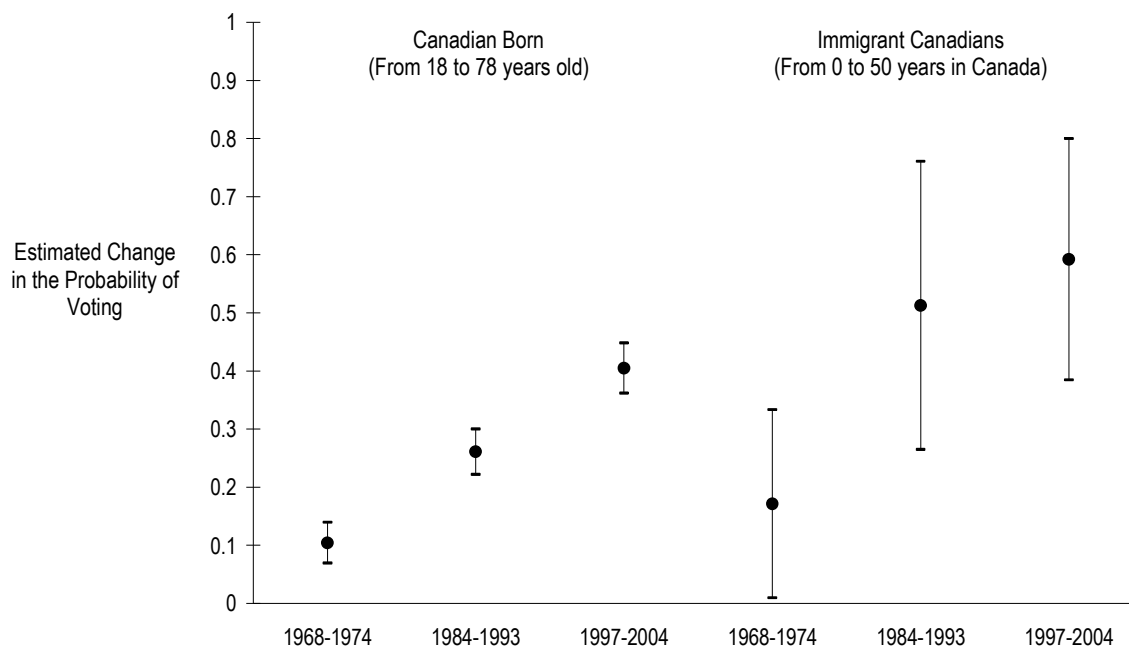


Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table 3.3. The dashed lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval.

(2) Income and education levels, as well as the year of the election, are controlled.

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 3.4 Turnout by Years in Canada in Three Election Periods, Canadian Born Citizens and Immigrant Canadians



Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table 3.2 and 3.3. The bars represent the 95% confidence interval.

(2) Income and education levels, as well as the year of the election, are controlled.

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Table 3.4 Predictors of Voter Turnout, Including Political Engagement, Canadian Born Citizens, 1968-2004 (Binary Logit Coefficients with Standard Errors)

	1968-1974		1984-1993		1997-2004	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Age	0.0284a	0.0076	0.0743a	0.0093	0.0695a	0.0084
Age ²	-0.0004b	0.0001	-0.0008a	0.0002	-0.0004c	0.0002
Education:						
Primary	-0.0952	0.1193	-0.3396c	0.1473	-0.4600c	0.1801
Post-secondary	0.4508a	0.1332	0.4598a	0.0925	0.6469a	0.0769
Income:						
Highest quintile	-0.1880	0.1102	-0.5427a	0.0997	-0.5981a	0.0933
Lowest quintile	0.2031	0.1099	0.2461	0.1335	0.0636	0.1002
Partisanship	0.6497a	0.1099	0.9720a	0.1317	0.7549a	0.1158
Election Interest	1.4882a	0.1153	1.5220	0.1303	1.9849a	0.1114
Election year:						
1968	-0.4767a	0.0998				
1974	-0.3901a	0.0997				
1984			-0.1878	0.1049		
1988			0.2804a	0.1055		
1997					-0.1420	0.0905
2000					-0.2257c	0.0925
Constant	0.8307a	0.1245	-0.1018	0.1425	-1.0084a	0.1387
Model Chi ²	330.32a		469.70a		805.57a	
Pseudo R ²	0.083		0.135		0.185	
N	6,135		6,030		6,729	

a. $p \leq .001$ b. $p \leq .01$ c. $p \leq .05$

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Table 3.5 Predictors of Voter Turnout, Including Political Engagement, Foreign Born Canadians, 1968-2004 (Binary Logit Coefficients with Standard Errors)

	1968-1974		1984-1993		1997-2004	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Years in Canada	0.0699c	0.0317	0.1323b	0.0495	0.1133b	0.0423
Years in Canada ²	-0.0007	0.0005	-0.0012	0.0010	-0.0005	0.0008
Years Prior to Migration	-0.0094	0.0368	0.0440	0.0494	0.0306	0.0443
Years Prior to Migration ²	0.0010	0.0009	-0.0011	0.0012	0.0002	0.0013
"New" Country of Origin	0.2367	0.3005	0.3949	0.4211	0.7252c	0.3468
Education:						
Primary	-0.5194	0.3712	-0.1805	0.5936	-0.5662	0.8318
Post-secondary	0.2030	0.3730	-0.0407	0.4013	0.1678	0.2977
Income:						
Highest quintile	-1.9493a	0.3844	-0.2857	0.4979	-0.6954	0.3640
Lowest quintile	-0.9388b	0.3060	0.9477	0.5908	0.3945	0.3784
Partisanship	0.7204a	0.3130	-0.1764	0.5099	0.1859	0.3361
Election Interest	1.2654c	0.3555	2.3305a	0.4857	1.1523b	0.4049
Election year:						
1968	-0.0168	0.3424				
1974	0.0974	0.3845				
1984			-0.2970	0.4929		
1988			-0.3115	0.4790		
1997					0.3081	0.3456
2000					0.2708	0.3343
Constant	0.4860	0.6612	-1.0947	0.8564	-2.1743	0.7099
Model Chi ²	65.77a		70.16a		68.25a	
Pseudo R ²	0.125		0.215		0.181	
N	689		453		534	

a. $p \leq .001$ b. $p \leq .01$ c. $p \leq .05$

Sources: 1968-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Table 3.6 Voter Turnout by Prior Behaviour, Canadian Panel Data

	Panel			
	1974-1979	1979-1980	1988-1993	2004-2006
Voted in prior election	92	91	95	96
Abstained in prior election	80	59	79	56
(N)	(1,301)	(1,751)	(1,046)	(1,682)

Sources: 1974-79, 1979-80, 2004-2006 Canadian Election Study Panels; 1988-1993 Political Support in Canada Study Panel

Chapter 4

The Role of Political Experience in the Acquisition of Election Campaign Information

1 Introduction

If young people and new Canadian citizens did vote in greater numbers, would they be bringing to the table the same kinds of considerations as those of their more politically experienced counterparts? The model democratic citizen is not only active in politics, but also informed politically. A collectively well-informed public ensures a greater measure of responsiveness on the part of political elites, and discourages attempts by those elites to manipulate the public (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996). An equitable distribution of political information among all citizens is also a critical element of a well-functioning democracy, because it ensures that everyone has a fair chance of recognizing and acting in their own political interests. As Delli Carpini and Keeter note, "the more equitably information is distributed among citizens, the more likely it is the actions of government will reflect the public interest and, that the public will be supportive of those actions" (1996: 1).

Yet most citizens in advanced industrial democracies fall considerably short of this ideal. Young people in Canada, as elsewhere, stand out as having particularly low levels of political knowledge (Bennett, 1989; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Gidengil et al., 2004; Lambert et al., 1988). Younger citizens are less able than their older counterparts to correctly identify which parties propose which policies during election campaigns, to recall the names of prominent contemporary political figures, and to recall other basic political facts.

The precise reasons for the relationship between age and stocks of campaign information are unclear. Certainly, older citizens are more likely to have accumulated more information about politics over the years than younger citizens, but historical and contemporary political information are distinct phenomena (Fournier, 2002; Jennings, 1995): each new election campaign, after all, brings forward fresh sets of issues and policy proposals from the contending parties, and the young and old therefore have an equal opportunity to acquire contemporary campaign information. In theory, election campaigns are learning opportunities, and they have the potential to equalize political information levels of young and old citizens; in practice, they do not. The puzzle is: why do younger voters so consistently lag behind their older counterparts when each group has the same access to precisely the same types of campaign information.

This chapter explores the relationship between citizens' years of experience with the political system and their acquisition of political campaign information. It considers three potential explanations for that relationship. The first possibility is that younger citizens tend to learn less during campaigns simply because they pay less attention to campaigns. The other two potential explanations are grounded in the idea that younger citizens are typically less informed about campaigns than their older counterparts not because of age per se, but because they inevitably lack crucial, long-term prior experience with politics. On the one hand, long term experience with Canadian politics and election campaigns might endow older citizens with stocks of cognitive resources that make them more effective at making sense of and retaining campaign information than younger, less politically experienced citizens. On the other hand, experience might enable older citizens to develop efficient strategies for paying attention to politics; that is, older voters acquire more campaign

information not necessarily because they pay more attention to political campaigns, but also because they are able to get more out of paying less attention.

After setting down the theoretical groundwork for understanding how citizens acquire political information, the chapter presents and tests the observable implications arising from those theoretical assumptions. The evidence indicates that, contrary to theories which suggest that inexperienced citizens have a harder time learning and retaining campaign information, is that young citizens who pay a good deal of attention to campaigns typically learn as much as their equally attentive, but more experienced, counterparts. Instead, discrepancies in campaign knowledge associated with how many years of exposure to politics Canadians have only emerge among citizens who are less conscientious followers of politics.

2 Political Attentiveness, Cognitive Resources, and the Acquisition of Political Information

How do citizens acquire campaign information, and how might citizens' ages be an important determinant of how much citizens learn during campaigns? Luskin asserts that citizens' acquisition of political information depends on their motivations, opportunities, and abilities to acquire political information: "To become highly sophisticated," he observes, "we must encounter a certain quantity of political information, be intellectually able enough to retain and organize large portions of the information we encounter, and have reason enough to make the effort" (1990: 335).

Drawing on Luskin's framework for understanding how citizens learn, this analysis distinguishes between two sets of factors. The first set of factors, attentiveness to campaign

information, includes both the motivation and opportunity to acquire information.²⁶ The second set of factors is cognitive resources, which influence citizens' abilities to acquire information.

Paying attention to the campaign is the first critical step towards acquiring information: citizens who spend more time paying attention to news about the election in the media are generally better informed about the campaign than others simply because they have had more opportunities to acquire information (Luskin, 1990). The relationships between age and levels of political knowledge, participation, and interest are typically cited all together in research on political engagement (Bennett, 1997; Converse with Niemi, 1971; Miller and Shanks, 1996; Sotirovic and McLeod, 2004, 366), and it is certainly reasonable to think that these are all somehow connected. The first possibility to consider, then, is that the connection between years of experience with the political system and levels of campaign information is merely an artifact of age differences in levels of attentiveness to politics (see Luskin, 1987).²⁷ According to that line of reasoning, younger citizens lack the motivation to pay attention to politics, and consequently acquire less political information than their older counterparts. But as the previous chapter argued, there are at least two plausible ways of conceptualizing the relationship between age and motivation: life cycle and generational explanations.

²⁶ No analytical distinction is made between *motivation*, the desire to acquire campaign information, and *opportunity*, the amount of exposure to campaign information. This analysis employs direct measures of attentiveness to the campaign, rather than mere exposure to campaign information. Motivation does need not be examined exclusively.

²⁷ Although people can also learn about the campaign by spending time talking to other people about the election, paying attention to the news about the election in the media is far more likely to convey accurate information. Political discussion can effectively convey campaign information, but the information gained through interpersonal communication tends to be misperceived by the learner, and is also more likely to be biased in the first place (Beck, Dalton, Greene, and Huckfeldt, 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987).

Life cycle accounts argue that young citizens are less likely than older citizens to pay attention to politics because they have more important priorities at earlier stages of adulthood. For young adults, politics usually takes a back seat to obtaining an education and establishing careers and families. As they become older and settled into their careers and family life, citizens have more opportunities to engage in politics, and they are more likely to be preoccupied with such concerns as maintaining incomes and taking care of families – concerns which are directly affected by politics (Converse with Niemi, 1971; Strate et al., 1989). They also acquire more social contacts, and are therefore more likely to encounter others who are interested in politics, and to be encouraged to engage in politics (Nichols and Beck, 1995; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass, 1987; Teixeira, 1992).

Unlike life cycle explanations, generational accounts of the relationship between age and political attentiveness contend that the period in which people were initially socialized to politics shapes their political orientations for the rest of their lives. But there are conflicting claims about how generational changes affect political attentiveness. On the one hand, politics may have been more salient in the ‘formative years’ of older generations of citizens than of younger generations. Certainly, there is some evidence that among more recent generations of citizens in the United States a key component of political engagement, partisanship, is in decline. On the other hand, the theory of cognitive mobilization argues that more recent generations of citizens have more resources to pay more attention to politics: younger generations are better educated, and they have been raised in an environment that is relatively rich with political information in newspapers, and on television and radio (Dalton, 1984; Dalton, 2006; Inglehart, 1990).

Whether life cycle or generational accounts explain age-related gains in campaign information, the core expectation is the same:

H_{4,1}: Older citizens acquire more campaign information than their younger counterparts because they pay more attention to political campaigns.

However, theories which claim that their positions in the life cycle, or the periods in which they were socialized, can explain the information gap between the young and old have thus far been unable to hold up under empirical scrutiny. Both explanations rest on the general idea that the link between age and stocks of political information is a sheer consequence of greater engagement on the part of older citizens. But the available evidence shows that, even after taking into account differences in levels of political interest and attentiveness, older citizens tend to have higher stocks of campaign and general political information than the young (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Fournier, 2002).

The modest empirical record of life cycle and generational accounts seems to suggest that there could well be alternative mechanisms that explain the link between age and levels of political information. Indeed, how much campaign information citizens acquire is a function of more than just attentiveness to election news; it also depends on whether citizens have the kinds of skills and resources that reduce the cognitive transaction costs of acquiring up to date political information, making it possible to sort out and integrate new political information without trouble. One such cognitive factor, directly related to age, is a citizen's amount of prior experience with politics. Older citizens generally have more direct, firsthand familiarity with politics than do their younger counterparts, and although those with less prior political experience have just as much opportunity to pay attention to politics as their more

politically exposed counterparts, there are good reasons to think inexperience is a distinct disadvantage when it comes to making sense of contemporary politics.

One widely accepted conjecture is that experience endows citizens with contextual knowledge about the political system, making it easier to assimilate and retain new political information. This contextual knowledge plays two important roles. First, citizens with a good deal of prior knowledge about the workings of the Canadian political system are further ahead than others from the outset of each election campaign.²⁸ Citizens who are political experts are better equipped than their novice counterparts to draw more complex information from the news to which they pay attention. Citizens with very little prior experience with politics are more likely to focus initially on the kinds of information which are easiest to acquire, and then shift to other, more challenging kinds of information later on (Fiske, Kinder, and Larter, 1983). Those with abundant stocks of contextual information, however, should be capable of acquiring more challenging campaign information because they already have plenty of other prior contextual knowledge upon which to draw.

Although highly motivated political novices might conceivably seek out and absorb a great deal of political information over a short period, there are practical limits on just how much contextual information citizens are able to gather. For one, there are limits to how much contextual political information is available throughout a campaign; citizens discover things through experience with earlier campaigns that cannot be learned in subsequent campaigns. Moreover, the costs of acquiring contextual information, in terms of both time

²⁸ There is an extensive literature on the link between 'general' political knowledge and campaign knowledge (Chaffee, Zhao, and Leshner, 1994: 306; Nadeau et al., 2008; Price and Zaller, 1993; Zaller, 1991b). Not surprisingly the two are closely related: people with a good deal of general political knowledge also tend to hold greater stocks of campaign information than others (Nadeau et al., 2008), and that consistent finding certainly lends support to the idea that contextual knowledge matters. The two concepts are so closely linked, however, that it is reasonable to suspect that some other important set of antecedent factors may well contribute to both.

and effort, can be prohibitively high. Indeed, much of what we learn about politics comes as a by-product of what we do in our daily lives, rather than from paying close attention to politics (Fiorina, 1990; Popkin, 1991). Thus, much of the background political information acquired over a lifetime of experience is essentially “free” (Ferejohn, 1990), and the learning curve for those without any free contextual information, by contrast, is steep and prohibitively costly in terms of time and effort.

The second major advantage of having greater contextual political knowledge is that the information rich can better understand new political information, thereby increasing how much of that new information they retain. As Converse explains, "the richness and meaning of new information depends vitally on the amount of past information one brings to the new message. So does the retention of information over time" (Converse, 1975: 97). And Fiske, Kinder, and Larter (1983: 382) observe that, "As ordinary citizens grapple with the political environment, their amount of experience-based prior knowledge facilitates their understanding of new information." Politically inexperienced citizens lack any background in which to place new information and make it meaningful to them. In the long run, as citizens gain large reservoirs of political information they develop ways of structuring and storing that information. As they build up increasingly complex cognitive structures to organize what they already know about politics, citizens find it easier to integrate novel political information (Fiske et al., 1981; Markus and Zajonc, 1985; Price and Zaller, 1993).

The joint effects of these two factors give reason to suppose that prior experience is important because it influences the relationship between campaign attentiveness and the acquisition of campaign information. If prior contextual knowledge allows citizens to focus on other, more complex kinds of campaign information, and if that prior knowledge

improves citizens' competence in making sense of the new political information they encounter, then the implication is that the efficacy of paying attention to campaign information should rise as years of experience increase. If that is the case, then there should be steeper gains in information arising from attentiveness among those with greater long-term exposure to politics. By contrast, the expectation is that there will be effectively no increases associated with attentiveness among citizens with relatively little long-term exposure. This line of reasoning produces the capacity hypothesis:

H_{4.2}: The more years of experience with Canadian politics, the greater the acquisition of political information during the campaign; the relationship between campaign attentiveness and the acquisition of campaign information strengthens as years of experience increase (the capacity hypothesis).

The implication is that there are quite practical limits concerning how much information political novices can acquire during a campaign. By this logic, young citizens are at a significant natural disadvantage when it comes to campaign learning.

The alternative line of reasoning contends that whether citizens are better informed about politics depends on how *selective* they are about the kinds of political information to which they pay attention. Citizens have a strong incentive to ignore many potential sources of political information. And there are reasons to expect that citizens with more political experience will be better-equipped than their inexperienced counterparts to draw relevant political information from less content, and from a limited number of sources. Citizens use cognitive shortcuts to reduce the amount of effort they need to make political judgments (Mondak, 1994). These cognitive shortcuts can take a variety of forms²⁹, but often voters can

²⁹ Voters can focus, for example, on the characteristics of party leaders and candidates - from basic demographic characteristics to personality traits - to assess how they will perform if elected (Brady and

learn which simplifying strategies best reduce the cognitive costs of acquiring information by relying on experience (Fiorina 1990; Popkin 1991).

Whether most citizens pay attention to or ignore specific sources of political information involves weighing the benefits against the opportunity costs, the returns forgone by not paying attention to other things, and the transaction costs, the energy needed to process the information acquired through paying attention and turn it into useful inferences (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). Learning the magnitude of these costs and benefits of different sources and kinds of political information requires experience. Lupia and McCubbins (1998) make the persuasive claim that over the long haul citizens develop specific strategies to reduce how much attention they need to pay to politics; they find ways of getting the information they need as quickly as possible by selecting the few sources that provide the most accurate information, and ignoring others. Lupia and McCubbins describe this process of selecting which sources to attend and which to ignore as a "cognitive stock market." That stock market is characterized as a sort of trial and error tournament in the minds of citizens where prior experience substantiates the value and veracity of different information sources (1998: 30-35). Novice voters, for example, can only know after an election whether their information sources were reliable, and whether they made the right choices based on the right information. By contrast, voters with a great deal of prior experience have an easy strategy at hand: they pay attention to the kinds of information that were useful in the past. In short, experience with politics makes citizens more efficient in selecting the kinds of information they pay attention to.

Sniderman, 1985; Cutler, 2002; Kinder et al., 1980; Kinder, 1986; Popkin, 1991; Rahn et al., 1990), and some researchers argue that partisanship is a heuristic cue that represents retrospective assessments of party performance (Achen, 2002; Fiorina, 1981; Gerber and Green, 1998; Shively, 1979). Still others contend that core values and ideologies allow voters to develop positions on relatively complex issues (Downs, 1957; Feldman, 1988; Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Zaller, 1991a).

This line of reasoning produces a very different expectation about how experience modifies the effects of paying attention to the campaign. Rather than improving how much citizens learn from paying attention, the implication is that as citizens gain experience with Canadian electoral politics, attentiveness makes less and less difference to how much campaign knowledge they ultimately retain. Relatively inattentive but experienced voters are able to close the campaign information gap between themselves and their more attentive counterparts by selectively focusing on the most informative sources of campaign news. By contrast, inexperienced voters who have no reference points for judging the usefulness of different sources of information, and so how much information they acquire depends quite heavily on the sheer volume of information to which they pay attention.

H_{4.3}: The more years of experience with Canadian politics, the greater the acquisition of political information during the campaign, net other factors; the relationship between campaign attentiveness and the acquisition of campaign information weakens as years of experience increase (the selectivity hypothesis).

There are three potential explanations, then, concerning the relationships between age, attentiveness to campaign information, and the acquisition of that information. The next step is to outline a strategy for testing these expectations.

3 Data and Measures

The empirical evaluation of these hypotheses employs pooled data from the 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES surveys. The surveys include items that test respondents' knowledge about the election platforms of the federal parties. All respondents were asked to identify which of the federal parties made which specific campaign promises. Up-to-date election campaign

information is measured by a series of items that ask respondents whether or not they can recall which parties made specific policy promises in the election campaign. The generic question wording for each of these items is: "*Do you happen to recall which party is promising to...?*" Additive indexes of political information are constructed for each election. Respondents from each of these campaigns are then grouped in three categories: those with high, moderate, and low levels of campaign information.

Attentiveness to political information is gauged by respondents' answers to survey questions about attentiveness to the campaign in the news media and frequency of interpersonal political communication during the campaign. The key indicator, attentiveness to campaign news, is measured by an additive index of items that ask respondents how much attention they pay (on a scale of 0 to 10) to news about the election on the TV, radio, and in the newspaper, as well as how interested they are in the election.³⁰

Once again, the analysis compares immigrant to Canadian-born citizens, in order to separate the effects of experience from other factors related to age. Political experience effects are measured by immigrants' years of residence in Canada. Life span effects, however, are indicated by years of residence in Canada *combined with* the number of years an immigrant lived prior to arriving in Canada. If life span factors are what really matter, then both parts of immigrants' lives should be influential.

With these core methodological considerations in mind, the paper now turns to the empirical evidence.

³⁰ These four items form reliable indexes of campaign attentiveness in each of the three elections (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78, 0.74, and 0.77 in 1997, 2000, and 2004, respectively).

4 Findings

4.1 Age, Political Experience, and the Acquisition of Information

The starting point of the analysis is the relationship between age and the acquisition of campaign information. The data presented in Figure 4.1 illustrates the relationship between age and levels of campaign information across the 1997-2004 federal election campaigns among citizens born in Canada (panel 4.1a) and immigrant citizens who arrived in Canada as adults (panel 4.1b). Respondents are divided into nine age groups with comparable numbers of cases in each group. These basic data indicate that older citizens are more likely than the young to keep up to date about politics. There are strong age-related gains in levels of information among the youngest Canadian-born age cohorts, with the sharpest increases occurring between the cohorts aged 18 to 25 and 26 to 30. Information levels show more modest increases between the 26 to 30 and 61 to 70 year old Canadian born cohorts. Finally, there is a considerable drop in levels of information among the oldest Canadian born of citizens – those over the age of 70. Part of that curvilinear pattern is surely the result of a general decline in cognitive processing and information recall among the elderly (Baltes, Staudlinger, and Lindenberger, 1999). It is worth noting, however, that this group constitutes less than 10 percent of all respondents from the five studies analyzed here, so the decline in information levels among the oldest group has a minimal impact on the generally positive association between age and levels of campaign information.

The data illustrating the association between age and levels of campaign information among immigrants, presented in panel 4.1b, provide the first indication that something other

than the life cycle is at work. The relationship is again positive and curvilinear, but is much stronger among immigrants than among Canadian-born citizens. For instance, none of the 18 to 25 year old foreign born Canadians in the 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 campaigns exhibit high levels of campaign information, but nearly half (46 percent) of 61 to 70 year old foreign born Canadians are highly informed. By way of contrast, although a low proportion of 18 to 25 year old Canadian-born citizens exhibit high levels of campaign information (16 percent), high levels of information peak at only 33 percent among the 51 to 60 year old age group. And, unlike Canadian born citizens, there is no steep decline in levels of information among the oldest group of foreign born Canadians.

What are the reasons behind the linkages between age and levels of campaign information? To answer that question requires a multivariate strategy. The goals of the following multivariate analyses are twofold. The first objective is to take into account other factors associated with age that could explain away its relationship with information levels. This goal can be accomplished by comparing the effects of age on information levels with and without controls for these other age-related factors: if experience matters, then holding constant other factors associated with age should have no substantial impact on the original relationship between age and information levels.

The second objective is to see whether experience with Canadian politics, rather than age, drives the relationship between age and information levels. A useful way to do that is to simultaneously compare the effects of pre- and post-migration years among immigrants. If experience with Canadian politics is the relevant variable, then only post-migration years should produce significant positive effects, whereas if other factors related to age are

responsible for the relationship, then both pre- and post-migration years should have significant and positive effects.

The first stage of the multivariate analysis incorporates the causal variable of primary interest in the analysis, experience with Canadian politics. Because years of experience with Canadian politics are conceptually distinct from age, and are empirically distinct from age when it comes to immigrants, experience with Canadian politics is measured as years of experience after the age of 18. Among those born in Canada the experience variable corresponds to age, and ranges from 0 (18 years old) to 84 (102 years old). To capture the non-linear effects of experience, the squared product of age is included in the multivariate models. A measure indicating the day during the campaign on which the respondent was interviewed is also included in the model, in order to control for potential differences in information levels earlier and later in the campaign. Finally, dummies for election years are also incorporated. The multinomial logit³¹ model is:

$$\ln\Omega_{HI|LO}(x_i) = \beta_{0, HI|LO} + \beta_{1, HI|LO} AGE + \beta_{2, HI|LO} AGE^2 + \beta_{3, HI|LO} CAMPDAY + \beta_{4, HI|LO} ELECTION97 + \beta_{5, HI|LO} ELECTION00$$

$$\ln\Omega_{MOD|LO}(x_i) = \beta_{0, MOD|LO} + \beta_{1, MOD|LO} AGE + \beta_{2, MOD|LO} AGE^2 + \beta_{3, MOD|LO} CAMPDAY + \beta_{4, MOD|LO} ELECTION97 + \beta_{5, MOD|LO} ELECTION00$$

where *HI* is the "High Information" category, *MOD* is the "Moderate Information" category, and *LO* ("Low Information") is specified as the base category.

Among immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults, experience is measured by taking the difference between the year of the survey and their reported year of arrival in Canada. To

³¹ The dependent variable, campaign information, is an ordinal measure, and therefore ordered logit is usually the most appropriate estimation procedure. However, a Brant test indicates that the parallel regression assumption in ordered logit is violated in the Canadian born model. Therefore, a multinomial logit estimation is employed for that sample. However, the results are essentially the same when ordered logit estimation is employed.

capture the non-linear effects of experience, the squared product of years of experience is also included in the multivariate models. For immigrants there is also a second set of time-related measures, years of experience in the country of origin, which is the difference between their reported year of arrival in Canada and year of birth. The ordered logit model is:

$$\ln[p_{\text{lowinfo}} + p_{\text{modinfo}} + p_{\text{highinfo}}] = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{PREMIG} + \beta_2\text{PREMIG}^2 + \beta_3\text{POSTMIG} + \beta_4\text{POSTMIG}^2 + \beta_5\text{CAMPDAY} + \beta_6\text{ELECTION97} + \beta_7\text{ELECTION00} + \varepsilon$$

The second stage of the analyses adds attention to politics, other cognitive resources, and other life cycle factors to the multivariate models. Two measures of attentiveness are included in these second-stage models: level of attention to the campaign in the news media and frequency of political discussion, which is measured by two dummy variables indicating whether the respondent discusses politics with friends and relatives "*often*" or "*occasionally*", rather than "*not at all*."

The two cognitive resources that are essential for acquiring campaign information are language proficiency and education. Most information in Canadian election campaigns is communicated in either French or English, and so the ease with which citizens are able to acquire information should depend on the extent to which they are proficient in either French or English (Fournier, 2002; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996).³² The second cognitive resource is formal education. As Nie and his colleagues assert, "Formal education has a dramatic impact on the ability of individuals to gather information on a variety of subjects, organize facts meaningfully, and efficiently process additional and related knowledge. In

³² Language proficiency is probably not a significant factor in the acquisition of campaign information for the majority of Canadians, but variations in language proficiency almost certainly affect immigrant Canadians' capacity to acquire campaign information.

short, education enhances cognitive proficiency and analytic ability" (1996: 41).³³ Education is measured by two dummy variables, the first comparing those who have not completed high school to all others. The second compares those who have some university education or higher to all others. Language proficiency is measured by a dichotomous variable that compares those who speak a language other than English or French at home to those who speak one of Canada's two official languages.

Measures representing various signposts of movement through the life cycle are also incorporated. Four dummy variables, measuring whether the respondent is married, has children, and is employed or retired, are designed to capture this movement through the life cycle. The equation for Canadian born citizens is:

$$\ln\Omega_{HI|LO}(x_i) = \beta_{0,HI|LO} + \beta_{1,HI|LO} \text{AGE} + \beta_{2,HI|LO} \text{AGE}^2 + \beta_{3,HI|LO} \text{ATTENTION} + \beta_{4,HI|LO} \text{TALKOFT} + \beta_{5,HI|LO} \text{TALKOC} + \beta_{6,HI|LO} \text{OTHLANG} + \beta_{7,HI|LO} \text{NOHS} + \beta_{8,HI|LO} \text{UNIV} + \beta_{9,HI|LO} \text{RETIRED} + \beta_{10,HI|LO} \text{STUDENT} + \beta_{11,HI|LO} \text{UNEMPLOYED} + \beta_{12,HI|LO} \text{FEMALE} + \beta_{13,HI|LO} \text{MARRIED} + \beta_{14,HI|LO} \text{CHILDREN} + \beta_{15,HI|LO} \text{CAMPDAY} + \beta_{16,HI|LO} \text{ELECTION97} + \beta_{17,HI|LO} \text{ELECTION00}$$

³³ Abstract ideas, including political ideas, are more abundant and more tightly organized among the most educated (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991). The better educated make sense of politics more easily (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Luskin, 1987; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991), and consequently they tend to have greater stocks of up to date political information than do less educated citizens (Bennett, 1989; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Fournier, 2002; Gidengil et al., 2004; Neuman, 1986).

$$\begin{aligned} \ln\Omega_{MOD|LO}(x_i) = & \beta_{0,MOD|LO} + \beta_{1,MOD|LO}AGE + \beta_{2,MOD|LO}AGE^2 + \beta_{3,MOD|LO}ATTENTION + \\ & \beta_{4,MOD|LO}TALKOFT + \beta_{5,MOD|LO}TALKOC + \beta_{6,MOD|LO}OTHLANG + \\ & \beta_{7,MOD|LO}NOHS + \beta_{8,MOD|LO}UNIV + \beta_{9,MOD|LO}RETIRED + \\ & \beta_{10,MOD|LO}STUDENT + \beta_{11,MOD|LO}UNEMPLOYED + \\ & \beta_{12,MOD|LO}FEMALE + \beta_{13,MOD|LO}MARRIED + \\ & \beta_{14,MOD|LO}CMODLDREN + \beta_{15,MOD|LO}CAMPDAY + \\ & \beta_{16,MOD|LO}ELECTION97 + \beta_{17,MOD|LO}ELECTION00 \end{aligned}$$

And the model for immigrant Canadians is:

$$\begin{aligned} \ln[p_{lowinfo} + p_{modinfo} + p_{highinfo}] = & \beta_0 + \beta_1PREMIG + \beta_2PREMIG^2 + \beta_3POSTMIG + \\ & \beta_4POSTMIG^2 + \beta_5ATTENTION + \beta_6TALKOFT + \\ & \beta_7TALKOC + \beta_8OTHLANG + \beta_9NOHS + \beta_{10}UNIV \\ & + \beta_{11}RETIRED + \beta_{12}STUDENT + \\ & \beta_{13}UNEMPLOYED + \beta_{14}FEMALE + \beta_{15}MARRIED \\ & + \beta_{16}CHILDREN + \beta_{17}CAMPDAY + \\ & \beta_{18}ELECTION97 + \beta_{19}ELECTION00 + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

Does long-term exposure to Canadian politics influence how much campaign information citizens acquire? Or do other factors associated with a citizen's age explain the link between age and levels of information?

Consider first the results for Canadian born citizens. The multinomial logit results presented in the first column of data in Table 4.1 confirm that long-term political experience is a consistently strong and statistically significant predictor of citizens' levels of campaign information (Wald tests indicate the joint significance of AGE and AGE² is $p < 0.00005$ for both moderate and high levels of information). Of greater interest, however, is the stability

of the coefficients for experience and its squared product even after controls for attentiveness, life cycle factors, and other cognitive resources are introduced to the models. The relationship between age and levels of political information is not a spurious artifact of age differences in motivation to pay attention to politics, or differences in other life cycle factors. The multivariate results presented in the second column of data in Table 4.1 suggest that neither political attentiveness, nor political discussion, education, language proficiency, nor life cycle factors have an appreciable impact on the original relationship between experience and levels of campaign information. Certainly, some of these variables have marked independent effects on levels of information that rival the effects of political experience. But the coefficients for years of political experience are largely unchanged and remain significant ($p < 0.00005$) after these additional variables are introduced in the regression model.

