Université de Montréal

Long-Term Economic Decline and Non-Mainstream Voting

par

Andrea M.L. Perrella

Département de science politique

Faculté des arts et des sciences

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Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures

Cette thèse intitulée :

Long-Term Economic Decline and Non-Mainstream Voting

présentée par :

Andrea M.L. Perrella

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Richard Nadeau, président-rapporteur

André Blais, directeur de recherche

Louis Massicotte, membre du jury

François Pétry, examinateur externe

Claire Durand, représentant du doyen de la FES

SUMMARY

Canadian voting behaviour from 1974 to 2000 is examined by relating long-term economic changes to support for "non-mainstream" parties, defined as parties other than the Liberals or Progressive Conservatives. This long-term perspective is unique, in that standard economic voting research focuses on how short-term economic changes affect support for the incumbent. Instead, a long-term perspective shows long-term economic decline yielding a distinct effect. Instead of the incumbent party being evaluated as to its competence over economic management, those who have suffered long-term economic decline vote in ways that reflect increased rejection for the political system as a whole, with this attitude manifesting itself as voter support for non-mainstream parties. This approach, although new in economic voting, is based on established theory as outlined by Lipset (1959/63) and Easton (1975), whereby long-term economic decline is prone to lead voters to acquire attitudes and behaviours that express discontent towards the political system.

The impact of long-term economic decline on non-mainstream voting is examined through three different approaches, presented as three separate articles. Each, in its own way, illustrates the effects of long-term economic decline. The first article employs an aggregate approach. Federal voting results from 1979 to 2000 are related to short- and long-term economic data, namely unemployment and

labour-force participation rates, all aggregated at the provincial level. The pooled data produce results that confirm the relevance of short-term changes to explain support for the incumbent party, as hypothesized by the "responsibility hypothesis" of standard economic voting, while support for non-mainstream parties is explained by long-term economic decline.

The second article examines long-term economic decline through the perspective of occupation. Data from the 1979 and 1993 Canadian Election Studies and the 1971, 1981 and 1993 Canada Census are pooled together for an individual-level analysis. Results show that those whose occupations have suffered long-term economic decline feel less external political efficacy, vote less, and are more likely to support non-mainstream parties.

The third article draws upon some of the findings from Teixeira and Rogers's study (2000). Canada is used as a case study to demonstrate how the long-term economic decline of working-class individuals who do not possess post-secondary education has changed this group's voting behaviour in a manner that reflects withdrawal of support for the political system as a whole. As in Article 2, both objective economic data (Statistics Canada) and election surveys (CES 1974 to 1997) are used to build models that show how members of this disadvantaged group behaved no differently from other voters before the 1980s, when economic conditions were more "equitable," and how after the early 1980s their long-term economic decline eroded further

their sense of external political efficacy, which in turn led them to vote increasingly for non-mainstream parties.

The project concludes by highlighting two general findings. First, there is a qualitative difference between short-term and long-term economic experience. The former yields implications about the competence of the incumbent, while the latter sheds light on support for the entire political system. Using the multi-stage vote model developed by Blais et al. (2002) as a tool for discussion, economics is highlighted as a central component of the vote calculus, and a factor that yields implications both to more proximate factors as well as to established attitudes and values.

The second general finding concerns the consistency of the results. Generally, the link between long-term economic decline and support for non-mainstream parties is found no matter what perspective is utilized. However, other factors, such as the region in which a voter lives, appear to bear more weight. Nonetheless, given the fact that long-term economic decline affects a voter's attitudes towards the entire political system, and given the fact that it appears to take a long time to develop these attitudes, these effects may be durable.

The conclusion also points to some potential objections with the key concepts of the project and the methods that were employed.

Key words: long-term economic decline; non-mainstream parties; political efficacy; economic voting.

RÉSUMÉ

Le comportement électoral des Canadiens entre 1974 à 2000 est examiné en reliant les changements économiques à long terme et l'appui accordé aux partis « non dominants », à savoir les partis autres que le Parti libéral et le Parti conservateur. Cette perspective à long terme est unique en son genre car les recherches courantes sur le vote économique étudient surtout la relation entre le ressentiment des électeurs, les changements économiques à court terme et l'appui au parti sortant. À l'inverse, dans cette thèse, une perspective à long terme est adoptée et les résultats démontrent que le déclin économique à long terme entraîne un effet distinct. Au lieu d'évaluer la gestion économique du parti sortant, les individus qui ont subi un déclin économique à long terme adoptent des comportements politiques suggérant un rejet du système politique en général, lequel se manifeste clairement par l'appui à des partis « non dominants ». Cette approche, bien que nouvelle dans le domaine de vote économique, est basée sur la théorie déjà établie et décrite par Lipset (1959/63) et Easton (1975), selon laquelle le déclin économique à long terme mène les électeurs à adopter des attitudes et des comportements qui suggèrent le mécontentement envers le système politique.

L'impact du déclin économique à long terme sur le vote est examiné par trois approches différentes, présentées en dans trois articles séparés. Chacun, de sa propre manière, illustre les effets du

déclin économique à long terme. Le premier article utilise une approche agrégée. Les résultats des élections fédérales de 1979 à 2000 sont reliés à des données économiques à court et à long terme, notamment les taux de chômage et d'occupation de la population active, calculés à l'échelon provincial. Les données agrégées donnent des résultats qui confirment la pertinence des changements à court terme pour expliquer l'appui au parti sortant, tandis que le soutien aux partis « non dominants » s'explique au contraire par les changements économiques à long terme.

Le deuxième article examine le déclin économique à long terme par la perspective du statut professionnel. Les données des différentes études électorales canadiennes de 1979 à 1993 et les données du recensement canadien de 1971, 1981 et 1993 sont mises utilisées pour poursuive une analyse au niveau individuel. Selon les résultats obtenus, les individus pratiquant un métier marqué par le déclin économique à long terme tendent à percevoir moins d'efficacité politique des gouvernements, à voter moins, et à appuyer des partis « non dominants ».

Le troisième article est basé sur l'approche adoptée par Teixeira et Rogers (2000), et appliquée aux États-Unis. En examinant la situation d'un groupe démographique canadien particulier, soit les membres de la classe ouvrière ne possédant pas un diplôme d'éducation postsecondaire, cet article démontre comment le déclin économique à long terme a changé leur comportement électoral et

mene au retrait de leur soutien au système politique dans son ensemble. Cet article reprend également des données économiques (Statistique Canada) et des enquêtes électorales (EEC 1974 à 1997). D'une part, les résultats montrent clairement que les membres de ce groupe, déjà désavantagé, se sont comportés comme les autres électeurs avant les années 1980, soit à l'époque où les conditions économiques étaient plus « équitables ». D'autre part, ils démontrent également que, depuis le début des années 1980, leur déclin économique à long terme a mené à une augmentation de leur mécontentement à l'égard du système politique, ce qui a causé l'augmentation du vote pour des partis non dominants.

La thèse se termine en soulignant deux résultats généraux. D'abord, il y a une différence qualitative entre les effets économiques à court et à longs termes. La perception des effets économiques à court terme a des implications sur l'opinion à l'égard de la compétence du parti sortant, alors que celle à long terme a un impact sur le système politique dans son ensemble. En utilisant le modèle de vote « multi-niveaux » développé par Blais et al. (2002) comme outil pour la discussion, les conditions économiques sont considérées comme un facteur central dans les choix électoraux. Plus précisément, elles semblent avoir un effet sur les éléments les plus proche, mais également un effet sur les attitudes et valeurs déjà établies.

Ensuite, la deuxième conclusion générale concerne l'uniformité des résultats. D'une façon générale, le lien entre le déclin économique

à long terme et l'appui de partis non dominants est trouvé peu importe la perspective analytique adoptée. Cependant, d'autres facteurs, tels que la région dans laquelle un électeur réside, semblent avoir plus de poids. Néanmoins, étant donné le fait que le déclin économique à long terme affecte les comportements d'un électeur envers le système politique pris dans son ensemble, et étant donné que cela a pris beaucoup de temps pour que ces attitudes se développent, ces effets ne sont pas susceptibles de disparaître rapidement.

La conclusion souligne aussi quelques objections potentielles avec les concepts principaux du projet et des méthodes qui ont été utilisés.

Mots clés : déclin économique à long terme; partis « non dominants » ; efficacité politique; vote économique.

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"Where some people are very wealthy and others

have nothing, the result will be either extreme

democracy or absolute oligarchy, or despotism

will come from either of those excesses,"

– Aristotle

Introduction: Economic Foundations of Political Legitimacy

The link between economic hardship and voting behaviour is examined by paying particular attention to the last 30 years. Since the 1970s, voters have witnessed turbulent economic changes. The Keynesian economic orthodoxy that sustained generous welfare programs came under attack. Also, the past 30 years has been marked by turbulent election results, such as the minority governments of the 1970s and the emergence in the 1990s of new parties that criticize basic fundamental Canadian political institutions, namely the Reform/ Alliance Party, which advocated constitutional change in order to elevate the influence of Western provinces, and the separatist Bloc Québécois. The basis of support for such parties, and other, smaller parties that have not acquired as much prominence, are examined in light of long-term economic decline.

Economic hardship is often associated with political instability. That people who experience economic problems will look for new political solutions is an idea that has great intuitive plausibility. One possible outcome of economic hardship may be as little as a change in governing party, such as in 1984 when the Progressive Conservatives defeated the Liberal Party, which governed during the recession of the 1980s. Another, and less frequent, consequence of economic hardship is outright rebellion. In the former case, voters react to the performance

of incumbent politicians. In the second case, voters react to a perceived dysfunction in the entire political system. The latter case holds far more drastic implications for democratic governance. But given the current behaviour of voters in Canada, it is not entirely clear whether supporters of the new and semi-successful third parties[1] are expressing a desire for a simple change in governance, or whether they are reacting against the system as a whole. We know even less about the basis for support of more marginal parties that span the political spectrum, be they the communist parties on the left, the Libertarians on the right, or any of several religious parties (e.g., Christian Heritage, Natural Law, etc.). In any case, a generation of economic hardship may be a common driver among voters who have turned away from both the Liberals and the PC Party and towards parties that espouse a completely new political agenda.

The reason economics is advanced as a potentially key determinant of voter discontent stems from the extensive literature that links together economic hardship and political volatility. Lipset (1959/63) notes that one feature of a stable government system is its ability to ensure a certain level of general prosperity, which sustains the system's legitimacy. "A society divided between a large impoverished mass and a small favoured elite results either in oligarchy (dictatorial rule of the small upper stratum) or in tyranny

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[1] Both the Reform/Alliance and the Bloc Québécois have won enough seats to form the official opposition.

(popular-based dictatorship)," (Lipset, 1959/63: 31). If an individual no longer feels assured of a certain level of well being, the legitimacy of the system may erode. Furthermore, in situations in which conditions are in flux, a new group of winners may emerge at the expense of a new group of losers, with the losers reacting by supporting movements that question the legitimacy of the regime, giving rise to new cleavages, or even making already existing cleavages more poignant.

A well known Canadian case study of the economic basis of voter discontent is by Maurice Pinard (1971). Following Smelser's (1963) theory of collective behaviour, Pinard shows that several factors were in place that favoured the growth of the Créditistes. In particular, Quebec voters who were suffering economic decline (or "strains") and who also lived in rural regions made it conducive to mobilize voters around this new party. Such voters switched from one major party to another, eventually giving up on both to support the new political movement.

Both Lipset and Pinard see the link between economic conditions and voting behaviour as reflecting more than just an evaluation of the competence of political leaders. Instead, such a link is a manifestation of support – or lack, thereof – for the entire political system.

More recent work in economic voting research does not accommodate such an understanding of voting. Lewis-Beck (1988), for instance, confirms a link between economic downturn and declining support for the government, relying on the standard economic voting

research approach relating election survey questions on economic perceptions and vote intentions. The main focus is on the incumbent party and its overall level of support, vis-à vis other parties. The main method is to track short-term changes in voting intentions as expressed in election surveys, with survey questions that ask respondents to evaluate the economy, mostly within a short-term time frame (usually 12 months). Conclusions point to a direct relationship between general economic decline and general decline in popular support for the governing party.

This approach may be suitable to forecast election results, but the narrow focus on the short-term is deeply unsatisfactory. Standard economic voting literature makes no distinction of vote shifts from the incumbent mainstream party to a mainstream opposition party, compared to a vote shift from the incumbent to a different type of opposition party, one that is more ideological, perhaps more radical, and perhaps more critical of the "state," and not just critical of some policies of the incumbent party. This is an important omission in the literature. In essence, standard economic voting research fails to distinguish between short-term anger against an incumbent party and an outright legitimacy crisis. This is probably due to reliance on survey data, where sample size may make it next to impossible to trace developments of discontent at the fringes of a party system; too few respondents express support for other parties. Therefore, research that

relies solely on survey data finds it much easier to measure support for and against the incumbent party.

Although the project being presented here also makes use of survey data, the pooling together of several surveys permits the capture of voting at the fringes. In Article 1, actual electoral results from elections held between 1979 and 2000 for each party are used. Articles 2 and 3 use Canadian Election Survey data from 1974 to 1997. This way, distinctions can be made about shifts in voter support between mainstream "pragmatic" parties and non-mainstream parties.

There has hardly been any analysis on whether a shift away from incumbent parties benefits just another incumbent and pragmatic party, or a party with more radical appeals. In other words, economic voting has not yet addressed the issue of the potential for long-term economic hardship on voter attitudes about the political system as a whole.

This project focuses on long-term economic decline, particularly since the 1970s, and its link to voter support for parties that challenge the status quo. Of all the major events in Canadian elections since the 1970s, none ranks more prominent than the 1993 general election, an election marked by two main developments: 1) the rise to prominence of two non-mainstream parties; and 2) the demise of the Progressive Conservative Party, one of the oldest and most established mainstream parties of Canada. This most recent episode of the development of third parties in Canada may validate Pinard's theory, such that a generation

of economic decline brought upon by the stagflationary 1970s and 1980s may have moved some segments of the electorate to shift support from the Liberals and PC to Reform/Alliance and the Bloc Québécois. Perhaps 20 years of economic turbulence, and the forces put upon governments to curtail expenditures and redistributory policies, have led to a whole new set of winners and losers, which, as Lipset would suggest, has led to the emergence of a an issue dimension along which voters divide. But you wouldn't know that from the standard economic voting literature, which makes no attempt to measure the long-term influence of economic stagnation.

In sum, this project addresses the general issue of stable democratic governance by looking at voting as an indicator of discontent towards the entire political system, and by looking at long-term economic hardship as a contributing factor of discontent. The project draws a distinction between voting for a mainstream and non-mainstream party. A switch from one mainstream party to another will be seen as less significant than a switch from a mainstream party to a non-mainstream party. Most economic voting literature makes no distinction between the political significance of choice along these lines. The project makes the assumption that sometimes voters feel drawn to choices that would otherwise seem unattractive under more favourable economic conditions, and that long-term deteriorating economic conditions can disconnect voters from their traditional mainstream party choices.

A- Current Research: The Short-Term Perspective

The following literature review focuses on two main different approaches to understand the link between economic conditions and voter behaviour. The first section on the "Responsibility Hypothesis" reviews the more mainstream approach, characterized by a high reliance on election survey data and a focus on short-term changes.

The second section, entitled "Policy Oriented Voting," focuses on a literature that places more centrality on personal economic conditions and their salience to a voter's views on how the state should govern. This stream of research argues that it may take several elections for long-term economic hardship to motivate voters to abandon mainstream parties in favour of newer political movements. Therefore, the mainstream focus on short-term changes may be unsuitable to capture a phenomenon that spans a longer period of time.

Economic hardship also combines with different factors to become electorally salient. Individuals suffering hardship can relate to others in a similar predicament, at the regional, sectoral, and even the class level, leading to a collective consciousness that propels a new movement.

1- Responsibility Hypothesis

The foundation of economic voting rests on the so-called "responsibility hypothesis," where the competence of the incumbent government is evaluated in light of how it handled the economy. One of the first empirical tests of the hypothesis thesis comes from an analysis of House of Representatives elections in the United States. Kramer (1971) employs aggregate data on income and overall support for incumbent party to validate the hypothesis. Drops in income are inversely related to support for the incumbent party. Kramer's use of "income" can be considered an egotropic indicator, but his aggregate analysis is consistent with either a sociotropic or an egotropic conclusion, given that by aggregating income data, it is not clear whether voters are responding to changes in their personal circumstances, which would make it egotropic, or to changes in overall national income levels, a sociotropic phenomenon (Kramer, 1983). Furthermore, it must be pointed out that Kramer's analysis relates short-term changes in income to short-term changes in support levels.

An individual-level confirmation of the responsibility hypothesis was conducted by Fiorina (1978). Using survey data, Fiorina concludes that voters respond to changes in economic conditions retrospectively, whereby past economic conditions weigh in highly. Also, voter reactions appear sensitive to short-term changes. Fiorina notes, however, that economics is not always politically salient.

Kinder and Kiewiet (1979) coauthored a study that further substantiates the responsibility hypothesis. According to the authors' analysis of a data series stretching from 1956 to 1976, voters appear to switch party preferences according to changes in national economic conditions. Their analysis relies on National Election Study survey data, relating short-term changes in perceptions of economic conditions to vote choice.

Many other studies reinforced the sociotropic version of the responsibility hypothesis, with more nuanced findings. For instance, on the question of which economic indicator is most politically salient, some studies point to unemployment, but not just the raw rate. It may be important that unemployment is high or low in absolute terms, but what seems at least equally as important, if not more so, are changes in the unemployment rate (Nadeau and Blais, 1993, 1995), as well as perceptions about job growth, especially if expectations exceed what is reported by government statistics.

Inflation is another key economic indicator. As Chappell and Viega point out (2000), inflation is one economic condition that the government can control through price controls and perhaps even through monetary policy. But the relationship between inflation and support for the incumbent depends also on the particular party in power. As per the clientele and "salient goal" hypotheses, the relative salience of individual economic indicators depends on a party's general policy agenda. Some parties "own" a particular issue (Carlsen, 2000;

Hibbs, 1987; Rattinger, 1991; Swank, 1993). The United States is a good example where the Democrats focus on unemployment, while the Republicans focus on inflation. [2] Therefore, in times of high unemployment, the Democrats are deemed to benefit more in opposition, because they are seen as the party that is most dedicated to job growth. However, a rise in unemployment is seen to hurt a left-of-centre party more if it's in government compared to its potential to erode support for a right-of-centre administration (Goodhart and Bhansali, 1970). Furthermore, while in government, voters adjust their expectations, figuring a left-of-centre government is probably more likely to make more progress on unemployment than a more right-of-centre government (Powell and Whitten, 1993). It should be noted according to studies of "independents" in the Untied States, such voters rely more on egotropic evaluations, given that such voters are disconnected from partisan cues on how to evaluate sociotropic conditions (Romero and Stambough, 1996).

Overall, the responsibility hypothesis sees voters as evaluators of government performance, relying mainly on national economic conditions. Personal finances are not seen to measure highly in the evaluations. One reason given for this finding is the difficulties in linking personal finances to government policy. An "ethic of self-

[2] American writer Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914) once joked: "What is a Democrat? One who believes that the Republicans have ruined the country. What is a Republican? One who believes that the Democrats would ruin the country."

reliance" may explain why voters, especially in the individualistic culture of the United States, do not link personal fortunes to government behaviour (Sniderman and Brody, 1977). Therefore, the government is seen as yielding less control on personal finances. However, changes to some aspects of personal finances can be traced to government policy. Feldman (1985) notes that although overall sociotropic voting is more prevalent than egotropic voting, there is a "mediated pocketbook effect" where personal finances, or a part thereof, are linked to government behaviour. Feldman also notes that this otherwise negligible effect could be compounded by general conditions: "These results provide clear evidence that under certain conditions – poor economic conditions and clear attributions of responsibility – personal economic self-interest can play a role in political evaluation," (p. 159).

Perhaps the strongest evidence for an egotropic effect comes from the welfare states of northern Europe. In Scandinavian countries, where the government takes a more active role in individual economic well being, personal finances appear more politically relevant (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994, 1995, 1997). Lewis-Beck (1986, 1988) also found evidence for pocketbook voting, but along with evidence for sociotropic voting. Using the Euro-Barometer surveys, Lewis-Beck analyzed economic voting in Western European countries, and developed a model that encompasses different variables that track both general economic trends and more personal, household, conditions.

Pocketbook evaluations, however, show negligible effects, overall. Yet, similar to what was found in the Scandinavian countries, Lewis-Beck found that "when voters think that government policies have had a good or a bad effect on the household financial situation, their vote intention is significantly influenced," (Lewis-Beck, 1986: 325).

Overall, the responsibility hypothesis concludes that voters rely predominantly on retrospective evaluations of sociotropic conditions in order to render a verdict on how well the incumbents are governing. The economy is an important factor, both because it is an important part of life, and because it represents a symbol of overall governance. If the overall economy seems prosperous, voters infer that the government is doing a good job overall. Sociotropic conditions are also widely reported by the media, so voters do not need to possess a great deal of information in order to conclude whether or not the economy is functioning well (Anderson, 2000; Key, 1966). Even though personal finances may provide a more immediate source of economic information, personal circumstances are seen as related more to personal efforts (Feldman, 1982).

2- Policy Oriented Voting

While the responsibility hypothesis relates short-term self-report perceptions of economic changes to short-term changes in party

preferences, a longer-term view reveals voting behaviour as reflective of policy evaluations (Brooks and Brady, 1999). Voters are not understood simply to pass judgment on the government's competence. Instead, voters take a more global perspective; they interpret the legitimacy of changes to welfare programs, cuts to the civil service, particular public policies, and so forth. For example, Brooks and Brady point to the New Deal as an income redistribution policy that sets the foundation for why certain voters have divided themselves between the Republicans and Democrats. The more redistribution-friendly Democrats tend to draw the support of poorer voters, while the wealthier tend to back the more business-friendly Republicans. According to Brooks and Brady, "policy evaluations of the welfare state explain 33% of the differences between voters in the top versus bottom quintile of the income distribution," (1999: 1361). The attack on the welfare state has created a new underclass with an angry baggage of attitudes towards any of the major parties, and perhaps towards the system as a whole.

This line of work is echoed by Teixeira and Rogers (2000), who demonstrate how the more affluent period before the early 1970s gave way to a growing income gap between the upper and lower classes, a gap that has led to a level of discontent among what they refer to as the "forgotten majority," namely white working-class individuals who do not possess a college education (see also Teixeira, 1998). Before 1973, all hard-working Americans could expect to become middle-class. Changes in general economic conditions were felt more equitably

across the board. But after 1973, a widening wage gap raised the salience of long-term personal economic conditions among that segment of the voting population that was most adversely affected. As Nagler and De Boef (2000) point out, if national conditions improve while personal conditions do not, then voters look for other indicators, namely their "economic reference group," such as occupational peers. If individuals' deteriorating personal situations are matched by their peers, then voters might rely more heavily on this experience when evaluating how well the government is looking after their interests. It is precisely this approach that guided the analysis reported in Article 2.

Pinard (1971) also points to reference groups as important to integrate voters to a new movement. An individual's self-identification is partly attributed to memberships in various primary groups, groups that often define themselves according to ethnicity, language, religion, and region. Membership in these groups become politically salient in cases where the group clearly finds itself at a disadvantage, where there appear to be "in groups" and "out groups" in how political benefits are distributed. Lipset (1959/63) discusses this phenomenon in light of economic changes, where changes in stratification lead to the development of new political cleavages. However, Pinard focuses on primary groups as an especially salient factor to explain why Social Credit succeeded more in rural areas of Quebec, where voters are more integrated into primary groups, while the more autonomous urban voters were less likely to be integrated into a new movement. A highly

integrated electorate recognizes peers who share a similar negative economic experience, and this may lead them to a rejection of the current slate of mainstream parties as inadequate.

Another interesting feature of understanding voters through the perspective of reference groups is its challenge of the commonly asserted notion in standard economic voting research of *voter myopia*. Voters are understood to have short-term memories. However, as noted by Van Der Brug et al. (2000), voters' memories may be organized more intricately if understood in terms of a voter's membership to a reference group. It may not necessarily be true that voters simply follow their herd, but it seems reasonable to expect personal concerns, such as hardship, to become politically salient through a reference group. Standard economic voting research has not found such a phenomenon, but this seems most likely due to the fact that it has not looked for it.

B- Operationalizing Voter Behaviour

Several hypotheses are tested to determine whether long-term economic hardship have an effect on the vote. They will be outlined in detail shortly. However, before going into further detail, it should be made clear what is meant by "voting behaviour." Voter behaviour here is examined in ways that lead to an interpretation of voter support for the political system as a whole. A developing legitimacy crisis among

voters, even just a small segment of voters, has not been studied carefully enough. How voters express such sentiments is also not clearly established. But it seems plausible that voters upset with the entire political system would be more prone to abandon those parties most closely associated with the political system. Here, this is viewed as a vote for a party other than that for the Progressive Conservative or the Liberal parties. A vote for any other party is a vote for a non-mainstream party.

No distinction will be made within this broad category. Surprisingly, this is a unique approach since most studies of such parties tend to focus on particular sub-types of parties, especially those that are most prominent. For example, in Canada, Pinard's (1971, 1973) work on the rise of "third parties" was focused on Social Credit. Lately, a considerable amount of attention has been given to the phenomenon of anti-state and anti-system voting, phenomena that appears to have grown more prominent over the last few decades in many advanced democratic states (Bélanger, 2004; Clarke and Kornberg, 1993, 1996; Clarke, et al., 2000; Gidengil, et al., 2001; see also Poguntke, 1996, and Sartori, 1976). More recent work focuses on how discontented voters would be more prone to abandon both the incumbent and the mainstream opposition party if there is a viable "third party" choice (see Hetherington, 1999). Some other work shows a shift of non-mainstream voting from Canada's "traditional" third party,

the NDP, to the newer upstarts Reform/Alliance and Bloc Québécois (Belanger and Nadeau, 2005).

But what is missing in this type of research is a clear distinction between mainstream and non-mainstream. Although the term "mainstream party" has appeared in the literature (in fact, it has appeared quite a lot), it has not always been adequately defined. For example, a report of the 2003 Scottish elections (Burnside et al., 2003) refers to the top four parties as mainstream. Meguid (2005) provides a more precise definition: "Mainstream parties are defined as the electorally dominant actors in the center-left, center, and center-right blocs on the Left-Right political spectrum," (352). A problem with this definition is that it connects mainstream to the ideological spectrum. That may be fine when one describes an extreme left or extreme right party as non-mainstream, but according to the logic, the closer a party is to the center, the more it qualifies as mainstream. But one must not equate a *moderate* party with the mainstream. There are centrists parties that fail to attain the respectability afforded to a so-called mainstream party. In other words, it may be necessary for a mainstream party to hover the center, but a centrist party does not necessarily qualify as mainstream.