The results indicate that differences in levels of mere exposure to information do not account for the relationship between age and levels of political information; and the empirical validity of life cycle and generational explanations of levels of political information is certainly called into question, since those accounts rest on the preeminent role of attentiveness to politics.

The age coefficients represent the effect of each additional year of experience with politics over the age of 18 on levels of campaign information. The effects of political experience are easier to appreciate, however, if we build a more substantive interpretation of the results by converting the logit coefficients into changes in the predicted probabilities of acquiring low, moderate, and high levels of campaign information. The predicted probabilities are illustrated in Panel 4.2a of Figure 4.2, where the other variables in the

models are held constant, while experience (including its squared product) increases in five-year increments from age 18 to 78.³⁴ The results exhibit a curvilinear pattern: the steady information gains with initial years of experience moderate in later years. The impact of experience is still quite striking, even after controlling for a multitude of potentially confounding factors: an estimated 20 percent of 18 year olds exhibit moderate or high levels of campaign information, compared to about 50 percent of those aged 50 to 70.³⁵

A more powerful test of the life cycle, generational and political experience explanations is generated by comparing the results for Canadian-born citizens to those of foreign-born citizens. The estimates presented in Table 4.2 support the claim that it is experience with Canadian politics, not a life cycle or generational effect, that best explains foreign-born citizens' levels of campaign information. The coefficients for years of experience with Canadian politics are stronger than those for years of experience among native-born citizens presented in Table 4.1. And despite the smaller sample sizes, the coefficients for experience with Canadian politics meet the threshold for statistical significance (Wald tests indicate the joint significance of POSTMIG and POSTMIG² is $p < 0.00005$). The impact of long-term experience with Canadian politics on immigrants' acquisition of campaign information is illustrated in Panel 4.2b of Figure 4.2. An estimated 30 percent of immigrant citizens without any experience with Canadian politics exhibit moderate or high levels of campaign information, compared to 70 percent or more of those with more than 30 years of experience.

If other age-related factors really mattered, then years prior to migration should exhibit a similar effect on levels of information, controlling for all other variables in the model.

³⁴ Long and Freese's (2006) `prvalue` post-estimation command is employed using Stata to compute specific predictions (see Long and Freese 2006: 118-122).

³⁵ The same pattern emerges when the data from each election year are analyzed separately, although confidence intervals are accordingly larger.

However, additional years prior to migration have no discernable systematic influence on the acquisition of campaign information. Estimates derived from the second column of data in Table 4.2 show that the over the first 30 years in Canada the probability of exhibiting moderate and high levels of information increases by a modest one percent and three percent, respectively. Moreover, a Wald test indicates that the chance this modest effect is due sampling error is quite high: the joint significance of PREMIG and PREMIG² is $p < 0.59$.

The combined multivariate results for Canadian born citizens and immigrant Canadian citizens therefore lend robust empirical support to the idea that how much information citizens acquire during political campaigns depends on the amount of prior experience with Canadian politics they have. Among Canadian born citizens, the effects of years of experience linger even after levels of campaign attentiveness and other cognitive resources are held constant. Nor do various signposts of movement through life stages have a substantial impact on the original relationship between years of experience and levels of campaign information. Hypothesis 1 is simply not supported by the evidence.

More significant from a theoretical point of view, however, are the results concerning immigrant Canadians. If factors related to movement through the life cycle really mattered, then both pre- and post-migration years should have produced positive effects of similar magnitudes, because the additive effect of these two variables would be similar to the impact of age for Canadian-born citizens. That is not the case. Nor is it the case that generational differences can account for the link between age and levels of campaign information. If citizens' "formative years" were the crucial explanatory variable, then both pre- and post-migration experience should have had a weak effect on levels of information, simply because

these Canadians must have moved significantly beyond their formative years by the time they arrived in Canada.

That is not to say differences in socialization are inconsequential; there are some signs that socialization does matter. Specifically, following election campaigns closely appears to have a lower payoff for immigrants than for their Canadian born counterparts. The impact of campaign attentiveness on immigrants' acquisition of campaign information over the 1997-2004 campaigns is considerably lower than the impact of attentiveness on Canadian born citizens' acquisition of campaign information in those elections.

But the evidence suggests there are several ways in which immigrants overcome the apparent disadvantage of being socialized in other political systems. For one, they are better endowed with some of the resources that aid in the acquisition of political information. Immigrant citizens tend to have significantly higher levels of formal education than their Canadian-born counterparts as a direct consequence of Canada's immigration policy. Canada's point system of immigrant assessment favours those who are well educated over others, and nearly half of all new adult immigrants now arrive with a university degree (Li 2003: 103). Secondly, immigrants seem to acquire the background skills and resources provided by firsthand experience with the Canadian political system at a faster rate than do Canadian-born citizens. The data show that immigrants who arrive in Canada as adults start out at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to acquiring campaign information: their Canadian born counterparts who have been in the country longer are much more likely to be informed about the campaign at age 18. But experience-related gains in information are considerably greater among immigrants who arrive in Canada as adults than for either of the other groups. Indeed, within ten years immigrants are just as informed as their Canadian-

born counterparts. If Canadian immigrants face a steeper political learning curve, they certainly appear to be up to the challenge.

The results also suggest that the wealth of accumulated prior knowledge about Canadian politics – what Jennings (1995) calls "historical" political knowledge, and what Converse (1975) calls "context" – is not driving the relationship between previous political experience and the acquisition of new campaign information. Such prior knowledge can certainly be classified as contextual information about the political system, and that undoubtedly helps citizens to navigate through the waves of information they encounter during campaigns. But from the evidence presented in Figure 3 it seems quite unlikely that older citizens learn more during a campaign merely because they come across familiar issues and political players. The more novel and challenging the information provided during a campaign, the more prior experience matters: the experience-information relationship is stronger among immigrant Canadians, a group of citizens with a unique deficit in "historical" knowledge about Canadian politics, than among their Canadian born counterparts.

4.2 Political Experience and Attentiveness

To this point the focus has been on the simple relationship between experience and levels of political campaign information. But what are the mechanisms by which experience improves stocks of campaign information? The analysis now considers the possibilities that long-term experience improves citizens' capacities to retain new information, and that experience changes how selective citizens are when it comes to paying attention to and acquiring new political information.

One way to test these possibilities is to examine whether the effect of attentiveness to politics in the media differs among citizens with different numbers of years of experience. The conditional effects of political attentiveness are estimated by introducing multiplicative terms to the models initially presented in Table 4.1. These variables capture the ways in which the effects of political attentiveness on the acquisition of campaign information vary with age (among Canadian born citizens) and years in Canada (among immigrant Canadians). The models are:

$$\begin{aligned} \ln\Omega_{HI|LO}(x_i) = & \beta_{0,HI|LO} + \beta_{1,HI|LO} \text{AGE} + \beta_{2,HI|LO} \text{AGE}^2 + \beta_{3,HI|LO} \text{ATTENTION} + \\ & \beta_{4,HI|LO} \text{AGE} * \text{ATTENTION} + \beta_{5,HI|LO} \text{AGE}^2 * \text{ATTENTION} + \\ & \beta_{6,HI|LO} \text{TALKOFT} + \beta_{7,HI|LO} \text{TALKOC} + \beta_{8,HI|LO} \text{OTHLANG} + \\ & \beta_{9,HI|LO} \text{NOHS} + \beta_{10,HI|LO} \text{UNIV} + \beta_{11,HI|LO} \text{RETIRED} + \\ & \beta_{12,HI|LO} \text{STUDENT} + \beta_{13,HI|LO} \text{UNEMPLOYED} + \beta_{14,HI|LO} \text{FEMALE} + \\ & \beta_{15,HI|LO} \text{MARRIED} + \beta_{16,HI|LO} \text{CHILDREN} + \beta_{17,HI|LO} \text{CAMPDAY} + \\ & \beta_{18,HI|LO} \text{ELECTION97} + \beta_{19,HI|LO} \text{ELECTION00} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \ln\Omega_{MOD|LO}(x_i) = & \beta_{0,MOD|LO} + \beta_{1,MOD|LO} \text{AGE} + \beta_{2,MOD|LO} \text{AGE}^2 + \beta_{3,MOD|LO} \text{ATTENTION} + \\ & \beta_{4,MOD|LO} \text{AGE} * \text{ATTENTION} + \beta_{5,MOD|LO} \text{AGE}^2 * \text{ATTENTION} + \\ & \beta_{6,MOD|LO} \text{TALKOFT} + \beta_{7,MOD|LO} \text{TALKOC} + \beta_{8,MOD|LO} \text{OTHLANG} + \\ & \beta_{9,MOD|LO} \text{NOHS} + \beta_{10,MOD|LO} \text{UNIV} + \beta_{11,MOD|LO} \text{RETIRED} + \\ & \beta_{12,MOD|LO} \text{STUDENT} + \beta_{13,MOD|LO} \text{UNEMPLOYED} + \\ & \beta_{14,MOD|LO} \text{FEMALE} + \beta_{15,MOD|LO} \text{MARRIED} + \\ & \beta_{16,MOD|LO} \text{CMODLDREN} + \beta_{17,MOD|LO} \text{CAMPDAY} + \\ & \beta_{18,MOD|LO} \text{ELECTION97} + \beta_{19,MOD|LO} \text{ELECTION00} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \ln[p_{\text{lowinfo}} + p_{\text{modinfo}} + p_{\text{highinfo}}] = & \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{PREMIG} + \beta_2\text{PREMIG}^2 + \beta_3\text{POSTMIG} + \\ & \beta_4\text{POSTMIG}^2 + \beta_5\text{POSTMIG*ATTENTION} + \\ & \beta_6\text{POSTMIG}^2*\text{ATTENTION} + \beta_7\text{ATTENTION} + \\ & \beta_8\text{TALKOFT} + \beta_9\text{TALKOC} + \beta_{10}\text{OTHLANG} + \\ & \beta_{11}\text{NOHS} + \beta_{12}\text{UNIV} + \beta_{13}\text{RETIRED} + \beta_{14}\text{STUDENT} \\ & + \beta_{15}\text{UNEMPLOYED} + \beta_{16}\text{FEMALE} + \beta_{17}\text{MARRIED} \\ & + \beta_{18}\text{CHILDREN} + \beta_{19}\text{CAMPDAY} + \beta_{20}\text{ELECTION97} \\ & + \beta_{21}\text{ELECTION00} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

The results of these conditional models are summarized in Table 4.3.³⁶ Note first of all, that a comparison of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Pseudo R² statistics confirm that both interaction models perform as well as or better than the models without interaction terms. However, interaction effects, especially the statistical significance of those effects, can be quite difficult to interpret because the statistical properties of the coefficients are different from those of additive logit models, and the inclusion of the additional squared terms further complicate the interpretation of these interaction effects. The appropriate way to assess the statistical significance of the interaction is a Wald test of the joint significance of the interaction terms in each model. It turns out that for the Canadian born sample, the interaction terms are significant at $p < 0.0014$ and $p < 0.022$ for moderate and high levels of information, respectively. And for the immigrant sample, the interaction terms are significant at $p < 0.034$.³⁷

³⁶ In this interaction model, the AGE / POSTMIG and ATTENTIVENESS β s represent the conditional effects of each variable when the other equal zero. The β s for the multiplicative terms represent the effect of an additional year of experience with politics on the relationship between attentiveness and level of campaign information.

³⁷ Significant interactions also emerge when the Canadian born sample is disaggregated into 1997, 2000, and 2004 samples.

But exactly how does long-term exposure influence the relationship between attention to the campaign and the acquisition of campaign information? A more substantively meaningful description of the interaction effects comes from a comparison of differences in information levels between the most and least attentive citizens, over a range of years of experience with Canadian politics. Consequently, the data presented in Figure 4.3 illustrates the predicted probability of acquiring moderate to high levels of information (the top panel, 4.3a), and then exclusively high levels of information (the bottom panel, 4.3b), among the most and least attentive Canadian born citizens at varying years of age.³⁸

These data suggest that efficiency, rather than capacity, improves as age increases. The effects of paying attention to the campaign decline significantly with age, in large part because older, inattentive citizens are able to acquire far more information than their younger, inattentive counterparts.

Among citizens who are most attentive to the campaign, the probability of exhibiting higher levels of campaign information begins to *decline* in middle age. The top panel in Figure 4.3, for instance, shows that the estimated percentage of highly attentive citizens who display moderate to high levels of campaign information grows from about 65 percent at age 18, to approximately 76 percent among citizens in their late 30s and early 40s. But information levels decline among highly attentive citizens beyond the early 40s. And by 78 years of age, only 57 percent of highly attentive citizens exhibit moderate to high levels of information. A similar pattern surfaces when only high levels of information are examined

³⁸ Using the `prvalue` procedure in Stata, estimated values and confidence intervals (95%) are once again calculated for different combinations of values on the attentiveness and political experience variables. The “political experience” variables and the attentiveness variable are alternatively set at the different values shown in Figure 4.5 to produce the final estimates. For each estimated value in Figure 4.5, the control variables are held constant at the same levels reported in footnote 7.

(Panel 4.3b). The estimated proportion of highly attentive citizens who retain high stocks of campaign information rises modestly from about 35 percent among 18 year olds to approximately 40 percent among citizens in their late 30s and early 40s, and then declines to an estimated 28 percent among citizens in their late 70s.

By contrast, information levels *increase* substantially with age among the least attentive citizens. The estimated proportion of inattentive citizens who display moderate to high levels of information grows steadily from about 8 percent among 18 year olds to about 35 percent among citizens in their early 60s (Panel 4.3a). Most of the age dynamic is actually movement from a low to moderate level of information. Changes in the proportion of citizens displaying a high level of campaign information are comparatively modest. The estimated percentage of inattentive citizens expressing high levels of information rises from virtually none at age 18 to about 7.5 percent among citizens in their late 60s and early 70s.³⁹

The confidence intervals for the effects of attentiveness at different ages, illustrated in Figure 4.4, show that attentiveness has significantly different effects for younger and older Canadian born citizens. The effects of attentiveness on the probability of exhibiting moderate to high levels of information declines with more years of experience (Panel 4.4a), and the data indicate that those effects are significantly weaker among citizens 58 years of age or older than among those younger than 40 years of age. However, it turns out that when

³⁹ One potential misgiving about the validity of this interpretation centres on the impact of age on the accuracy of respondents' answers: What if the apparent experience-related decline in the impact of political attentiveness is purely a consequence of inaccurate self-reporting of attentiveness among older respondents? As noted earlier, cognitive functioning tends to deteriorate among the very oldest age groups. Two points address this objection: first, there are equally valid reasons to expect that self-reported measures of attentiveness become more accurate with experience, because prior experience provides respondents with a benchmark by which they can gauge how much attention they pay to politics, namely, previous political campaigns; second, the empirical results do not change in any meaningful way when respondents who are most susceptible to age-related cognitive decline, those over the age of 71, are excluded from the analyses.

it comes to passing the moderate information threshold no significant differences emerge between substantively interesting age levels (Panel 4.4b).

The evidence from immigrants is quite different. Figure 4.5 reports the predicted probability of acquiring moderate to high levels of information among the most and least attentive immigrants, at varying numbers of years of experience with Canadian politics. There are marked increases in immigrant Canadians' capacity to draw campaign information from the sources they pay attention to during their initial 10 to 15 years in Canada, followed by rising efficiency in gathering campaign information in the subsequent years. The data in Panel 4.5a show that among the least attentive of this group of Canadians, there is very little change in the probability of exhibiting moderate to high levels of campaign information as years of experience with Canadian politics increase from zero to 30. That probability increases by 34 percent, however, between 30 and 50 years of experience. Conversely, among the most attentive immigrants who arrived as adults, there is a nearly 70 percent increase in the probability of exhibiting moderate to high levels of campaign information as years of experience with Canadian politics increase from zero to 25, but very little change in the subsequent years. Panel 4.5b, focusing exclusively on high levels of campaign information, shows a similar pattern.

As it turns out, attentiveness has a miniscule effect among the least experienced and most experienced immigrant Canadians, but large and significant effects among those with somewhere between 15 and 35 years of exposure to Canadian politics (Figure 4.6). One possible explanation for this finding is that immigrant citizens learn to make sense of, and retain, the information they pay attention to in the initial years of experience, while in later years they learn to acquire relevant campaign information more easily. These processes, after

all, are unlikely to occur simultaneously. Citizens ought to learn how to effectively get something out of paying attention to politics before they can learn which sources and kinds of information are worth heeding, and which are best ignored.

There is certainly far more support for the selectively hypothesis than the capacity hypothesis among the Canadian-born population. These findings encourage speculation about why we find evidence consistent with one, but not the other. One possibility is that most citizens pick up enough basic political knowledge to make sense of the political world well before they reach voting age, and so the value of firsthand political knowledge in early adulthood is overstated. Young Canadians are quite capable of understanding and retaining novel campaign information even when they do not have a wealth of prior firsthand experience. Not surprisingly, then, new immigrants who arrive from very different political systems do benefit from that firsthand learning during their initial years as citizens.

5 Conclusions

Canadian political scientists have devoted a good deal of attention to the problem of low turnout, and lack of political interest and knowledge among youth (Pammett and LeDuc, 2003a; Gidengil et al., 2004; Blais et al., 2004a; O'Neill, 2001, 2003; Howe, 2003). A reasonable assumption is that these forms of youth disengagement are closely linked.

The evidence in this chapter suggests the relationship between age and the acquisition of information in political campaigns is more complex. Younger citizens tend to be relatively uninformed because, compared to older citizens, they have less direct, firsthand experience with electoral politics. Experience endows older citizens with basic contextual knowledge, which reduces the cognitive costs of acquiring new political information. More significantly,

long-term experience also allows citizens to develop strategies to acquire new information efficiently. More politically experienced citizens therefore have to put less effort into paying attention to election campaigns to acquire similar amounts of new political information as their less experienced, counterparts.

Young people may well be less motivated than others to pay attention to politics, but the evidence here indicates that is not the only reason why younger citizens acquire less campaign information than do older citizens. It turns out that older citizens who pay very little attention to politics know how to draw relevant campaign information from the limited number of opportunities they take advantage of, whereas their inexperienced counterparts do not. It takes more effort for younger citizens to acquire levels of up to date political information that are comparable to their more experienced counterparts, but that effort pays off: when younger Canadians pay a good deal of attention to campaigns, they acquire nearly the same amount of information as do equally attentive older Canadians.

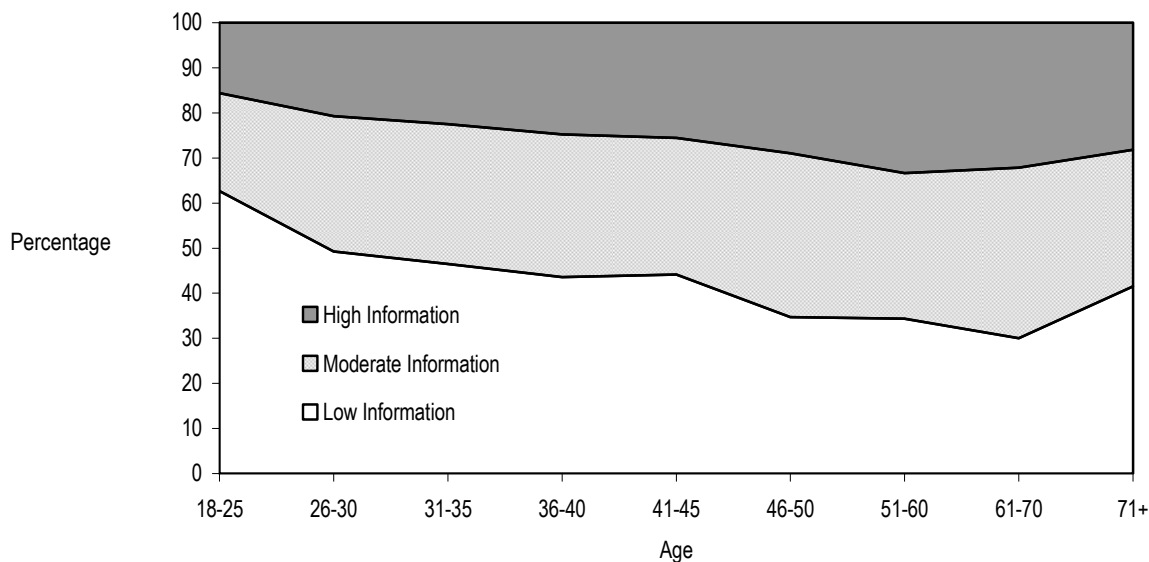
The evidence also highlights the challenge faced by new immigrants when it comes to acquiring political information. New immigrants, regardless of their ages, encounter a similar difficulty as young native-born citizens when it comes to making sense of campaign information: they lack prior direct experience with Canadian federal elections. Nevertheless, how immigrant Canadians get campaign information is also substantially different from how their Canadian-born counterparts acquire the same information. Indeed, the challenge for immigrants is compounded because they must grapple with a completely new social and political environment. There are clear signs that socialization in the country of origin affects how immigrants acquire information, and how much information they acquire. More specifically, socialization prior to migration seems to make learning new political

information more difficult. Immigrants who arrive in Canada as adults pay just as much attention news about election campaigns as other Canadians, but attentiveness has less of an impact on their information levels than of those born in Canada, and there is no evidence that they make up for this by getting their information from other sources like interpersonal communication. The evidence presented here indicates that like Canadian born citizens, foreign born Canadians become more efficient at acquiring information as they gain experience with Canadian politics. But the data also suggest that unlike Canadian born citizens, new immigrants to Canada have some difficulty making sense of campaign information.

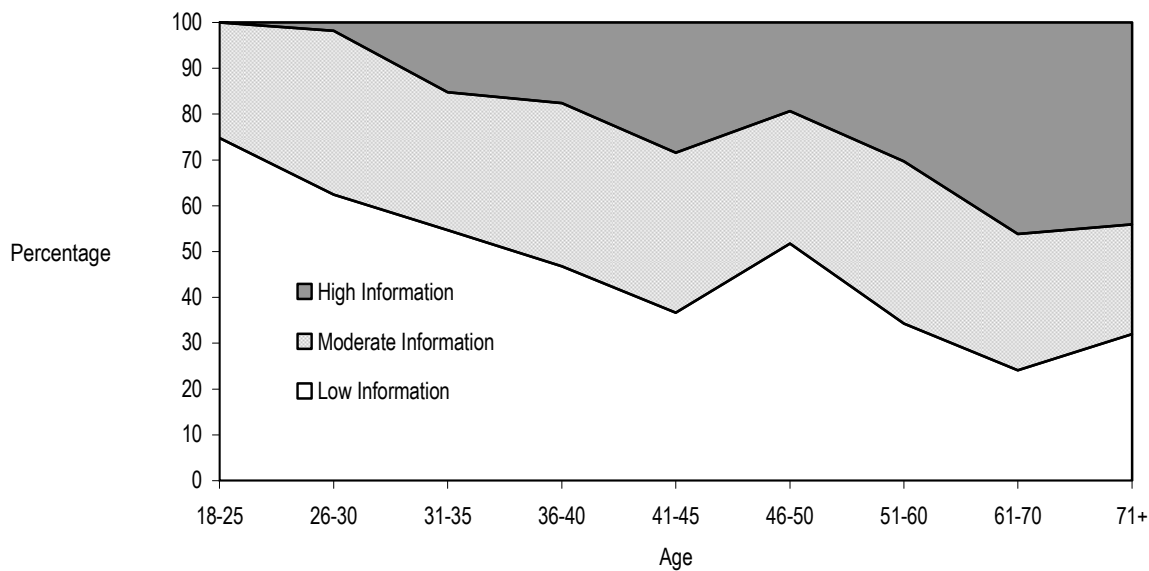
CHAPTER FOUR TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Levels of Campaign Information by Age and Years in Canada, 1997-2004 Elections
(Canadian Born Citizens and Immigrant Canadians who Arrived As Adults)

4.1a. Canadian Born Citizens



4.1b Immigrant Canadians



Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Table 4.1 Predictors of Citizen Campaign Information Levels, Canadian Born Citizens, 1997-2004 (Multinomial Logit and Ordered Logit Estimates)

	Without Controls		With Controls	
	Mod. vs. Low Info	High vs. Low Info	Mod. vs. Low Info	High vs. Low Info
Age	0.062a (0.006)	0.079a (0.007)	0.067a (0.007)	0.083a (0.009)
Age ²	-0.0007a (0.000)	-0.0009a (0.000)	-0.0009a (0.000)	-0.0011a (0.000)
Constant	-1.502a (0.114)	-2.353a (0.125)	-2.394a (0.148)	-4.121a (0.183)
Wald χ^2	394.65a		1616.34a	
McFadden's R ²	0.029		0.149	
N	9,366		9,366	

a. $p < 0.001$ b. $p < 0.01$ c. $p < 0.05$

Notes: (1) Both models control for year of survey and day of interview. Controls for education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home are included in the second model.

(2) The full regression results are presented in Table B1 in Appendix B

Table 4.2 Predictors of Citizen Campaign Information Levels, Adult Immigrants, 1997-2004 (Multinomial Logit and Ordered Logit Estimates)

	Without Controls	With Controls
Years in Canada	0.085a (0.021)	0.084a (0.026)
Years in Canada ²	-0.0008c (0.000)	-0.0009c (0.000)
Pre-migration years	0.052 (0.030)	0.033 (0.033)
Pre-migration years ²	-0.0011 (0.001)	-0.0009 (0.001)
Thresholds:		
Mod. inform. (y=2)	1.659 (0.360)	2.008 (0.554)
High inform. (y=3)	3.111 (0.364)	3.725 (0.559)
Wald χ^2	70.73a	161.41a
McFadden's R ²	0.048	0.145
N	794	794

a. p < 0.001

b. p < 0.01

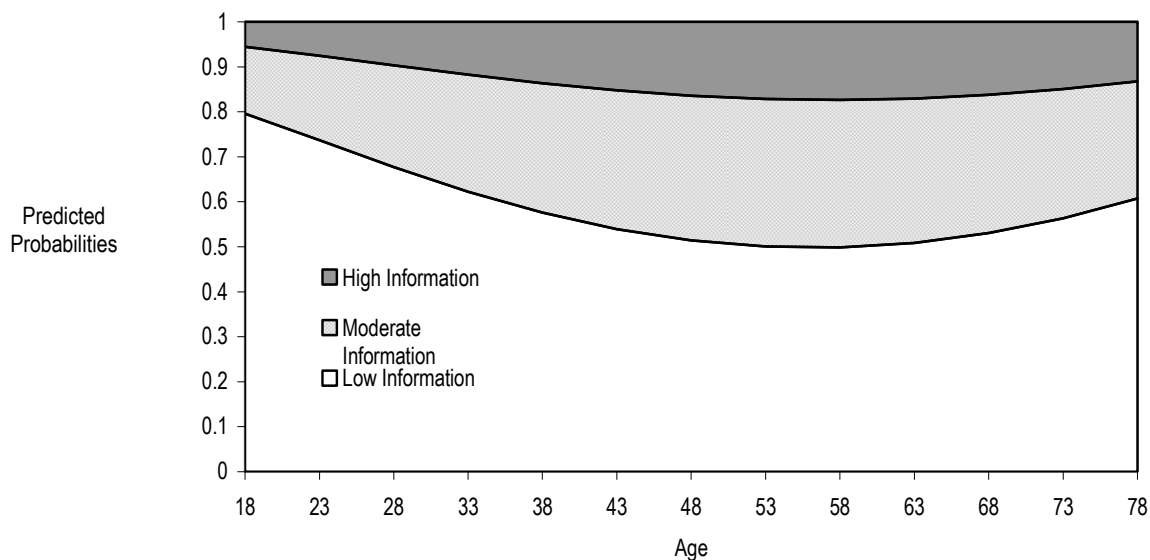
c. p < 0.05

Notes: (1) Both models control for year of survey and day of interview. Controls for number of years in the country of origin, education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home are included in the second model.

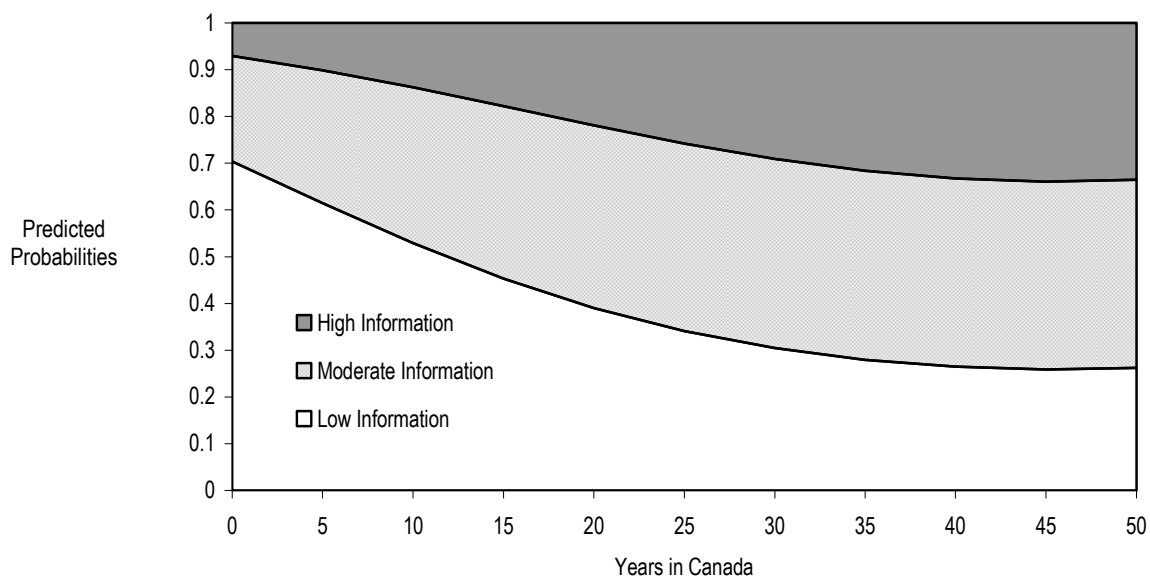
(2) The full regression results are presented in Table B1 in Appendix B

Figure 4.2 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Age and Years in Canada, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004 Elections (Canadian Born Citizens and Immigrant Canadians who Arrived As Adults)

4.2a. Canadian Born Citizens



4.2b Immigrant Canadians



Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table 4.1 and 4.2
 (2) Controls for education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home are included in the model. Years prior to migration are also controlled in the immigrant model. Their values are held constant in these calculations.

Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

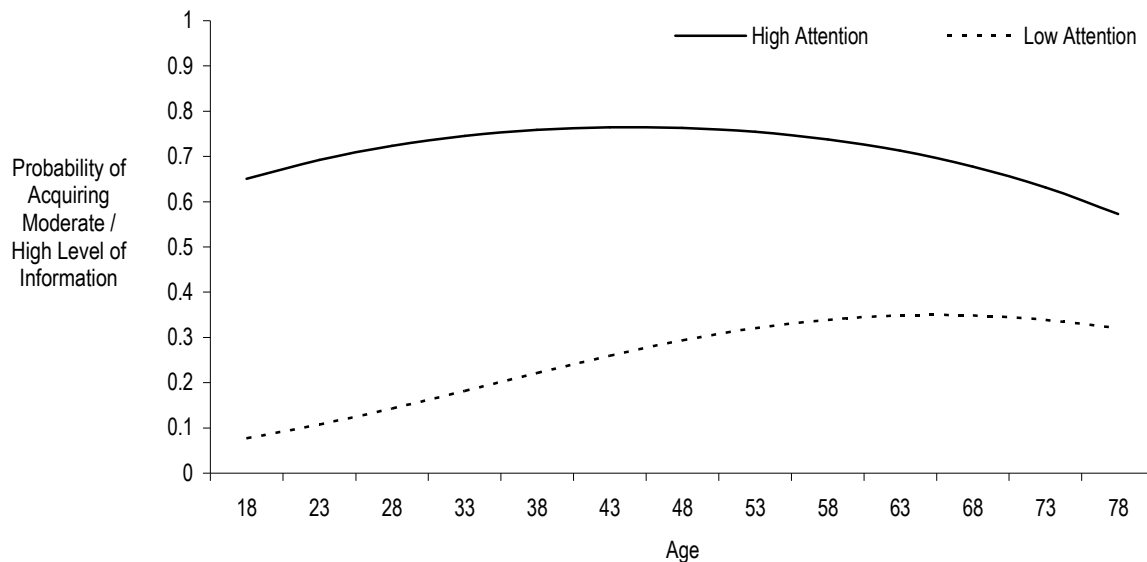
Table 4.3 Summary of Results for Interaction Models

Model	Significance of Interactions		Model Fit Comparison			
	Wald χ^2	Prob. > χ^2	McFadden's R ²		AIC	
			Additive	Interactive	Additive	Interactive
<i>Canadian Born</i> (N = 9,366)						
HI vs. LO Information	13.17	0.0014	0.149	0.150	1.843	1.841
MOD vs. LO Information	24.63	0.00005				
<i>Immigrant Canadians</i> (N = 794)						
	6.77	0.034	0.144	0.148	1.931	1.926

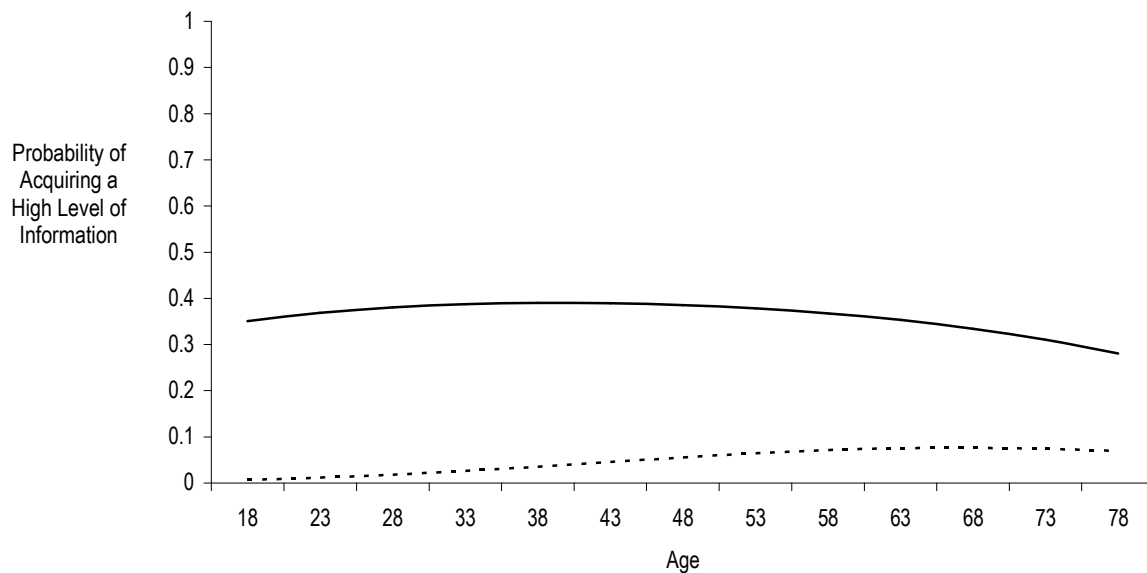
Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 4.3 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Campaign Attentiveness and Age, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004 Elections (Canadian born citizens)

4.3a. Moderate to High Levels of Campaign Information



4.3b High Levels of Campaign Information

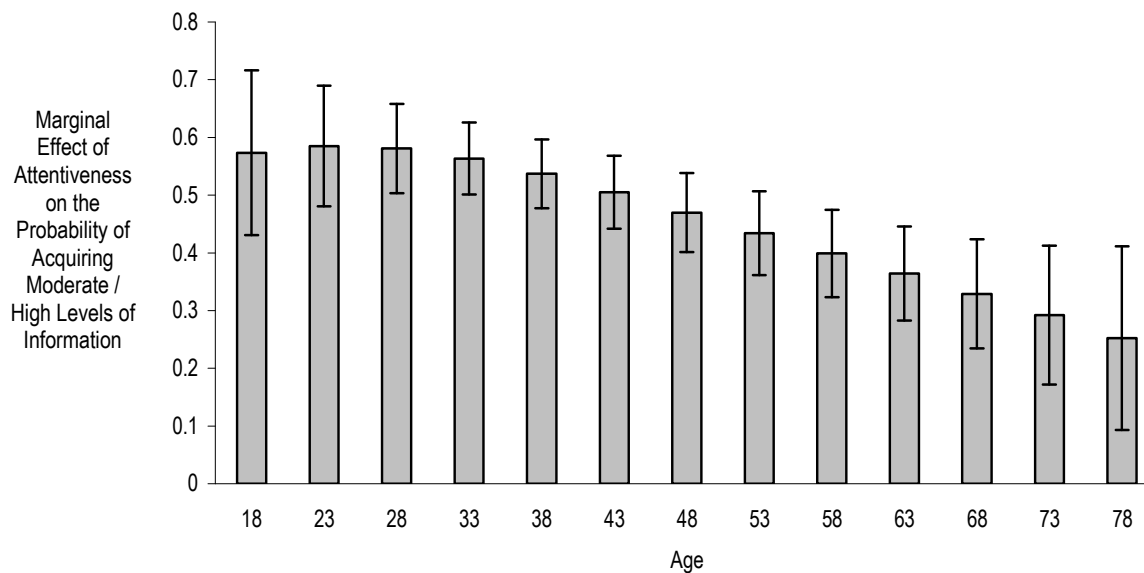


Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table B1 in Appendix B.
 (2) Controls for education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home are included in the model. Their values are held constant in these calculations.

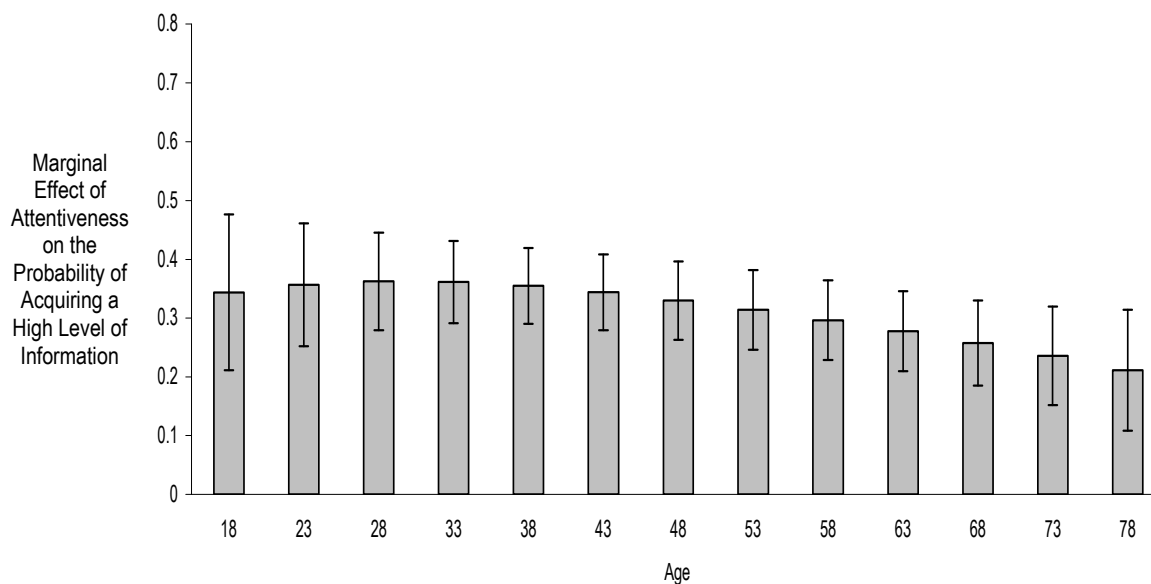
Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 4.4 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Campaign Attentiveness and Age, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004 Elections (Canadian born citizens)

4.4a. Moderate to High Levels of Campaign Information



4.4b High Levels of Campaign Information

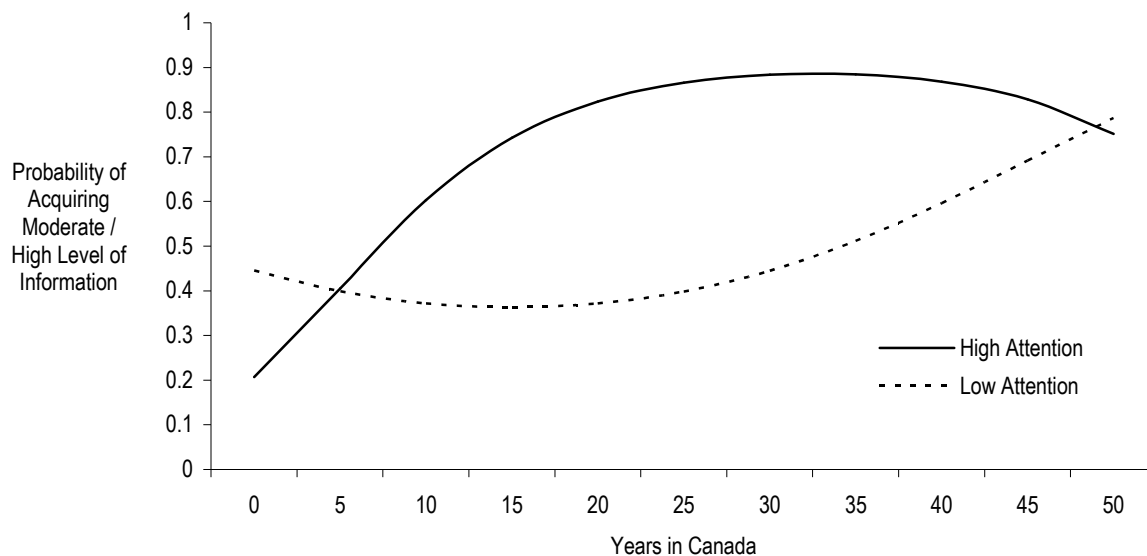


Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table B1 in Appendix B.
 (2) Controls for education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home are included in the model. Their values are held constant in these calculations.

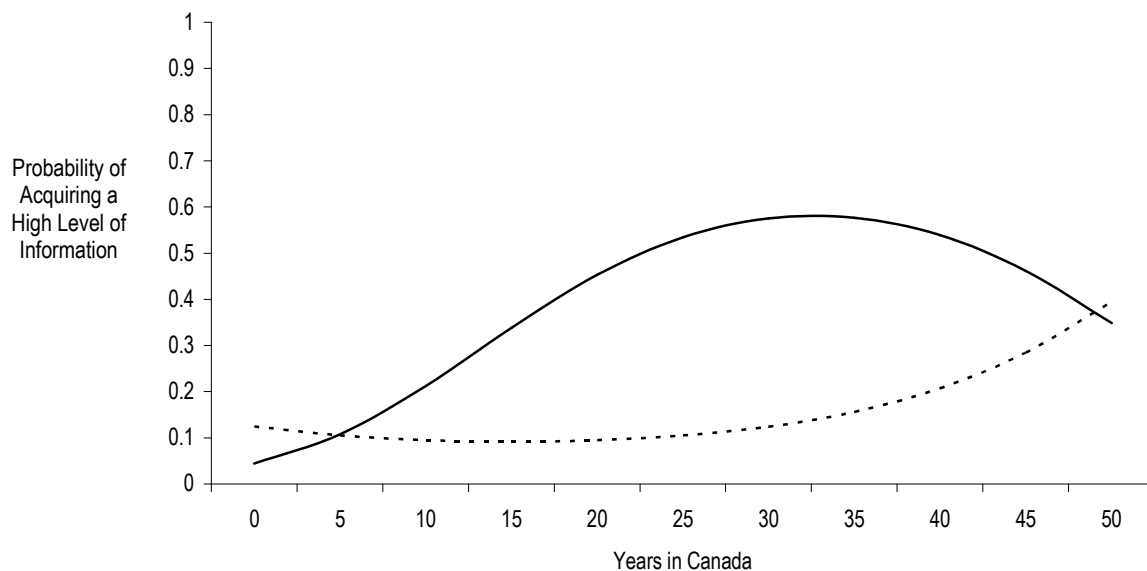
Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 4.5 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Campaign Attentiveness and Years in Canada, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004 Elections (Immigrant Canadians)

4.5a. Moderate to High Levels of Campaign Information



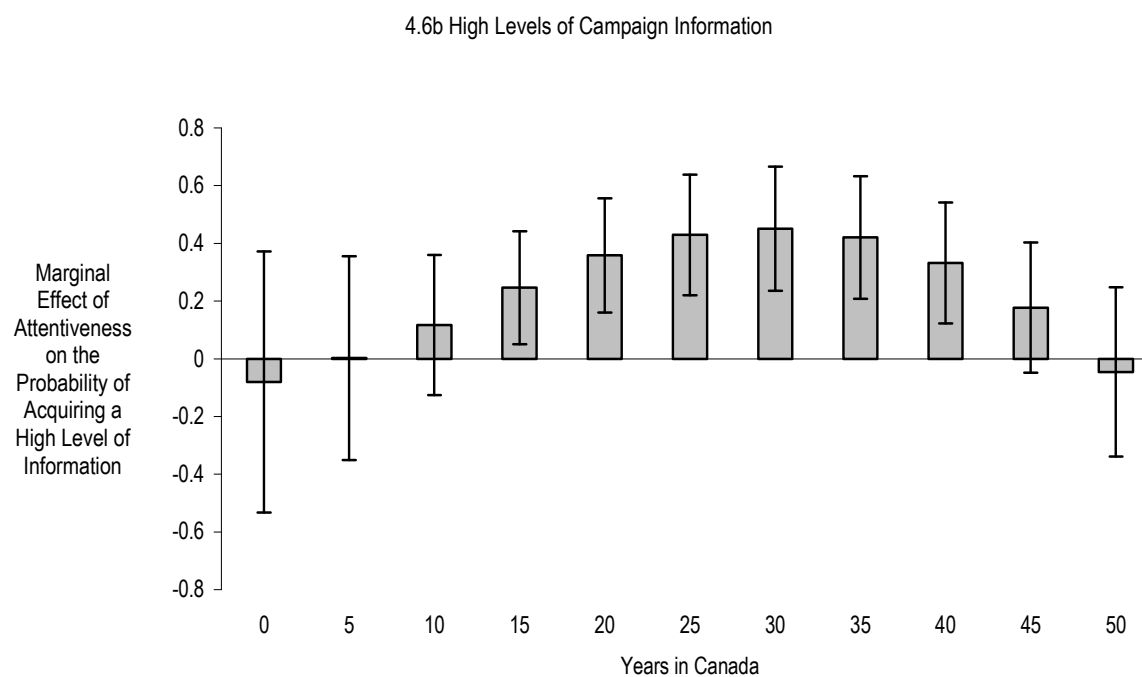
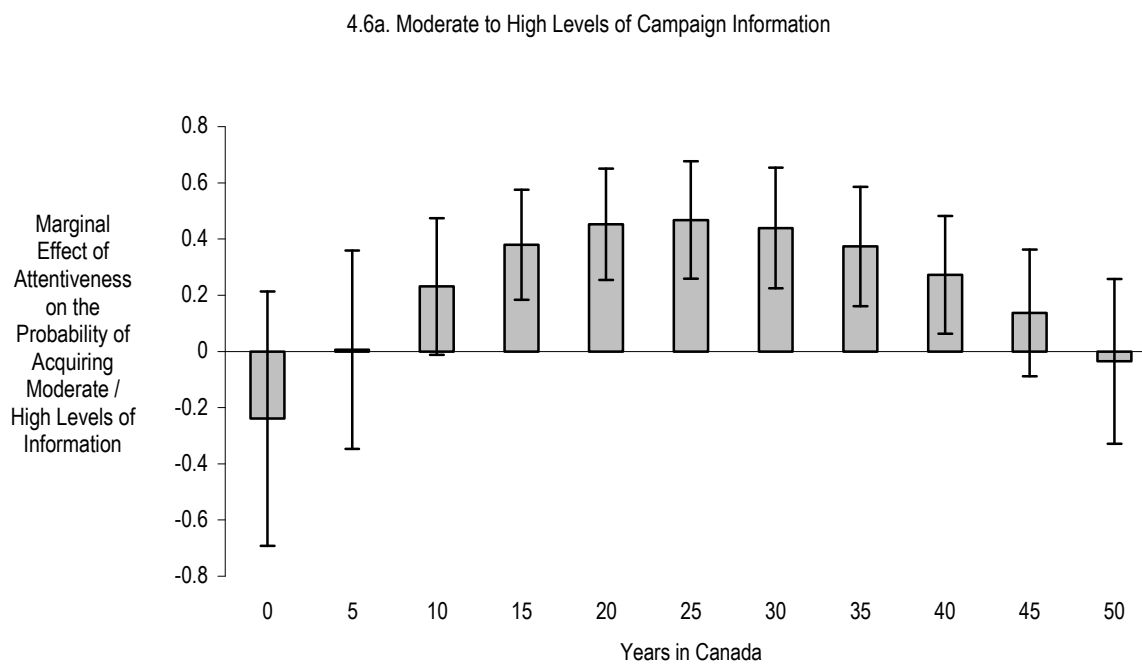
4.5b High Levels of Campaign Information



Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table B2 in Appendix B
 (2) Controls for education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home, and years prior to migration are included in the model. Those are held constant in these calculations.

Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Figure 4.6 Estimated Levels of Campaign Information by Campaign Attentiveness and Years in Canada, Controlling for Other Factors, 1997-2004 Elections (Immigrant Canadians)



Notes: (1) Values are probabilities derived from ordered logit estimates presented in Table B2 in Appendix B
 (2) Controls for education, income, employment status, attentiveness, political discussion, and language spoken at home, and years prior to migration are included in the model. Those are held constant in these calculations.

Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Chapter 5 Partisan Bias in Canada

1 Introduction

In some respects, partisanship is a double-edged sword in democratic political systems. On the one hand, citizens' enduring attachments to political parties are a source of long-term political stability. Indeed, many observers have pointed out the "structuring power of partisanship" (Achen, 2002: 152). On the other hand, rigid partisan loyalties also raise the prospect of elite manipulation. If party attachments dictate public opinion, then mass publics are nothing more than echo chambers in which the preferences of partisan elites merely reverberate.

The conceptual foundations of partisanship, and the significance of its relationship to voting behaviour, were dominating sources of controversy during the first quarter-century of Canadian voting research. To some, partisanship was a highly influential orientation affecting Canadian political attitudes and vote choices (Sniderman, Forbes, and Melzer, 1974: 286). But to others the concept held little real value for understanding Canadian voting behaviour, largely because partisan loyalties appeared to be unstable and influenced heavily by short-term forces (Meisel, 1975; Regenstreif, 1965). Despite these early conceptual arguments, a quiet consensus appears to have emerged over the last two decades on the meaning of partisanship in Canada, one largely in keeping with its original formulation as a social identity that shapes other political attitudes and behaviours.

Even though the debate over partisanship in Canada has waned somewhat in recent years, theoretical developments outside Canada prompt new questions about the nature of Canadians' party attachments. A very different conception of partisanship, which sees party

attachments as learned political orientations influenced by citizens' short and long-term evaluations of parties, gained considerable empirical support in American political science during the same period in which Canadian scholars were attempting to sort out exactly what partisanship meant (Achen, 1992, 2002; Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson, 1998; Fiorina, 1981; Franklin and Jackson, 1983; Gerber and Green, 1998, 1999; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson, 1989; Zechman, 1979). This alternative view generates several empirical implications for which Canada's relatively unstable federal party system is a particularly appropriate testing ground. These developments have also shifted the terms of the debate about Canadian partisanship away from the question "are Canadians partisans?" and towards the question "what is Canadian partisanship?" Do party loyalties drive political opinions and behaviour, or is partisanship instead shorthand for the reasoned, long-term political evaluations of a skeptical public?

Long-term political experience occupies a central place in both theories of partisanship. At the heart of these theoretical perspectives are starkly different accounts of how citizens learn about politics. In the party identification model, partisan bias is taken to increase with recurring exposure to political information (Bartels, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1968). In the alternative model, the contention is that recurring exposure to political information provides citizens with opportunities to learn about the performance of parties (Achen, 1992, 2002; Gerber and Green, 1998, 1999). What is missing is an assessment of the relative merits of each of these theoretical perspectives is absent in the scholarship on partisanship in Canada.

The next two chapters fill that void and investigate the relationship between partisanship and experience in Canada by testing several of the empirical implications drawn from these

competing conceptions of partisanship. This chapter focuses on the prevailing theory, the social psychological model. It begins by mapping developments in research on partisanship, with a particular emphasis on how Canadian research has evolved. Then, empirical tests are proposed and conducted for one of the core implications of the social psychological model, namely, that political learning is biased by partisan predispositions. The main test focuses on the effects of partisanship on a particular set of opinion dynamics: attitudes towards the Liberal government's handling of the scandal surrounding the federal sponsorship program.

2 Two Images of Partisanship

Voting research in the social-psychological tradition puts party identification front and centre as the "unmoved mover" of vote choice. The social-psychological model of voting defines party identification as a longstanding affective psychological identification with a political party. Party identifications resemble other identifications with social groups that constitute parts of citizens' self-images. Citizens acquire their partisan identities relatively early in life, through family and other social group memberships, and partisanship subsequently acts as the conduit through which other political attitudes are shaped. Their partisan self-images create a "perceptual screen" that distorts the way citizens acquire and interpret new political information: people tend to accept new information that is consistent with their existing political orientations, but they also tend to resist discordant political information (see Bartels, 2002; Zaller, 1992). The most important consequences of partisan bias are robust party identifications that intensify with the passage of time, and vote choices that seldom deviate from those partisan loyalties. Political support usually changes slowly, and in predictable

ways: sudden, wholesale rejection of an incumbent party, or approval of a challenger, is an extremely rare event; and new voters whose party identifications have not yet "crystallized" are typically the sources of electoral realignments.

The social-psychological model of partisanship was, and largely remains, the prevailing model of voter behaviour in the United States, but by the early 1970s some observers began expressing doubts as to the validity of the party identification concept, as well as its status as the preeminent basis for vote choices. Three kinds of empirical evidence, which are inconsistent with the central tenets of the social-psychological theory of party identification, provoked doubts about the concept. First, panel studies show a good deal of instability in party identification over time, more than the social-psychological model could account for (Clarke and McCutcheon, 2009; Dreyer, 1973; Markus and Converse, 1979; Niemi and Jennings, 1991). Second, people's party identifications seem to shift with their changing political opinions and evaluations of parties, leaders, and candidates (Jackson, 1975; Markus and Converse, 1979; Page and Jones, 1979). In other words, party identification appears to respond to political attitudes as much as it shapes those attitudes, which led some observers to question whether partisans were biased.

Third, in other settings party identification has not fared as well as an explanation for stability or change in electoral behaviour (Holmberg, 1981; LeDuc, 1981; Thomassen, 1976). In Western Europe, other long-term political orientations do seem to account for stability and shifts. Ideological orientations and identifications appear to structure the vote to a greater extent in Europe than in the United States. Identifying with the 'left' or 'right' of the political spectrum influenced voting preferences more than any explicit party identification (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Percheron and Jennings, 1981; Sani, 1976). Historically, social class

is also a far more significant determinant of the vote in European countries than in the United States (Dalton, 1996).

Canada, too, seemed to be another case where the party identification model could not travel. The initial studies of party identification in Canada concluded it was a hollow concept. Voters' partisan loyalties were linked so closely to their vote preferences – preferences which, for many, changed from election to election – that the idea of long-term attachments to political parties that might be distinguished from vote preferences seemed out of place in the Canadian context (Meisel, 1975). Those studies appeared to confirm the "textbook theory" of Canadian partisanship, namely, that Canadians lacked any long-term partisan loyalties because Canada's two main parties, the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives, were largely indistinguishable (Sniderman, Forbes, and Melzer, 1974).

Attempts to rescue the social-psychological model followed soon after,⁴⁰ but what became the predominant view of party identification in the years that followed, however, was something of a compromise between the "textbook theory" of Canadian partisanship and the social-psychological model. In *Political Choice in Canada* (1978), Clarke and his colleagues

⁴⁰ Some defended the original formulation of party identification. Relying on Canadian survey respondents' reports of their votes in past elections, Sniderman and his colleagues concluded that, "In Canada, identification with a party is the rule, not the exception, and the vote is marked by continuity, not volatility" (Sniderman, Forbes, and Melzer, 1974: 286). Others proposed modifications to the concept. Jenson, for one, sought to redefine the theory of party identification, rather than contest the initial studies that demonstrated Canadian voters' weak partisan loyalties. She conjectured that party identification was a "cost-saving mechanism" (Jenson, 1975: 544) and:

an instrumental tie, a tie which is learned early but re-examined periodically to be certain that it is in fact a correct affiliation, given one's needs, expectations, and preferences about politics. It is potentially a mutable tie, altering as conditions make change desirable. Partisanship is based upon a long-run calculation of benefit, a calculation which is differentially performed with regard to accuracy, but on the whole effective. The implication, then, is that once a benefit is no longer perceived to exist the identification with the party will be called into question and reasonably could be expected to be altered. (Jenson, 1976: 31).

Jenson's view bears a strong resemblance to the "running tally" model emerging in the United States over much of the same period. And although Elkins (1978) provided strong, empirically grounded arguments in favour of the social-psychological model, he, too, concluded that the dynamics of party identification may well follow logic similar to Jenson's.

devised a new way of looking at party identification, which divided the electorate into durable and flexible partisans. Durable partisans had attachments that were consistent at the federal and provincial levels, stable over time, and at least moderately intense. Flexible partisans, by contrast, did not exhibit all three characteristics. This typology accepted that some Canadians had durable partisan commitments that, in accordance with the social-psychological model, substantially influenced their vote choices. But it also suggested that a larger number of flexible partisans behaved in keeping with the textbook theory of Canadian partisanship.

The focus of the *Political Choice* model was on dynamics within the Canadian electorate as a whole, and the main message argued for the potential for electoral volatility. Election outcomes depended on the structure of the electorate – the numbers of transient voters moving in and out of the electorate, new voters, and durable and flexible partisans – as well as the impact of short-term forces. A central claim was that the Canadian electorate often exhibited aggregate stability because individual-level changes cancelled one another out, but there was a genuine prospect of wild swings in election outcomes. The flexible partisanship model was assailed on a number of methodological and conceptual fronts⁴¹, but the basic thrust of the model was supported by panel survey evidence, which indicated a large number of voters did in fact change their partisan affiliations from election to election. The model was further vindicated by the outcomes of the 1984 and 1993 general elections, where party fortunes changed dramatically in keeping with the *Political Choice* model's theme of individual-level volatility.

⁴¹These included the early studies' reliance on recall data (MacDermid, 1989), inconsistency of federal-and provincial party identifications as an indicator of flexibility (Blake, 1982), and, most important, the absence of a "none of these" category in the party identification measure (Gidengil, 1992; Johnston, 1992b; Johnston et al., 1992a).

The biggest challenge to the *Political Choice* model was a subsequent change in the wording of the Canadian party identification item in national election surveys. Before 1988, the party identification item did not include an explicit option for respondents who did not identify with any party. Adding this option to the party identification item, Johnston et al. (1992a; see also Johnston, 1992b) noted a significant decline in the number of Canadians who claimed to be partisans. The inference drawn was that much of the prior instability exhibited by Canadian partisans was a consequence of measurement error: "[the old party identification item] inflated the percentage appearing to identify with some party and made the identifier group appear quite unstable over repeated measurements" (Johnston et al., 1992a: 82). They concluded that "the difference between the two countries is overdrawn" (Johnston et al., 1992a: 80), and made the case that party identifications were linked to enduring social economic geographic cleavages.⁴²

The introduction of the modified party identification item appeared to suspend debates over the concept of party identification in Canada. The wording change moved attention away from flexible partisans and towards those with enduring party loyalties; it also shifted the emphasis away from the disparities between the original social-psychological model and the reported behaviour of Canadian partisans, and toward the similarities between Canadian and American electorates. Research on Canadian electoral behaviour since then typically defines partisanship according to the social-psychological model (Blais et al., 2001a, 2002a; Nevitte et al., 2000), and substantive discussions about party identification have focused on

⁴² Johnston et al.'s conclusions were reinforced by further evidence from Schickler and Green's (1997) re-analysis of Canadian election panel data from 1983 to 1988, where the authors found that partisanship was highly stable over that five-year period when they corrected for measurement error in the original Canadian party identification item, as well as evidence from Canadian Election Study panel data employing the new party identification item (Gidengil et al., 2006). There were also indications of a distinct partisan bias in Canadians' evaluations of party leaders and issue opinions consistent with the social-psychological model (Johnston, 1992b; Johnston, Fournier, and Jenkins, 2000).

measurement (Blais et al., 2001a) and cross-time stability at the individual level (Gidengil et al., 2006), but not on the concept itself.

Ironically, at the same time as the social-psychological model of party identification was becoming the dominant perspective in Canadian political science, a rival theory of partisanship was gaining traction in American political research. Misgivings about empirical inconsistencies and the limited range of applicability of the social-psychological model were the starting point for a revisionist view of partisanship, which conceives of party identification in a very different way. From this “revisionist” perspective voters update their beliefs about parties, and their partisan loyalties, each time they are confronted with new information (Achen, 1992, 2002; Fiorina, 1981; Franklin and Jackson, 1983; Gerber and Green, 1998, 1999; Zechman, 1979).

The revisionists do not contend that partisan socialization is irrelevant. In fact, many explicitly acknowledge that the origins of party preferences are probably found in pre-adult political socialization (Achen, 1992, 2002; Gerber and Green, 1998). Their major point of departure from the social-psychological model, rather, concerns the way in which citizens update their beliefs. Those who view partisanship as a political identity contend that new political information is incorporated in ways that conform to preexisting partisan loyalties, whereas the revisionist approach argues that the integration of new information is far more evenhanded. The significant point is that the classic social-psychological model of party identification sees partisanship deepening and strengthening with the passage of time as a systematic consequence of bias. The revisionist model, by contrast, sees the development of robust partisan preferences as contingent on the flow and substance of the messages citizens receive about the parties with the passage of time.

Tests of the empirical implications of either the classical or revisionist models of partisanship in the Canadian setting remain rare and they are limited in scope. Johnston (1992a), for one, explored how party identification shaped Canadians' perceptions of 1988 federal election campaign events. Although he uncovered some evidence consistent with perceptual bias, he also found that perceptions of campaign events moved opinions in the same direction for different partisans. Johnston concluded that "Defection from party identification did not go systematically down over the campaign. Rather, it reflected the flow of events: When a party suffered a reverse, identifiers' defection went up; when events favored the party, identifiers' defection went down" (Ibid: 329). And in a comprehensive assessment of the link between years of experience and partisanship, Johnston (1992c: 105-107) finds a very modest increase partisan intensity over the typical "political life cycle." From the other side, Clarke and Stewart (1998) employed a "running tally" model of partisanship to demonstrate how provincial partisanship influenced federal partisanship, but their efforts were focused on investigating dynamics in federal partisanship, rather than how the revisionist model could explain stable party preferences.

There are good reasons to entertain a more comprehensive assessment of the validity of each of these models of partisanship in Canada. The wording change in the Canadian party identification item may well have identified a larger proportion of stable partisans, but as David Elkins (1978) argued more than three decades ago, the applicability of the party identification concept depends on the *nature* of party identification, not simply the frequency with which people hold such attachments. Much of the initial uncertainty about the applicability of the party identification concept to Canadian political behaviour, Elkins claimed, resulted from the failure to distinguish differences in the proportion of stable party

identifiers in Canada and the United States from differences in the pattern of relationships between party identification and other variables in the two countries. The latter, he argued, was the true test of whether or not the concept applied equally to Canada and the United States; the former merely indicated that other forces might work in Canada to depress the proportion of stable identifiers. According to that line of reasoning, the more recent evidence that the proportion of stable identifiers is more similar in Canada and the United States than previously thought has little bearing on the applicability of the social-psychological model, or any other model of partisanship, to Canadian political behaviour.⁴³ More critical are the relationships between partisanship and such other theoretically relevant variables as years of political experience.

It is to those relationships that the analysis now turns.

2.1 Expectations

Two core claims underpin the social-psychological explanation for the strengthening and deepening of partisan preferences with experience. The first claim, which concerns the selective perception of political information, contends that partisans tend to absorb favourable news about the party they support, as well as negative news about other parties. By the same token, partisans also filter out information that is inconsistent with their partisan predispositions, routinely ignoring the missteps and setbacks of the party they support.

H_{5.1}: The political opinions of government and opposition partisans diverge in response to the same political events.

⁴³ It is also worth noting that only one of the previously mentioned assessments of the empirical implications of partisanship (Johnston, 1992b) employs the now conventional measure of party identification that includes an explicit option for respondents who do not identify with any party.

The second claim concerns the long-term impact of selective perception, or what Berelson et al called "the spiraling effect of political reinforcement" (1954: 223). Partisan predispositions grow deeper with each new piece of filtered information that affirms partisan loyalties. And the deeper the partisan attachment, the more that information is filtered. As a consequence, the perceptual gap between individuals with attachments to different parties widens as those individuals gain more and more experience with partisan politics, and partisan attachments become more intense with the passage of time (Converse 1968, 1975). Thus the expectation is:

H_{5,2}: The intensity of partisan attachments increases with years of political experience.

There is one important caveat when it comes to the effects of reinforcement on partisan attachments: years of political experience should exert a comparatively weaker influence on the strength of Canadians' loyalties to newer political parties. Regardless of years of political experience, partisans who are loyal to relatively new political parties in the Canadian party system, like the Reform Party and Bloc Quebecois in the late 1980s and early 1990s, have had less time to develop strong attachments to those parties. And it is the number of years of "psychological membership" in a political party, not merely age or years of exposure to politics, that is thought to be a crucial determinant of the strength of attachment to that party (Converse 1968: 143-144). Hence:

H_{5,3}: The intensity of attachment to established parties increases with years of political experience at a greater rate than does the intensity of attachment to relatively new parties.

3 Data and Measures

This investigation employs two distinct but complementary methodological strategies to explore dynamics in partisan preferences. The first approach, following Bartels (2002), is to analyze panel data. This strategy is used to test hypothesis 5.1, which states that the opinions of partisans diverge in response to the same political events. A fair test of this hypothesis requires individual-level information about dynamics of political opinions across time, and fortunately the CES 2004 and 2006 contain a panel component that taps many of the same political opinions held by the same sample of respondents at two different points in time.⁴⁴

Opinion change is measured using the "change score" approach. For each i opinion, a change score is calculated by taking the difference in opinion between time t and time $t-1$:

$$\Delta Opinion_i = Opinion_{it} - Opinion_{it-1}$$

Change scores are then regressed on a set of dummy variables representing different partisan groups. A common criticism of the change score approach, as well as many other approaches used to estimate cross-time changes in attitudes, is that they underestimate the effects of independent variables on attitude changes: regression towards the mean is severe because of measurement error in the variables of interest.⁴⁵ However, as Allison and others note (Allison, 1990; Kenny, 1975; Kenny and Cohen, 1979), change scores are quite suitable (and often preferable to other estimation approaches) when the objective is to compare

⁴⁴ An alternative approach might be to use cross-sectional data to observe whether partisan groups with more political experience have greater opinion differences than those with very little exposure to politics. The problem with that particular approach is that opinions may well diverge as people gain political experience, but for reasons other than partisan bias. Instead, people might gradually sort themselves into partisan camps because of their strong opinions.

⁴⁵ One solution is to estimate measurement error in the variables (Bartels, 1993, 2002; Gidengil et al., 2006; Green and Palmquist, 1990, 1994; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002; Schickler and Green, 1997). That approach, however, requires at least three data points. Only two data points (the pre-election survey waves of the 2004 and 2006 Canadian Election Studies) contain the battery of items tapping opinions about the Sponsorship Scandal.

opinion change between stable groups.⁴⁶ For that reason, opinion changes are compared between *stable* partisans and non-partisans – those who indicate the same partisan affiliation (or no affiliation) in both 2004 and 2006. Other respondents with shifting partisan affiliations are excluded from the analysis. Indeed, given that unstable partisans already challenge the partisan bias model, they are largely irrelevant to the analysis.