An even less clear concept is "non-mainstream." This term has not received nearly as many mentions, and is even less likely to be described in any precise manner. At most, non-mainstream implies the fringe or extreme end of a party system, i.e., the leftovers of a party

system. For example, Meguid (2005) distinguishes mainstream parties from "niche" parties, which tend to focus on single issues or a narrow segment of the electorate. These include Green parties, which tend to focus primarily on the environmental issue, and some radical-right parties, which tend to assert a platform focused on immigration and welfare reform, and not much else. Hearl et al. (1996) and Jolly (2004) distinguish mainstream parties from regional parties. The problem with these perspectives is that it leaves undefined parties that are not strictly regional, not necessarily extremist, yet promote views that are more national and more broad. A non-mainstream party need not necessarily be either a niche or a regional party. The only thing that disqualifies these niche or regional parties from the mainstream is their size: small, marginal parties that win few (if any) seats, or for some other yet unspecified reason do not qualify as mainstream. As a result, niche or regional parties tend to do no better than sit in opposition.

In order to bring more clarity and precision to this concept, a "mainstream party" is seen here to mean a party that is implicated in the political system, a political "insider," even if that party sits in opposition. In pre-2004 Canada, the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties are, indeed, implicated as political insiders, even when one sits in opposition while the other occupies government (awaiting its inevitable return to occupy 24 Sussex Drive). Whereas "non-mainstream" describes a party that is generally regarded as an outsider, not tainted in any way as having a hand in the political

system. In Canada, these include all parties that have not been in power.

Arguably, this conceptualization may have limited applicability in multi-party systems where lines between "insider" and "outsider" parties may be blurred. Nonetheless, there is some support in the literature for this definition, although no one has really gone so far as provide as precise a definition. There is some suggestion that to become more mainstream, a party must be closer to occupying power. There are several ways this can happen. First, a mainstream party can draw on policy ideas of a non-mainstream party, thereby legitimating and providing a measure of respect for a party that was previously seen as non-mainstream (Bale, 2003). Second, a non-mainstream party can be seen as more mainstream if it becomes coalitionable, such as the Green parties (Mair, 2001). In either case, what was once an outsider has evolved – or is evolving – towards becoming an insider. What was once regarded as a party that was completely outside of the political executive is less of an outsider.

Generally, the impetus for such research is the emergence of new parties that appear to exploit discontent towards the political system and that enjoy some measure of success, even if only at the regional level. The populist movement that spawned the Reform Party in Canada[3] and the separatist Bloc Québécois have all stimulated

[3] The Reform/Alliance populist movement is not a uniquely Canadian phenomenon. In fact, the rise of the radical right in Europe and in other

renewed interest in the political basis of these new parties. It is almost as if the growth and "arrival" of non-mainstream parties is greeted with a sense of surprise. But if one looks at election ballots prior to the emergence of any of these "third" parties, one sees parties other than the most prominent. Support for these non-mainstream parties does exist, and support levels do vary from one election to the next. The question then changes from "what caused these parties to emerge?" to "what explains their unusually high levels of support?" An answer to that question is being pursued here by looking at the economic-basis of support for these parties, even when these parties are not prominent and not a potentially "threatening" force.

That is the main purpose that motivated this research project. Support for non-mainstream parties is the main focus, and thus, support for non-mainstream parties is the main dependent variable. Support for the incumbent is also studied, but only to show that standard economic voting is correct in that short-term changes to economic conditions yield consequences for the ruling incumbent, but that it is unable to explain voter propensity to support non-mainstream parties.

Attitude measures, such as external political efficacy, have also been used, particularly in the second and third articles. These attitude

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advanced industrial countries has drawn a great deal attention. See, for example, Ignazi (2003), the October 2004 issue of *Journal of Political Ideologies* (especially Betz and Johnson (2004), Taggart (2004), and Fieschi and Heywood (2004), and Norris (2005).

measures validate the overall argument that there is an association between the degree to which voters hold negative feelings about the political system and the extent to which they support parties that are clearly not mainstream.

C- Methodology and Hypotheses

Support for non-mainstream parties is related to voters' experience with long-term economic hardship, as per three different contexts: region, occupation, and socio-demographic group.[4] Each of these contexts is examined in a unique article. Each article uses different data, different levels of analysis, and different methods. Table I.1 provides a brief overview of each.

Economic data are always drawn from government statistical databases, either the *Labour Force Survey* or the Census. Data were drawn from 1969 to 2001, although each article focuses on particular periods. Voting data are drawn from two main sources: Elections Canada and the Canadian Election Study surveys. The aggregate-level approach of Article 1 makes use of actual vote results as reported by

[4] The concept "class" is being avoided intentionally. The term tends to signify hierarchy and status as it pertains to power relations (i.e., Marxist analysis), while the purpose here is to focus on a group of voters who share demographic similarities. They may all belong to the "working-class," but only those in the working-class who do not possess post-secondary education are considered members of this economically disadvantaged demographic group.

Elections Canada, while the individual-level analysis in Articles 2 and 3 rely on the CES surveys.

Table I.1: Basic summary of research project

	Article		
	1	**2**	**3**
Unit of analysis	Region	Occupation	Demographic group
Economic data	Labour Force Survey (1969-2000)	Census (1971-1991)	Labour Force Survey (1976-1997)
Economic indicators	Unemployment and labour-force participation rates	Proportion of workforce	Unemployment rates
Voting data	Elections Canada (1979-2000)	Canadian Election Studies (1979 and 1993)	Canadian Election Studies (1974-1997)
Voting indicators	Votes cast	Reported vote choice	Reported vote choice
Level of analysis	Aggregate: Provinces	Individual	Individual
Method	OLS Regression	Multinomial logit	Multinomial logit

In all cases, a voter's "long term" economic experience is understood to mean a span of 10 years. This is regarded as a suitable period given that it is more than twice as long as the standard government term, during which voters may have witnessed different

economic cycles, different election campaigns, and different governing parties.

A series of hypotheses are formulated to explore the relationship between long-term economic hardship and voting intentions. The following three sections give a more detailed description of each article.

• *Article 1: Regional Level*

Regional-level analysis is fairly straight forward. Changes in regional economic conditions, as revealed by census data, are related to changes in regional voting patterns. Chapter 1 covers in more detail the rationale behind each indicator, but for now it is sufficient to say that the regional unit of analysis is province, and labour-market indicators are used to measure economic conditions. In particular, short-term and long-term changes to unemployment and labour-force participation rates are used as key variables to explain voting behaviour, all at the provincial level. Short-term changes in unemployment are seen as more relevant in explaining voter support for the incumbent, while long-term changes in participation rates, which more adequately indicate the overall economic conditions, reflect more generalized economic health, are seen as more relevant to explain non-mainstream voting. Election returns from 1979 to 2000 are assembled into one pooled dataset. The provincial-level percentage of vote shares won by the incumbent and by

non-mainstream parties (two separate dependent variables) are related to the different economic indicators. These different measures and variables have been used to test the following hypotheses:

H1.1: Support for the incumbent is inversely related to short-term changes in unemployment.

H1.2: Support for non-mainstream parties is inversely related to long-term changes in the labour participation rate.

• *Article 2: Occupational Level*

Analysis at the occupational level relies on Statistics Canada datasets as well as Canadian Election Study (CES) datasets. The CES tracks respondent occupations, which enables an analysis of the link between the economic conditions of different occupational groups and the vote. Census data are used to identify occupations that have experienced declines. Census data from 1971, 1981 and 1991 are used to track changes over two 10-year periods: 1971 to 1981, and 1981 to 1991. Occupational-level economic conditions from the first period are related to respondents' vote choice for the 1979 election, while the

second period is related to respondents vote choice of the 1993 CES. A multinomial logit model is generated to test the following hypotheses:

> ***H2.1: Voters in occupational groups experiencing lower levels of job growth are less likely to vote and more likely to support non-mainstream parties.***

The use of CES surveys also allows the inclusion of attitude measures, namely external political efficacy. This attitude was selected to determine if it functions as a possible mediating factor between economic decline and vote choice. The logic being that a respondent whose occupation has declined over the long term is more likely to feel ripped off by the system, and thus, would be more likely to manifest a weaker sense of political efficacy. This attitude, in turn, is expected to raise a voter's propensity to vote for parties least aligned with the political system, i.e., non-mainstream parties. The potential for such a dynamic is tested with the following hypotheses:

> ***H2.2: Voters in occupational groups experiencing lower levels of job growth regard the political system as less responsive.***

H2.3: The relationship between occupational job growth and voting behaviour disappears when external political efficacy is included as a control variable.

• *Article 3: Socio-Demographic Group*

Canadian Election Study respondents are categorized according to a socio-demographic group that has been defined by Teixeira and Rogers (2000). According to Teixeira and Rogers, non-college educated working-class white voters in the United States have experienced long-term economic decline in terms of both income and employment security, all the while watching governing elites focus their attention on affirmative action programs and welfare initiatives to help minority groups and other “special interests.” The disadvantaged socio-demographic group has consequently felt neglected by the system, and after a while has begun to express discontent by supporting less mainstream movements, which in the United States came in the form of Ross Perot’s independent presidential bid, or the Republican’s 1994 mid-term election campaign which focused on anti-welfare policy positions.

The third article explores whether the same phenomenon has occurred in Canada. *Labour Force Survey* data have been used to determine whether similar economic trends have occurred in Canada.

Using unemployment rates, it will be shown that those with a working-class occupation (e.g., traditional "blue collar" trades, factory workers, clerks, etc.) and who lack a college education have generally been worse off economically, but since the 1980s, their precarious economic condition has worsened relative to all others, and continued to lag well into the late 1990s. Race was not examined, because it is not reported in the *Labour Force Survey.*

The following hypothesis is tested to determine if the post-1980s long-term economic decline of this demographic group is linked to increased support for non-mainstream parties.

> ***H3.1: Working-class voters who lack post-secondary education are more likely to vote non-mainstream compared to all other voters in elections held after the 1980s compared to elections prior to the 1980s.***

CES survey data are used. Respondents who belong to the identified demographic group (working-class, non-college educated) are compared to all other respondents. Datasets from 1974 to 1997 have been pooled into two separate files: one for elections from 1974 to 1980, and the second one for elections from 1984 to 1997.

Similar to the second article, political efficacy is examined as a possible mediating factor, and tested according to the following hypotheses:

H3.2: Working-class voters without post-secondary education have lower levels of external political efficacy than other respondents.

H3.3: Political efficacy is an intervening variable that explains why working-class voters without post-secondary education are more likely to vote non-mainstream after the 1980s.

Control Variables

The aforementioned hypotheses may suggest certain conclusions about the relationship between economic hardship and voting behaviour, but the apparent link may in fact be spurious, or at the very least may need to be specified. The descriptions of Articles 2 and 3 explicitly state political efficacy as a potential mediating factor, but all articles, including Article 1, also include other control variables.

In all cases, regional dummy variables are used. Respondents (or, in the case of Article 1, data points) are identified as belonging to the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, or the West. In all cases, Ontario is set as the reference group. In the second and third articles, other control variables have been included, namely: gender (male, not male) religion

(Catholic, not Catholic), language (French, not French), and age. Also, dummy variables have been created to account for particular election years, but only for Articles 2 and 3. Election-year dummies were tried in Article 1, but failed to yield significant results.

D- General Findings

Each article produces findings that confirm the hypotheses. In the first article, non-mainstream voting is explained by long-term economic decline, with short-term decline yielding no impact whatsoever. Conversely, support for the incumbent party is explained by the short-term indicator, not the long-term measure.

In the second article, survey respondents whose occupation has suffered long-term economic decline show a higher propensity to support non-mainstream parties. Furthermore, this behaviour is connected to political efficacy, such that those who work in occupations in decline are more likely to feel less efficacious.

Results of the third article show that survey respondents who belong to a particular economically hard-hit demographic group (working-class individuals who do not have post-secondary education) are more likely to vote non-mainstream after 1980, when this group's economic decline was more pronounced. As in Article 2, this phenomenon is tied to political efficacy.

Taken as a whole, these different approaches lead to three general conclusions. First, long-term economic decline is a relevant factor. It is able to explain non-mainstream voting scores significant results, even when controlling for other factors.

Second, long-term economic decline yields a qualitatively different type of voting behaviour. While short-term decline is more connected to the evaluation of the competence of particular political leaders and parties, long-term decline appears more connected to voter attitudes about the political system as a whole.

Third, it must be pointed out that the effect of long-term economic decline is not dramatic. Some of the other control variables show a greater weight in explaining voter support for non-mainstream parties, particularly regional factors. The Conclusion discusses this point at greater length.

CHAPTER 1

LONG-TERM ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND NON-MAINSTREAM VOTING IN CANADA

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Introduction: Economic Decline and Voter Volatility

Discontent in Canada manifests itself through the emergence of new parties that erode the support of otherwise well-established parties. The plurality electoral system, which heavily favours few, large and generally centrist parties, makes such a phenomenon more poignant. In Canada, the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties have traditionally alternated as government and official opposition. In such a system, success from any other party is seen as unusual, linked to the rejection of both established parties, and therefore possibly linked to some serious level of discontent. But apart from the rare and often short-lived breakthroughs from "third" parties, Canadians do vote for many other alternatives. When support for such alternatives increase, one cannot but believe voters are deeply upset about something, compelling them to turn their backs on "politics as usual."

Of all the sources of discontent that can displace a voter away from any of the two main parties, economic hardship seems the most obvious. Many other political issues come and go, but over time economic performance remains a salient consideration among voters. No other issue touches both a voter's need to survive and a voter's hopes to prosper. This is why economic conditions are probably the most studied factor in electoral research, and why economic voting research offers some of the most robust models that accurately predict election outcomes.

Despite its success, economic voting research focuses too narrowly on support levels for incumbents, which for the most part tend to be well-established and mainstream parties, by relating such mainstream support to short-term economic conditions. More often than not, declines in support for the incumbent tend to correspond to increased support for another mainstream opposition party. Traditionally in Canada, this support tends to volley between the Liberal and Progressive Conservative Parties. In the United States, the Republican and Democratic Parties. For the most part, such movements guide the headlines – are voters supporting the current government or the main opposition?

Although a short-term approach helps explain why voters like or dislike an incumbent, it does not adequately explain the strengthening or weakening support for alternative parties, many of which advance a radical agenda. This neglect stems largely from the focus on short-term economic and political changes, an approach that makes it difficult to study the basis of electoral support for smaller parties, the support of which may depend more on structural, longer-term conditions. But a look at electoral politics in Canada (and other countries) over the past generation suggests a need to take a more complete look at voting behaviour in light of economic changes. Many reasons might explain the emergence of new, and one might argue, radical, parties since 1993, namely the Reform/Alliance party, which advocates constitutional change in order to elevate the influence of western provinces, and the

separatist Bloc Québécois, which advocates a different sort of constitutional change. Can it not be argued that support for these alternative parties stems from a deep level of discontent, which might be tied to long-term economic decline?

Such a question is a contrast to the concerns of conventional economic voting research. A recession here and there is not unusual and not expected to lead to the same level of rage as when voters persistently find themselves struggling economically, even between recessions. Such a discouraging experience might lead one to question not only the sitting incumbent, but might lead to the development of more severe evaluations that pin blame on the political structure, given that it is seen to fail in delivering the goods regardless who's in power.

In a way, there is nothing new to the notion that voter discontent could stem from economic hardship. Lipset (1959/1963) states, for instance, that one feature of a stable government system is its ability to sustain a healthy economy, which sustains the system's legitimacy. "From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that only in a wealthy society in which relatively few citizens lived at the level of real poverty could there be a situation in which the mass of the population intelligently participate in politics and develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of irresponsible demagogues," (30). Whether or not non-mainstream parties are led by "irresponsible demagogues" is a separate issue, but Lipset's main point is that voters faced with a serious economic decline tend to abandon the

"usual" parties in favour of something completely new. Furthermore, Lipset notes that this is especially true among those who experience a great deal of economic volatility, such as miners, farmers, and so forth. He adds that discontented people who share a common bond or common communication channel are more likely to mobilize politically. This helps explain why many new political movements tend to succeed first in particular regions (e.g., agricultural regions) or among particular segments of a population (e.g., unionized workers).

In Canada, the political implications of economic hardship have been explained most thoroughly by Maurice Pinard (1971), who focused on how economic strains helped shift Quebec voters away from the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives and towards Social Credit. He demonstrated how voters in economically hard-hit regions are more likely to turn to a third party for solutions, once voters reject the traditional parties for doing too little. Pinard used his findings to validate Smesler's (1963) theory of collective behaviour, whereby strains (such as economic hardship), combined with other conditions, such as the ease with which individuals can mobilize, lead to unrest. Such conditions were present in rural Quebec, where voters suffering economic strains switched from one major party to another, eventually giving up on both to support a new political movement. It should be pointed out that according to Pinard, it is not poverty *per se* that triggers discontent, since the poor are often disengaged from politics. But a

change from one economic condition to a worse one can lead to support for a new political movement, independent of the movement's ideology.[1]

A common feature of Lipset's and Pinard's perspectives is the attention paid to voting as not just an expression of approval or disapproval for the governing party, but also as an expression of support for the entire political system. This is measured by the extent to which economic decline places voters in an increasingly vulnerable position, and consequently, leads them to question the appropriateness, or legitimacy, of their regime. Legitimacy and stability, curiously, are two central concerns in political science that contemporary work in economic voting appears to overlook. Perhaps Canada is not a likely candidate for an all-out legitimacy crisis, but the research here will show that Canada is also not immune to such a development. Long-term economic decline is related to reduced support for mainstream political parties, but such a development escapes conventional economic voting models, hence the need to re-conceptualize the link between economic conditions and voting behaviour.

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[1] Pinard (1971) notes that the success of a new political movement is not as dependent on its ideology, given that discontented voters who are ready for an alternative would tend simply to support whichever party "that appears to them most likely to be successful, whether it is conservative or progressive in the eyes of the sophisticated observer," (95), which was the Social Credit in the case of Quebec.

Conventional Economic Voting Models

A great deal of economic voting research is based on the "responsibility hypothesis," where voters are understood to pass judgment on how well the government has handled the economy. This is by far one of the most prolific areas of voting research, having accumulated a wealth of literature that includes hundreds of manuscripts (Lewis-Beck and Paldam, 2000). It is no surprise, since in a way, it is rather easy to formulate testable hypotheses regarding economic conditions and voting behaviour. Models that predict election prospects for the incumbent are also very marketable, since many outside the confines of academia, such as news commentators, lobbyists and political professionals, are interested in predicting election outcomes, with economic conditions often emerging as a very solid basis for a reliable political forecast.

General findings are consistent: Bad economic times spell trouble for the party in office. It did not take a generation of research to confirm what is clearly very intuitive, but it has taken a great deal of work to identify the precise manner economics works. The conceptualization of economics and voting has taken research in a variety of directions, leading to a varied set of conclusions. The following review shows how far economic voting has gone to explain the link between economic conditions and voter behaviour. But as will be seen, there is clearly far

more distance yet to cover, and conventional economic voting has, for the most part, conducted research with a narrow focus.

Economic voting research confirms what is commonly referred to as the sociotropic thesis: Voters react to *national* economic conditions rather than personal, or "pocketbook," finances. Personal financial considerations are nowhere nearly as important as national economic conditions, findings that challenge the otherwise clean Downsian model that sees voters adjust their support for the incumbent according to personal economic circumstances (Downs, 1957). Egocentric effects do exist, but tend to be weaker than sociotropic effects (Lewis-Beck, 1988). Several reasons are given to explain why national conditions are more influential than personal economic factors. First, it is not always easy to attribute blame or credit for changes in personal finances, but it is possible to link general economic trends to an administration's policies. In some societies, such as the United States (the setting of most economic voting research), an individualistic political culture reduces the political relevance of individual circumstances decisions (Feldman, 1982, 1985; Sniderman and Brody, 1977). However, pocketbook effects emerge more prominent when voters can clearly attribute personal circumstances to government, a phenomenon particularly salient in societies with more interventionist governments (i.e., welfare states), where personal economic conditions are very much tied to state policies (Nannestad and Paldam 1994, 1995, 1997).

Whereas the sociotropic vs. egocentric debate pertains to the spatial context of economic voting effects, the retrospective vs. prospective debate focuses attention on the time dimension. Fiorina (1978) was among the first to show that voters rely heavily on past economic conditions, given that past economic conditions are more readily known, and therefore, blame and credit for past economic conditions are more easily established (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979, 1981). A formidable opposition to this view is contained in the forward-looking "bankers" hypothesis (Erikson, et al., 2000; MacKuen, et al., 1992), which relates trends in consumer confidence in the United States to support levels for the President. Findings substantiate a view of the voter as capable of assessing future economic expectations and linking those expectations with the current governing administration. Other studies find room for both retrospective and prospective effects. Nadeau and Lewis-Beck (2001), for instance, note that retrospective effects are present if voters are evaluating an incumbent, such as the U.S. president seeking a second term, while prospective effects emerge more salient if there is no such candidate.

In either case, whether economic conditions are conceptualized as retrospective or prospective, the time horizon is very short: about 12 months. Furthermore, some see this time horizon too long, where voter behaviour appear to correlate more strongly to economic changes a few months prior (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994). There is a good reason why it is not a good idea to extend the time horizon too far out. Much

economic voting research is based on survey data, and respondents are not presumed to recall accurately economic conditions that go back longer than a year or two. Furthermore, it is not deemed reasonable to expect respondents to project too far into the future. As a result, economic voting research is based, for the most part, on the short-term.

Although survey-level research restricts the time horizon, the time horizon of aggregate level work is not much longer. One of the first economic voting studies employs aggregate data (Kramer 1971), where declines in aggregate-level income are related to reduced support for incumbents, conceptualized as U.S. House of Representatives candidates from the same incumbent presidential party. The findings reveal a pattern that is consistent with the retrospective hypothesis,[2] where declines in economic conditions erode support from the incumbent party. But economic change is measured from one election year to the year prior, a short-term horizon.

Further methodological precision reveals other unique characteristics of various indicators. Take unemployment, for instance. High or low unemployment rates may be politically important in absolute terms, but what seems at least equally as important, if not more so, are *changes* in the unemployment rate (Nadeau and Blais, 1993, 1995). Furthermore, voters seem to react to job growth levels if

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[2] Kramer (1983) points out that aggregate level data does not confirm or negate an egocentric link. Voting behaviour related to aggregate economic data cannot explain whether voters respond to changes to their own personal incomes, or to changes in national-level incomes.

their expectations are higher than actually reported by government statistics. Perceptions about unemployment are driven by personal experience, regional conditions, as well as partisan cues (Nadeau et al., 2000). Others find interactive effects between economic and political factors. For instance, the clientele and "salient goal" hypotheses connect the relative salience of individual economic indicators to a party's policy agenda. Here, unemployment and inflation mean different things to voters as they evaluate different parties. Some parties have a degree of "ownership" over a particular problem (see, for example, Carlsen, 2000; Hibbs, 1987; Rattinger, 1991; Swank, 1993). A more recent stream of research focuses attention on regional conditions (see, for example, Cutler, 2002; Godbout and Bélanger, 2002; Mondak et al., 1996), where conditions at the provincial, regional or even neighbourhood level have been measured to mediate sociotropic evaluations.

Overall, the different approaches to economic voting research yield interesting results. But two consistent features throughout the literature is the short-term horizon and the focus on support levels for the government (i.e., incumbent). What is needed is a look at whether voters respond to more structural changes, a more durable set of economic circumstances, the duration of which takes a much longer period to complete. If long-term economic decline chips away at support for both the incumbent and the mainstream opposition in favour of non-mainstream parties, then a short-term horizon might not detect such a shift. Generally, support for non-mainstream parties is very small, and

changes over the short-term are very slight. Hence, a longer-term view is needed to measure something that otherwise might go unnoticed.

It is not to say that the long-term is completely ignored. Brooks and Brady (1999), for instance, show that a longer-term view reveals voting behaviour as reflective of policy evaluations. Here, voters evaluate party stands on issues such as welfare programs, the size of government, the legitimacy of institutions, and other evaluations that require more than just 12 months to develop. There is nothing inherently economic about this category, given that policies address numerous non-economic issues. But in many instances, policies affect voters economically, or are evaluated in light of economic conditions. As an example, Brooks and Brady mention the New Deal in the United States as an income redistribution initiative that divided the Republicans and Democrats. It is rational, then, for poorer voters to prefer greater redistribution, while the wealthier prefer otherwise.

There is some evidence to suggest that a generation of painful economic restructuring and long-term economic decline can lead to voter resentment. Teixeira and Rogers (2000) point to 1973 as a dividing line in economic history, with the pre-1973 period marked by general affluence, while the post-1973 period was marked by a growing income gap between the upper and lower classes, a gap that has led to increased voter resentment. Such a perspective specifies sociotropic/retrospective evaluations as relevant before 1973, when all hard-working Americans could expect to become middle-class. But the

stakes began to change after 1973, with a widening wage gap making long-term personal economic interests more salient among that segment of the voting population that was most adversely affected.

In sum, if voters see that no mainstream party appears able – or willing – to reverse long-term economic declines, then it should come as no surprise to see voters blame the "system." But such a phenomenon cannot easily be captured by conventional methods that relate short-term economic changes to opinions about the governing party. A one-year improvement in economic conditions may certainly yield some benefit to the incumbent party, but a lengthy period of stagnation might shift the focus of political discourse to the margins of non-mainstream political movements.

Conceptualizing Voting: Mainstream vs. Non-Mainstream

Economic voting studies that focus only on the level of support for incumbent parties cannot adequately measure levels of discontent. Votes for the opposition Liberals during a PC reign is not the same as voting for the left-of-center New Democratic Party (NDP), or for Reform, Bloc, Libertarian, and so forth. There is a different, and sometimes more aggressive, message communicated when voters support smaller opposition parties. There are different types of such opposition parties, each emerging under a unique context (see Gunther and Diamond

(2003) for a more complete and updated discussion), but it is sometimes not easy to categorize a particular political party into any one type.