The approach used to evaluate hypotheses 5.2 and 5.3 is to analyze cross-sectional data to estimate whether and how additional years of political experience are related to the strength of partisan attachments. That analysis draws on pooled data from the 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES. Merging the data from these four elections increases the pool of potential cases from N=2,400-2,900 in any single election year, to N=10,607 in the merged sample. To test those hypotheses, a standard measure of partisan intensity is employed as the dependent variable. It asks each respondent who identified with a federal party, "*How strongly [party] do you feel: very strongly, fairly strongly, or not very strongly?*"

4 Partisan Bias: The Panel Evidence

On February 10, 2004, Canada's Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, tabled a report to Parliament on an investigation by her office into a program administered by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC). The objective of the program, which began in 1994-1995, was to increase the federal government's visibility in the province of Quebec by

⁴⁶ Effects are not underestimated using this approach as long as the independent variables are correlated with the stable component in $Opinion_i$ (the cross-sectional variance in $Opinion_i$ that does not change over time), but are uncorrelated with the transient component in $Opinion_{i-t}$ (the cross-sectional variance in $Opinion_i$ specific to time $t-1$). The only scenario under which *stable* partisan affiliations across 2004 and 2006 could possibly be correlated with the *transient* component in political opinions in 2004 is if partisanship is actually *caused by* opinions in 2004. That scenario is inconsistent with the social psychological model (though it is quite consistent with the revisionist model).

sponsoring special events in the province. But the Auditor General found that under the Sponsorship Program, PWGSC did not follow the usual rules for awarding those contracts (Canada, 2003). She also found that the Sponsorship Program did very little beyond generating commissions for advertising and communications firms, as well as Crown Corporations, contracted by PWGSC to administer the sponsorships (Ibid). Indeed, the report observed that "some sponsorship funds were transferred to Crown Corporations using unusual methods that appear designed to provide significant commissions to communications agencies while hiding the source of funds and the true nature of transactions" (Ibid, Ch. 3: 1).

The story behind the "Sponsorship scandal" unfolded over the next two years, and it chronicled activities that went well beyond administrative incompetence and the mismanagement of public funds. Justice John Gomery, appointed by Prime Minister Paul Martin to conduct an inquiry into the Sponsorship Program, eventually concluded that the Sponsorship Program involved:

a complex web of financial transactions among Public Works and Government Services Canada, Crown Corporations and communications agencies, involving kickbacks and illegal contributions to a political party in the context of the Sponsorship Program (Canada, 2005: 6).

As it turned out, the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada, the party in government at the time when the sponsorship program was installed, benefited financially from the Sponsorship Program. Justice Gomery also found that many of the advertising and communications agencies were "carrying on their payrolls individuals who were, in effect, working on Liberal Party matters." (Ibid: 7).

The Sponsorship scandal presents an excellent opportunity to test the partisan bias thesis. The issue grabbed public attention, dominating political headlines for a sustained period, and featuring in two consecutive election campaigns. Figure 5.1 shows the monthly number of

Scandal-related articles in three major Canadian newspapers between February, 2004 and January, 2006. Media exposure waxed and waned considerably over those two years: coverage was heaviest in February, 2004, the month in which the Auditor General released her report on the Sponsorship Program, and lightest in the summer months of 2004 and 2005. Nevertheless, 20 articles or more appeared monthly between February and May, 2004, September and October, 2004, February and May, 2005, and November, 2005.

The scandal also featured an overt partisan element that tested the loyalties of Liberal partisans and added force to the negative preconceptions of non-Liberal partisans. The governing Liberal party was not merely drawn into the affair by virtue of being the incumbent government at the time. Instead, members of the party were directly implicated in the Sponsorship scandal. As Figure 5.2 suggests, the Liberal Party became increasingly linked with the scandal as further details about the Sponsorship Program emerged from Justice Gomery's public inquiry.

The sustained flow of new information about the events surrounding the Sponsorship Program thus gave partisans an opportunity to form and modify opinions about the scandal. And if partisan loyalties influence perceptions of political figures and events, as the classic theory of party identification argues, then Liberal and non-Liberal partisans' opinions about the scandal should have diverged as more information surfaced. The incumbent Liberal government's association with the Program was entirely negative: the party was in power from the time the Program was established until it was dismantled, and the mounting evidence suggested the Liberal Party itself may have gained from the illicit activities linked to the Program. If, on the one hand, the movement of public opinion about the scandal became generally more negative, then non-liberal partisans should have been at the forefront

of that movement, and Liberal partisans should have been highly resistant to such an opinion shift. If, on the other hand, public opinion about the scandal became less negative as time passed, then the views of Liberal partisans should have shifted considerably more than those of the average citizen, whereas the views of non-liberal partisans should have been resilient.

Fortunately, the 2004-2006 Canadian Election Study panel asked four questions about the scandal in 2004, which were repeated in the 2006 pre-election survey (Table 5.1). The items form a reliable index of opinion about the Liberal Prime Minister's handling of the scandal (Cronbach's alpha = 0.69 and 0.66 in 2004 and 2006, respectively), and make possible a test of the partisan bias theory.

The data in Figure 5.3 show that partisan groups varied considerably in their views on the Sponsorship scandal from the outset. Opposition partisans were more likely than non-partisans to express negative opinions about the Sponsorship scandal in 2004. And Conservative and Bloc partisans in particular were significantly more likely than those without any party attachments to hold negative opinions about the Sponsorship scandal. Not surprisingly, Liberal partisans' opinions were, on average, considerably less negative than those of all other groups. But even those who shared an attachment to the Liberal party were less than content with how news about the Sponsorship scandal was unfolding. The typical Liberal partisan was on the fence, as it were.

In order to test whether partisans' opinions about the scandal diverged or not between 2004 and 2006, dummies for stable partisan groups are regressed on a variable measuring change in sponsorship scandal index scores between 2004 and 2006:

$$\Delta\text{SPONSORHIP} = a + b_1\text{LIB} + b_2\text{CON} + b_3\text{NDP} + b_4\text{BQ} + \varepsilon$$

The evidence presented in Figure 5.4 indicates that for nearly all those with stable partisan affiliations, negative evaluations of the sponsorship scandal waned between the 2004 and 2006 election campaigns, although not by much. Moreover, the extent to which negative views diminished over that period varies considerably across partisan groups, but not quite in ways anticipated from the partisan bias perspective. Conservative partisans' views were most resistant to change; the average score of Conservatives dropped by a little more than a tenth of a point on a nine-point scale. But the more surprising finding is that New Democratic, rather than Liberal, partisans turn out to have shifted the most.

The aggregate opinion change of committed New Democrats is difficult to explain from the partisan bias perspective. Instead, this finding seems more consistent with the alternative view of partisanship, namely, that the preferences and values of citizens determine both their partisan affiliation and their perceptions of events. As Gerber and Green (1999, 2006), discussing partisan bias in the United States, observe:

The mere fact that Democrats and Republicans each tend to declare their party's presidential nominee the more effective debater (Katz and Feldman, 1962; Sigelman and Sigelman, 1984) is not convincing evidence of selective perception because each group of partisans doubtless applies different ideological criteria when evaluating the candidates' ideas.

As it happens, it is easier to disentangle effects of perceptual differences based solely on partisan affiliations from those based on other criteria when more than two partisan groups are considered, as in the case presented here. If partisan biases were driving opinions about the Liberal government's handling of the Sponsorship affair, then we would anticipate a common trajectory of opinion change among Conservative, New Democratic, and Bloc Quebecois partisans, the magnitude and direction of which should have been different from that of Liberal partisans. Although there are indeed there are systematic changes in the

opinions of different partisan groups, there is no evidence to suggest that sustained coverage of the Sponsorship scandal generated mutual disdain for the Liberal government among opposition partisans. Instead, the greatest disparity emerges between two groups of opposition partisans, Conservatives and New Democrats. The findings concerning the Sponsorship Scandal therefore suggest that strictly partisan biases have less powerful effects than the other kinds of perceptual differences.

In fact, there is scarcely any evidence of partisan bias operating in other dimensions of political opinion. The results presented in Table 5.2 show the estimated effects of partisan bias on changes in opinions about the Conservative Party of Canada and its leader, Stephen Harper, as well as opinions about the other party leaders. Only three out of 40 coefficients indicate statistically significant partisan differences in opinion change that are consistent with the idea of perceptual bias. Conservative views about the honesty and competence of Paul Martin, the Liberal Leader and Prime Minister, declined between 2004 and 2006, and BQ views about Martin's competence also declined over that period. But in both instances the change is quite modest: the views of Conservative and BQ partisans moved less than 1 point more than non-partisans on a 21-point scale.

5 Partisan Intensity: the Cross-Sectional Evidence

Given that there is modest evidence of partisan bias in opinion change between the 2004 and 2006 elections, it is perhaps not surprising that the data from the 1993-2004 CES indicate that the relationship between political experience and the intensity of Canadians' partisan loyalties does not quite conform to expectations. Recall the two hypotheses generated from the social psychological perspective. The first was that more years of political experience are

associated with more robust partisan attachments (Hypothesis 5.2). The second speculated that the association is relatively stronger when it comes to established federal parties and relatively weaker when it comes to newer parties (Hypothesis 5.3). To test those hypotheses, age, age squared, and controls for the year of survey were regressed on the standard CES measure of partisan intensity for the pooled sample of native born Canadians. The multinomial logit⁴⁷ model is:

$$\ln\Omega_{VS|NVS}(x_i) = \beta_{0,VS|NVS} + \beta_{1,VS|NVS}AGE + \beta_{2,VS|NVS}AGE^2 + \beta_{3,VS|NVS}ELECTION93 + \beta_{4,VS|NVS}ELECTION97 + \beta_{5,VS|NVS}ELECTION00$$

$$\ln\Omega_{FS|NVS}(x_i) = \beta_{0,FS|NVS} + \beta_{1,FS|NVS}AGE + \beta_{2,FS|NVS}AGE^2 + \beta_{3,FS|NVS}ELECTION93 + \beta_{4,FS|NVS}ELECTION97 + \beta_{5,FS|NVS}ELECTION00$$

where *VS* is the "very strongly" category, *FS* is the "fairly strongly" category, and *NVS* ("not very strongly") is specified as the base category.

A second model, which included interaction terms to take into account the differences between partisans of established parties and those of relatively new parties⁴⁸, was also fitted:

$$\ln\Omega_{VS|NVS}(x_i) = \beta_{0,VS|NVS} + \beta_{1,VS|NVS}AGE + \beta_{2,VS|NVS}AGE^2 + \beta_{3,VS|NVS}AGE*NEWPARTY + \beta_{4,VS|NVS}AGE^2*NEWPARTY + \beta_{5,VS|NVS}ELECTION93 + \beta_{6,VS|NVS}ELECTION97 + \beta_{7,VS|NVS}ELECTION00$$

$$\ln\Omega_{FS|NVS}(x_i) = \beta_{0,FS|NVS} + \beta_{1,FS|NVS}AGE + \beta_{2,FS|NVS}AGE^2 + \beta_{3,FS|NVS}AGE*NEWPARTY + \beta_{4,FS|NVS}AGE^2*NEWPARTY + \beta_{5,FS|NVS}ELECTION93 + \beta_{6,FS|NVS}ELECTION97 + \beta_{7,FS|NVS}ELECTION00$$

⁴⁷ From the social-psychological perspective, it is assumed partisan intensity is an ordinal measure. However, a Brant test indicates that the parallel regression assumption in ordered logit is violated. Therefore, a multinomial logit estimation is employed.

⁴⁸ The BQ (1993-2004), Reform / Canadian Alliance (1993-2000), and the New Conservative Party (2004) are defined as relatively new; established parties are the Liberal Party, the NDP, and the Progressive Conservative Party (1993-2000). Similar results are obtained when the Conservative Party (2004) is defined as an established party instead.

Two significant findings emerge from the results. First of all more years of political experience do not produce a clear-cut increase in partisan intensity. Certainly, there is evidence that partisans become more likely to express "very strong" attachments as they get older. The estimated probability of exhibiting very strong ties increases from about 15 to 30 percent between the ages of 18 and 78 ($p < .00005$). But the estimated likelihood of expressing party ties that are "not very strong" *also* increases, from approximately 18 to 27 percent between ages 18 and 53, before declining with subsequent years of experience to about 20 percent among 78 year olds ($p < 0.00005$). Immigrant Canadians' partisan attitudes are not consistent with the expectations of the social psychological model of partisanship either. The effects of additional years of experience with Canadian politics appear to broadly match the effects found among Canadian born citizens, but the relationships are not statistically significant.⁴⁹

Secondly, it turns out that the link between political experience and partisan intensity is actually significantly *stronger* when it comes to newer federal parties (the joint significance of the interaction terms AGE*NEWPARTY and AGE²*NEWPARTY is $p < .0343$). Age differences in the estimated probability of expressing "very strong" attachments to established and relatively new parties, illustrated in Figure 5.5, indicate that the probability of

⁴⁹ The link between adult immigrants' years of experience with Canadian politics and the strength of their partisan attachments was examined in a separate model:

$$\ln\Omega_{I|S|N|V|S}(x_i) = \beta_{0,I|S|N|V|S} + \beta_{1,I|S|N|V|S}\text{POSTMIG} + \beta_{2,I|S|N|V|S}\text{POSTMIG}^2 + \beta_{3,I|S|N|V|S}\text{PREMIG} + \beta_{4,I|S|N|V|S}\text{PREMIG}^2 + \beta_{3,I|S|N|V|S}\text{ELECTION93} + \beta_{4,I|S|N|V|S}\text{ELECTION97} + \beta_{3,I|S|N|V|S}\text{ELECTION00}$$

$$\ln\Omega_{F|S|N|V|S}(x_i) = \beta_{0,F|S|N|V|S} + \beta_{1,F|S|N|V|S}\text{POSTMIG} + \beta_{2,F|S|N|V|S}\text{POSTMIG}^2 + \beta_{3,F|S|N|V|S}\text{PREMIG} + \beta_{4,F|S|N|V|S}\text{PREMIG}^2 + \beta_{3,F|S|N|V|S}\text{ELECTION93} + \beta_{4,I|S|N|V|S}\text{ELECTION97} + \beta_{3,I|S|N|V|S}\text{ELECTION00}$$

It turns out the effects of additional years prior to migration are significant, which is quite puzzling when viewed from the social psychological perspective. The estimates indicate that immigrants who arrived in Canada at age 33 are twice as likely as those who arrived at age 18 to hold "not very strong" partisan attachments (26 compared to 13 percent). The proportion of weak partisans declines thereafter to about 10 percent among those who arrived in Canada at age 58.

expressing very strong party ties rises some 14 points over 60 years among partisans of established parties, but increases approximately 25 points over the same time span among partisans of relatively new parties.

Neither hypothesis 5.2 nor hypothesis 5.3 is supported by the CES data. And why this might be so is easier to see when the way in which partisans' process new political information is conceived differently from the social psychological perspective. The revisionist model suggests both favourable and unfavourable new information about parties is incorporated in a far more neutral manner. From that vantage point, it is quite likely that some partisans develop more positive views of their party as they gain political experience, while others develop more negative views, even switching partisan allegiances as different parties fall in and out of favour.

6 Conclusion

Many scholars now accept that Canadians' party loyalties, like those of citizens in other countries, are enduring social identities, early debates about the meaning and significance of partisan loyalties in Canada notwithstanding. One of the central elements of this theory is that partisans are predisposed to accept political messages that are consistent with their party identifications, and reject those that are inconsistent with those identifications (Bartels, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960, 1966; Zaller, 1992). Thus, party attachments deepen as citizens gain more exposure to partisan politics (Converse, 1968, 1976).

If this view of partisanship is accurate, it has important implications for how we understand electoral politics and democratic citizenship in Canada. For one, the social psychological model suggests that public preferences are shaped considerably by partisan

loyalties rather than by reasoned judgment. Moreover, this view of partisanship implies that, irrespective of differences in the policies and performance of parties, partisan bias is an important mechanism by which parties survive and succeed over the long haul. Indeed, this is one interpretation of the enduring success of the federal Liberal Party in Canada. As Blais and his colleagues (2002a: 124) observe:

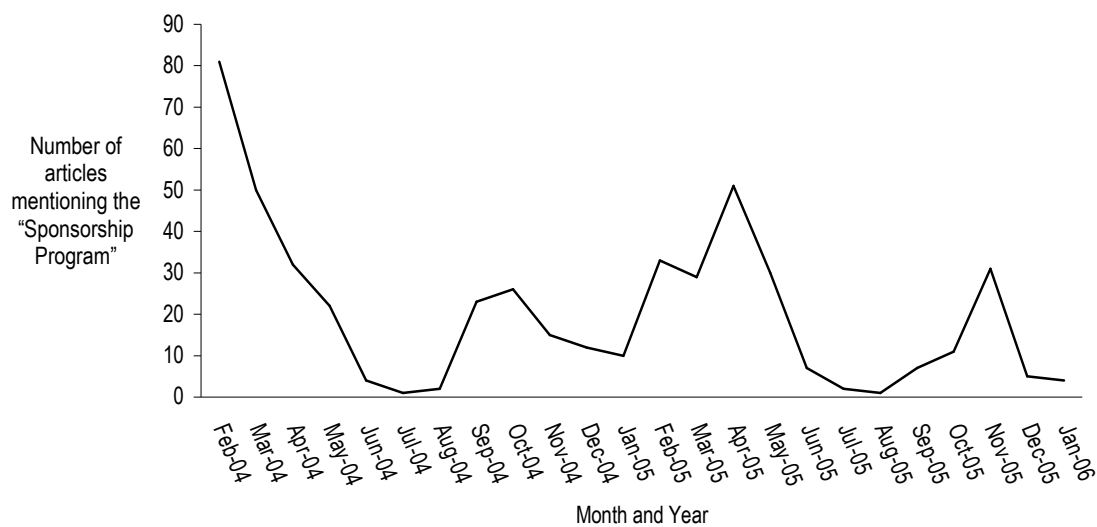
The fact that over half the party identifiers in Canada are Liberals provides the party with a huge advantage. It is what enables them to remain the 'natural' party of government. This is not to imply that the Liberals are certain to win any election, but it does mean that the other parties start with a serious handicap. It is possible for the Liberals to lose an election, but only if short-term factors are strongly against them.

However, the impact of partisan bias in Canada has been subject to few empirical tests, and none over the course of multiple campaigns. This chapter explored the effects of partisan bias in a context where it was most likely to figure prominently: the 2004 and 2006 Canadian federal elections, in which a dominant issue was the scandal surrounding the Liberal government's handling of the Sponsorship Program. The evidence that emerges from the analysis is inconsistent with the partisan bias thesis. It turns out that opinions about the sponsorship scandal moved significantly and in a positive direction among a group of opposition partisans, New Democrats. Indeed, there is also no evidence to suggest that the strength of partisan attachments increases systematically with more years of experience with the parties.

The social-psychological model of party identification is a core concept in the study of mass political behaviour in Canada, as elsewhere. But is there a viable alternative in Canada to the social-psychological model of partisanship? The next chapter explores that question.

CHAPTER FIVE TABLES AND FIGURES

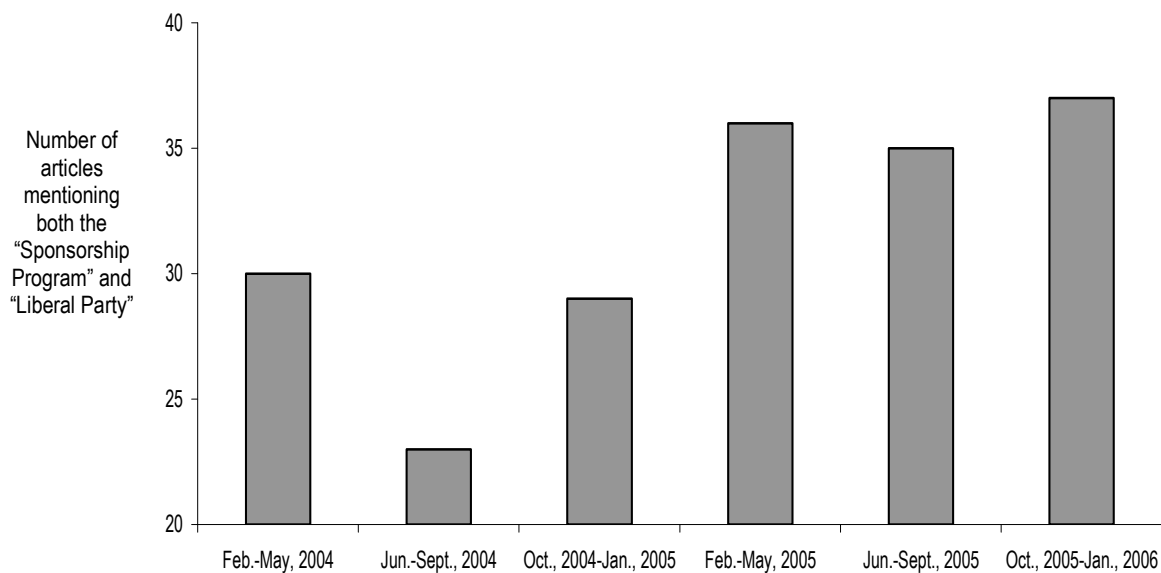
Figure 5.1 Monthly Numbers of Major Canadian Newspaper Articles Mentioning the Federal Sponsorship Scandal, February 2004 to January 2006



Notes: (1) Data were collected through a search of *Dow Jones Factiva* database of articles in the *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, and *Toronto Star*

Source: Dow Jones Factiva, 2008

Figure 5.2 Numbers of Major Canadian Newspaper Articles Mentioning the both the Federal Sponsorship Scandal and the Liberal Party, February 2004 to January 2006



Notes: (1) Data were collected through a search of *Dow Jones Factiva* database of articles in the *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, and *Toronto Star*

Source: Dow Jones Factiva, 2008

Table 5.1 Question Wording, The Sponsorship Scandal Index (0-4 Scale)

Now some questions about the sponsorship scandal. Does it make you very angry, somewhat angry, not very angry, or not angry at all? (Very angry =1, Not angry at all = 0)

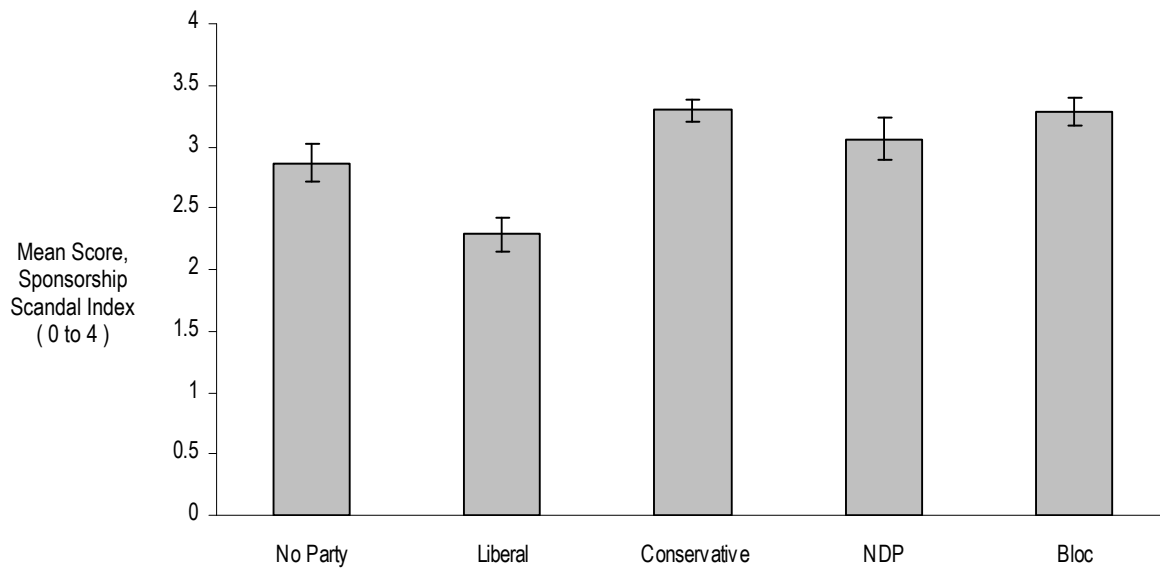
Before becoming Prime Minister, do you think Paul Martin knew about the scandal? (Yes =1, No = 0)

Since becoming Prime Minister, how good a job has Paul Martin done in dealing with the scandal? A very good job, quite a good job, not a very good job, or not a good job at all? (Not a good job at all =1, A very good job = 0)

If re-elected, how confident are you that Paul Martin will prevent this type of scandal from happening again? Very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not confident at all? (Not confident at all =1, Very confident = 0)

Source: 2004-2006 Canadian Election Panel Survey

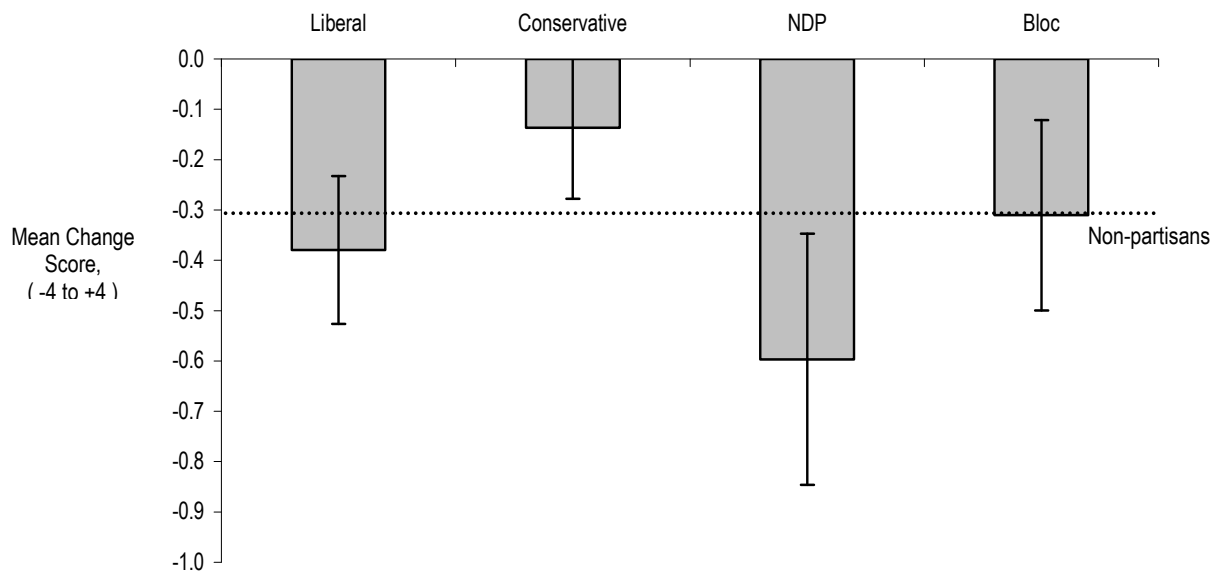
Figure 5.3 Opinions about the Sponsorship Scandal by Partisanship, 2004
(Mean Scores, 0-4 Sponsorship Scandal Index, with 95% Confidence Intervals)



Notes: (1) the analysis is restricted to stable partisans and non-partisans

Source: 2004-2006 Canadian Election Panel Survey

Figure 5.4 Opinion Change about the Sponsorship Scandal by Partisanship, 2004-2006
(Mean Scores, -4 to +4 Scale, with 95% Confidence Intervals)



Notes: (1) the method of analysis is OLS Regression (Prob > F = 0.0001, R² = 0.029, N = 1,000)
(2) the analysis is restricted to stable partisans and non-partisans

Source: 2004-2006 Canadian Election Panel Survey

Table 5.2 The Impact of Stable Partisanship on Opinion Change, 2004-2006 CES Panel
(OLS Regression Coefficients with Standard Errors in Parentheses)

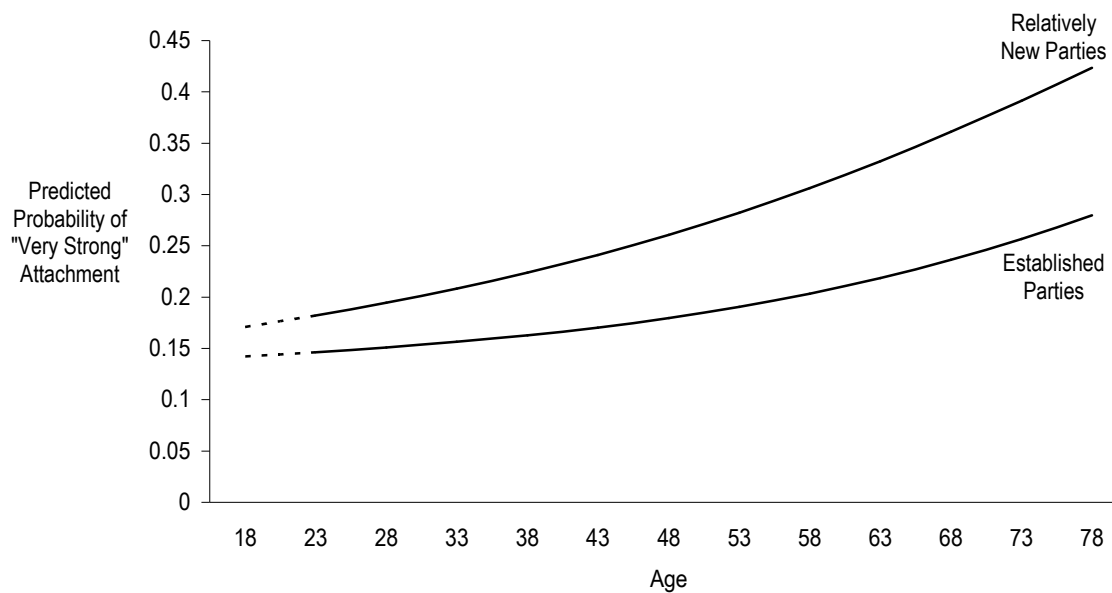
Dependent variable	Partisanship				Constant	R ²	N
	Liberal	Conservative	NDP	BQ			
▮ Conservatives are a threat to social programs (-1 to 1 scale)	-0.016 (0.034)	-0.023 (0.033)	-0.051 (0.045)	0.058 (0.053)	-0.011 (0.028)	0.029	1,100
▮ Harper too extreme (-1 to 1)	0.029 (0.030)	-0.007 (0.028)	-0.052 (0.050)	-0.044 (0.048)	0.014 (0.024)	0.008	1,031
▮ Martin honesty (-10 to 10)	0.046 (0.224)	-0.807b (0.258)	0.379 (0.317)	-0.259 (0.315)	-0.158 (0.193)	0.027	1,170
▮ Harper honesty (-10 to 10)	-0.283 (0.253)	0.208 (0.230)	0.198 (0.335)	0.443 (0.363)	-0.057 (0.204)	0.012	1,027
▮ Layton honest (-10 to 10)	-0.071 (0.238)	-0.019 (0.281)	-0.215 (0.299)	-0.028 (0.338)	0.330 (0.209)	0.001	903
▮ Duceppe honest (-10 to 10)	-0.235 (0.624)	0.423 (0.657)	-0.615 (0.796)	0.120 (0.608)	0.115 (0.560)	0.007	246
▮ Martin honest (-10 to 10)	-0.090 (0.204)	-0.939a (0.236)	0.144 (0.308)	-0.891b (0.288)	-0.062 (0.166)	0.035	1,178
▮ Harper honest (-10 to 10)	-0.007 (0.244)	0.310 (0.236)	0.140 (0.322)	-0.370 (0.351)	-0.306 (0.205)	0.007	1,024
▮ Layton honest (-10 to 10)	0.149 (0.212)	0.164 (0.253)	-0.331 (0.238)	-0.128 (0.337)	0.496b (0.171)	0.005	930
▮ Duceppe honest (-10 to 10)	-0.698 (0.699)	-0.575 (0.911)	-1.458 (0.766)	-0.110 (0.669)	0.708 (0.642)	0.018	253

a. $p < 0.01$ b. $p < 0.05$

Notes: (1) the analysis is restricted to stable partisans and non-partisans
(2) the reference group in each regression is stable non-partisans

Source: 2004-2006 Canadian Election Panel Survey

Figure 5.5 Predicted Probabilities of Expressing "Very Strong" Partisan Attachments by Party Type, Canadian Born Partisans, 1993-2004



Notes: (1) the method of analysis is Multinomial Logit (McFadden's $R^2 = 0.017$; Wald $\chi^2 = 272.24$, 16 d.f.; $P > \chi^2 = 0.00005$; $N = 10,224$)
 (2) the analysis is restricted to partisans
 (3) relatively new parties are the BQ (1993-2004), Reform / Canadian Alliance (1993-2000), and the New Conservative Party (2004); established parties are the Liberal Party, the NDP, and the Progressive Conservative Party (1993-2000)
 (3) the dashed lines indicate non-significant differences between partisans of new and established parties

Source: 1993-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Chapter 6 Are Canadians Rational Partisans?

1 Introduction

Even if Canadians do not develop deep and enduring partisan loyalties, the intuition of most observers of Canadian politics is that significant numbers of voters consistently support the same party. Why might party support be stable in the absence of deep partisan identities? Proponents of the revisionist view of partisanship maintain that alternative perspective is able to account for a variety of behavioural phenomena that the social psychological model cannot explain.⁵⁰ Not only do revisionist accounts clarify the link between age and partisan stability (Achen, 1992, 2002; Fiorina, 1981; Franklin and Jackson, 1983; Gerber and Green, 1998), but they also explain why partisanship appears to be more stable in some political systems than others, as well as during some periods rather than others (Gerber and Green, 1998). Revisionists also generate an account for the curvilinear relationship between political knowledge and partisan stability, in which partisan defection is rarer among voters with high and low levels of political knowledge than among those with moderate levels of knowledge (Achen, 1992).

This chapter explores the revisionist account of partisanship in the Canadian context. It first outlines this alternative model of partisanship, and proposes several testable implications of that model in the Canadian context. Next, the empirical results of these tests are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for how we understand party identification in Canada.

⁵⁰For a more critical view of the empirical claims made by proponents of revisionist models, see Bartels (2001, 2002). Bartels argues that the impact of historical political shocks on U.S. partisanship is too powerful for revisionist models to plausibly explain (2001).