A common term associated with a non-traditional opposition party is "third" party, a concept applied in Canada by Maurice Pinard. According to Pinard (1973) a third party is simply a "non-traditional party which has not yet been in power," (455). Frustrated voters who do not see a satisfactory option among the traditional offerings would look for alternatives other than the Liberal and PC Parties. Both traditional parties emerged from *within* Canada's parliament, making them essentially insiders, even when one party is in opposition. Whereas other parties have extra-parliamentary origins whose challenge to the two traditional parties can only be noticed by contrasting positions, which normally attack at the same institutions that have formed along with the traditional parties (Landes, 2002; Taggart, 1998).

Despite the simplicity of such a definition, the concept of a "third party" may be too specific for a study of long-term economic voting. First, few third parties run candidates in all constituencies and in all provinces. The Bloc Québécois only fields candidates in Quebec. Other parties, such as Reform, initially fielded candidates in the Western provinces only, and later expanded to other provinces except Quebec in 1993. Even then, not all constituencies in the "Rest of Canada" had a Reform candidate. Second, even when a third party fields candidates in all provinces, its prominence and campaign strategy may vary from province to province. For instance, the NDP's profile in Quebec has

always been negligible. Third, some of the most successful smaller "third" parties in Canadian history have faded into oblivion, making a long-term focus difficult. The Social Credit, Reform, Bloc and NDP all have captured the attention of those who wish to study voter discontent in Canada. But third parties (except, perhaps, the NDP) eventually fade away. Social Credit no longer appears on the Quebec electoral radar; Reform has morphed into the Alliance which later merged with the PC party; the NDP has seen better days. The rise and fall of these parties within a relatively short to medium time frame does not easily permit a study of long-term voting trends. Fourth, the NDP might not qualify as a third party simply because it is not obvious whether this party is "non-traditional." The NDP may take a leftist stance on many issues, and may have had radical roots, but they are by no means a novelty in politics, and may simply be seen as a traditional opposition party (Gidengil, et al., 2001). They are nonetheless a party with extra-parliamentary origins, and remain, at least federally, outsiders.

Even if it is feasible to study a third party over a reasonably long period of time, the interpretation of votes for such parties would be open to question. One could argue that the Reform and the Bloc qualify as "anti-state" parties. An anti-state party pursues fundamental, at times even constitutional, change to reform the entire political system, not simply just to replace the current executive (Sartori, 1976). Communist and fascist parties fall into this category, running candidates in democratic elections just to acquire power, only to do away with

democratic institutions – or implement drastic reforms – once in power. Although not necessarily as extreme as Communist or fascist parties, the Reform/Alliance party and Bloc Québécois could qualify as anti-state. One party was founded to challenge standard Canadian institutions, such as the unelected Senate,[3] and the other party was founded to pursue a different sort of fundamental change, Quebec's independence. On the other hand, one could argue that neither party intends to uproot democratic institutions or to completely eliminate the Canadian state, but instead hopes to rearrange and rebalance the institutions to reflect regional concerns.

New parties such as the Reform/Alliance party could also qualify as an "anti-party" movement. The basis of such movements stems from negative perceptions of established parties that lead to a view of parties as no longer able to represent the electorate (Poguntke, 1996). Declining turnout, dealignment and the rise of support for the Reform/Alliance party coincide with an increased sense of discontent towards Canada's two main political parties (see, for example, Bélanger, 2004; Clarke and Kornberg, 1993, 1996; Clarke, et al., 2000; Gidengil, et al., 2001).[4] But

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[3] The Reform party's populist views were also prominent. They demanded more "free votes," the legislative recall, more referenda. Some of their more controversial views include opposition to official bilingualism and a general distaste for a centralized federation.

[4] It should be noted that Poguntke (1996) distinguishes between specific and generalized anti-partyism. The first explains voter discontent with overall performance of governing or other key parties, while the later points to voter discontent with the whole concept of a political party. Bélanger (2004) and Gidengil et al. (2001) show that sometimes a party can tap into both sentiments, as in the case of the Reform Party of Canada, which appealed to

again, the Reform/Alliance party does not field candidates simply to oust the outsiders, but has evolved to behave less and less as a western protest party and increasingly as a party with an eye on government, especially following the merger with the PC party.

While it is not always obvious whether a larger third party reflects either anti-state or anti-party elements, the smaller parties are even less clear. What about the Green party, Christian Heritage, or "fringe" parties that at times appear to parody the political system (e.g., Rhinoceros)? To some extent, such smaller parties reflect both anti-state and anti-party sentiments. The more religious movements might derive support from those who regard mainstream political parties as too decadent, especially in light of hot-button issues such as abortion and homosexual rights. More policy-oriented movements might reflect an anti-system views, with the Greens deriving some support from ecocentrics.

Given all these particular constraints with the concept of a third party, a more general concept is needed. The term "non-mainstream" party seems to conjure the same type of characteristics normally ascribed to third parties: an alternative choice. But "non-mainstream" is a more general concept, and non-mainstream voting can be defined as simply the aggregate of votes cast for such alternatives. Table 1.1 lists all non-mainstream parties that ran candidates during the period of this study. Size does not matter, because non-mainstream parties could

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those who were upset with both the Liberals and Conservatives, as well as those who otherwise felt disengaged from party politics altogether.

range in size from larger movements that have formed the official opposition, such as the Reform/Alliance party and Bloc Québécois, to smaller parties and less prominent candidates that hardly ever get mentioned, such as independents, the Marxist-Leninists, the Green party, Libertarians, Natural Law, and so forth. All non-mainstream parties are unique in what they stand for and how they attract voters, but one could argue that the common feature among all non-mainstream parties is that a vote for such parties is clearly not a vote for politics as usual. A vote for a non-mainstream party is a rejection of mainstream politics.

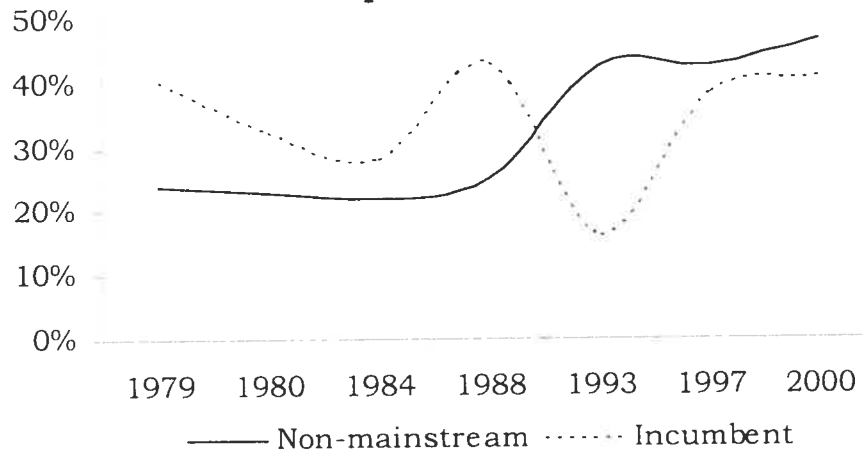
When viewed as a whole, it is clear Canadians have voted in sufficiently high numbers against the two mainstream parties, the Liberal and Progressive Conservative Parties. Prior to the watershed 1993 election, the proportion of votes cast for non-mainstream parties hovered within a range 20 to 25 percent (see Figure 1.1), due mainly – but not exclusively – to support for the NDP. Since 1993, support for the non-mainstream parties surged past 40 percent, due mostly – again, not exclusively – to the Reform/Alliance party and the BQ. In other words, while support for particular non-mainstream parties is volatile over time, support overall for all non-mainstream parties tends to be more steady, and support levels tend to reflect a generalized expression for an alternative voice, sometimes based on rage, sometimes on ideology, but generally based on a rejection of mainstream politics as represented by the typical parties that tend to occupy government.

Table 1.1: Non-mainstream parties that ran candidates in elections from 1979 to 2000

Party
Abolitionist Party of Canada
Bloc Québécois
Canada Party
Canadian Action Party
Canadian Alliance
Christian Heritage Party of Canada
Communist Party of Canada
Confederation of Regions Western Party
Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
Green Party of Canada
Independent
Libertarian Party of Canada
Marijuana Party
Marxist-Leninist Party
National Party of Canada
Natural Law Party of Canada
New Democratic Party
Parti Nationaliste du Québec
Parti Rhinocéros
Party for the Commonwealth of Canada
Reform Party of Canada
Social Credit
Union Populaire

Source: http://www.parl.gc.ca

Figure 1.1: Vote shares of non-mainstream and incumbent parties, 1979-2000



Source: http://www.parl.gc.ca

Data and Methods

In order to link economic conditions to support for non-mainstream parties, provincial economic and provincially pooled federal voting data were compiled. Canada's 10 provinces offer neat packages of both economic data and voting results, permitting the construction of 10 data points for every election being studied. Election results from previous elections are conveniently and freely available from Canada's Library of Parliament web page. Ballots cast for every candidate, whether affiliated to a party or not, are contained in these databases. Aggregated provincial-level election results are used to construct two separate variables. One variable tracks the percentage of votes cast for

non-mainstream parties, comprised of votes for candidates not affiliated with either the two mainstream parties. Another variable tracks the percentage of votes cast for the incumbent party. The Liberals were the incumbent for the 1979, 1984, 1997 and 2000 elections; the PC was the incumbent for the 1980, 1988 and 1993 elections. For the seven elections covered, more than 87 million valid votes have been cast, the vast proportion of which for the Liberal and Progressive Conservative party, Canada's two mainstream parties.

Combined to the voting data, provincial-level economic data from 1969 to 2000 were gathered from Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey* databases (CANSIM Table 282-0002), producing a pooled aggregate dataset of 69 data points.[5] Two key economic indicators were extracted: unemployment rate, and participation rate. The unemployment rate requires little justification, given that it is a valid and widely used measure of economic conditions. The other labour-market indicator, the participation rate, appears never to have been used in voting research. Economic research, especially labour economics, does pay a great deal of attention to participation-rates, a measure that reveals economic conditions not accurately captured by the unemployment rate.

First, labour-force participation is affected by longer-term conditions, such as demographics. Immigration, the baby-boom

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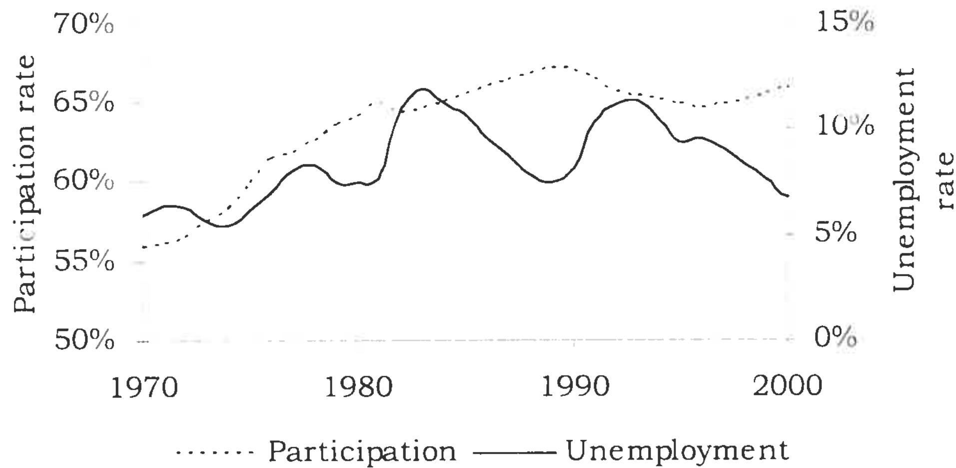
[5] The total number of data points would have been 70, but unemployment data for Prince Edward Island was missing for some years during the early 1970s, reducing the sample size to 69 for two of the three models tested.

generation and the entry of women into the workforce all affect the supply side of the workforce. Data from Statistics Canada reflect some of these demographic changes. For instance, the male-to-female ratio of the labour force declined from .30 in 1976 to .23 in 2000.[6] Second, labour-force participation may reflect overall economic health. Economic expansion, such as the period following the Second World War up to the 1960s, drew more people into the workforce, while trends from the 1960s to the 1980s show the reverse. Economic shocks (e.g., OPEC), stagflation, downsizing and the outsourcing of manufacturing and industrial work to the developing world all contribute to overall economic malaise that affects the "demand" side for labour. Industry automation can permanently eliminate the need for certain workers, rendering them economically obsolete, with the consequence of seeing larger segments of the population – especially those who lack a post-secondary education – disqualified from many of the growth areas of the economy, or qualified only for work that does not pay as much as the blue-collar union wages of a previous generation. Such conditions appear to have negatively affected labour-force participation (Holzer, 1990), which may explain the post-1970s slowing trend of the participation rate in Figure 1.2.

[6] CANSIM Table 282-0002.

Figure 1.2: Labour market trends in Canada, 1969-2000



Source: Statistics Canada

If it persists, extended periods of economic decline discourage workers who simply give up looking for work, while potential workers – such as students who have recently graduated – do not even bother to look (Sapsford, 1981). This might lead to unemployment, but it might also lead to a different type of employment, such as part-time work. According to Statistics Canada, the ratio of the part-time to full-time workers grew from .14 in 1976 to .22 in 2000.[7]

All of these factors contribute to overall earning potential, which is another key factor that drives participation rates (Parsons, 1980). Declining income prospects discourage potential workers from seeking employment. This degree of economic malaise is not always adequately

[7] Ibid.

captured by simply relying on unemployment figures. Participation rates are then a more comprehensive indicator.

Another good reason to use the participation rate is its ability to tap into long-term economic trends. Short-term decline, including the occasional recession, may have some impact on participation rates, but the impact seems more pronounced on unemployment, which tends to bounce back more quickly. As shown in Figure 1.2, participation rates, on the other hand, increase or decrease independently of the business cycle. This suggests that the decision to join or withdraw from the labour force depends on long-term factors rather than short-term economic swings (Ostry and Zaidi, 1979). In other words, the labour-force participation rate functions as a general indicator of overall economic strength.

For each main indicator – unemployment and participation – two different types of variables are created, one for short-term changes and one that covers the long-term. Short-term changes are simply an arithmetic subtraction of election-year rates less the rates of one year prior. Long-term changes are calculated in a similar fashion, current year rates minus the rates 10 years prior.

Canada's political landscape cannot be fully understood without taking into account regional considerations (Gidengil, et al., 1999), hence the decision to include regional dummies. Furthermore, since the dataset comprises of provincially pooled data, and given that regression analysis is being used to test the hypotheses, regional dummies are

necessary to account for the possibility that residuals might not be independent across the regions. Three such regional dummies are constructed; one for the Western provinces; another for Quebec; and finally, one for Atlantic provinces.[8] Ontario was the excluded region and thereby functions as the reference group.

The four economic variables (short- and long-term versions of unemployment and participation) and the three regional dummy variables form the basis of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions models to test two different hypotheses. The first hypothesis tests the responsibility hypothesis. Confirmation of this hypothesis would be substantiated if short-term economic conditions explain support levels for the incumbent party. Of the two economic variables, the short-term change in the unemployment rate would be expected to yield the most significant results in explaining incumbency vote.

H1.1: Support for the incumbent is inversely related to short-term changes in unemployment.

The participation rate is not expected to score significant results, and neither economic variable's long-term versions is expected to yield significant results.

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[8] Western provinces include: British Columbia; Alberta; Saskatchewan; and Manitoba. Atlantic provinces include: Newfoundland and Labrador; Prince Edward Island; Nova Scotia; and New Brunswick.

The second hypothesis tests the link between long-term economic decline and support for non-mainstream parties.

H1.2: Support for non-mainstream parties is inversely related to long-term changes in the labour participation rate.

The short-term version of participation rate and both versions of the unemployment variable are expected to yield insignificant findings.

Results

The economic variables and regional dummies produce regression models summarized in Table 1.2.[9] Overall, the models appear stable, showing no major violation of any assumption to a linear regression model.[10] The first model confirms the responsibility hypothesis, but with mixed results. Overall, support for an incumbent could be explained by short-term changes to unemployment, as hypothesized. However, short-term changes to the participation rate also yield a marginally significant result ($p<.10$), suggesting that it, too, should be included in the model.

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[9] See Appendix 1 for a complete detailed description of all variables.
[10] Collinearity diagnostics suggest no problem with respect to the relationship among the different independent variables. Residual analysis also does not suggest any other serious problems, except for Models 2a and 2b, where heteroscedasticity was detected. This was treated using a base-10 logarithmic transformation of the dependent variable.

Table 1.2: Comparing long- and short-term effects

	1			2a			2b		
Dependent variable, Vote share for:	**Incumbent**			**Non- mainstream parties***					
	Coef.	Std. Error		Coef.	Std. Error		Coef.	Std. Error	
Economic conditions, Long-term:									
Participation rate	.233	,455		**-2.783**	,788	p<.001	**-2.931**	,637	p<.001
Unemployment rate	-.367	,576		-.148	,998				
Economic conditions, Short-term:									
Participation rate	**4.679**	2,651	p<.10	1.215	4,592		1.748	4,534	
Unemployment rate	**-3.831**	1,576	p<.05	-1.343	2,730		-1.707	2,606	
Regional dummies:									
West	**-.088**	,040	p<.05	**.250**	,070	p<.001	**.254**	,067	p<.001
Quebec	.0194	,064		.0862	,111		.0881	,109	
Atlantic	,001	,039		**-.178**	,068	p<.05	**-.185**	,067	p<.001
Intercept	**.324**	,038	p<.001	**-.506**	,066	p<.001	**-.508**	,065	p<.001
R-sq	.309			.626			.635		
Adj. R-sq	.229			.584			.601		
SEE	.105			.182			.181		
N	69			69			70		

*The dependent variable (percentage vote for non-mainstream parties) was converted to a base-10 logarithm to correct for heteroscedasticity.

Figure 1.3a: Participation rate and non-mainstream vote, Western provinces

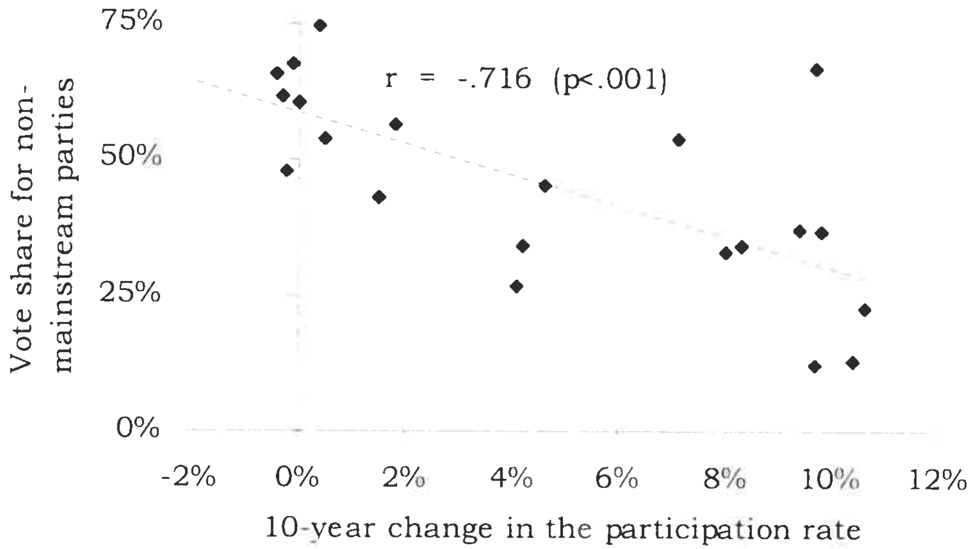


Figure 1.3b: Participation rate and non-mainstream vote, Central Canada

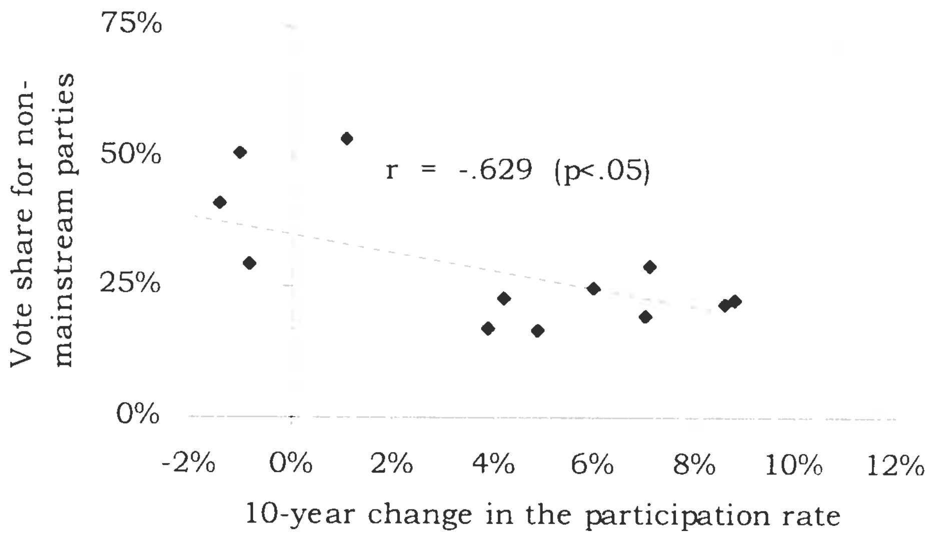
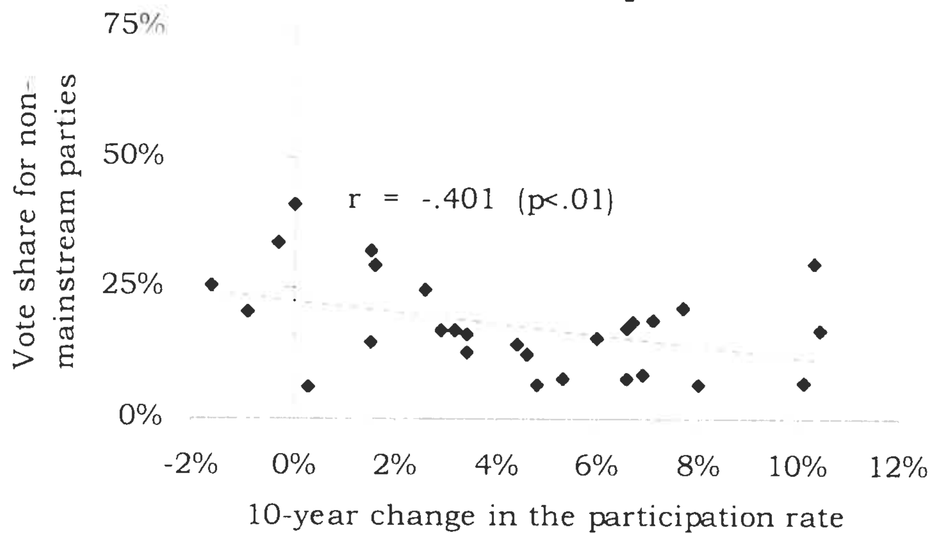


Figure 1.3c: Participation rate and non-mainstream vote, Atlantic provinces



Models 2a and 2b confirm the second hypothesis. Model 2a clearly shows that the only significant economic variable that explains support for non-mainstream voting is the long-term change in participation rates. None of the short-term variables yields significant scores, and neither does the long-term change in unemployment. (Model 2b excludes long-term unemployment for reasons to be explained below.) The second hypothesis is further confirmed visually through regional-level scatterplots (see Figures 1.3a to 1.3c). All three major regional groupings show a consistent pattern: Weaker growth in participation is related to stronger support for non-mainstream parties.

In a sense, these results simply suggest that long-term economic decline does not bode well for mainstream parties. This interpretation follows the conceptualization of labour-force participation as strictly

economic. However, the participation rate could also be interpreted as a measurement of overall integration into mainstream society. Drops in labour-force participation reflect worsening long-term socioeconomic conditions. In such a context, a decline in the participation rate captures a very real sense of economic hardship, and might also reflect "social exclusion" (Brady, 2003: 723). The decision to stop looking for work is a reaction to bad economic conditions, alienation, and an overall sense of exclusion, sentiments normally exploited by non-mainstream parties.

However, as already pointed out in reference to Pinard's work, the socially excluded tend to be non-voters. Hence, there is nothing to these findings to suggest that the inverse relationship between labour force participation and support for non-mainstream parties derives from voters who have withdrawn from the workforce. Instead, it may be those workers left behind to do all the work that may feel resentment. In addition, they may not necessarily express their resentment by pointing to economic conditions. As Teixeira and Rogers (2000) indicate, rising discontent among working-class American voters stems from a sense of unfairness. The large segment of voters who work, pay taxes and struggle to make ends meet see a political establishment more intent on addressing the needs of minorities, welfare recipients and other citizens who otherwise do not work, and who probably do not vote, either. But working-class citizens do vote in greater proportions, and the political relevance of their sense of unfairness grows amid worsening economic

conditions over a long period of time. It would then come as no surprise to see such voters gravitate increasingly towards political parties that advocate a social and political agenda wrapped in the language of worker-rights, taxpayer-rights and government waste. The political behaviour itself may be non-economic, but a drive for such a movement may very well stem from economic strains.

The other main economic indicator, unemployment, did not produce nearly as consistent a picture. Long-term increases in the unemployment rate are not accompanied by increased support for non-mainstream parties, mostly because of the cyclical pattern of unemployment. It is clearly more volatility than the steadier pattern of participation rates (see Figure 1.2). Therefore, a 10-year change in unemployment rates might not accurately capture a trend. It is precisely for this reason that two different long-term models were constructed, one that included long-term changes to unemployment, and one without unemployment. Results of both versions do not differ by much, but it might make more theoretical sense to exclude unemployment, at least the way it is used in these models.

Among the regional variables, the West regional dummy is consistently significant for both models. The West dummy is negative in Model 1, which suggests lower levels of support for the government within western provinces, the flip-side to the positive coefficient score in Models 2a and 2b. This is not overly surprising, given that non-mainstream parties have often flared up in the West. The Progressives,

Social Credit, the New Democrats, and, more recently, the Reform/Alliance parties have traditionally drawn a lot of support from the West. "Western alienation" is a sentiment that clearly has contributed to the success of non-mainstream parties in that region. But would not economic decline further enflame a region with a political context already predisposed to view conventional Canadian politics as biased in favour of "the center?" In other words, economic decline in other parts of Canada might be interpreted as either bad economic decisions by state leaders or simply an ebb in the economic cycle, while in the West it might be seen as a rip off. Lipset (1959/1963) and Pinard (1971) both mention this possibility, and the data appear to validate them both. This may explain why the scatterplot for the Western provinces (Figure 1.3a) shows a stronger inverse relationship between labour-force participation and support for non-mainstream parties than the scatterplots for the other two regions: The West may be the region that is most sensitive to economic changes, and consequently, more prone to transfer economic discontent to support for a non-mainstream party.