2 The Revisionist Model and Its Empirical Implications

The specific features of different revisionist models vary, but most versions are grounded in similar assumptions and share the same essential claims. There are three core assumptions common to revisionist approaches. The first conjecture is that citizens are future-oriented, and will support parties that offer the most prospective benefits. Second, revisionist models take for granted that citizens have imperfect information about which party offers the most prospective benefits – they cannot know for certain how the parties, if elected, will behave in the future. The final core assumption is that, given the fundamental uncertainty they face, citizens draw on their accumulated knowledge about how the parties have behaved in the past to estimate how the parties will behave in the future.

The two chief claims that flow from these assumptions are that: 1) at any given time citizens use a combination of retrospective assessments and current information in order to judge parties; and 2) the decision weights citizens assign to retrospective assessments and current information vary systematically. Citizens' party identifications represent their estimates of the underlying difference in the expected benefits offered by the parties, and citizens update their beliefs about that underlying difference as they encounter additional information about the parties (Achen, 1992, 2002; Gerber and Green, 1998, 1999).

However, the extent to which citizens modify their beliefs about the parties depends on at least four different factors (Gerber and Green, 1998: 801-804). First, citizens will revise their estimates of the underlying differences between parties only when the new information they encounter is surprising (Ibid: 804). Any new information, of course, makes it possible for citizens to estimate more accurately the underlying differences between the parties. But

citizens change their minds about which party they will support only when new information is inconsistent with their prior beliefs about where the parties stand. Second, citizens place greater weight on new information when the policies and performance of political parties vary over time. In relatively stable party systems, where the differences between parties are static, citizens are more likely to view surprising new information with skepticism, and consequently fall back on their prior estimates of where parties stand. By contrast, surprises are the norm in relatively unstable party systems where the differences between the parties may change frequently, and citizens in those systems are therefore more likely to adjust their assessments of parties in light of surprising new information. Third, the more experience citizens have with the party system, and the more they have observed parties' performance, the more likely they are to rely on their retrospective assessments of the parties. Finally, at times, citizens take "noisy" readings of where the parties stand. That is, citizens form uncertain estimates of party positions and performance either because the new information they encounter is inherently unclear, or because they lack the motivation or cognitive skills to make inferences based on the information. Citizens tend to discount noisy information because they are uncertain about what it tells them about the parties.

The revisionist model of partisanship produces a different set of expectations than those generated from the social psychological perspective. From the revisionist perspective, vote choices are a function of partisanship and current party evaluations, with varying decision weights assigned to both factors:

$$Vote_t = (1 - \lambda) Partisanship_{t-1} + \lambda Current\ Evaluations_t + \varepsilon$$

The assumption is that *Partisanship_{t-1}* represents voters' retrospective assessments of the parties, and that *Current Evaluations_t* of the parties are distinct set of vote considerations

with the potential to independently influence the vote. The decision weights assigned by the voter are represented by the λ and $1 - \lambda$ terms.

Those weights, in turn, are determined by the amount of useful information contained in retrospective assessments and current party evaluations. When voters have observed stability in the policies and performance of parties in the past, λ is quite low because current evaluations contain no useful new information, and they will set aside their evaluations of the most recent programs and pledges of competing parties and rely instead on their retrospective assessments (Gerber and Green, 1998: 804). Likewise, when voters receive inconsistent and unreliable (i.e. noisy) signals about what the parties stand for in the current election, λ is also quite low (Ibid).

At least two empirical implications concerning the relationship between citizens' past experiences with politics and their partisan preferences flow from these assumptions. First, as voters gain more information about the parties with experience, they will encounter fewer surprises: new observations increasingly match with their prior estimates of the underlying difference between the expected benefits offered by the parties. Consequently, prior partisan beliefs exert a stronger influence on current party preferences as voters gain experience. Moreover, the full configuration of the party system matters: the entry of new parties in the system affects the behaviour of all voters, not just the supporters of those new parties. The expectation is:

H_{6.1}: The consistency of partisanship and vote choice increases with years of political experience: partisanship has a greater effect on the voting decisions of older voters than younger voters.

The second implication is that as voters gain political experience, they increasingly approach surprising new information with skepticism. The longer they have observed the parties, the more likely citizens are to discount surprising new information that does not square with what they know about the parties from the past.

H_{6,2}: The impact of surprises on vote choice decreases with years of political experience: Current party evaluations have a weaker effect on the voting decisions of older voters than younger voters.

Then there are the implications arising from the effects of noise. Although these are ancillary to the focal hypotheses about experience, the credibility and persuasiveness of the revisionist theory rests in part on their veracity. The assumption is that voters discount noisy new readings of where the parties stand. Accordingly, the expectation is:

H_{6,3}: Current party evaluations of the parties have a weaker effect on vote choices when citizens are uncertain about where the parties currently stand.

One possibility, of course, is that voters who are uncertain about where the parties currently stand discard all their prior beliefs about the parties' past policies and performance, and instead base their vote decisions on such other low-information cues as candidate personality characteristics or the state of the economy. The revisionist model of party identification, however, suggests that uncertain voters fall back on their prior estimates of the underlying difference between the expected benefits offered by the parties:

H_{6,4}: Partisanship has a stronger effect on vote choices when citizens are uncertain about where the parties currently stand.

3 Data and Measures

The analysis draws on pooled data from the 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 Canadian Elections Studies (Total N=10,607). These cross-sectional data are divided into three subgroups. First, respondents in Quebec are analyzed separately from those in the rest of Canada. The federal party system in Quebec is distinct from the system in Canada's other provinces because the Bloc Quebecois competes in local constituency elections exclusively in Quebec. Indeed, there is evidence of longstanding differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada in terms of partisan predispositions and others kinds of considerations that determine vote choices (Blais, 1991; Johnston et al., 1992a; Guérin and Nadeau, 1998; Godbout and Bélanger, 2002). Consequently, voting behaviour in that province is typically examined on its own. Second, in analyzing how years of experience with Canadian politics affects the relationships between partisanship and vote choice, and current party evaluations and vote choice, adult immigrants are once again examined separately from Canadian born respondents.

Partisanship is a dichotomous measure lagged to the campaign period. Using voters' lagged partisanship rather than their partisan affiliations reported after the campaign attenuates some of the potential effects of rapid partisan updating, where voters would have already shifted their partisan affiliations in light of their vote choices.⁵¹ Such effects would bias the coefficients for partisanship upward, and wash away other potential effects.

⁵¹Achen (1992: 208) notes that even using measures of party identification recorded during the campaign period will overestimate the true effects of party identification on vote choice, because people may have already updated their identifications by incorporating information from the campaign. He suggests using identification lagged to before the campaign. Unfortunately, no such measure is available. At any rate, both the social psychological and revisionist models of partisanship imply that the least politically experienced voters are more likely than their more experienced counterparts to rapidly shift partisan allegiances in light of what they have learned during the campaign. If that is in fact the case, then the tests performed in this chapter produce conservative estimates of the interaction between partisanship and experience.

Voters' up-to-date observations of where the parties stand are measured by their thermometer ratings of the parties (Abramson et al., 1992; Clarke and Stewart, 1998). These items ask respondents to place each party on a scale from zero to 100, which represent extremely negative and extremely positive assessments, respectively. Following Abramson and his colleagues (1992), the thermometer rating for each party has been "normalized" using the formula:

$$EVAL_j = (U_j - U_n) / (U_1 - U_n)$$

Where, for each respondent, $EVAL_j$ represents the normalized evaluation for party j , and U_j , U_n , and U_1 represent the original thermometer scores for party j , the highest ranked party, and the lowest ranked party, respectively. Thus, the lowest and highest ranked parties score zero and one, respectively, and other parties score somewhere in between zero and one on the normalized evaluations.

Finally, voters' uncertainty about their most recent observations of where the parties stand is measured indirectly, using the Bartels' (1986, 1988) strategy for gauging voter uncertainty in U.S. presidential elections. The assumption is that respondents place parties on the thermometer scales only when they are fairly certain of their evaluation of those parties; they refuse to place the parties when their uncertainty exceeds some threshold value (Bartels 1986, 713). Neither uncertainty nor the threshold is directly observable, but the idea is that individual-level characteristics associated with non-response tell us something about respondents' levels of uncertainty: that is, respondents who share the same characteristics as those who refuse to place the parties on the thermometer scales should have higher levels of uncertainty than do other respondents. Uncertainty is measured indirectly by first modeling non-response (results presented in Table C1, Appendix C), and then saving each respondent's

predicted probability of non-response in a NOISE variable. Higher probabilities of non-response are taken to signify greater uncertainty, and correspond to higher values on the NOISE variable.⁵²

With these methodological considerations in mind, we turn to the panel evidence, followed by the cross-sectional evidence.

4 Evidence

4.1 Age and Partisan Vote Dynamics

The starting point is the basic evidence concerning the effects of years of experience with politics on the relationships between partisan affiliation and vote choice, and current party evaluations and vote choice. A series of binary logit models are estimated to explore the effects of experience among Canadian born citizens.⁵³ The interactive effects of age and partisanship, and age and current party evaluations, are estimated by regressing vote choice for each party j on partisanship (PID_j), the party's normalized evaluation ($EVAL_j$), the respondents' years of experience ($EXPERIENCE$), and interactions between $EXPERIENCE$ and PID_j , and $EXPERIENCE$ and $EVAL_j$. Several other controls are also included in these models: dichotomous controls for the specific election, and a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent is a partisan for some other party besides party j ($OTHID$). By

⁵² The model regresses non-response ($NONR$) on education, level of knowledge about the parties' election campaign promises, age and age squared, non-partisanship, level of attentiveness to the election campaign, and dummy variables to take into account different levels of non-response in particular elections:

$$\ln[NONR / (1-NONR)] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UNIV + \beta_2 NOHS + \beta_3 CAMPINFO + \beta_4 AGE + \beta_5 AGE^2 + \beta_6 NOPID + \beta_7 ATTENTIVENESS + \beta_8 ELECTION93 + \beta_9 ELECTION97 + \beta_{10} ELECTION00 + \varepsilon$$

⁵³ The Progressive Conservative Party, which competed in the 1993, 1997, and 2000 elections, and the new Conservative Party, which competed in the 2004 election, are analyzed jointly. The results are similar when the analysis is restricted to the Progressive Conservatives from 1993-2000.

incorporating the OTHID variable in these estimations, the effects of partisanship can be compared directly across models because the consistent baseline for comparison is then non-partisans. The basic equation is:

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote_j}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1PID_j + \beta_2EVAL_j + \beta_3EXPERIENCE + \beta_4EXPERIENCE*PID_j + \beta_5EXPERIENCE*EVAL_j + \beta_6ELECTION93 + \beta_7ELECTION97 + \beta_8ELECTION00 + \beta_9OTHID$$

where

$$\Omega_{Vote_j}(x_i) = \Pr(y = 1 | x_i) / \Pr(y = 0 | x_i)$$

Separate sets of analyses are conducted using Quebec respondents and those outside Quebec. And because there are relatively few NDP and Reform Party / Alliance supporters in Quebec over the 1993-2004 period, support for those particular parties is not considered in the Quebec analyses.

Weighted samples from all four studies are used in estimating Liberal, Conservative, and NDP support, whereas the estimates of Reform/Canadian Alliance support use a weighted national sample that necessarily excludes the 2004 election (the Alliance merged with the Progressive Conservative before that election) and the estimates of party support within Quebec use a weighted sample of Quebec respondents from all four studies.

A detailed examination of the multivariate evidence illustrates just how substantial the effects of more years of experience are on the relationship between partisanship and vote choice. Figure 6.1 presents the estimated net effect, by age, of partisanship on Liberal and Conservative Party support outside Quebec.⁵⁴ Panel A in Figure 6.1 shows the estimated

⁵⁴Once again, for these and all other probability estimates presented in this chapter, all other variables in the models are held constant at their mean, median, or modal values. These estimates are generated using Long and Freese's (2006) `prvalue` commands in *Stata*.

difference (ΔPr) between non-partisans and Liberal partisans in the probability of voting for that party, as voters' ages increase in five-year increments from 18 to 78 years old. These estimates indicate that the voting gap between partisans and non-partisans increases systematically with age. At age 18, for instance, Liberal partisans are about 14 percent ($\Delta Pr = 0.137$) more likely than non-partisans to vote for the Liberal party, but by age 78, Liberal partisans are about 45 percent ($\Delta Pr = 0.445$) more likely than non-partisans to support the Liberals. The vertical lines within each bar, indicating the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval, show that the effects of Liberal partisanship are significantly stronger among older voters than among their younger counterparts. The estimated effects of partisanship on Conservative Party voting, illustrated in Panel B of Figure 6.1, reveal a similar pattern. Conservative partisans are about 6 percent ($\Delta Pr = 0.060$) more likely than non-partisans to vote for the Conservative Party at age 18; but the impact of partisanship increases to about 30 percent ($\Delta Pr = 0.301$) by age 78. And, although the differences are not significant at conventional levels, the impact of partisanship on the vote is also greater among older voters than their younger counterparts when it comes to NDP and Reform Party / Canadian Alliance voting outside Quebec.

How much do older voters discount current party evaluations? If the revisionist model of partisanship is accurate, then voters with more years of experience should be significantly more inclined than others to ignore "surprises." That is, older partisans should be much less likely than younger partisans to defect from the party they would typically support, when new signals suggest that another option might be better. Moreover, the revisionist model contends that this propensity to discount new information is not simply a function of older partisans' greater resistance to negative information about the party to which they are loyal;

rather, it is a general phenomenon among those with more political experience. Accordingly, older *non*-partisans should also be less persuaded by new signals.

The evidence from Canadian born citizens outside Quebec lends considerable support to both of these claims. Precise estimates of how current party evaluations influence the vote choices of Canadian born citizens of different ages are presented in Figure 6.2. This figure illustrates the predicted individual shifts in Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, and Reform Party / Canadian Alliance support at different ages as current evaluations of each of those parties change. The effects of current evaluations are assessed under two possible sets of conditions: first, as current party evaluations of partisans move from extremely favourable (1) to quite unfavourable (0.5); and second, as current evaluations of non-partisans move from quite unfavourable (0.5) to extremely favourable (1).⁵⁵

The predicted individual shifts in Conservative Party support, presented in Panel A of Figure 6.2, are consistent with the hypothesis that older voters are more likely than younger voters to discount current party evaluations. For example, 18 year old Conservative partisans with unfavourable evaluations of the party (0.5) are approximately 75 percent less likely than those with extremely favourable evaluations of the party (1) to vote Conservative; the corresponding effect among 78 year old Conservative partisans is about 28 percent. And older non-partisans are also less likely than their younger counterparts to be influenced by their evaluations of the Conservative Party. When Conservative Party evaluations shift from unfavourable to extremely favourable (i.e., 0.5 to 1), 18 year old non-partisans are an estimated 77 percent more likely to vote for the Conservative Party, whereas 78 year old non-

⁵⁵Another possibility, of course, is to assess the "marginal effect" of evaluations at different ages. That test involves quite unrealistic assumptions about just how "surprising" recent signals about party performance could be (it would mean a shift in evaluations from 0 to 1, and is not substantively interesting).

partisans are only 44 percent more likely to support the party under the same set of conditions.

What about the other parties? The predicted individual shifts in support for the NDP and the Reform Party/Canadian Alliance, presented in Panels B and C, respectively, follow much the same pattern. Considerable differences in recent evaluations of these parties also generate smaller disparities in electoral support among older voters than their younger counterparts. And, once again, similar age dynamics emerge among partisans and non-partisans.

In general, we can be reasonably certain about the evidence with respect to age and party evaluations. There are statistically significant ($p < .05$) age differences in the effects of party evaluations on electoral support for the Conservative, NDP, and Reform Party/Canadian Alliance.⁵⁶ The major exception concerns Liberal Party voting. In that case, the age dynamics conform to expectations and match those of the other three parties, but they never quite reach acceptable levels of statistical significance.

Outside Quebec, then, a fairly consistent picture emerges. Irrespective of which particular party is under consideration, older voters are more likely than younger voters to stand by their partisan affiliations, and to discount recent signals about where the parties stand. Voters in Quebec exhibit similar tendencies, although the evidence from within that province is not quite as convincing. Figure 6.3 presents the estimated net conditional effects of years of experience on the relationship between partisanship and Liberal Party support (Panel A), and current party evaluations and Liberal Party support (Panel B). The basic pattern is familiar. First, partisanship exerts a greater influence on the vote choices of the

⁵⁶The only exceptions concern NDP and Reform Party / Canadian Alliance partisans. The effects of changes in NDP and Reform Party/Canadian Alliance evaluations from 1 to 0.75 do not produce significantly different effects among younger partisans than their older counterparts.

older electorate than younger voters, and the conditional effect is similar in magnitude to the corresponding effect outside Quebec. The Liberal voting gap between partisans and non-partisans in Quebec increases from about 4 percent among 18 year olds to approximately 40 percent among 78 year olds, and that difference is statistically significant ($p < .05$). Second, the joint impact of age and party evaluations on the vote follow a similar dynamic in Quebec as in the rest of Canada. However, there appears to be a disparity between Liberal Party support, on the one hand, and BQ and Conservative Party support on the other. Conservative and BQ support are not conditioned by age to quite the same degree. The evidence with respect BQ and Conservative Party support, however, is largely inconclusive: the conditional effects of age and party identification on BQ and Conservative Party voting are statistically insignificant.⁵⁷

Table 6.1 summarizes these multivariate results. Each of the discernable relationships are consistent with hypotheses 6.1 and 6.2: in three out of seven models the effects of partisanship on vote choice increase with additional years of experience, and in five out of seven models the effects of party evaluations on vote choice decline with additional years of experience. The binary logit models generally fit the data quite well: McFadden's R^2 ranges from 0.374 for Conservative voting in Quebec to 0.601 for BQ voting in Quebec. Moreover, a comparison of Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) between the models with and without the interaction terms indicates that six out of the seven interaction models fit the data the

⁵⁷The Conservative voting gap between partisans and non-partisans increases from about 13 percent among 18 year olds to 27 percent among 78 year olds, and the BQ voting gap increases from approximately 26 to 42 percent. None of the age differences in the impact of partisanship on Conservative or BQ voting are statistically significant. The results also indicate that the effects of current party evaluations on Conservative and BQ vote choice generally decline with age, although these interaction effects reach acceptable levels of statistical significance only among Liberal and BQ partisans.

equally as well or better than those without interaction terms. The model for Conservative Party voting in Quebec performs slightly better without either of the age interactions.

A more rigorous method of evaluating the revisionist account, however, is to compare the effects of both interactions within each model. The expectation is that the weight given to prior considerations increases with more years of experience, whereas the weight given to surprising new information decreases. Thus, if the theory of rational partisanship is correct, differences in partisan allegiances and party evaluations should influence the vote choice in significantly and systematically different ways, depending on years of experience (that is, AGE*PID should be positive and significantly stronger than AGE*EVAL, or AGE*EVAL should be negative and significantly stronger than AGE*PID). Indeed, Wald tests confirm that in five out of seven models, the effects of AGE*PID and AGE*EVAL are significantly different from one another.

There are similar dynamics within two regional subsets of the Canadian electorate, with two different party systems, and the evidence is more consistent with the revisionist model than the social-psychological model of partisanship. But as it turns out, no discernable pattern emerges when Canada's immigrant population is examined.⁵⁸ One possibility worth

⁵⁸Immigrant Canadians were analyzed by regressing vote choice for each party j on partisanship (PID _{j}), the party's normalized evaluation (EVAL _{j}), the respondents' years of experience in Canada (POSTMIG) and years prior to migration (PREMIG), interactions between POSTMIG and PID _{j} , POSTMIG and EVAL _{j} , PREMIG and PID _{j} , and PREMIG and EVAL _{j} :

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote_j}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1PID_j + \beta_2EVAL_j + \beta_3POSTMIG + \beta_4POSTMIG*PID_j + \beta_5POSTMIG*EVAL_j + \beta_6PREMIG + \beta_7PREMIG*PID_j + \beta_8PREMIG*EVAL_j + \beta_9ELECTION93 + \beta_{10}ELECTION97 + \beta_{11}ELECTION00 + \beta_{12}OTHID + \varepsilon$$

These analyses are restricted to immigrant respondents outside Quebec. There are too few cases to conduct reliable analyses of immigrant respondents within the province of Quebec. Only two significant interaction effects emerge in these analyses, neither of which substantiate nor disconfirm the revisionist theory of partisanship. The relatively small sample size of adult immigrants makes reliable tests of multiple interactions between explanatory variables quite a challenge; but several alternative tests (including straightforward bivariate tabular analysis, and multivariate models incorporating age interactions instead of pre- and post-migration interactions) produced results that were no less ambiguous.

taking into consideration is that pre-adult partisan socialization is in fact critical to the formation of "priors" which citizens subsequently update in a relatively unbiased manner (Achen, 2002). That is, partisan preferences which are learned early in life are reference points that enable, but do not ultimately shape, subsequent learning. If that is the case, it might explain why the partisan dynamics among adult immigrant Canadians are quite different from those of Canadian born citizens.

4.2 Noisy Political Signals and Partisanship

The final step in the analysis is to examine how noisy readings about where the parties currently stand affect vote choice. Recall that the revisionist model also suggests that when voters take noisy readings, they discount new information and fall back on partisanship. Does the empirical evidence support the revisionist account?

The effects of respondent uncertainty about where the parties currently stand (Hypotheses 6.3 and 6.4) are estimated by regressing vote choice on partisanship (PID_j), the party's normalized evaluation ($EVAL_j$), the respondents' uncertainty about where the parties currently stand ($NOISE$), and interactions between $NOISE$ and PID_j , and $NOISE$ and $EVAL$:

$$\ln\Omega_{Vote_j}(x_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PID_j + \beta_2 EVAL_j + \beta_3 NOISE + \beta_4 NOISE * PID_j + \beta_5 NOISE * EVAL_j + \beta_6 ELECTION93 + \beta_7 ELECTION97 + \beta_8 ELECTION00 + \beta_9 OTHID$$

Once again, Quebec respondents were analyzed separately in these models. However, because the effects of experience are not directly assessed in these tests, Canadian born citizens and immigrant Canadians were jointly analyzed.

These findings suggest that uncertain voters rely more heavily than others on their prior partisan preferences. Table 6.2 shows the detailed results for each of the parties competing

in federal elections outside Quebec.⁵⁹ The effects of partisanship on support for all four parties increases along with the amount of noise in current party evaluations, and when it comes to Liberal and Conservative Party support, the interaction between noise and partisanship produces statistically significant effects ($p < .05$). The impact of partisanship on voting for the Liberal party, for example, is two and a half times greater among voters whose readings of where the parties currently stand is very noisy ($\Delta Pr = 0.46$) than among those with clear appraisals of the parties ($\Delta Pr = 0.183$).

There is also some evidence that the impact of party evaluations on the vote is conditioned by how much noise is in those evaluations: most notably, Conservative partisans who take very noisy readings of where the parties currently stand are more likely than others to ignore current party evaluations and stick with the Conservative party ($p < .05$). Some voters, then, do discount information about which they are uncertain.

Nevertheless, these findings are not of a piece. Noise levels have no significant effect, for example, on whether non-partisans take evaluations into account. This finding is perhaps not all that surprising. According to the logic of the revisionist model, non-partisans are considerably less likely to hold dependable prior beliefs about which party is the best option. Consequently they are more likely to take current information into account irrespective of its reliability. More noteworthy are the results from Quebec, where noise appears not to have any discernable impact on vote choice. And a summary of the results from these “noise” models, presented in Table 6.3, shows that within Quebec the noise interactions are also statistically insignificant.

⁵⁹The scale on which “noise” is measured is an arbitrary result of the estimation method, binary logit. The upper and lower limits of the scale, 0 and 1, are not meaningful; the only assumption is that lower and higher noise values represent greater and lesser uncertainty, respectively. Consequently, the distribution of noise values in the sample is used as a guide in determining what constitutes meaningful low (10th percentile), moderate (median), and high (90th percentile) noise levels.

5 Conclusions

Canadian voters' longstanding attachments to political parties are generally recognized as the single most influential determinant of voting decisions, yet old debates about the significance of these attachments have not been fully resolved.

The aim of this chapter has been to revisit the conceptual foundations of partisanship within the Canadian context, with a focus on the relationship between partisanship and political experience. This investigation started out by observing that two competing theories of partisanship interpret the relationship between partisanship and political experience in different ways. The traditional conception views partisanship as a social identity; it is reinforced time and again by the social environment, and by biased perceptions of political events. The alternative idea, the revisionist account, views partisanship as essentially rational: over time voters update their beliefs about which party offers the greatest expected benefits by integrating new political information in an efficient manner. Both of these interpretations were empirically assessed.

On balance, the results provide more support for the revisionist account of partisanship than for the traditional party identification concept. The evidence is that the impact of party identification on vote decision increases as voters gain experience with politics, whereas the impact of voters' most recent estimates of where the parties stand decreases with experience. Moreover, voters are likely to discount their most recent estimates, and rely more heavily on partisanship, when those estimates are very noisy readings of where the parties stand. Consequently, the relative impact of party identification on the vote choice rises as uncertainty about the current political climate rises.

The evidence provokes questions about the applicability of the social psychological model of party identification in the Canadian context. In particular, the findings related to the effects of uncertainty conflict with the social psychological model (Bartels, 2002, 129). Zaller (1992), for example, posits that politically uninformed respondents should be more susceptible to political messages that are inconsistent with their partisan predispositions, and consequently partisan loyalties should be less stable among that group of citizens. The revisionist model of partisanship, by contrast, suggests that uninformed and disengaged respondents should be *least* susceptible to political messages that do not conform to their prior beliefs, because those citizens are less certain than others about the current political climate. The evidence presented here is clearly more consistent with the latter perspective.

Although the revisionist model matches the *Political Choice* concept of Canadian party identification in a number of respects, there are two important differences between these models when it comes to explaining the origins of stable partisanship. First, unlike the *Political Choice* model, the revisionist model indicates in which segments of the population we can expect to find stable partisans who consistently vote for their party, namely, older voters and those who are uncertain about where the parties currently stand in terms of issues, policies, and performance.

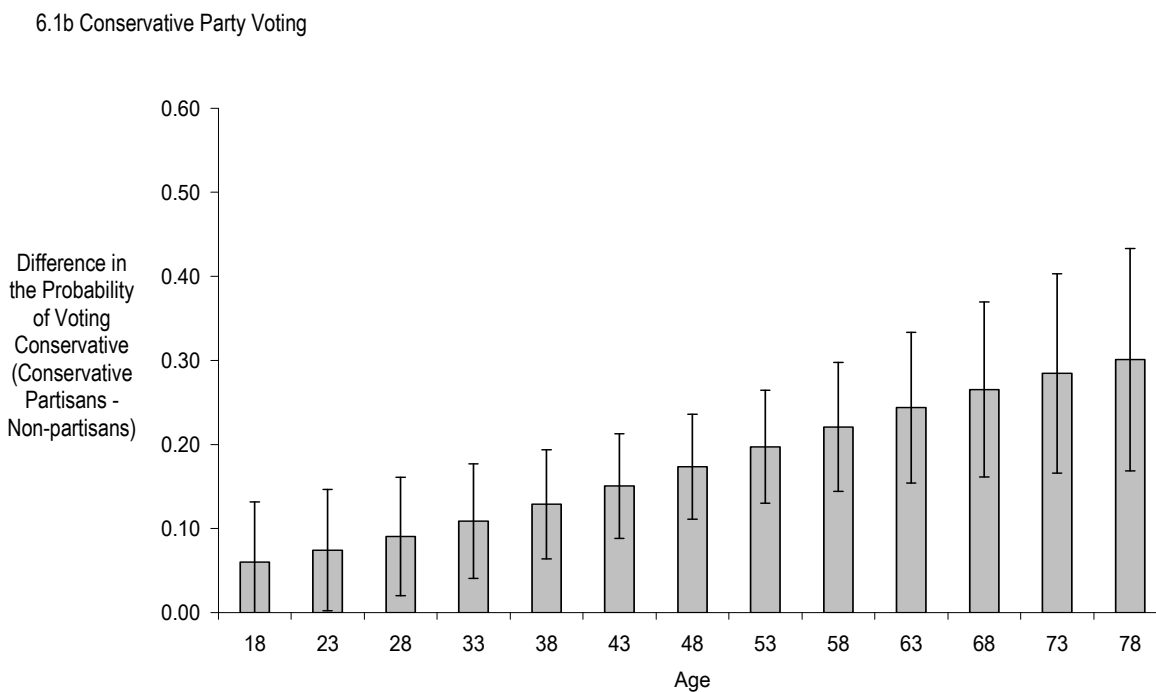
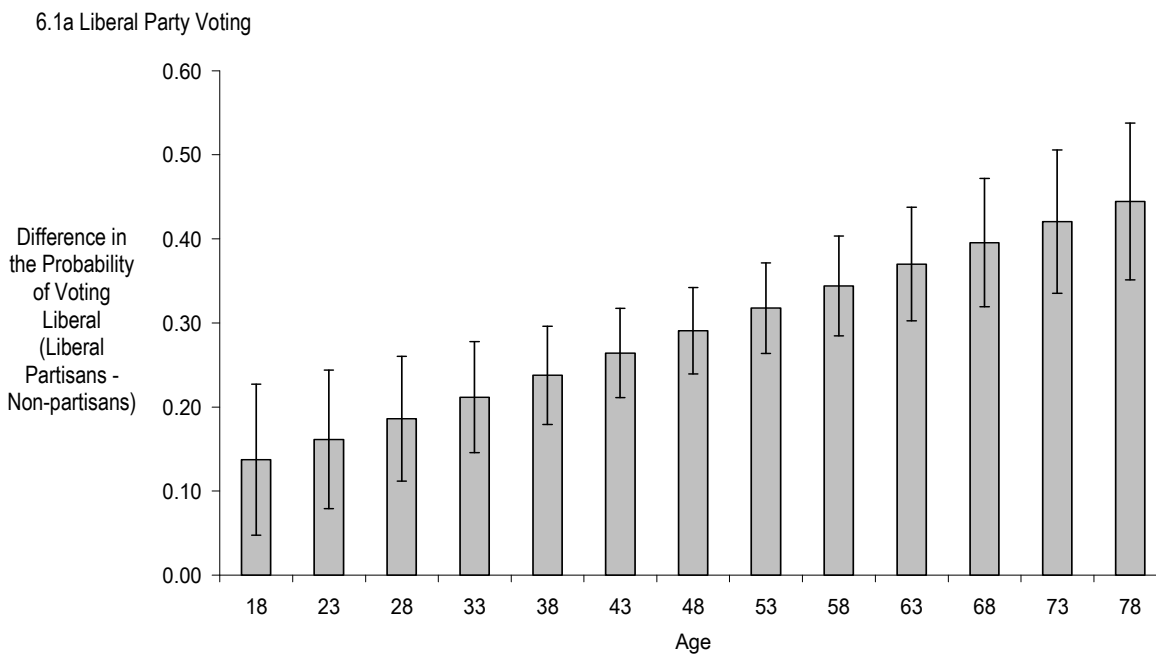
Second, the two models have a different perspective on the effects of uncertainty. The revisionist account suggests that uncertainty can actually generate partisan stability, while Clarke and his colleagues suggest the opposite:

Uncertain about where the parties *really* stand on the implications of the major restructuring projects of recent decades, individuals have been willing to desert one party, to seek out another, and in general exhibit very little partisan loyalty.... In consequence, the events, personalities, or issues of the day serve to guide their choices, and attachments to political parties are highly flexible. (Clarke et al., 1996: 50)

Political uncertainty, in their view, produces partisan instability. The implication is that if the parties sent clear messages to the electorate about their policies and priorities during campaigns, rather than obfuscating, then voter volatility might be less prevalent in Canada. According to the revisionist account, the *clarity* of parties' messages is neither necessary nor sufficient to generate enduring partisan loyalties. Instead, the single most important determinant of whether citizens develop enduring partisan preferences is the cross-time *consistency* of the signals sent by the parties about their core values, their policies, or their performance. Even if parties are rarely up front with the electorate about their positions on difficult issues and tough choices, given enough time voters can learn something about which party is best for them.

CHAPTER SIX TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 6.1 The Estimated Effects of Partisanship on Vote Choice by Age, Canadian born voters outside Quebec, 1993-2004

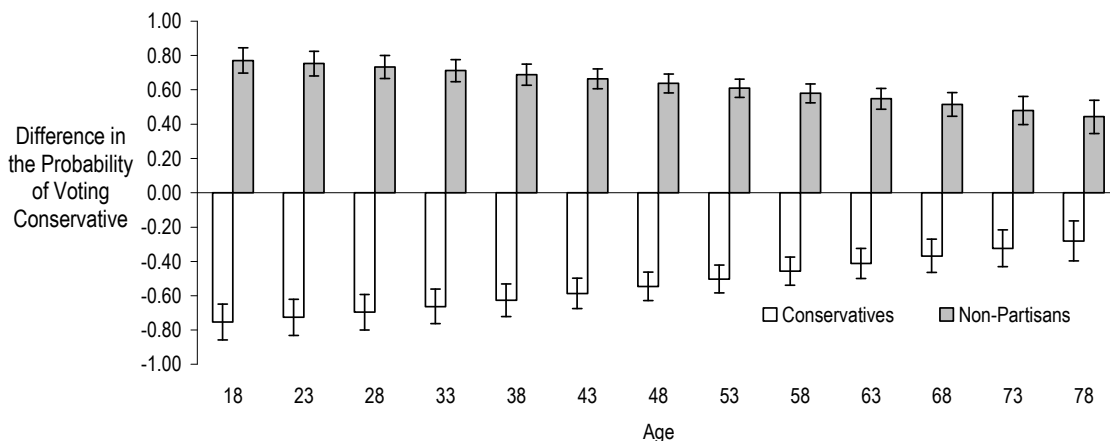


Notes: (1) Values are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party *j* between *j* partisans and non-partisans. All other variables in the model (survey year and current party evaluations) are held constant at their median and mean values.

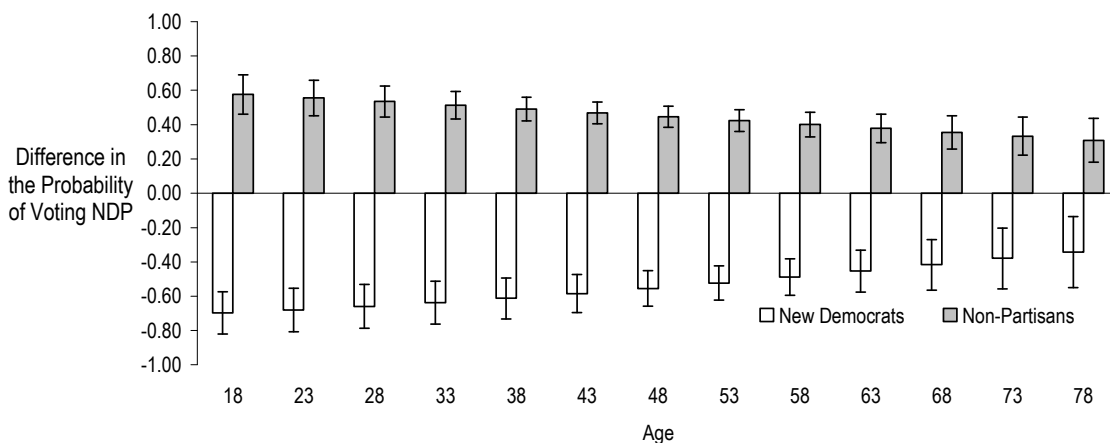
Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1993-2004

Figure 6.2 The Estimated Effects of Party Evaluations on Vote Choice by Age, Canadian born voters outside Quebec, 1993-2004

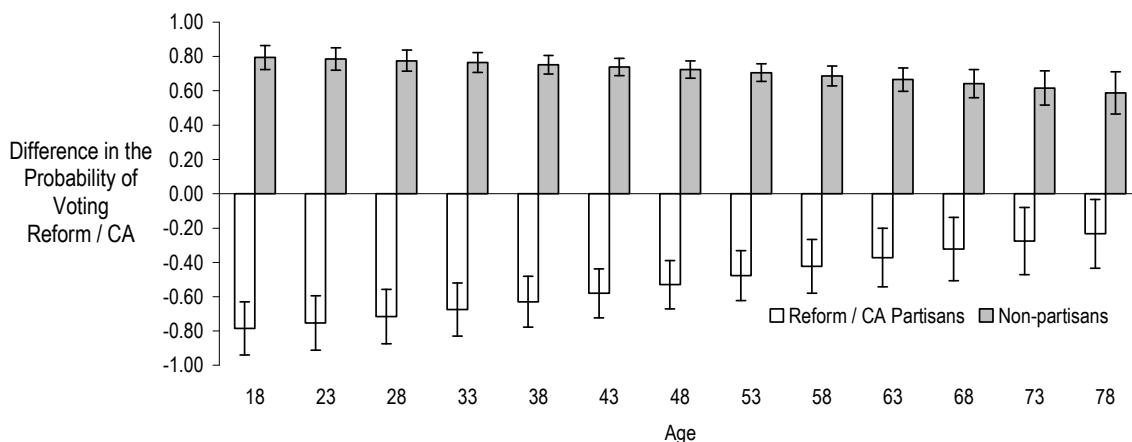
6.2a Conservative Party Voting



6.2b NDP Voting



6.3b Reform Party / Canadian Alliance Voting

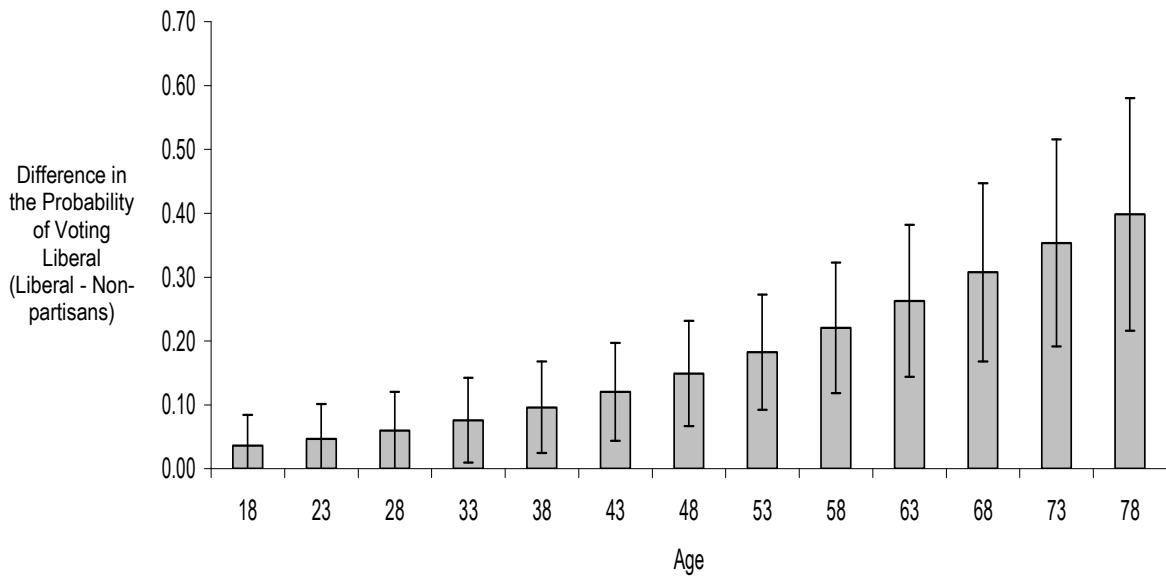


Notes: (1) Values for non-partisans are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party j when $EVAL_j = 0.5$ and $EVAL_j = 1$; Values for partisans are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party j when $EVAL_j = 1$ and $EVAL_j = 0.5$. All other variables in the model (survey year) are held constant at their median values.

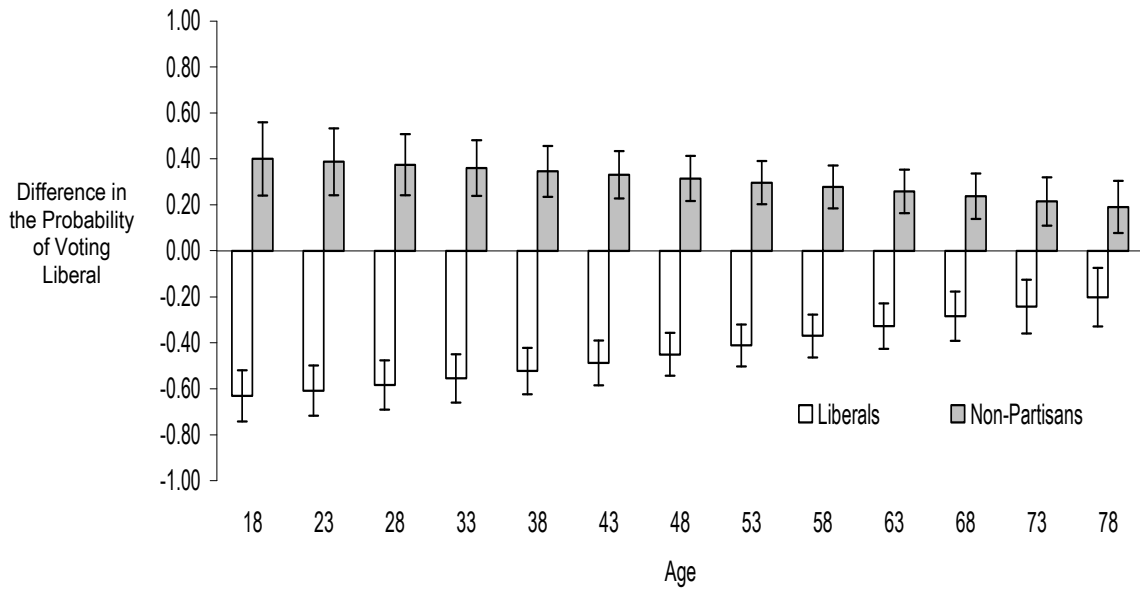
Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1993-2004

Figure 6.3 The Estimated Effects of Partisanship and Party Evaluations on Liberal Vote Choice by Age, Quebec, 1993-2004

6.3a Liberal Partisanship and Liberal Vote Choice



6.3b Liberal Evaluations and Liberal Vote Choice



Notes: (1) In panel a, values are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party j between j partisans and non-partisans. All other variables in the model (survey year and current party evaluations) are held constant at their median and mean values.
 (2) In panel b, the values for non-partisans are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party j when $EVAL_j = 0.5$ and $EVAL_j = 1$; Values for partisans are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party j when $EVAL_j = 1$ and $EVAL_j = 0.5$. All other variables in the model (survey year) are held constant at their median values.

Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1993-2004

Table 6.1 Summary of Results, Age Interactions (Binary Logit Models)

Model	Model Fit (additive model in parentheses)		Direction of Interactions		Difference in Interactions (AGE x PID > AGE x EVAL)	
	AIC	McFadden's R ²	AGE x PID	AGE x EVAL	Wald χ^2 (1 d.f.)	P > χ^2
<i>Party Vote Outside Quebec</i>						
Liberal (N=5,207)	0.769 (0.772)	0.430 (0.427)	+	ns	2.97	0.0849
Conservative (N=5,183)	0.473 (0.478)	0.555 (0.550)	+	-	15.25	0.0001
NDP (N=5,143)	0.395 (0.397)	0.511 (0.507)	ns	-	4.45	0.0349
Reform / CA (N=3,729)	0.514 (0.517)	0.583 (0.581)	ns	-	7.93	0.0049
<i>Party Vote in Quebec</i>						
Liberal (N=1,953)	0.551 (0.555)	0.555 (0.549)	+	-	11.63	0.0006
Conservative (N=1,910)	0.444 (0.443)	0.374 (0.373)	ns	ns	0.46	0.4977
BQ (N=1,936)	0.564 (0.564)	0.601 (0.599)	ns	-	4.31	0.0379

Notes: (1) ns = not significant at P < 0.05

Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1993-2004

Table 6.2 The Estimated Effects of Partisanship and Party Evaluations by "Noise" levels, 1993-2004

Party	Noise Level	Impact of Partisanship			Impact of Evaluations (Partisans Only, EVAL = 1 → 0.5)		
		Pr Vote	95% Conf. Interval		Pr Vote	95% Conf. Interval	
Liberal	Low	0.183	0.113	0.253	-0.715	-0.792	-0.637
	Moderate	0.270	0.212	0.329	-0.690	-0.767	-0.613
	High	0.460	0.361	0.559	-0.545	-0.744	-0.347
Conservative	Low	0.115	0.039	0.190	-0.626	-0.712	-0.540
	Moderate	0.175	0.106	0.243	-0.557	-0.638	-0.476
	High	0.334	0.203	0.465	-0.371	-0.491	-0.250
NDP	Low	0.106	0.022	0.190	-0.622	-0.724	-0.521
	Moderate	0.162	0.076	0.248	-0.569	-0.673	-0.465
	High	0.353	0.163	0.544	-0.390	-0.551	-0.230
Reform / CA	Low	0.183	0.057	0.309	-0.716	-0.831	-0.600
	Moderate	0.252	0.134	0.369	-0.655	-0.771	-0.538
	High	0.477	0.085	0.870	-0.437	-0.798	-0.076

Notes: (1) values are differences in the predicted probability of voting for party j , along with the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence intervals. All other variables in the models are held constant at their median or mean values.

Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1993-2004

Table 6.3 Summary of Results, Noise Interactions (Binary Logit Models)

Model	Model Fit (additive model in parentheses)		Direction of Interactions		Difference in Interactions (NOISE x PID > NOISE x EVAL)	
	AIC	McFadden's R ²	NOISE x PID	NOISE x EVAL	Wald χ^2 (1 d.f.)	P > χ^2
<i>Party Vote Outside Quebec</i>						
Liberal (N=5,623)	0.767 (0.770)	0.435 (0.432)	+	ns	3.58	0.0586
Conservative (N=5,593)	0.476 (0.478)	0.549 (0.546)	+	-	13.76	0.0002
NDP (N=5,555)	0.402 (0.403)	0.501 (0.499)	ns	ns	5.84	0.0157
Reform / CA (N=4,010)	0.510 (0.510)	0.582 (0.581)	ns	ns	3.36	0.0669
<i>Party Vote in Quebec</i>						
Liberal (N=2,017)	0.566 (0.564)	0.551 (0.551)	ns	ns	0.02	0.8863
Conservative (N=1,973)	0.441 (0.440)	0.371 (0.371)	ns	ns	0.27	0.6010
BQ (N=2,000)	0.552 (0.555)	0.609 (0.609)	ns	ns	0.45	0.5020

Notes: (1) ns = not significant at P < 0.05

Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1993-2004

Chapter Seven

Not-So-Great Expectations: Anticipating Election Outcomes

1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the impact of political experience on vote preferences, and demonstrated that partisans become less likely to vote for a party other than their own as they gain experience. The explanation was that partisanship is essentially shorthand for what voters have learned in the past about the parties' behaviour, and, with more political experience, voters come to rely increasingly on this reservoir of prior information.

Preferences ultimately drive the voting decisions of most citizens. But another set of voting considerations, quite aside from preferences, can also have a significant impact on how people vote. Many voters take into consideration how much electoral support they think each of the various parties might garner on election day (Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Blais et al., 2001b, 2002a; Johnston et al., 1992a; Mutz, 1997). And for many of the same reasons that learning over the long haul reinforces partisan loyalties, there are grounds to believe that prior political experience might be a significant determinant of whether voters take these expectations into account when they decide which party to support.

The more intriguing prospect is that prior political experience may well be a crucial factor in explaining why so many people "waste" their votes in Single-Member Plurality (SMP) electoral systems such as Canada's. Duverger's law argues that the SMP electoral system "favours the two-party system" because of two joint causal processes, one "mechanical", and the other "psychological" (Duverger, 1954). The mechanical factor is the Single Member Plurality system's under-representation of minor parties (smaller parties

nearly always win a greater share of votes than seats in the SMP system). The psychological factor is voters' reactions to this systematic under-representation. Voters in SMP systems anticipate that supporting minor parties is futile and, consequently, abandon those parties for one of the top contenders. The combined effect of the mechanical and psychological processes is a reduction of the number of parties, as voters try to avoid wasting their votes.

I conjecture that a critical time component, experience with politics, is missing from empirical investigations of Duverger's psychological effect. Only through direct experience can voters come to recognize and anticipate the effects of the SMP system and reach the conclusion that a vote for a minor party is "wasted". This temporal element in Duverger's psychological factor has significant, but non-obvious, implications for the dynamics of party competition in SMP systems.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how experience might matter; it assesses whether expectations about which of the different parties and candidates will win an election are a more powerful determinant of the vote decision when voters have long-term, firsthand experience with previous election outcomes. The analysis begins by evaluating earlier interpretations of Duverger's psychological effect. It then advances a different framework for understanding the effect. That framework generates three testable hypotheses. The next section outlines the methodological choices which inform tests of these hypotheses, and then the core empirical results are presented and described. Finally, the concluding section revisits the hypotheses in light of the evidence.

2 Duverger's Law and the Role of Political Experience

Duverger's mechanical effect has been assessed repeatedly in a variety of settings (Amorim Neto and Cox, 1997; Benoit, 2002; Ordeshook and Shvetsova, 1994; Rae, 1967; Taagepera and Shugart, 1993), but the psychological effect has been more difficult to pin down. Certainly, there is ample evidence that voters have expectations about how the different parties and candidates will fare in electoral contests. And these expectations do appear to influence vote decisions in ways that usually help contenders and hurt parties that trail (see Bartels, 1988; Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Blais et al., 2001b; Johnston et al., 1992a; Mutz, 1997; Simon, 1957). Less clear is how the process operates over the long haul.

The typical focal point for most scholars of electoral behaviour who try to understand the process is this passage from Duverger:

In cases where there are three parties operating under the simple-majority single-ballot system the electors soon realize that their votes are wasted if they continue to give them to the third party: whence their natural tendency to transfer their votes to the less evil of its two adversaries in order to prevent the success of the greater evil. (1954: 226)

This behaviour is variously referred to as tactical, sophisticated, or strategic voting, and there are now a considerable number of empirical assessments of how this practice works in different electoral settings (Alvarez and Nagler, 2000; Black, 1978; Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Cain, 1978; Cox, 1997; Fey, 1997; Johnston and Pattie, 1991). The awkward empirical fact is that its impact appears to be quite modest: strategic behaviour accounts for less than 10 percent of the vote in most SMP elections (Alvarez and Nagler, 2000: 59). That hardly seems enough to account for the "law"-like system-level evidence compiled by Duverger. Riker was among the first to observe the "perplexing" lack of evidence of the psychological factor at work, "[g]iven the empirical strength of Duverger's law at the institutional level" (1982:

762). And nearly four decades after Duverger's law was introduced, Blais and Carty noted that while progress had been made in understanding the mechanical factor, the psychological factor "remains a rather fuzzy notion whose process or magnitude is not clearly understood" (1991: 79-81). Since then, the gap between Duverger's theoretical claims and the micro-level evidence has narrowed. Empirical support for the psychological factor has emerged in recent studies in the United States and other contexts in which Duverger's theory would anticipate strategic voting behaviour (Abramson and Aldrich, 2002; Abramson et al., 1995, 2004, 2010; Aldrich et al., 2005). Nevertheless, when it comes to the Canadian case Riker's early assessment of Duverger's law, namely, that it is "a not very well accepted proposition" (1982: 754), still seems appropriate.

Canada's federal party system is a particularly useful research site to consider because it consistently defies Duverger's law; despite Canada's single member plurality electoral system, multiparty competition is the norm. Canada's exceptionality is puzzling because there is the clear evidence that expectations about the local race do systematically influence the way Canadians vote. Voters do take into account how good, or bad, a party's chance of winning is when making vote choices: the better a party's perceived chances are, the more likely voters are to support that party (Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Blais et al., 2001b).

Scholars have advanced several explanations for the modest evidence of the wasted vote thesis focusing on both contextual and individual-level factors. The first set of accounts, emphasizing the importance of electoral context and the nature of electoral competition in Canada more specifically, does not appear to explain the persistence of multiple parties at the national level. One variant of this type of explanation argues that Canada's multiparty system is a consequence of differences in competition across local districts. The conventional

wisdom was that although Canada violates Duverger's law at the national level, it nevertheless conforms to his theory at the district level. Many parties might appear viable at the national level, the argument goes, but in most districts only two parties are truly competitive. After examining nearly 60 years of electoral data, however, Gaines (1999) demonstrates this is not the case. The second variant of the party competition explanation argues that Canada's multiparty system is a consequence of tight competition within local districts. Cox (1997) contends that in SMP systems, electoral competition within districts can nevertheless arrive at "non-Duvergerian" equilibrium. In some local constituencies, for example, many voters who are disenchanted with the perceived frontrunner are uncertain about which of the trailing parties have a better chance of defeating the top contender, because support for at least two of those trailing parties is so close as to be virtually tied. Under that scenario there is no obvious strategic option for voters who oppose the frontrunner. The upshot is that minor parties continue to receive electoral support in those constituencies because of a "coordination failure" on the part of voters: some voters who oppose the frontrunner choose one of the trailing parties, while the remaining voters choose the other trailing party. But that account does not appear to explain the prevalence of minor parties in Canada either (see Johnston and Cutler, 2009).

The other set of explanations emphasizes the perceptions and preferences of individual voters, and it seems to provide more traction. The argument here is that the pool of potential strategic voters in Canada is actually quite small because many supporters of so-called "third" parties have strong preferences for those third-place parties over all other parties (Blais, 2002), and because they have unrealistically high expectations about how good their preferred party's chances are of winning (Blais, 2002; Blais and Turgeon, 2004). Blais

(2002) concludes that these two factors accounted for the dearth of strategic voting in the 1988 Canadian federal election.

The first factor, strong preferences, does not contradict Duverger's wasted vote thesis. Why, after all, would someone worry about wasting their vote if none of the other options look palatable? However, the second factor, unrealistic expectations, provokes a good deal more doubt about the merits of Duverger's wasted vote thesis. It suggests there are genuine limits to voters' abilities to avoid wasting their votes. The evidence from Canada indicates those limitations stem from two sources: lack of political information, and partisan bias. Canadians who are poorly informed are less likely to correctly identify which party would finish last in their constituency (Blais and Turgeon, 2004). And those with partisan attachments to trailing parties are more likely than others to engage in "wishful thinking"; that is, they are more likely to think those trailing parties actually have a good chance of winning in the riding (Blais, 2002; Blais and Turgeon, 2004).

The clear implication is that individual voter characteristics are a strong determinant of whether expectations about party chances influence vote choices, and that there are limits to whether expectations matter. The question addressed in this chapter is which voters overcome some of those limitations, and draw on their expectations about the election outcome to decide which party to support. It tests a different individual-level explanation by exploring a distinctive set of observable implications that flow from Duverger's law.

I argue that the crucial element rarely present in discussions of Duverger's "wasted vote" thesis is the passage of time. The process of coming to recognize how the SMP system distorts representation and acting on that new knowledge, Duverger states, is not a one-election phenomenon:

[The psychological factor] operates in fact in the same way as 'under-representation'. The reversal of the two effects does not always occur at the same moment, under-representation generally being the earlier, *for a certain lapse of time is required before the electors become aware of the decline of a party and transfer their votes to another.* The natural consequence is *a fairly long period of confusion* during which the hesitation of the electors combines with the transposition of the 'under-representation' effect to give an entirely false picture of the balance of power amongst the parties....*The impulse of the electoral system towards the creation of bipartism is therefore only a long-term effect.* (Duverger, 1954: 226, emphasis added)

Others have noted (Blais and Carty, 1991; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989) Duverger's imprecision about how the psychological effect works. The above passage, after all, is not a particularly lucid elaboration of the theory behind the psychological effect. Nevertheless, the inference is that, from the outset the mechanical effect generates uncertainty on the part of voters about the various parties' electoral strengths ("the hesitation of the electors"), and it takes time for voters to resolve that uncertainty.

If the passage of time matters to the "wasted vote" thesis, then any fair test of Duverger's Law should consider time's impact on voting behaviour. The first step in sketching out the observable implications of the effects of time, however, is to clarify what voter uncertainty means to Duverger, and why it takes "a certain lapse of time" for voters to overcome that uncertainty.

Voter uncertainty figures more prominently in later theoretical work on "wasted votes", most notably Cox's (1997) description of the "non-Duvergerian" equilibrium. Yet Cox assigns a very different theoretical role to uncertainty than does Duverger. Indeed, it is instructive to compare the two. For Cox, uncertainty is a product of the nature of competition in the local contest: he is referring to voters' doubts about which of the two trailing parties to choose when the expectation is that those parties will garner effectively the same levels of support. Duverger's point seems to be different: whereas Cox assumes that

each voter has a clear expectation as to how other voters will behave, the inference from Duverger is that voters do not always have clear expectations about how the rest of the electorate will act. Specifically, the "newness" of the electoral contest influences how certain voters are about the election outcome. The implication is that whenever new parties first enter the electoral competition, voters are initially unsure about election outcomes because they are unaware of the level of support those new parties will receive. However, uncertainty about election outcomes need not be caused by disturbance in the party system. A logical extension of Duverger's claim is that even in a well-established party system, new voters entering the electorate are initially unsure about how the parties will fare in elections.

The psychological effect should lag substantially behind the mechanical effect for a couple of reasons. First, too few voters have enough information about how other voters will behave to immediately recognize that a vote for a minor party is wasted. As Chapters 1 and 5 both argue, citizens revise their political beliefs by comparing new information with what they know from the past. Voters' expectations about electoral outcomes in SMP systems are a unique set of beliefs, however, because new information is in short supply. One well-established proposition is that most citizens are unwilling or unable to expend much cognitive effort on the voting decision, and that voters use cognitive shortcuts to overcome information shortfalls. A standard assumption is that one way in which voters form expectations about election outcomes is by relying on public opinion polls reported in the media (Cox, 1997; Johnston et al., 1992a). The problem for voters is that the most relevant kinds of polls for SMP elections are typically not available. The conventional wisdom, verified empirically in a number of electoral settings, including Canada (Blais et al., 2001b), is that in SMP electoral systems, voters' beliefs about how the race is shaping up in their

local constituencies are more salient than their expectations about national election outcomes. Voters are unlikely to get information about how the race is shaping up in their local constituencies because poll results are rarely publicized in the vast majority of local constituencies: during federal elections, media outlets frequently report the results of national public opinion polls, often disaggregating the results by province or region. But only recently have local constituency polls appeared in the media, and only for a handful of races with high-profile candidacies.

Given the scarcity of information on which to base expectations about the outcome of local contests, voters rely on what they already know. Over the long haul, even the least politically attentive voters get an idea of which parties tend to fare better, and which tend to fare worse, in their local constituency contests. Citizens with repeated, firsthand experience with politics should have accumulated stocks of prior knowledge about the behaviour of other voters in their constituency upon which they can rely to develop meaningful expectations about how the race is shaping up in their local constituency. Inexperienced voters, by contrast, are less likely to have firm expectations about who will win the election in their local constituencies, because they have very little prior knowledge about the behaviour of other voters in their constituency.

The second reason the psychological effect should lag substantially behind the mechanical effect is that voters need time to recognize and understand the systematic distortions produced by SMP. Even if voters do have a good idea of how other voters in their local constituency will behave, they then face the challenge of gauging the threshold of support below which a party becomes unviable in an SMP system. Voters should be less

certain of the party's chances in their local constituency until they can muster an accurate estimate of that threshold of viability.

Their uncertainty about the outcome of local elections means that inexperienced voters' expectations should differ systematically from those of more experienced voters. Cognitive limits and uncertainty jointly produce a number of empirically observable effects in survey response.⁶⁰ One key feature of opinion uncertainty, as Alvarez and Franklin (1994, 1996) point out, is an inclination to stake out the middle ground: less certain respondents are more likely than others to express moderate beliefs, and to take moderate positions on issues. When it comes to assessing parties' chances of winning elections, the analogous effect ought to be a reluctance among those who are uncertain about the outcome to clearly identify winners or losers. Indeed, irrespective of how competitive the race in the local constituency might be, voters who are unsure about the outcome should be less likely than those who are fairly certain about the outcome to make sharp distinctions between parties with better and poorer chances of winning. Regardless of the real dynamics of competition within their local constituencies, less experienced voters are more likely to express the view that every party has a chance of winning.

H_{7.1}: Politically inexperienced citizens are less likely than their more experienced counterparts to clearly differentiate between expected winners and losers in an election.

⁶⁰ The "measurement error" school of thought argues that these kinds of response effects should be treated as a problem in survey responses. Zaller and Feldman (1992: 580-582), however, were among the first scholars to make the case that systematic response effects can actually tell researchers something important about people's opinions. They observe,

such [measurement] error is said to stem from the inherent difficulty of mapping one's attitudes onto the unavoidably vague language of survey questions", but, "When, as all estimates agree, *measurement 'error' typically constitutes one-half or more in the variance of typical attitude items*, one naturally wonders what exactly this 'error' consists of and how it has been generated.

For an extensive accounting of the ways in which people use satisficing strategies in responding to surveys that systemically affect the kinds of responses they give, see Krosnick (1991).

This brings us to the voting decision itself. The argument here is that because inexperienced voters are less certain about the election outcome in their local constituencies, they are consequently less likely than their more experienced counterparts to consider expectations about the different parties' chances when they cast their ballots. Only voters with a reservoir of prior experience with elections in their local constituency take into account the possibility of 'wasting' their votes.

H_{7.2}: Citizens who believe a party has no chance of winning the local constituency election are less likely to vote for that party than those who believe the party has a good chance of winning. This relationship is strong among politically experienced citizens, but weak among politically inexperienced citizens.

Hypothesis 7.2 provides the fundamental test of Duverger's psychological factor, and its temporal element in particular.

3 Data and Measures

This empirical investigation draws on data from the 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 *Canadian Election Studies*. These CES data are ideal for a combination of reasons. First, Canada has both a SMP electoral system and a multiparty system at the federal level. Second, each of these cross-sectional, random sample surveys of the Canadian electorate contain items that measure respondents' expectations about how each of the parties will fare in their local constituency. They also contain a core set of common sociodemographic and attitudinal questions that have been replicated across federal elections.

The focus of the latter part of this analysis, the interaction between experience and expectations, poses a methodological challenge. The problem is that interactive variables in

statistical analyses are often collinear with the original additive variables, and that leads to imprecise estimations. The best solution to the collinearity problem is to increase the number of observations, and for this investigation the easiest way to do that is to pool the CES data. It turns out that despite the relatively large sample sizes in the CES, there are too few cases in any single CES dataset for a reliable analysis of the interactive relationship that is central to this study. Consequently the strategy is to pool responses from all survey years. However, a number of respondents are analyzed separately. First, residents of Quebec are analyzed independently because there is a distinctive federal party system in that province. The choice set facing Quebec voters is different. Second, because the crucial explanatory variable is experience with *Canadian* politics, foreign-born Canadians who arrived in Canada after reaching voting age (18 years old) are also examined separately.

The operationalization of each of the variables used here is reported in the appendix, but several indicators require some explanation. First among these are voters' expectations about the election outcome in their local constituencies. Respondents' perceptions of the different parties' chances of winning in their local constituencies are measured by CES items that ask respondents to score each party somewhere between zero, where the party has no chance at all, to 100, where the party is sure to win. These survey items contain an element of ambiguity when it comes to gauging how competitive respondents think each party is in the local constituency race (Bilodeau, 2000): a high absolute score for a party on the zero to 100 scale would seem to suggest that party has a good chance of winning. But some respondents who think the race is close may also assign high scores to other parties they think also have a very good chance of winning. The quantity of interest, then, is each party's score relative to the scores given to the other parties, rather than each party's absolute score. Therefore,

following Abramson et al. (1992, 58), these measures of expectations are "normalized" using the formula:

$$\text{CHANCES}_a = E_a / (E_a + \dots + E_n)$$

where E_a is the original score for party a , and Chances_a is the normalized score for party a .

The second key measure, which is used to test hypotheses 7.1, is the extent to which voters differentiate between the competing parties' chances of winning in their local constituencies is measured by the standard deviation of the parties' normalized estimated chances. This is calculated for each respondent as follows:

$$\sigma_k = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{a=1}^k (\text{CHANCES}_a - \text{CHANCES})^2}{N-1}}$$

where CHANCES_a is the normalized score for each party a , and σ_k is the standard deviation of each individual normalized scores for k parties competing in the riding. Missing scores are omitted from the calculation. The resulting variable ranges from zero (when the respondent believes all parties have an equal chance of winning) to .707 (when the respondent gives estimates of only two parties, one of which is certain to win, and the other is certain to lose).

Finally, gauging the impact of party chances on vote choices (Hypothesis 7.2) requires yet another measurement strategy, one that explicitly takes into account the difference between parties in each voter's estimates of the parties' chances. This difference is calculated for each pair of parties as follows:

$$\text{CHANCES}_{a-b} = \text{CHANCES}_a - \text{CHANCES}_b$$

Accordingly, $\text{CHANCES}_{a-b} = 1$ if party a is certain to win and party b is certain to lose, and $\text{CHANCES}_{a-b} = -1$ if party b is certain to win and party a is certain to lose.

With these methodological considerations in mind, we can turn to the empirical analysis.

4 Evidence

4.1 Perceptions of Party Competition

The appropriate starting point is the basic data on respondents' perceptions of party competition within their local constituencies, presented in Table 7.1. Respondents are divided into three age categories: those who are 18 to 34 years old and have relatively modest levels of political experience, those who are 35 to 50 years old and have extensive political experience, and those who are older than 50 years and have the largest stocks of political experience. The mean normalized estimates of each party's chances of winning in their local constituency, as well as the mean standard deviation of each respondent's set of estimates, are compared across the three age groups. At this initial stage no distinction is made between foreign born and Canadian born respondents, but the table does separate Quebec respondents from those in the rest of Canada. Thus there are eight sets of estimates of party chances to compare across age categories.

The data reported in Table 7.1 provide preliminary support for the first hypothesis. Certainly there is substantial variation in respondents' perceptions of party chances across parties and elections, but a clear pattern emerges across each of the eight sets of estimates: in every case but one, 18 to 34 year olds' estimates of each party's chances of winning their local constituency are more tightly clustered than are the estimates of the two older age groups. The average spread of these estimated chances within each age group is summarized in the rows reporting the mean standard deviations. These confirm that respondents in the

youngest age cohorts are significantly less likely than those in the two older cohorts to make a clear distinction between expected winner and losers in local races. The widest age gap is in 2004, when, in both Quebec and the rest of Canada, the mean standard deviation of the parties' estimated chances were more than 0.07 points lower among 18-34 years olds than among those older than 50. The only instance where the spread of estimates is not significantly smaller among 18-34 year olds than among older cohorts is in the 1997 election, and then only in Quebec.

The evidence also indicates the relationship between age and perceptions of party chances is non-monotonic. The differences in the average spread of estimated chances between 35-50 year olds and those over 51 years are relatively small and they are statistically insignificant in every case. The implication is that citizens learn over the course of a few elections to distinguish more clearly between parties' chances of winning the election in their local constituencies, a prospect that is certainly consistent with the widely accepted notion that early gains in experience have greater weight in learning than later increases in experience (Baltes et al., 1999).

There are also signs that younger and older Canadians differ systematically in which parties they are more inclined to believe have a good chance of winning in their local constituencies. Outside Quebec the perceived chances of the NDP were higher among the youngest age cohort than among either of the two older cohorts during the 1997, 2000, and 2004 elections. Conversely, older Canadians outside Quebec were more inclined than their younger counterparts to believe the Liberal party had a good chance of winning the local

contest in 1993, 1997, and 2000; and within Quebec the perceived chances of the Liberal party improved with age in all four election contests.⁶¹

These basic bivariate results provide some initial support for the idea that newer potential voters are more uncertain than their more experienced counterparts about the competing parties' chances of winning the election in their local constituencies. But is it direct experience, or is it the other factors associated with age, that influences perceptions of party competition? Older voters tend to pay more attention to, and know more about, election campaigns. That has already been established. Older voters are also more likely than the young to express partisan preferences. Then there is the matter of specifying the precise nature of the relationship between experience and perceptions of parties' chances. The evidence presented thus far suggests that the impact of experience is non-linear; early gains in experience having greater weight than later increases. This possibility, however, cannot be captured using the simple three-category measure of experience. Finally, because the measure of the spread of parties' estimated chances of winning is in part a function of the number of party chances estimated by the respondent (the variance is lower when fewer parties' chances are estimated, *ceteris paribus*), it is necessary to take into account the possibility that the number of party chances estimated varies with age.