As for the other two regional dummies, one or both of the remaining regions fail to attain significance. Quebec never yields a significant result, probably due to the small sample size that accounts for this regional dummy. The Atlantic regional dummy is significant only for the model that explains vote for non-mainstream parties, and curiously, living in what is clearly Canada's poorest region *removes* vote

share from non-mainstream parties. One explanation for this finding is that the context in the Atlantic provinces might be totally opposite to that of the West, whereby voters in the Maritimes are more likely to sustain their support for mainstream parties. Again, this validates Pinard and Lipset, where poverty (and the Atlantic provinces are persistently the poorest in Canada) does not automatically cause people to revolt. Nonetheless, even in the poorest region of Canada we see a significant inverse relationship between labour-force participation and support non-mainstream parties.

Conclusion

Results presented here lead to several conclusions. First, the responsibility hypothesis is easily replicated, where support levels for the incumbent party could reasonably be tied to short-term economic changes. In particular, a drop (increase) in the unemployment rate over a period of one year bolsters (hurts) voter support for the incumbent party. But it is one thing for voters to "kick out the rascals" and place in government another mainstream party, and quite another when voters increasingly prefer parties with more radical agendas. This leads to the second main conclusion: long-term economic decline appears linked to the support for non-mainstream parties. This finding lends support to Lipset's (1959/1963) theory that relates governmental legitimacy to

generalized affluence. If an increase in voter support for non-mainstream parties is understood to mean a vote against the status quo as well as a vote in favour of a set of ideas that pursue fundamental changes, then the findings reported here support Lipset's theory.[11]

Such results could not have surfaced by relying on conventional economic voting techniques that focus on the short-term. The short-term cannot easily detect any growing disconnect between voters and mainstream politics, an evolutionary process that expectedly takes a considerable amount of time. If voter shifts are presumed to move at glacial speeds, then short-term economic indicators can only tap into changes in support for the incumbent party. This is another important conclusion to draw from this article's analytical approach: Long-term changes to economic conditions matter at least just as much as short-term.

But this is as far as aggregate data can substantiate. The results presented here are based on a compilation of provincially pooled numbers, which cannot theoretically be extrapolated to individual behaviour. Theoretical validation requires analysis at the next level, namely analysis at the individual-level data. Election surveys and other micro-level data might form a basis upon which to construct such further studies, assuming appropriate data exist.

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[11] Given potential ambiguity as to whether the NDP is a *true* non-mainstream party, it should be noted that the results are generally replicated if the NDP is excluded from analysis. However, this causes the standard error of the estimate to grow considerably. Similarly, results remain unchanged if the marginal parties are excluded. This is discussed further in the Conclusion on page 162.

Furthermore, the conclusion that long-term economic decline increases support for non-mainstream parties may be a phenomenon unique to plurality systems. The same conceptualization of voting behaviour may not yield the same results in proportional representation systems. In PR systems, as clearly stated by Duverger (1954), voters who wish to support smaller parties do not necessarily feel their votes would be "wasted." Consequently, voters cast ballots for parties that appeal to specific political agendas, an effect that in turn encourages the proliferation of more parties. Hence, PR systems are more likely than plurality systems to encourage voter support for radical, separatist, regional, single-issue, extremist or other non-mainstream political parties, regardless of economic contexts. But in a plurality system, it takes a great deal of strife (such as long-term economic decline) to encourage voters to move away from the traditional choices and to take a chance on a non-mainstream party. Also, as Pinard (1971) notes, voters suffering strain shift their support to a third party when the main opposition party is weak in their constituency. In Canada's case, the weakness of the Progressive Conservatives in rural Quebec led otherwise Liberal supporters to vote for the rising Social Credit. Third parties in such a context can succeed locally or regionally but not nationally. But voters in a PR system do not require the context of one-party dominance to feel inclined towards supporting a non-mainstream party, since there a vote cast for a smaller party would not necessarily be wasted. Such an institutional context limits Pinard's approach, and also limits the extent

to which the results from this article could be generalized to different electoral systems.

In addition, PR systems further complicate matters through their propensity to form coalition governments. Such partnerships may make it difficult to separate mainstream from the non-mainstream parties. Take Denmark and Austria as examples. Denmark's 2001 election produced a coalition of the Liberal and Conservative parties, two parties that may be considered mainstream. But Denmark's coalition also relies on an opposition party, the far-right Danish People's party, to govern with a majority. Austria, too, experimented with a coalition involving a far-right party, the Freedom party. Should such non-traditional and otherwise unconventional parties be considered mainstream once they are admitted into a governing coalition, even if such parties advance an ambitious and arguably non-mainstream agenda?

Multi-partyism and institutional contexts that favour coalition governments make the mainstream/non-mainstream conceptualization of voting behaviour difficult to apply. More precision may be required to relate long-term economic decline to increased support for whatever qualifies as "non-mainstream" in such contexts. Lately, that behaviour appears tied to the recent success of nationalist and far-right parties that challenge the status quo. It would be valuable to assess a link between growing support for such parties in other industrialized economies and the considerable economic restructuring that has taken place over the past generation. Neo-conservative challenges to the

welfare state, OPEC oil shocks and the shift of manufacturing jobs to developing countries may have all led to more challenging economic conditions for voters. If the Canadian case is not unique, then long-term economic change and economic decline in other countries may shed light into the growth of political movements that challenge mainstream politics.

CHAPTER 2

LONG-TERM ECONOMIC DECLINE AMONG OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS: POLITICAL EFFICACY AND SUPPORT FOR NON-MAINSTREAM PARTIES

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Democratic Choices: Turnover or Rage?

In a democracy, no elected official assumes tenure; turnover is expected. Even good politicians often fail to get re-elected, and that is perfectly appropriate, since democracies empower voters to pick – and remove – their leaders. But there remain questions as to the criteria voters use to make such a choice. Among the many different theories that seek to explain voting behaviour, perhaps the most robust findings emerge from those that link voting behaviour to economic conditions. Out of plethora of articles and books written about economic voting, the basic conclusion is actually quite simple: Good economic conditions encourage voters to support the incumbent, while economic hard times lead voters to turn away from the governing party. Standard economic voting research produces consistent findings that by now there should be no dispute about the centrality of economics in a political system.

This is nothing new. As noted by Lipset (1959/1963), even the Ancient Greeks recognized a link between economic prosperity and support for political leaders. Voters and politicians are fully aware that bad economic times yield potentially negative consequences for the ruling incumbent. But normally, the incumbent's loss comes at the victory of the main opposition party.

In Canada, the ruling incumbent and the main opposition have tended to be either the Liberal or Progressive Conservative Parties. Since Confederation in 1867, no other party has become government. But over

the last generation, voters have been disengaging from these mainstream parties. Actually, more and more Canadians have been disengaging from politics altogether. Fewer Canadians turn out to vote, and among those that do, an increasing number have been gravitating towards those parties that voice a more radical agenda.

Standard-economic voting research does not account for such a phenomenon. It fails to link economics to more fundamental aspects of governance, namely stability and legitimacy. Economics here is not simply seen as an evaluative component for voters to judge whether the government is doing a good job, but is understood as the basis upon which voters evaluate whether the overall *system* is seen as legitimate. Therefore, while voters expectedly turn away from the governing party amid economic decline, where do they end up? Do they shift towards political movements that raise questions not only about particular political leaders or particular policies, but also about the *way* political decisions are made? To use Eastonian terms (Easton, 1975), does economic decline lead voters to focus attention on more *diffuse* political objects, such as the general principals and institutions that underlie governance?

Some of the more successful political parties in recent Canadian politics are those non-mainstream parties that appear to stand for fundamental change and that appear to challenge the established principles of the Canadian model of governance. The Reform Party emerged in the Western provinces to turn Canada's appointed Senate

into something that resembles very much the American Senate: elected members with equal representation from each province and empowered with greater legislative authority. This, it is believed, would rebalance the federation, which is presently viewed as biased towards the vote-rich central provinces. The Bloc Québécois emerged in 1990 after the collapse of the Meech Lake constitutional accord and has since been asserting reform to the federal system in favour of Quebec independence. Even the not-so-recent New Democratic Party has a longstanding reputation of pushing for fundamental reforms, be it nationalization of corporations, socialization of health care, and electoral reform. And then there are the many smaller parties. Some appeal to more ideologically pure visions (e.g., the Marxist-Leninist Party), some to issue-specific platforms (e.g., the Marijuana Party), others to fringe movements (e.g., the Natural Law Party), and a few may even be considered parodies (e.g., Rhinoceros Party). But most, if not all, of these non-mainstream parties appear to draw support from voters who feel a need to address a sense of unfairness and imbalance regarding the Canadian configuration of power. When voters mobilize around such a theme, they are not looking simply to change individual political leaders at the helm, but instead are pointing their criticism to the overall *way* that they are being governed.

Traditionally in Canada, such an agenda is raised by smaller parties. And the plurality electoral formula would tend to downplay the significance of these parties, since the system favours larger parties. Yet,

Canadians have voted for these smaller parties for many decades, albeit not in large numbers, until 1993. But over time, support for smaller parties has varied. What explains this variation? Is variation in support just random, or is it linked to something more structural? These questions cannot easily be answered by standard economic voting research. The "responsibility hypothesis" that forms the basis of economic voting models focuses on "specific" objects. But people experiencing economic decline may reject not only the party that happens to govern; they may also begin to question the whole political system. Voters suffering long-term economic decline, especially if they identify with a group that can be considered as consistently disadvantaged, may re-examine their political loyalties framed as "us vs. them." In other words, if voters identify with a group (Nagler and Niemann 1997; Nagler and Willette, 1999) and realize that the economic experience of the whole group has not fared well over the long term, then members of this declining group may begin to question the system's fairness and legitimacy. Do such voters simply shrug off their apparent disadvantaged conditions as simply part of the ups and downs of ordinary life in an advanced industrialized society? Or, do such voters interpret their peers' suffering as unjust? Do they begin to question the integrity of the political system? Would such a group begin to manifest negative attitudes towards the system?

From this perspective, it is useful to link the long-term economic experience of occupational groups with voting behaviour and with

attitudes about the political system, namely external political efficacy. External political efficacy measures the extent to which a citizen perceives the political system as functional, or, more precisely, as responsive. If the political system appears to be playing favourites, such that some groups appear to win while other groups consistently lose, then the loser may regard the system as non-responsive. If non-responsive means being an "out group," then long-term economic decline would most definitely qualify for outsider status. Voters in such a category would not only register lower levels of external political efficacy, but they would also support parties that echo these sentiments of discontent. But in order to understand such a phenomenon, a more long-term and broad perspective is required to connect economic changes, attitude changes, and fundamental voter shifts.

Narrow Focus of Standard Economic Voting Research

Economic voting's research predominant focus is the short-term. A common method of data gathering is to use surveys to gauge voters' perceptions of the economy over the previous 12 months.[1] This approach is widely successful, able to generate accurate predictions of voter support for an incumbent. This approach is also based on the

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[1] Voters can also be seen as forward-looking, or prospective. See Erikson, et al., 2000, and MacKuen, et al., 1992.

voter myopia assumption, where voters' memories are assumed not to extend longer than a few quarters (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994). Economic conditions that extend past one year are seen as too distant to enter the voting calculus.

Alternatively, analysis could rely on actual economic data instead of survey responses. But even here, economic voting studies tend to rely on short-term data. Kramer (1971, 1983) was among the first to relate voting behaviour to real-world economic data, with results validating the responsibility hypothesis: Declines in economic conditions in the United States *one year* before an election erode support for House of Representatives candidates of the president's party.

Another trait of standard economic voting research is its tendency to view voters as one homogenous group, as if all voters share a similar economic experience.[2] All voters are assumed to know whether the country as a whole is growing or in decline. But economic changes are not experienced the same way throughout the economy. Sectors differ according to the extent of change (some sectors grow more than others) and the direction of change (some sectors grow, others suffer). The question is: Do voters identify with their "sector?" There is some suggestion that voters do, indeed, evaluate the economy in light of reference groups. Within standard economic voting, some have attempted to disaggregate voters. Weatherford (1978) categorizes voters

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[2] Some studies take into account voter heterogeneity with respect to sophistication and knowledge (see, for instance, Krause, 1997).

according to class. Others (see, for example, Carlsen, 2000; Goodhart and Bhansali, 1970; Hibbs, 1987; Rattinger, 1991; Swank, 1993) note how some voters respond more to inflation, while others to unemployment. Voters are also disaggregated according to region (Cutler, 2002; Godbout and Bélanger, 2002; Mondak et al., 1996). And others have argued for examining the link between economics and voting through a voter's "economic reference group," such as one's occupational group (Nagler and Niemann, 1997; Nagler and Willette, 1999). If a voter's economic reference group is doing well, then that voter would tend to support the incumbent.

Another constraint with standard economic voting research is its tendency to interpret voting behaviour as a zero-sum game between the incumbent and its main challenger. This perspective may reflect the fact that much economic voting research takes place in the United States, where voters have only two viable choices, the Republican and the Democratic Party. But in Canada and most other countries, voters do indeed have more choices. In fact, some parties are clearly associated with the system while others are more peripheral. Should a vote against the ruling Liberal Party be seen as the same as a vote for the Bloc Québécois, or a vote for the Greens, or even, for simply not voting at all? Standard-economic voting, in general, has little to say about all these different choices, and this oversight weakens its interpretative leverage. Voters who turn their backs on mainstream politics punish the ruling

incumbents, but they also jeopardize the stability of the entire political system.