For all of these reasons a more rigorous test of hypothesis 7.1 is warranted. A multivariate strategy is employed that simultaneously takes into account the effects of

⁶¹One possibility, of course, is that these systematic differences in expectations are a consequence of partisan biases. But these patterns could also simply reflect a sharper distinction among older voters between probable winner and losers in their local constituency contests. The Liberal party, after all, was a serious contender in more ridings than any other in the four election contests between 1993 and 2004, whereas the NDP was arguably the least competitive of the major parties. The data from the 2004 election outside Quebec are instructive on this point: although Canadians in all three age groups rated the PC party's chances of winning as roughly the same, on average, in the three elections, in 2004 older citizens evidently believed the Conservative Party had a better chance of winning in their local contest than did younger citizens. And indeed, for a good part of the 2004 campaign it did look as if the Conservatives might form a government.

political experience, but also other potentially confounding effects. Respondents from Quebec and the other provinces are examined jointly at this point, since the data presented in Table 6.1 show that despite the different party systems operating inside and outside Quebec, much the same dynamic is at work in both with respect to the relationship between age and the spread of parties' estimated chances. However, immigrants are analyzed separately, in order to isolate the consequences of political experience from other age-related effects.

The analysis proceeds in two steps. First, the spread of Canadian born voters' estimates of the party chances, σ_k , is regressed on age and its squared product, along with a variable representing the number of missing party estimates (ranging from zero to five), and control dummies for each election:

$$\sigma_k = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{AGE} + \beta_2 \text{AGE}^2 + \beta_3 \text{PARTYMISS} + \beta_4 \text{ELECTION93} + \beta_5 \text{ELECTION97} + \beta_6 \text{ELECTION00} + \varepsilon$$

The analytical strategy for foreign born respondents is similar, but with an important modification. Instead of age, variables capturing the number of years each immigrant has lived in Canada, and the number of years each immigrant lived prior to migrating to Canada, are included in the model. The equation is:

$$\sigma_k = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{POSTMIG} + \beta_2 \text{POSTMIG}^2 + \beta_3 \text{PREMIG} + \beta_4 \text{PREMIG}^2 + \beta_5 \text{PARTYMISS} + \beta_6 \text{ELECTION93} + \beta_7 \text{ELECTION97} + \beta_8 \text{ELECTION00} + \varepsilon$$

The multivariate results reported in Table 7.2 provide a clearer picture of the effect of experience on perceptions of party competition. The coefficient for the variable "number of missing chances" in the model for Canadian-born voters shows that the spread of parties' estimated chances decreases considerably as respondents score fewer parties. In fact, a good deal of the variation in the spread of parties' estimated chances is attributable to fewer

evaluations ($\beta = -0.49$). But the parameter estimates reported in model also confirm the nonlinear effect of experience on perceptions of party competition among Canadian born citizens. The coefficient for years of experience over the age of 18 is positive and statistically significant at $p < .001$, indicating that the spread of parties' estimated chances increases with years of experience. However, the coefficient for the squared product of years of experience over the age of 18, which is negative and significant at $p < 0.001$, verifies that the impact of experience diminishes with each additional year.

It is difficult to grasp intuitively the impact of experience directly from these regression results because of the nonlinear transformation of the experience variable. Therefore, the parameter estimates in model two are used to calculate the average spread of the parties' perceived chances at different levels of experience, with the other variables in the model held constant. The estimates illustrated in Figure 7.1 show that the average spread of the parties' perceived chances increase with experience at a decreasing rate. According to these estimates, the average spread of the parties' perceived chances is 0.41 among 18 year olds, when all other factors are held constant at zero. The spread gradually increases to about 0.47 among 58 year olds, but beyond the late 50s additional years of experience have no discernable impact. The joint significance of AGE and AGE² is $p < 0.0005$.

The results for foreign born Canadians presented in Table 7.2 reinforce the claim that as citizens gain more experience with electoral politics in their local constituencies, they learn to distinguish more clearly between the different parties' chances of winning in the local race. The impact of additional years in Canada on immigrants' perceptions of parties' chances looks essentially the same as the relationship between age and perceptions among Canadian born voters (Figure 7.2). A Wald test verifies that the joint impact of years in Canada and its

squared product is statistically significant at $p < 0.0065$.⁶² The significant point is that the data with respect to immigrant Canadians appear to substantiate the claim that experience with Canadian politics, not some other factor related to age, is what really matters.

On balance, the evidence presented thus far suggests young Canadian born voters and new immigrant Canadians have less firm expectations than their more politically experienced counterparts about how the election in their local constituency is shaping up. The next step is to determine the substantive significance of these differences in perceptions of party competition. Do these expectations affect the vote decision, and (as per hypothesis 7.2) do they affect that decision differently depending on whether citizens have more or less experience with politics?

4.2 The Effects of Expectations on Vote Choice

The first question, whether expectations matter, has already been addressed in other research using the CES data (Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Blais et al., 2001b): the short answer is yes, expectations about the local race do systematically influence the way Canadians vote; the better a party's perceived chances are, the more likely voters are to support that party. Whether expectations have more powerful effects on the vote choices of citizens with long-term exposure to politics has not been addressed. Nor is the answer immediately self-evident. The empirical argument advanced thus far is that inexperienced voters are relatively less likely to hold firm expectations about who will win or lose in their local constituencies,

⁶² In contrast, extra pre-migration years have relatively modest and statistically insignificant effects. For each additional year over the age of 18 before emigrating to Canada, the standard deviation of the respondents' estimates of parties' chances increases by about 0.001. Immigrants' ages prior to migration have no statistically significant effects on the spread of the parties' perceived chances ($p < 0.228$).

and accordingly they hedge their bets, as it were, when it comes to estimating how poorly or well a party will do. Consequently, inexperienced voters should be less likely than their more experienced counterparts to take into account perceptions of how the local race is shaping up when they decide how to vote.

In order to test hypothesis 7.2, a series of binary logit analyses of vote choice are performed for different pairs of party choices. The goal is to see whether differences in voters' comparative expectations about the two parties' chances influence their decision to vote for one party rather than the other, and whether those comparative expectations exert a greater influence on the vote choices of those with relatively more political experience. One potential analytical approach is to examine every possible combination of parties, but that prospect is daunting because of the need to analyze foreign born Canadians and residents of Quebec separately from other respondents. Moreover, there are some party combinations for which there are no compelling reasons to think that voters' perceptions about the parties' chances will have any noteworthy impact on their decisions. There are so few respondents in Quebec who report voting for the NDP, the Reform Party, or the Canadian Alliance that any assessment of these voters is unlikely to uncover reliable results. And by the same token, the numbers of foreign born Canadians who support any single party other than the Liberal Party are too scarce to permit reliable analyses of distinct party pairings. Consequently, the analysis is confined to ten tests of the conditional impact of expectations on vote choices: six pairs of parties are analyzed among respondents outside Quebec (NDP vs. Liberal, Conservative vs. Liberal, Reform / Canadian Alliance vs. Liberal, NDP vs. Conservative, Reform / Canadian Alliance vs. Conservative, and Reform / Canadian Alliance vs. NDP);

and three pairs are analyzed among respondents within Quebec (Conservative vs. Liberal, BQ vs. Liberal, BQ vs. Conservative).

In each test, dichotomous measures of vote choice (where a vote for party a = 1, and a vote for party b = 0) are regressed on years of experience, years of experience squared, the variable capturing the difference in party chances ($CHANCES_{a-b}$), and multiplicative terms capturing the interactive effects of experience and expectations ($AGE*CHANCES_{a-b}$, and $AGE^2*CHANCES_{a-b}$). Along with control dummies for each election, both partisanship and current evaluations of the two parties are also included in these models. These remove the potential effects of wishful thinking among partisans and others with positive evaluations of the parties:

$$\ln[P_a / P_b] = \beta_0 + \beta_1PID_a + \beta_1PID_b + \beta_2EVAL_a + \beta_2EVAL_b + \beta_3 AGE + \beta_4 AGE^2 + \beta_5 AGE*CHANCES_{a-b} + \beta_6 AGE^2*CHANCES_{a-b} + \beta_7ELECTION93 + \beta_8ELECTION97 + \beta_9ELECTION00 + \varepsilon$$

It turns out that there are instances where expectations about how much electoral support the parties can garner do have a greater influence on the voting behaviour of more experienced voters, and instances where they do not. Table 7.3 reports the results of Wald tests examining the joint significance of the $AGE*CHANCES_{a-b} + \beta_6 AGE^2*CHANCES_{a-b}$ interactions, as well as comparisons of model fit statistics between models with and without the interaction terms. There are two cases where the conditional effects of experience are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, and where the model with interaction terms fit the data as well or better than the additive model: NDP versus Liberal voting outside Quebec, and

Liberal versus Conservative voting in Quebec (the full results for those models are presented in Table 7.4).⁶³

The first scenario where hypothesis two has unmistakable empirical support is the choice between voting NDP or Liberal outside Quebec from 1997 to 2004. When the effects of partisanship, feelings toward the two parties, and the year of the election are controlled, older voters who believe the NDP has a better chance of winning in the riding than the Liberal party are significantly more likely to vote for the NDP than younger voters with the same set of expectations. The estimated interaction between expectations and political experience on voting NDP rather than Liberal is illustrated in Figure 7.3.⁶⁴ The least experienced voters' perceptions of NDP and Liberal Party chances have a statistically insignificant effect on whether they vote NDP or Liberal: according to these estimates, among 18 year olds, the probability of voting for the NDP rather than Liberal Party when the NDP is certain to win the local race is actually no different from zero. The effect of citizens' expectations changes dramatically with additional political experience. By the time voters reach their early 30s they are appreciably more likely to vote for the NDP when it is thought to have a better chance of winning than the Liberal Party. According to these estimates, voters aged 33 who believe the NDP is certain to win the local race are approximately 28 percent more likely to vote for the NDP rather than the Liberal party, compared to those who believe the Liberal party is certain to win. In fact, the leverage of expectations over the decision to vote NDP or Liberal increases throughout the life course, albeit at a much slower rate than it does between the ages of 18 and 33 years of age. Although the confidence intervals at both extremes of

⁶³No noteworthy significant differences turned up in the estimates generated from the other seven models summarized in Table 7.3 when marginal effects and standard errors were calculated for substantively meaningful values of CHANCES_{a-b}, AGE, and AGE².

⁶⁴The probabilities are estimated using Long and Freese's (2006) `Prvalue` command in Stata.

age are quite wide, expectations about the parties' chances have significantly different effects on the vote choices of the youngest voters (18 to 23 years of age) and those who are older (38 to 63 years of age).

A similar dynamic emerges in Quebec, when the choice is between the Liberal and Conservative parties (Figure 7.4). Among 18 year olds, the probability of voting Conservative rather than Liberal is not significantly different from zero when voters believe the Conservative Party is sure to win and the Liberal Party is sure to lose than when voters believe the two parties' electoral fortunes are reversed. However, the effects of expectations shift dramatically among older voters. Quebec voters in their early 50s are nearly 75 percent more likely to vote for the Conservative Party rather than the Liberal Party when they think the Conservative candidate is certain to win and the Liberal candidate has no chance of winning. Once again, although the confidence intervals at both extremes of age are quite wide, the significant differences in the effects of expectations that do emerge are consistent with hypothesis 7.2. Voters aged 23 years and younger, for example, are significantly less likely to support the party with better chances of winning than are those aged 38 to 63.

The upshot is that both the New Democratic and Conservative Parties received significant support from younger voters who nevertheless believed those two parties had very little hope of winning locally; older voters who believed NDP and Conservative Party had equally slim chances at the local level were much more likely to support some other party, all else being equal. For most of the 1993-2004 period, neither of these two parties were typically the frontrunners in the minds of younger and older voters alike, and so any consideration voters might have given to the parties' respective chances of winning at the local level generally would have been to the detriment of the NDP outside Quebec and the Conservative Party in

Quebec. But these expectations about the parties' chances were largely irrelevant in the decision calculus of younger voters, at least when it came to the choice between the Liberal Party and NDP outside Quebec and the Liberal and Conservative Parties in Quebec. And although statistically significant age differences emerge for these particular combinations of party choice, it should be noted that similar but non-significant age patterns also emerge for five other party combinations.

5 Conclusions

This chapter began with the observation that hardly anything is known about the development of Duverger's psychological factor over the long term at the level of the individual voter. The argument was that experience with politics over the long run is an important determinant of whether or not voters recognize that votes for minor parties are often wasted votes. The empirical evidence presented here provides some support for that claim. The key finding is that politically experienced voters are substantially more likely than their young, inexperienced counterparts to reject parties that they believe do not have a chance of winning the local constituency contest. That finding is consistent not only with Duverger's basic wasted vote thesis, but also with the specific conjecture that Duverger's psychological factors operates over the long-term.

The argument is that the salience of expectations increases with political experience because with the passage of time voters learn something about the voting behaviour of their fellow constituents, and about the viability of the parties competing in their local districts. Less experienced voters, by contrast, are unsure about both how much support the competing parties will garner, and how much support is necessary to make a party a viable contender in

a winner-take-all race. The CES data indicate that older citizens with higher levels of firsthand political experience with Canadian politics are more likely than younger citizens to distinguish between probable winners and losers in their local constituencies. Although this is an imperfect indicator of how sure people are about the parties' chances, the pattern is entirely consistent with what we know about survey response under conditions of more or less certainty.

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests something about the long-term aggregate dynamics of party competition in multiparty, SMP systems. Blais has shown that wishful thinking and strong preferences for electorally weak parties are important mitigating factors when it comes to the impact of expectations on the vote (Blais, 2002; Blais and Turgeon, 2004). But another reason why so many aggregate 'wasted' votes are cast time and again is because a significant segment of citizens who have very little prior firsthand experience with elections, and have no prior expectations about the behaviour of other voters in their constituencies, vote in every election. This supply of "naïve" voters is replenished at every election through the natural process of age cohort replacement: in each electoral contest, significant numbers of older, experienced voters exit while simultaneously a considerable population of young, politically inexperienced men and women reach voting age. Age cohort replacement is certainly not the only source of persistent wasted votes, but it appears to be an important additional factor.

More pertinent to the research thesis advanced here, these results demonstrate yet another way in which experience matters in citizens' political judgments. Expectations about how much support parties will garner in the local constituency are a special set of voting considerations: election campaigns rarely give voters the opportunity to learn how the parties

will fare in their local constituency races; instead voters develop expectations by observing election outcomes in their local ridings over time. Experienced voters are better positioned to make use of such considerations. Inexperienced voters cannot, because they are unable to draw on a reservoir of prior learning about how well the parties do in their local constituencies, and they are unlikely to pick up that information during the course of the election campaign. For the less experienced voter, the vote decision is more likely to come down to a preference for one party over all the others. The vote decision for the more experienced voter, by contrast, is more likely to come down to a mix of both personal preferences, and expectations about the parties' chances.

CHAPTER SEVEN TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 7.1 Perceptions of Parties' Chances of Winning in the Local Constituency by Respondents' Age (Means with Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Canada Outside Quebec					Quebec Only	
	18-34 Years	35-50 Years	51+ Years	18-34 Years	35-50 Years	51+ Years	
1993 Election							
Liberal Chances	0.359 (0.007)	0.363 (0.007)	0.394 (0.008)	0.296 (0.010)	0.313 (0.014)	0.334 (0.015)	
PC Chances	0.305 (0.006)	0.308 (0.006)	0.299 (0.007)	0.253 (0.010)	0.249 (0.010)	0.280 (0.011)	
NDP Chances	0.162 (0.005)	0.161 (0.005)	0.159 (0.007)	0.101 (0.007)	0.070 (0.005)	0.064 (0.008)	
Reform Chances	0.185 (0.005)	0.178 (0.006)	0.180 (0.008)	0.364 (0.013)	0.385 (0.014)	0.349 (0.015)	
BQ Chances				0.184 (0.008)	0.223 (0.008)	0.213 (0.008)	
St. Dev (σ_k)	0.168 (0.004)	0.193 (0.004)	0.199 (0.005)				
1997 Election							
Liberal Chances	0.369 (0.009)	0.389 (0.008)	0.397 (0.009)	0.372 (0.015)	0.377 (0.012)	0.425 (0.017)	
PC Chances	0.257 (0.007)	0.245 (0.006)	0.249 (0.007)	0.226 (0.010)	0.213 (0.009)	0.224 (0.015)	
NDP Chances	0.189 (0.007)	0.181 (0.006)	0.162 (0.006)	0.063 (0.006)	0.064 (0.006)	0.053 (0.007)	
Reform Chances	0.228 (0.009)	0.222 (0.008)	0.228 (0.009)	0.359 (0.015)	0.359 (0.013)	0.328 (0.018)	
BQ Chances				0.216 (0.009)	0.217 (0.007)	0.249 (0.009)	
St. Dev (σ_k)	0.176 (0.005)	0.195 (0.005)	0.208 (0.005)				
2000 Election							
Liberal Chances	0.385 (0.009)	0.407 (0.010)	0.412 (0.010)	0.382 (0.014)	0.395 (0.014)	0.455 (0.014)	
PC Chances	0.189 (0.006)	0.179 (0.006)	0.159 (0.006)	0.099 (0.007)	0.084 (0.007)	0.086 (0.006)	
NDP Chances	0.178 (0.007)	0.153 (0.007)	0.137 (0.008)	0.061 (0.006)	0.044 (0.004)	0.053 (0.005)	
Cdn. Alliance Chances	0.271 (0.010)	0.284 (0.010)	0.327 (0.011)	0.094 (0.008)	0.065 (0.005)	0.074 (0.007)	
BQ Chances				0.393 (0.017)	0.432 (0.015)	0.386 (0.015)	
St. Dev (σ_k)	0.181 (0.006)	0.231 (0.005)	0.251 (0.006)	0.218 (0.007)	0.249 (0.007)	0.250 (0.007)	
2004 Election							
Liberal Chances	0.503 (0.019)	0.415 (0.015)	0.402 (0.014)	0.379 (0.030)	0.431 (0.027)	0.425 (0.026)	
Conservative Chances	0.427 (0.019)	0.519 (0.015)	0.562 (0.014)	0.097 (0.016)	0.052 (0.011)	0.061 (0.011)	
NDP Chances	0.230 (0.017)	0.197 (0.014)	0.161 (0.011)	0.034 (0.010)	0.019 (0.007)	0.021 (0.008)	
BQ Chances				0.633 (0.030)	0.581 (0.028)	0.586 (0.025)	
St. Dev (σ_k)	0.346 (0.012)	0.390 (0.009)	0.423 (0.006)	0.337 (0.017)	0.399 (0.012)	0.405 (0.001)	

Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

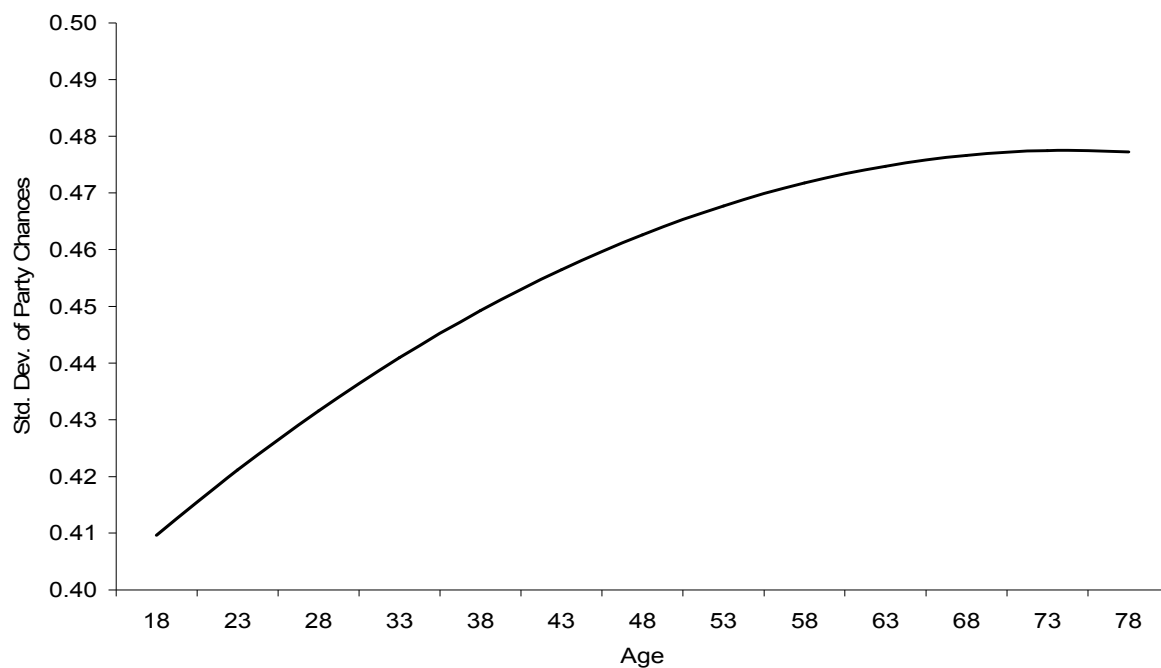
Table 7.2: Predictors of Perceived Local Constituency Competitiveness
(OLS Regression Estimates)

	Canadian Born		Immigrant Canadians	
	B	SE	B	SE
AGE	0.00241a	0.00033		
AGE ²	-0.00002a	0.00001		
POSTMIG			0.00319c	0.00161
POSTMIG ²			-0.00003	0.00003
PREMIG			0.00130	0.00210
PREMIG ²			0.00000	0.00008
NOISE				
PARTYMISS	-0.249a	0.005	-0.277a	0.018
y1993	-0.237a	0.005	-0.265a	0.015
y1997	-0.205a	0.005	-0.228a	0.017
y2000	-0.170a	0.006	-0.200a	0.024
Constant	0.410a	0.006	0.404a	0.027
Prob > F		0.0000		0.0000
R ²		0.38		0.44
N		11,913		898

a. $p < .001$ b. $p < .01$ c. $p < .05$

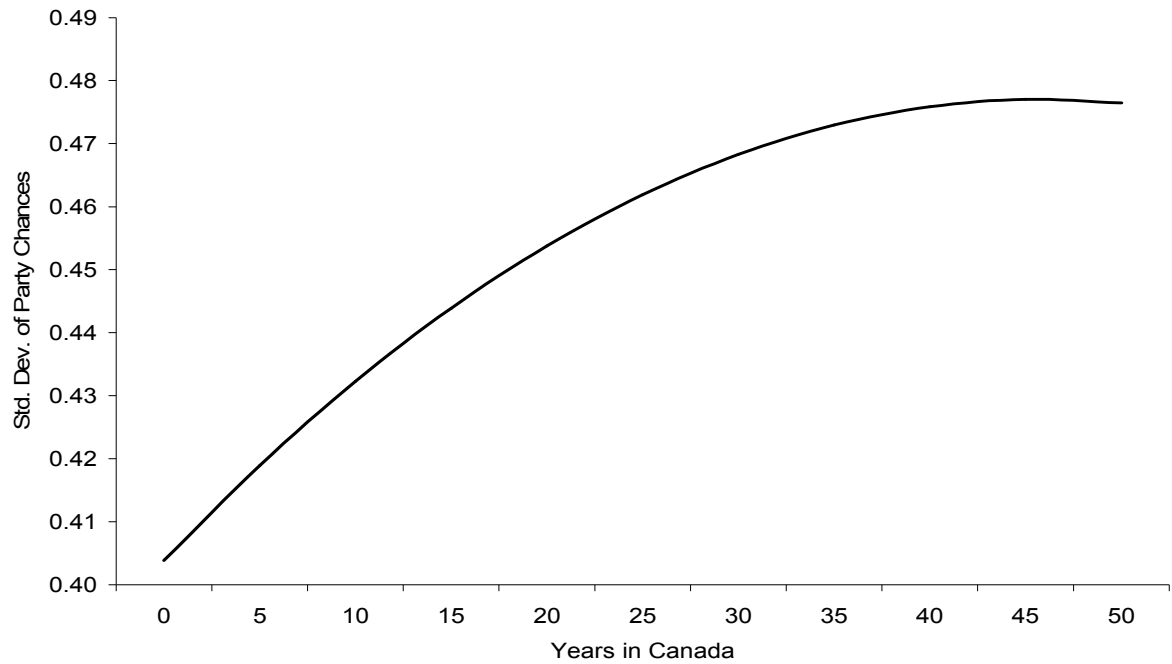
Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

Figure 7.1 The Spread of Perceived Party Chances by Age, Canadian Born Citizens, 1993-2004 (Regression Estimates)



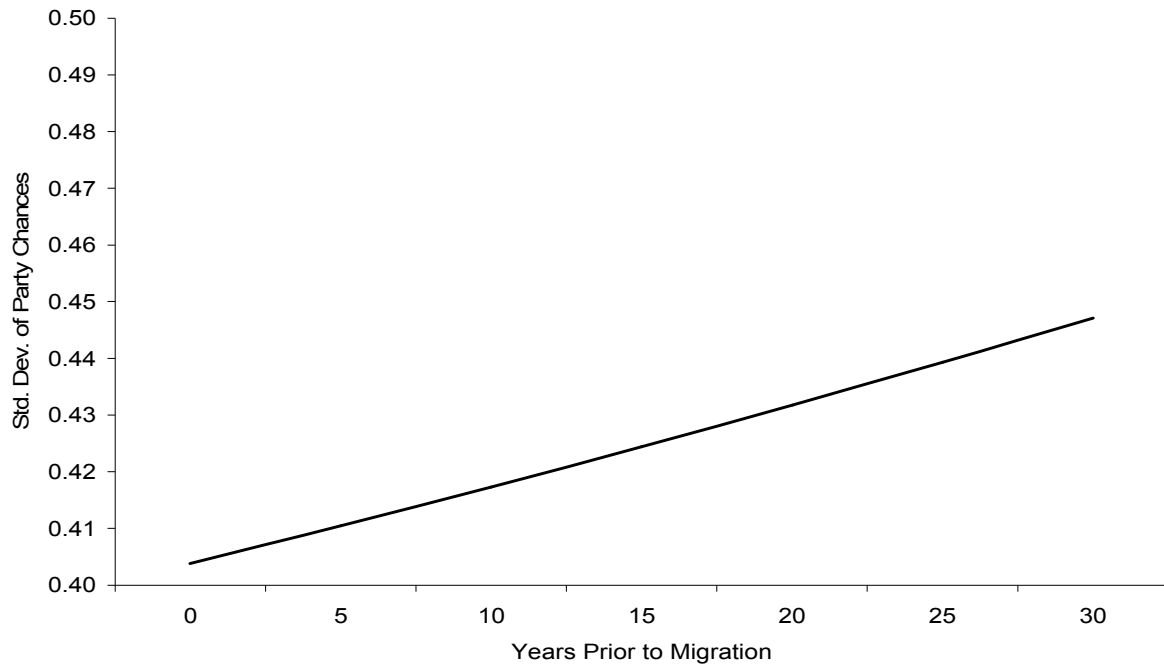
Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

Figure 7.2 The Spread of Perceived Party Chances by Years in Canada, Immigrant Canadians, 1993-2004 (Regression Estimates)



Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

Figure 7.3 The Spread of Perceived Party Chances by Years Prior to Migration, Immigrant Canadians, 1993-2004 (Regression Estimates)



Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

Table 7.3 Summary of Results for Interaction Models

Model	Significance of Interactions		Model Fit Comparison			
	Wald χ^2	Prob. > χ^2	McFadden's R ²		AIC	
			Additive	Interactive	Additive	Interactive
<i>The Vote outside Quebec</i>						
NDP Vote (versus Liberal Vote)	6.90	0.0317	0.474	0.480	0.600	0.595
Conservative Vote (Versus Reform/CA Vote)	1.12	0.5726	0.488	0.489	0.667	0.665
Liberal Vote (Versus Reform/CA Vote)	5.35	0.0689	0.544	0.545	0.631	0.631
Conservative Vote (Versus NDP Vote)	0.94	0.6248	0.631	0.631	0.504	0.506
Liberal Vote (Versus Conservative Vote)	0.33	0.8481	0.512	0.512	0.640	0.642
NDP Vote (Versus Reform/CA Vote)	1.83	0.4006	0.675	0.676	0.388	0.390
<i>The Vote in Quebec</i>						
Liberal Vote (Versus Conservative Vote)	6.95	0.0310	0.398	0.412	0.717	0.707
Liberal Vote (Versus BQ Vote)	5.19	0.0745	0.715	0.717	0.393	0.393
Conservative Vote (Versus BQ Vote)	3.19	0.2029	0.547	0.550	0.427	0.428

Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

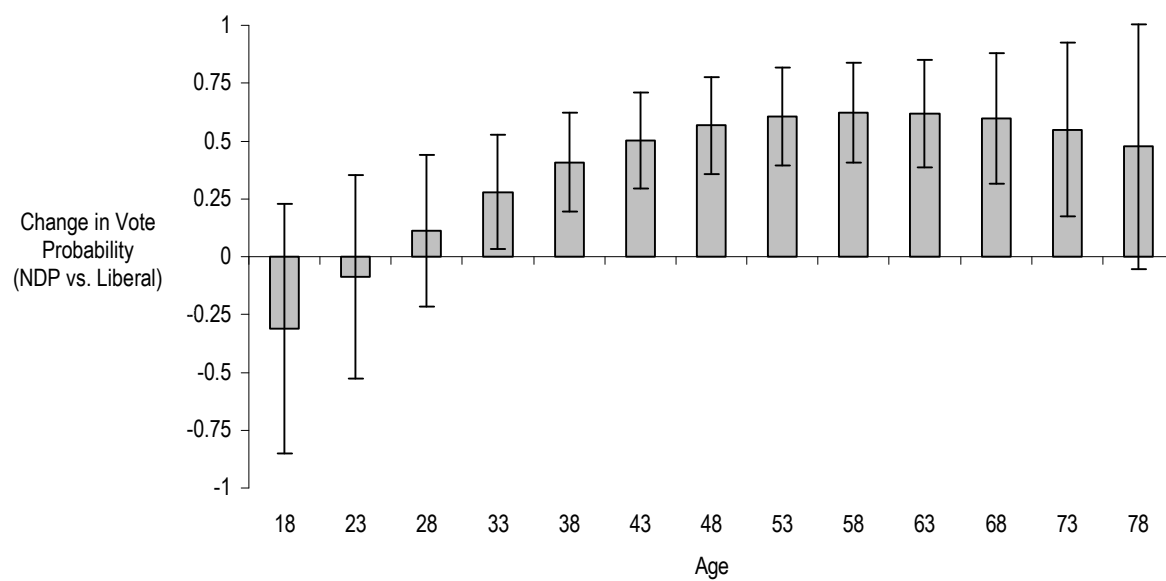
Table 7.4 Models of Vote Choice, Liberal versus NDP Outside Quebec, and Liberal versus Conservative in Quebec (Binary Logit Estimates)

Liberal (1) versus NDP (0) Voting (Outside Quebec)			Liberal (1) versus Conservative (0) Voting (Quebec)		
Independent Variable	β	SE	Independent Variable	β	SE
Liberal Partisan	0.913a	0.199	Liberal Partisan	1.165a	0.294
NDP Partisan	-1.592a	0.204	Conservative Partisan	-0.608	0.403
Liberal Evaluation	1.877a	0.274	Liberal Evaluation	3.354a	0.517
NDP evaluation	-2.316a	0.280	Conservative evaluation	-1.942a	0.489
Age	0.002	0.022	Age	-0.026	0.031
Age ²	0.0000	0.000	Age ²	0.0003	0.001
Chances(LIB-NDP)	-0.779	0.773	Chances(LIB-CON)	-1.597	1.241
Chances(LIB-NDP)*Age	0.120c	0.052	Chances(LIB-NDP)*Age	0.196c	0.098
Chances(LIB-NDP)* Age ²	-0.001	0.001	Chances(LIB-NDP)* Age ²	-0.002	0.002
1993 Election	1.059	0.267	1993 Election	0.734	0.487
1997 Election	0.344	0.243	1997 Election	-0.594	0.441
2000 Election	0.047	0.266	2000 Election	0.268	0.459
Constant	0.504	0.477	Constant	-0.540	0.693
Wald χ^2	471.74a		Wald χ^2	152.84a	
Pseudo R ²	0.480		Pseudo R ²	0.412	
N	2,363		N	740	

a. $p < 0.001$ b. $p < 0.01$ c. $p < 0.05$

Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

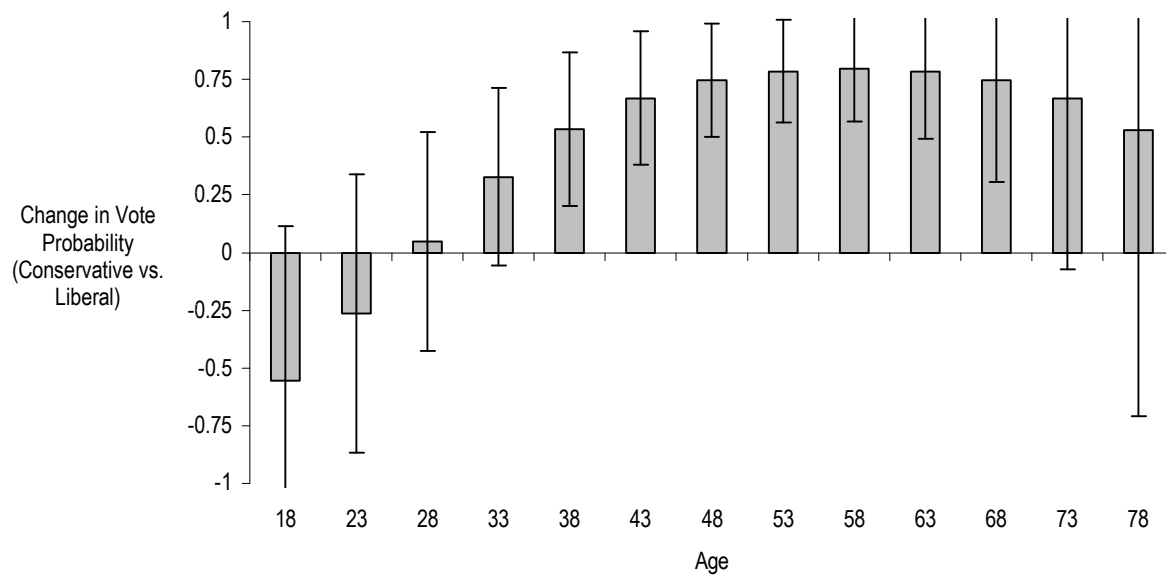
Figure 7.4 The Impact of Expectations on the Probability of voting NDP versus Liberal, Canadian Born Voters Outside Quebec, 1993-2004



Notes: 1) The bars represent the change in the predicted probability (ΔPr) of voting for the NDP rather than the Liberal Party as $Chances_{NDP-Lib}$ move from -1 to +1. The vertical lines represent the 95% confidence intervals for these estimates.
2) The other variables in the model are held constant.

Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

Figure 7.5 The Impact of Expectations on the Probability of voting Conservative versus Liberal, Canadian Born Voters in Quebec, 1993-2004



Notes: 1) The bars represent the change in the predicted probability (ΔPr) of voting for the Conservative Party rather than the Liberal Party as $Chance_{S_{Con-Lib}}$ move from -1 to +1. The vertical lines represent the 95% confidence intervals for these estimates.
2) The other variables in the model are held constant.

Sources: 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2004 CES

Chapter Eight Conclusion

Canadian political scientists have devoted considerable attention to the problem of youth disengagement from electoral politics in recent years. There is little question that by most benchmarks, young citizens in Canada, as elsewhere, lag behind their older counterparts when it comes to democratic participation. The empirical record indicates that young Canadians are uninterested and woefully informed about politics, and they are less likely to vote now than in the past (Blais et al., 2004a; Gidengil et al., 2004; Howe, 2003; O'Neill, 2003; Pammett and LeDuc, 2003a, 2003b). A reasonable assumption is that these forms of youth disengagement are closely linked.

This investigation has been concerned with uncovering the reasons why young people hold political attitudes and share patterns of political behaviour that are distinct from those of older citizens. The general conjecture examined is that citizens' levels of political engagement, and the kinds of information citizens bring to bear on their vote decisions, depend upon how much experience they have accumulated with Canadian politics. The core finding that emerges is that long-term experience with Canadian politics counts: it brings more opportunities for political learning, and consequently improves citizens' chances of making reasoned electoral choices.

This concluding chapter begins by reviewing the main research contributions of the study. It then addresses the implications of this research for how we understand the political socialization and “life cycle” effects, the political integration of immigrants, and democratic citizenship.

1 The Main Contributions

1.1 Understanding Why Political Experience Matters

The notion that citizens learn from their cumulative experience with politics is widely accepted. Even so, systematic inquiries into the processes through which learn from their accumulated political experience, and the content of that learning, are surprisingly few and far between. Indeed, most research appears to treat cumulative political experience as a residual explanation for the relationship between years of age and a range of political attitudes and behaviours; it represents the lingering effects of age once generational and life cycle influences have been taken into account. The theoretical foundations of these experience-based explanations seem quite fragile; long-term political experience is thought to bring wisdom and to impart civic skills (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Jennings and Stoker, 1999; Neuman, 1986; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Strate et al., 1989), but a comprehensive explanation of just how and why years of experience should matter is missing.

This project has drawn together disparate theories about specific sets of political attitudes and behaviours in one broad explanatory framework. These distinct theories are unified by one straightforward yet essential idea: because politics is complex and has quite limited significance in the everyday lives of the vast majority of citizens, it takes considerable time for citizens to learn from their intermittent and brief experiences with the political world. A large body of literature on mass political attitudes and behaviour recognizes that intendedly rational citizens face considerable challenges when it comes to political participation, judgment and decision-making (Lau, 2003; Lupia, McCubbins, and Popkin, 2000). Not only

must citizens strike a balance between the desire to act in their own political interests and the need to attend to more pressing non-political concerns in their lives, but they must also cope with the inherent uncertainty of politics (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Lupia, McCubbins, and Popkin, 2000; Popkin, 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991). Citizens adapt to these challenges by developing strategies, including the use of cognitive shortcuts and other simple decision rules, which reduce the costs of political participation and that help them to reach political judgments and make decisions that are “good enough.” The significant point is that for most citizens the development of these strategies takes considerable time and experience.

1.2 A Unique Comparative Approach

The fundamental difficulty with empirical assessments of theories about long-term political experience comes in distinguishing the effects of years of experience from those of movement through the life cycle and generational socialization. The latter two approaches see political behaviour as something shaped by experiences outside of the realm of politics. Life cycle accounts argue that the entirety of life experiences influence political outlooks and behaviours; shifting priorities as people age make politics and certain political preferences more salient at some stages of life than others. Socialization accounts, by contrast, argue that people's orientations towards politics are chiefly determined by their early, formative experiences: the political outlooks imparted by parents and other agents of socialization, along with salient social, economic, and political events in those early years.

One methodological contribution of this study has been to employ an innovative approach that makes it possible to distinguish between the effects of long-term experience,

generational socialization, and movement through the life cycle. Specifically, it has compared the political attitudes and behaviours of Canadian-born citizens to that of foreign-born Canadians who arrived in Canada as adults. This group of foreign-born Canadians are citizens whose formative experiences were outside Canada, and for whom stage in the life cycle and length of direct experience with Canadian politics are not related. Using this analytical strategy has made it possible to disentangle the effects of generational socialization, movement through the life cycle, and more years of direct experience with Canadian politics.

1.3 Extending and Applying New Theories of Political Experience to Canadian Politics

Two components of this study empirically tested conjectures about political experience, developed elsewhere to address unresolved questions about Canadian political behaviour. Chapter Three explored the potential role of habitual voting in the widening turnout gap between younger and older Canadian voters. Habits are important decisional cost-saving mechanisms that emerge slowly through repeated encounters with environmental stimuli, and one conventional wisdom is that voting is habit-forming because it is a relatively low-cost and low-benefit act. An important implication flows from this idea, namely, that younger citizens and new immigrant Canadians, two groups for whom voting in Canadian elections is not yet a habit, are typically more susceptible than others to changes across time and contexts in the modest costs and benefits associated with the voting decision. Thus, whenever aggregate turnout levels increase or decrease, changes should be most apparent among these two groups of citizens. It turns out that they are.

Chapters Five and Six examined the concept of partisanship in the Canadian context. Chapter Five tested and found scant evidence in support of some core implications of the traditional view of partisanship, which sees stable partisan loyalties as socially learned identities that are reinforced with experience. In Chapter Six, an alternative, “revisionist” theory of partisanship was outlined and tested. That theory assumes that because the political world is inherently uncertain, people slowly modify their political beliefs and judgments by taking into account a mix of new and old information (Achen, 1992, 2002; Gerber and Green, 1998; Zechman, 1979). From this perspective, partisan loyalty emerges with more years of experience because older voters rely heavily on their prior beliefs and judgments about parties and candidates, rather than on new information. Indeed, the analysis in chapter 6 found considerable support for this theory of partisanship.

Two other components of this study extended the logic of established theories of political behaviour to account for the effects of political experience. The first of these established theories, examined in Chapter Four, concerns informational shortcuts. One school of thought says that citizens employ a variety of strategies to overcome informational shortfalls when it comes to politics, and Lupia and McCubbins (1998) further contend that most people come to learn through trial and error what kinds of informational shortcuts they should employ. A logical implication of that theory is that with more years of experience, citizens develop effective and efficient strategies for paying attention to specific kinds of political information. The evidence presented in Chapter Four indicates that relatively inattentive citizens are able to reduce the information gap between themselves and their highly attentive counterparts as they gain years of experience with Canadian politics.

The second theoretical extension took the logic of the revisionist partisan model and applied it to voters' perceptions of party competition. One unresolved question in Canadian political research is why the federal party system consistently defies Duverger's Law – the proposition that single-member plurality electoral systems produce two-party systems because voters anticipate that candidates for minor parties cannot win the election (Duverger, 1954). Chapter Seven makes the argument that inexperienced new voters disproportionately support candidates for parties that have, in the past, garnered modest electoral support in their respective electoral constituencies. Because they have very little prior knowledge about the behaviour of other voters in their constituency, inexperienced voters, the chapter demonstrates, are less likely than others to have firm expectations about who will win the election in their local constituencies. Canadian voters have very limited public information available on which to develop expectations about the outcome of local constituency contests, besides what they have already learned from past election outcomes. Unlike novice voters, citizens with repeated, firsthand experience with politics have accumulated stocks of prior knowledge about the behaviour of other voters in their constituency upon which they can rely to develop meaningful expectations about how the race is shaping up in their local constituency. Experienced voters are also better able to gauge the threshold of support below which a party becomes unviable in a single-member plurality system.

2 The Broader Implications of this Study

2.1 Theories of Socialization and the Life Cycle

This study began with the observation that age dynamics in political behaviours and outlooks are often attributed to differences in pre-adult socialization, or differences in stages of the life cycle. The strategy of using adult Canadian immigrants as a comparison group shows that some of these claims may well be overstated.

Theories about pre-adult socialization and the life cycle offer attractive explanations for age dynamics, not least of all because of the absence of empirically tested competing accounts. Although classic theories of pre-adult political socialization have had their critics, to be sure (Marsh, 1971; Niemi and Hepburn, 1995; Searing, Schwartz, and Lind, 1973; Searing, Wright, and Rabinowitz, 1976)⁶⁵, the idea that core political predispositions acquired during the “impressionable years” shape people’s subsequent political attitudes and behaviours is attractive both for its simplicity and its broad explanatory power. And life cycle explanations are intuitively appealing because of the close connection between theories about how aging matters and the basic empirical measure, years of age.

However, most of the age dynamics in Canadian political behaviour examined in this study do not appear to be attributable to either movement through the life cycle or generational differences in pre-adult socialization. First, if age dynamics were attributable to generational differences in pre-adult socialization, then there should have been limited evidence of similar dynamics among immigrants who arrived in Canada as adults. But in

⁶⁵ Few critics have been as unyielding as political scientist Everett Carl Ladd, who observed: Social analysis and commentary has many shortcomings, but few of its chapters are as persistently wrong-headed as those on the generations and generational change. This literature abounds with hyperbole and unsubstantiated leaps from available data. (Quoted in Halstead, 1999: 33)

nearly every instance, immigrant behavioural dynamics that are attributable to additional years in Canada emulate those attributable to older age among native born Canadians.⁶⁶ Second, if age dynamics were largely attributable to movement through the life cycle, then there should be evidence that additional pre- and post-migration years have similar effects. It turns out that the effects of more pre-migration years on turnout levels (Chapter Three), information levels (Chapter Four), and levels of uncertainty about election outcomes (Chapter Seven) are relatively weak and statistically insignificant.

2.2 The Political Integration of Immigrants

The final set of implications concerns the political integration of immigrants. Despite Canada's long tradition as an immigrant receiving country, scholarship concerning the political integration of immigrant Canadians remains remarkably scarce. Black and his colleagues (Black, 1982, 1987; Black et al., 1987) were among the first to empirically assess political participation among Canadian immigrants, and their analyses emphasized immigrants' significant capacity to transfer the political attitudes and behaviours learned in their old environment to the Canadian political environment. As Black (1987: 739) notes, "More important than the specific context in which political involvement takes place is the question of whether it takes place at all."

Bilodeau's work (2004), however, suggests that challenges of adjustment are greater for Canadian immigrants from non-democratic regimes. He finds that immigrants from these source countries have a somewhat more limited understanding of democratic principles, are less willing to express political opinions, are less political efficacious, and are more likely to

⁶⁶ The sole exception is the ambiguous evidence concerning the relationship between number of years in Canada, partisanship, and vote choice presented in Chapter Six.

hold pro-authoritarian political outlooks than Canadian born citizens or immigrants from democratic regimes.

Bilodeau (Ibid) does find considerable evidence, however, that as they spend more time in Canada, the political outlooks and behaviours of immigrants from non-democratic systems come to more closely resemble those of other Canadians.⁶⁷ Indeed, an important implication from this study concerns the role of time in the political integration of new Canadians. The critical first step towards immigrants' political integration is political engagement. Despite the fact that new Canadians face unique and considerable challenges when it comes to political participation in their new host country, the evidence suggests they are up to that challenge: the longer immigrants have lived in Canada, the more likely they are to vote, and the better informed they are about election campaigns.

2.3 Democratic Citizenship

Different observers of public opinion and mass political behaviour in established democracies offer quite distinct interpretations not only of how citizens think and act politically, but also how they *ought to* think and act politically. For many, a well-functioning democracy requires high levels of political participation and sophistication among mass publics (Barber, 2004; Dahl, 1986; Pateman, 1970). And, not surprisingly perhaps, many publics are judged as falling considerably short of meeting these requirements. Citizens in the United States, for example, are often depicted as inadequately informed, unopinionated, or unsophisticated (see, for example, Converse, 1964; Lane and Sears, 1964; Lippman, 1922;

⁶⁷ Research concerning the voting behaviour of immigrants in Quebec also shows significant differences between old and new immigrants when it comes to support for the Parti Quebecois and support for sovereignty (Lavoie and Serré, 2002).

Luskin, 1987; Neuman, 1986; Smith, 1989). And the image of the Canadian public is not much better (Fournier, 2002; Gidengil et al., 2004).

But for others, the standards by which mass publics in established democracies ought to be judged depend in good part on developing a realistic picture of how citizens are able to think and act politically (Hardin, 1997). Most work from cognitive choice and behavioural decision theory perspectives fall squarely in this camp. A focal point of these approaches, after all, is the practical limitations on citizens' capacities. The normative concern is not whether citizens are highly participatory and sophisticated, but whether they are able to "get by." Despite the limitations that most citizens face, can citizens identify, understand, and pursue their political interests?

From this perspective, the evidence presented in this study suggests there are grounds to be optimistic about Canadian citizens' capacities to cope with democratic politics. First and foremost, the evidence shows that citizens adapt in the long run: they develop the habit of voting, and thereby become less and less prone to abstain as they gain more experience with elections (Chapter Three). They build efficient and effective strategies for paying attention to relevant political information as they gain more experience with election campaigns (Chapter Four). Citizens also learn to cope with the uncertainty surrounding recent party performance and electoral promises by falling back on what they already know from the past (Chapter Six). And citizens seem to do this in a largely unbiased manner (Chapter Five). Moreover, citizens learn to cope with uncertainty about how well each of the parties will fare in local constituency elections (Chapter Seven). In short, it is through experience that citizens acquire a greater capacity for making reasoned political choices.

Second, to borrow a phrase from Franklin and his colleagues (2004: 39), if young Canadian born citizens and new immigrant Canadians lag behind their more experienced counterparts when it comes to political engagement, then the blame rests squarely with the character of the political system, not with the characters of these novice citizens. The fact that young Canadians, for example, are less likely than their older counterparts to exhibit partisan “fidelity”, to use Elkins’ (1978) expression, should not be viewed as a deficiency on their part, either. The evidence from this study demonstrates that young partisans are more willing than others to abandon their respective parties at the ballot box. One plausible interpretation of this lack of partisan fidelity among younger Canadians is that they may well be abandoning traditional political institutions like political parties for “new politics” interest groups and social movements (Dalton, 2006; Nevitte, 1996). The theory and evidence presented in Chapter Six suggests that is not the case. The revisionist theory of partisanship implies that significant disparities between young and old partisans indicate that the parties send unclear signals about their policies and performance to the Canadian public.

It is also well-known that young Canadians are voting in fewer numbers in recent federal elections than in the past (Blais et al., 2004a; Gidengil et al., 2004). This study has demonstrated that over the same period turnout also declined among new Canadians, relative to more established immigrant Canadians. Young Canadians and new immigrant Canadians, however, are not the *source* of Canada’s “democratic malaise” (Gidengil et al., 2004): indeed, it is hard to imagine that two groups with such vastly different formative political experiences, distinct social networks, and unique political concerns and priorities could share a set of individual attributes that make them generally less inclined to vote than other Canadians. Instead, the decline in electoral participation among these two groups appears to

be a symptom of a larger and, in some respects, deeper problem facing electoral politics in Canada.

Young Canadians and new Canadian citizens may well be at a natural disadvantage when it comes to political engagement because they inevitably lack the accumulated wealth of skills, strategies, and habits that help average citizens cope with the complex and uncertain world of electoral politics. But experience counts, and the new citizens of today will have plenty of opportunities to learn in the long run from their experiences with politics.

Appendix A: Variable Construction

AGE

Year of survey - Year of Birth - 18
(thus respondents who are 18 years of age score zero)

PREMIG

Year of arrival in Canada - Year of birth - 18
(respondents who arrived in Canada before age 18 are excluded, thus respondents who arrived at age 18 score zero)

POSTMIG

Year of survey-Year of arrival in Canada
(respondents who arrived in Canada before age 18 are excluded)

NONTRAD

Immigrant respondents from "new" source countries are coded "1", and all others are coded "0". The countries are:

Non-traditional Countries of Origin (1)	Traditional Countries of Origin (0)
Yugoslavia, India, China, Hong Kong, Costa Rica, Haiti, Lebanon, Slovakia, Albania, Croatia, Honduras, Macedonia, Slovenia, Nigeria, Mexico, Somalia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Dominica, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Barbados, El Salvador, Belize, Ethiopia, Iran, Pakistan, Taiwan, Bermuda, Iraq, Philippines, Trinidad, Bosnia, Ireland, Israel, Portugal, Venezuela, Bulgaria, Romania, Vietnam, Chile, Grenada, Jamaica, Guatemala, Japan, Columbia, Guyana, Korea, Serbia, Brazil, Argentina, Lithuania, Turkey, Morocco, Central/South America, St-kits/Nevits, St-Vincent de Grenadine, Estonia, Latvia, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, other	UK, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, USA, Austria, Czech, Denmark, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Ukraine, Portugal, Switzerland, Iceland, Belgium

OTHLANG

Respondents who speak neither English nor French at home=1, all other respondents = 0

ATTENTION

This is a five-item index ranging constructed by adding responses to the following survey questions, and dividing each respondent's total score by 50:

1. *Using a scale from zero to ten, where zero means no attention and ten means a great deal of attention, how much attention have you paid to news about the federal election on TV over the last few days?*
2. *Using the same scale, how much attention have you paid to news about the federal election on the radio over the last few days?*
3. *Using the same scale, how much attention have you paid to news about the federal election in the newspaper over the last few days?*
4. *Using a scale from zero to ten, where zero means no interest at all and ten means very interested, how interested are you in the federal election?*
5. *Using the same scale, where zero means no interest at all and ten means very interested, how interested are you in politics in general?*

The ATTENTION variable ranges from 0 (politically disengaged) to 1 (engaged).

CAMPINFO

This is an index constructed by adding responses to the following survey questions:

1997 CES Questions:

1. *Do you happen to remember which party is promising to lower personal income taxes by TEN percent?*
2. *Do you happen to remember which party is promising to cut unemployment in half by year 2001?*
3. *And do you happen to remember which party is against recognizing Quebec as a distinct society?*

2000 CES Questions:

1. *Do you happen to remember which party is promising a single tax rate for people earning thousand dollars a year?*
2. *Do you remember which party is proposing a national prescription drug plan?*
3. *Which party is promising a law to fight criminal biker gangs?*
4. *Do you happen to recall which party is proposing a law to pay back the debt in 25 years?*

2004 CES Questions:

1. *Do you happen to recall which party is promising to get rid of the gun registry?*
2. *And which party is promising to do away with the Federal Sales Tax on family essentials? (NOT ASKED IN QUEBEC)*
3. *Which party is promising to increase military spending by 2 billion dollars each year?*
4. *Which party is promising to spend 250 million for fighting AIDS in poor countries?*

5. Do you happen to recall which party is promising to spend 4 billion dollars to reduce poverty?
6. Which party is promising an inheritance tax on estates over 1 million dollars?
7. Do you happen to recall which party is promising to spend 2 billion dollars on social housing? (ASKED ONLY IN QUEBEC)

A single measure of political information consistent across different surveys was created by coding each respondent in each survey year as having a “high”, “moderate”, or “low” level of information:

High level of information=3 (2 or more questions answered correctly in 1997 or 2000, 4 or more answered correctly in 2004)

Moderate level of information = 2 (1 question answered correctly in 1997 or 2000, 2 or 3 answered correctly in 2004)

Low level of information = 1 (0 questions answered correctly in 1997 or 2000, 1 question or less answered correctly in 2004)

TALKOFT

1997 / 2000 CES Wording:

In the past week, have you discussed the Federal election with other people often, occasionally, or not at all?

2004 Wording:

In the past week, have you discussed the Federal election with other people several times, once or twice, or never?

Respondents who indicate they discussed the election "often" or "several times" are coded "1", and all others are coded "0"

TALKOC

1997 / 2000 CES Wording:

In the past week, have you discussed the Federal election with other people often, occasionally, or not at all?

2004 Wording:

In the past week, have you discussed the Federal election with other people several times, once or twice, or never?

Respondents who indicate they discussed the election "occasionally" or "once or twice" are coded "1", and all others are coded "0"

CAMPDAY

The day during the campaign on which the respondent was interviewed (e.g. day one of campaign = 1, day two = 2, and so on)

EVAL_j

This is a normalized measure of each party's 0 to 100 thermometer rating. For each party, this measure ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates the party is rated lowest of all the parties by the respondent, and 1 indicates the party is rated highest.

1993 CES Wording:

How would you rate the [PARTY NAME HERE]? The scale runs from 0 to 100, where 0 means very unfavourable and 100 means very favourable.

1997 CES Wording:

Now we're going to ask you how you feel about each political party on the same scale. The scale runs from 0 to 100, where 0 means an extremely bad rating and 100 means an extremely good rating. How do you feel about the [PARTY NAME HERE]?

2000 CES Wording:

Now the political parties. Use any number from zero to one hundred. Zero means you REALLY DISLIKE them and one hundred means you REALLY LIKE them. How do you feel about the [PARTY NAME HERE]?

2004 CES Wording:

Now the political parties. Use any number from zero to one hundred. Zero means you REALLY DISLIKE them and one hundred means you REALLY LIKE them. How do you feel about the [PARTY NAME HERE]?

PID_j

For each party j, this measure indicates whether the respondent thinks of themselves as a supporter of this party. Supporters are coded 1, and all other respondents are coded zero.

1993 and 1997 CES Wording:

Thinking of federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Conservative, NDP, [BQ/ Reform Party] or none of these?

2000 CES Wording:

In Quebec:

In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Bloc Québécois, Alliance, Conservative, N.D.P, or none of these?

(50% of the sample was asked this question)

Generally speaking, in federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Alliance, Conservative, NDP (New Democratic Party), or do you usually think of yourself as not having a general preference?

(The other 50% of the sample was asked this question)

In the rest of Canada:

In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Alliance, Conservative, Liberal, N.D.P, or none of these?

(50% of the sample was asked this question)

Generally speaking, in federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Bloc Québécois, Alliance, Conservative, NDP (New Democratic Party), or do you usually think of yourself as not having a general preference?

(The other 50% of the sample was asked this question)

2004/2006 CES Wording:

In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P, Bloc Québécois, or none of these?

(if the interviewer was asked, "what Conservative party?" They were instructed to answer "the new one". If the respondent answered "Progressive Conservative", the interviewer was instructed to ask "Do you mean the old Conservative Party or the new Conservative Party?")

(50% of the sample was asked this version)

In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P, Bloc Québécois, another party, or no party?

(if the interviewer was asked, "what Conservative party?" They were instructed to answer "the new one". If the respondent answered "Progressive Conservative", the interviewer was instructed to ask "Do you mean the old Conservative Party or the new Conservative Party?")

(50% of the sample was asked this version)

NOPID

Respondents who did not indicate a party preference are coded "1", and all others are coded "0"

NOISE

The NOISE variable consists of the predicted values for each respondent from the following binary logit model:

Table A.1 Predictors of Non-Response, 1993-2004

	Canada Outside Quebec		Quebec	
	β	SE	β	SE
UNIV	-0.032	0.117	-0.320c	0.148
NOHS	0.181	0.111	0.088	0.128
CAMPINFO	-0.423a	0.070	-0.528a	0.082
NOPID	0.805a	0.092	0.312b	0.110
AGE	-0.003	0.009	-0.011	0.011
AGE ²	0.0003c	0.0001	0.0004c	0.0002
ATTENTION	-1.297a	0.205	-0.547c	0.226
y1993	0.972a	0.134	1.169a	0.178
y1997	0.632a	0.128	0.676a	0.180
y2000	0.476a	0.136	0.914a	0.167
Constant	-2.313a	0.200	-1.735a	0.233
Wald χ^2	291.41a		145.58a	
Pseudo R ²	0.075		0.064	
N	9,563		3,794	

a. $p < .001$ b. $p < .01$ c. $p < .001$

Where "Non-response" is a dichotomous measure (1 = one or more "don't know" or "refused" responses to the party thermometer rating questions; 0 = zero "don't know" or "refused" responses to the party thermometer rating questions)⁶⁸

⁶⁸The 1993 CAMPINFO and ATTENTION measures differ slightly from those in the other CES surveys. The 1993 CAMPINFO measure is an additive index based on the following items:

- Do you happen to know which of the federal parties support the GST?
- And which of the federal parties oppose the GST?
- Do you happen to know which of the federal parties promised to do away with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)?

Table A.2 The NOISE variable: Descriptive Statistics

	Canada Outside Quebec	Quebec
Minimum	0.007	0.015
10th percentile (Low NOISE)	0.023	0.045
Median (Moderate NOISE)	0.060	0.112
90th percentile (High NOISE)	0.158	0.239
Maximum	0.551	0.553
Mean	0.078	0.13
Std. Dev.	0.059	0.078
N	9,563	3,794

CHANCES

1993, 1997, 2000 CES Wording:

Now let's talk about how the parties are doing in your riding. Use a scale from 0 to 100. 0 means a party has NO CHANCE AT ALL of winning, 50 means AN EVEN CHANCE, and 100 means the party is CERTAIN to win. You can use ANY number from 0 to 100.

2004 CES Wording:

In 2004, respondents were asked two questions. The first is:

Do you think [party] has a chance of winning the election in your own local riding? Then, respondents were asked: Use a scale from 0 to 100. 0 means a party has NO CHANCE AT ALL of winning, 50 means AN EVEN CHANCE, and 100 means the party is CERTAIN to win. You can use ANY number from 0 to 100.

Respondents who stated that a party had no chance in response to question 1 scored 0 on question 2.

Respondents who stated that the party was the only one that had a chance in response to question 1 scored 100 on question 2.

-
- Do you happen to know which party promised to eliminate the deficit in 3 years?
 - Do you happen to know which party promised to eliminate the deficit in 5 years?
 - Do you happen to know which party promised to increase spending on public works?

Respondents who answered one question or less correctly are coded as "low information", those who answered two to four correctly are "moderate information", and those who answered five to six correctly are "high information"

The 1993 ATTENTION measure is an additive index (scaled from zero to 1) based on the following items:

- How many days in the past week did you listen to news on the RADIO?
- How many days in the past week did you watch news on TELEVISION?
- How many in the past week did you read news in the NEWSPAPER?

Appendix B: Additional Tables

Table B1. Predictors of Citizen Campaign Information Levels, 1997-2004 (Multinomial Logit and Ordered Logit Estimates)

	Canadian Born Citizens (Multinomial Logit)				Immigrant Canadians (Ordered Logit)	
	Mod. vs. Low Info		High vs. Low Info		β	SE
	β	SE	β	SE		
Block 1						
Age	0.062a	0.006	0.079a	0.007		
Age ²	-0.0007a	0.000	-0.0009a	0.000		
Years in Canada					0.085a	0.021
Years in Canada ²					-0.0008c	0.000
Pre-migration years					0.052	0.030
Pre-migration years ²					-0.0011	0.001
Day of Campaign					0.019c	0.008
y1997	-0.001	0.069	-0.056	0.077	-0.039	0.188
y2000	-0.239a	0.067	0.173c	0.070	0.259	0.183
Constant	-1.502a	0.114	-2.353a	0.125		
Thresholds:						
Mod. inform. (y=2)					1.659	0.360
High inform. (y=3)					3.111a	0.364
Wald χ^2		394.65a		70.73a		
McFadden's Pseudo R ²		0.029		0.048		
N		9,366		794		
Block 2						
Age	0.067a	0.007	0.083a	0.009		
Age ²	-0.0009a	0.000	-0.0011a	0.000		
Years in Canada					0.084a	0.026
Years in Canada ²					-0.0009c	0.000
Pre-migration years					0.033	0.033
Pre-migration years ²					-0.0009	0.001
University	0.664a	0.073	1.062a	0.080	0.522b	0.170
< High School	-0.321a	0.081	-0.735a	0.102	-0.829b	0.272
Retired	0.257c	0.129	0.414b	0.143	-0.011	0.285
Student	0.200	0.150	-0.035	0.187	0.604	0.460
Unemployed	-0.025	0.142	0.159	0.169	-0.930c	0.460
Female	-0.818a	0.061	-1.229a	0.071	-0.664a	0.161
Married	0.243a	0.066	0.178c	0.077	0.365c	0.181
Children	-0.160c	0.069	-0.164c	0.081	-0.394	0.209
Other language	0.159	0.189	0.112	0.223	-0.576a	0.174
Discuss Often	0.791a	0.097	1.189a	0.114	0.992a	0.254
Discuss Occasionally	0.523a	0.073	0.607a	0.095	0.666b	0.221
Attentiveness	1.668a	0.152	3.233a	0.176	1.322a	0.389
Day of Campaign	0.017a	0.003	0.028a	0.004	0.014	0.009
y1997	0.116	0.076	0.186c	0.091	-0.109	0.212
y2000	-0.268a	0.073	0.185c	0.082	0.107	0.202
Constant	-2.394a	0.148	-4.121a	0.183		
Thresholds:						
Mod. inform. (y=2)					2.008	0.554
High inform. (y=3)					3.725	0.559
Wald χ^2		1616.34a		161.41a		
McFadden's Pseudo R ²		0.149		0.145		
N		9,366		794		

a. $p < .001$ b. $p < .01$ c. $p < .05$

Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Table B2 Predictors of Citizen Campaign Information Levels, Including Interactions, 1997-2004
(Multinomial Logit and Ordered Logit Estimates)

	Canadian Born Citizens (Multinomial Logit)				Immigrant Canadians (Ordered Logit)	
	Mod. vs. Low Info		High vs. Low Info		β	SE
	β	SE	β	SE		
Age	0.073a	0.014	0.111a	0.019		
Age*Attentiveness	-0.028	0.030	-0.072c	0.036		
Age ²	-0.0008a	0.000	-0.0011a	0.000		
Age ² *Attentiveness	0.0000	0.000	0.0004	0.001		
Years in Canada					-0.046	0.055
Years in Canada ²					0.0015	0.001
Yrs Canada *Atten					0.254c	0.101
Yrs Canada ² *Atten					-0.0047b	0.002
Pre-migration years					0.033	0.033
Pre-migration years ²					-0.0010	0.001
University	0.662a	0.074	1.059a	0.081	0.498b	0.171
< High School	-0.331a	0.081	-0.745a	0.101	-0.847b	0.269
Retired	0.257c	0.126	0.410b	0.138	-0.016	0.288
Student	0.159	0.153	-0.09	0.196	0.561	0.471
Unemployed	-0.027	0.142	0.165	0.171	-0.975c	0.457
Female	-0.818a	0.062	-1.226a	0.071	-0.670a	0.162
Married	0.247a	0.066	0.179c	0.076	0.345	0.182
Children	-0.157c	0.070	-0.165c	0.082	-0.381	0.209
Other language	0.144	0.191	0.090	0.224	-0.596a	0.176
Discuss Often	0.785a	0.097	1.184a	0.114	0.963a	0.254
Discuss Occasionally	0.521a	0.074	0.610a	0.095	0.607b	0.224
Attentiveness	2.428a	0.451	4.858a	0.536	-1.126	1.134
Day of Campaign	0.017a	0.003	0.027a	0.004	0.014	0.009
y1997	0.118	0.076	0.192c	0.091	-0.126	0.212
y2000	-0.272a	0.073	0.181c	0.082	0.076	0.203
Constant	-2.626a	0.215	-4.799a	0.294		
Thresholds:						
Mod. inform. (y=2)					0.685	0.779
High inform. (y=3)					2.416	0.781
Wald χ^2		1602.09a			169.61a	
McFadden's Pseudo R ²		0.150			0.148	
N		9,366			794	

a. $p < .001$ b. $p < .01$ c. $p < .05$
Sources: 1997-2004 Canadian Election Studies

Appendix C: Data Source Acknowledgements

Data from the 1997, 2000, 2004, and 2006 Canadian Election Studies were provided by the Institute for Social Research (ISR), York University, and were completed for the Canadian Election Teams of André Blais, Université de Montréal (1997-2006 teams), Joanna Everitt, University of New Brunswick (2004-2006), Patrick Fournier, Université de Montréal, Elisabeth Gidengil, McGill University (1997-2006), Richard Nadeau, Université de Montréal (1997-2000), and Neil Nevitte, University of Toronto (1997-2006). The 2004 and 2006 surveys were funded by Elections Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The 1997 and 2000 surveys were funded by SSHRC.

Data from the 1988 and 1993 Canadian Election Studies were provided by ISR, York University. The 1988 data were completed for the Canadian National Election Study Team of Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, and Jean Crete. The 1993 data were completed for the Canadian Election Study team of Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. The 1988 and 1993 surveys were funded by SSHRC.

Data from the 1988 and 1993 Canadian Election Studies were provided by ISR, York University. The 1988 data were completed for the Canadian National Election Study Team of Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, and Jean Crete. The 1993 data were completed for the Canadian Election Study team of Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. The 1988 and 1993 surveys were funded by SSHRC.

Data from the 1968, 1974, 1979, 1980, and 1984 Canadian National Election Studies were provided by the Inter-University Consortium for Social and Political Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan. The 1968 data were collected by John Meisel, Queen's University. The 1974-1980 data were collected by Harold Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc, and John Pammett. The 1984 data were collected by R.D. Lambert, S.D. Brown, J.E. Curtis, B.J. Kay and J.M. Wilson.

Neither the original collectors of these data, Elections Canada, SSHRC, ISR, nor ICPSR bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

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