Non-Mainstream Parties

The Liberals and Conservatives dominated Canada's parliament at the founding and for the remainder of the 19th century and are therefore seen as the two parties most connected with the overall political system. Anger against the overall political system is understood to implicate both of these parties. In other words, a vote for either mainstream party is seen as one unique behaviour that is reflective of ordinary, stable politics, while a vote for a party other than any of these two mainstream parties is seen as an expression for something completely different. Therefore, if voters wish to express anger against the entire political system, voters are expected to shift support away from the mainstream and towards non-mainstream alternatives.[3]

Canadian history is dotted by the rise of non-mainstream movements that challenge the status quo. Parties such as the

[3] The concept of "third party" might also capture the same type of voting behaviour. Pinard (1973) defines a third party as a "non-traditional party which has not yet been in power," (455). Although "third party" seems generic enough, such a concept seems more apt to explain the rise of a party that is normally a regional phenomenon, and a party that, effectively, finishes in *third* place. If not third, then maybe a close fourth. The Creditistes's success in Quebec and the Reform Party's emergence in Western Canada are two appropriate examples of "third parties."

Progressives,[4] Social Credit, and more recently, the Reform Party and Bloc Québécois have garnered support from those who feel the entire political system is in need of fundamental reform. Perhaps one of the most successful non-mainstream parties is the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which later became the NDP. This traditional opposition party (Gidengil, et al., 2001) has extra-parliamentary origins and remain, federally at least, political outsiders.[5] But Canadians have voted for more than just the more prominent parties among the non-mainstream offerings. More marginal parties have garnered votes, such as the Libertarians, the Marxists-Leninists, Christian Heritage, and so on. In any case, Canada's plurality system and the traditional competition between the two mainstream parties have made a choice to vote against either mainstream option cognitively charged. A voter must reflect upon the possibility that a vote for a non-mainstream party may be a waste. But first, such a voter would have to determine whether it is worthwhile even to vote at all. In either case, the basis of such decisions is connected to an overall evaluation of the functionality of the political system.

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[4] The Progressives eventually disappeared, with many of its members joining the Liberals (see Morton, 1950), but its leader went on to head the floundering Conservative party in 1942, on condition that the party rename itself Progressive Conservative. That name stuck until the floundering PC Party merged with the Alliance Party (formerly Reform Party), with the new entity calling itself the Conservative Party.

[5] Results of the analysis in this article are unaffected if NDP voters are excluded. Also, results are generally replicated if analysis excludes marginal parties, that is, parties other than the most prominent "third parties" (i.e., the NDP; Social Credit for elections during the 1970s; Bloc Québécois from 1993 onward; and Reform/Alliance from 1988 onward). Please see the Conclusion (page 162) for further discussion.

External Efficacy: Measure of System Support

A vote for or against the status quo depends on whether or not one regards the status quo as appropriate. Voters drawn to non-mainstream parties, be they traditional opposition parties such as the NDP, populist movements such as Reform, or one of the many more obscure parties are assumed to support parties that are "outside" the system. These parties formed outside Parliament, have never won a federal election or been part of a federal government. In fact, the only official coalition government in Canadian history was that of the two mainstream parties. The Unionist government of 1917-1920 grouped together Conservative MPs and Liberal MPs who were in favour of conscription during the First World War. The NDP has, at times, supported Liberal minority governments, but was never officially a part of the government. In any case, non-mainstream parties are political outsiders, and their outsider status is used to empathize with voters' feelings that the system has shut them out, and often put forward radical solutions to change things. For instance, the Bloc Québécois's solution is for Quebec to leave Canada; communists want to eliminate private property.

In political behaviour, one of the more commonly used indicators of such an attitude is external political efficacy. It is a measure that

dates back to the 1950s, when it was part of a five-item scale[6] of "efficacy" (Campbell, et al., 1954). Later studies (Balch, 1974; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Lane, 1959) demonstrate a need to separate two sub-dimensions: internal efficacy, which measures the extent to which voters see themselves able to impact the system, and external efficacy, which measures the extent to which voters regard the political system as *responsive*. More recent studies add further sophistication to the concept. Craig et al. (1990), for instance, distinguish not only internal efficacy from external efficacy, but they also identify other related concepts, such as regime-based trust and incumbent-based trust.

Despite issues related to its multidimensionality, efficacy is seen as a set of attitudes that form through socialization (Easton and Dennis, 1967; Iyengar, 1980) and is therefore durable and resistant to change (Aish and Jöreskog, 1990). It is an underlying basis of a society's political culture, and it enables us to distinguish more participant from less participant orientations (Almond and Verba, 1963), with levels of efficacy directly related to democratic modes of participation, such as vote turnout (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982).

Despite its durability, levels of efficacy can vary among different subgroups of any society. Inter-group variations can be explained by

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[6] The original survey items are: i) "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think;" ii) The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in this country;" iii) Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things;" iv) People like me don't have any say about what the government does;" and v) Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on."

socio-economic status (Wu, 2003), and even by general economic conditions. For instance, Canadians who live in more "central" economic regions tend to measure higher levels of efficacy compared to those who live in more "peripheral" regions (Gidengil, 1990). But efficacy can also change over time. It may not happen quickly, but if a regime fails to deliver positive results, and if people feel that their input is less valued, then it should come as no surprise to find more and more citizens adjust their attitudes accordingly. In particular, citizens who increasingly regard themselves as shut out of the political process are expected to withdraw support from the regime. As stated by Madsen (1978): "While one should assume no exact correspondence between efficacy and support, it nonetheless is surely true that when a supposedly democratic system is seen to have *failed* in its promise of citizen efficacy, it is likely to lose the support of its disillusioned members," (868, emphasis his).

Disparities in social and economic conditions provide voters with clues as to the success or failure of the political system. One group of voters experiences negative results and blames the incumbent government. But another group of voters experiences negative results but feels discouraged at the possibility of influencing any real change. It is this second group of unhappy voters that deserves more scrutiny, because it is this group that is most likely to disengage from mainstream politics, either by withdrawing completely, or by moving towards political movements that are potentially destabilizing.

Data and Methods

Analysis of the link between economic conditions and voter support is broken down into several key steps. First, voters are categorized according to occupational groups. Statistics Canada's 1980 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system catalogues more than 400 specific occupational titles that are sorted into 15 occupational groupings. The economic indicator used to measure economic change is based on the notion of "job growth," a measure which has not yet caught the attention of standard economic voting research (but see Lewis-Beck and Tien, 2004). Labour force data contained in the 1971, 1981 and the 1991 Censuses are used to measure the growth of each of the 15 occupational categories over two separate 10-year periods: 1971 to 1981, and 1981 to 1991. Economic health is measured through the 10-year percentage change of each occupational group's workforce's proportion in the overall labour market. This conceptualization assumes that an occupational group employing fewer and fewer people is experiencing economic decline. Table 2.1 reports these changes for each of the 15 occupational groups.

Table 2.1: Job growth for occupational groups, 1971-1991

	Percent of labour force			10-year change (percentage)	
Occupational Group	1971	1981	1991	1971-1981	1981-1991
Managerial/Admin	4.905	7.247	12.517	47.747	72.720
Natural Sc./Math	3.085	3.588	4.12	16.305	14.827
Social Science	1.042	1.679	2.277	61.132	35.616
Teaching	4.602	4.355	4.509	**-5.367**	3.536
Medicine/Health	4.303	4.622	5.235	7.413	13.263
Arts	1.06	1.473	1.767	38.962	19.959
Clerical	18.098	19.503	18.519	7.763	**-5.045**
Sales	10.748	10.205	9.419	**-5.052**	**-7.702**
Service	12.78	12.741	13.087	**-0.305**	2.716
Agriculture	7.106	4.884	3.769	**-31.269**	**-22.830**
Other Primary	1.666	1.396	1.055	**-16.206**	**-24.427**
Processing	4.411	4.202	2.956	**-4.738**	**-29.653**
Machining	11.533	11.016	8.314	**-4.483**	**-24.528**
Construction	7.491	6.852	6.07	**-8.530**	**-11.413**
Transportation	7.171	6.236	6.387	**-13.039**	2.421

Source: Statistics Canada. Occupation. March 1993. Cat. No. 93-327; Statistics Canada. 1981 Census of Canada. Labour Force - Occupations Trends. Nov. 1983. Cat. No. 92-920.

As can be seen, some groups seen its proportion of the workforce, grow such as administrators, health professionals, and the large "service" sector. A handful of other occupations were in decline, represented by the bold scores. For instance, transportation workers accounted for a smaller proportion of the workforce in 1981 compared to 1971, with the 10-year change amounting to 13 percentage drop. But this group recovered somewhat from 1981 to 1991, with its proportion of the overall workforce showing a slight 2.4 percent growth.

Some occupational groups have even suffered two decades of decline, such as in agriculture, and mining (i.e., other primary). Interestingly, it is these occupational groups that Lipset (1959/63) points to as potentially politically unstable, given their relatively insecure economic conditions. In the data presented here, even occupations in manufacturing (i.e. processing) have suffered long-term decline, probably due to the growth of the well talked about "service economy."

Since the focus of this paper is to link economic hardship to support for the political system, the 10-year change in each occupational group's share of the job market is recoded such that negative changes (declines) are retained but positive changes (growth) are given a score of 0. All scores were then converted to their absolute values. Scores range from 0 (no decline) to positive values, such that the higher the score the more worse off an occupational group. This arrangement was done because the hypothesis being tested is that economic hardship fuels a sentiment of political inefficacy and leads to rejection of mainstream parties, but there is no expectation that growing occupational groups are necessarily more supportive of mainstream politics than groups who are relatively stable. This may very well be the case, but the focus of interest here is the difference between those who are suffering some sort of economic decline and all others.

Each 10-year change is related to data from a particular Canadian Election Study survey. Typically, the CES tracks a

respondent's occupation, according to the Statistics Canada's SOC scheme. This facilitates the matching of 10-year changes for any one occupational group to survey data from a particular election. Voting behaviour of respondents in the 1979 election study are explained by their occupational group's 1971 to 1981 change in workforce size relative to the entire labour market,[7] while voting behaviour of the 1993 election study respondents is explained by their occupational group's changes from 1981 to 1991.[8] The first dependent variable, vote choice, is structured as a nominal variable with the following three categories: 1- Vote for mainstream party (Liberals and PC); 2- Vote for non-mainstream parties; and 3- Abstention.

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[7] The 1979 CES did not specifically track occupation, but it did record each respondent's "Blishen scores" (see Blishen, 1987), which was converted into 1980 SOC codes.

[8] Data from the 1979 Canadian Election Study were made available by ICPSR. The data were originally collected by Harold Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence Leduc, and Jon Pammett. Neither the ICPSR nor the original collectors of the data bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretation presented here. Data from the 1993 Canadian Election Study were provided by the Institute for Social Research, York University. The survey was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), grant numbers 411-92-0019 and 421-92-0026, and was completed for the 1992/93 Canadian Election Team of Richard Johnston (University of British Columbia), André Blais (Université de Montréal), Henry Brady (University of California at Berkeley), Elisabeth Gidengil (McGill University), and Neil Nevitte (University of Calgary). Neither the Institute for Social Research, the SSHRC, nor the Canadian Election Team are responsible for the analyses and interpretations presented here. It would have been ideal to include other election surveys, but this was prevented because of compatibility issues regarding occupational categories. The 1981 Census followed the 1980 Standard Occupational Classification, and documents conveniently reported comparative data for both the 1981 and the 1971 census periods. The 1991 Census also reports occupational data according to the 1980 SOC, but subsequent censuses converted to the 1991 SOC, which is not compatible with earlier versions. Also, while efficacy items were asked in the 1979 CES, these questions were not repeated in the 1980 CES. The 1980 CES is therefore excluded from the analysis.

The 1979 and the 1993 CES also measure respondent's levels of external efficacy. The two survey items used to measure external political efficacy are: i) "I don't think that the government cares much what people like me think," and ii) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does."[9] Agreement with these statements is assigned a lower score than disagreement, so that high scores pertain to higher levels of efficacy. Scores from the two-items were added together, then the sum was divided by two, yielding an overall a range from 0 (low efficacy) to 1 (high efficacy).

In all, it is expected that economic decline experienced at the level of occupations erodes an individual's sense of external political efficacy, which in turn lowers the propensity to vote as well as the propensity to vote mainstream. This relationship can be summarized in the following hypotheses:

H2.1: Voters in occupational groups experiencing lower levels of job growth are less likely to vote and more likely to support non-mainstream parties.

H2.2: Voters in occupational groups experiencing lower levels of job growth regard the political system as less responsive.

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[9] In the 1979 CES, the items are listed as variable 1042 and 1044. In the 1993 CES, the items were found in the mailback survey wave as variable MBSD5 and MBSD8. The external efficacy index for the pooled dataset yields a Cronbach's alpha of .5819.

Given that external political efficacy is expected to function as an intervening variable, it is expected that when all three variables (occupational group job growth, external political efficacy, and voting behaviour) are combined into the same model, the economic variable (job growth) is expected to lose its significance. This is summarized by the following hypothesis:

H2.3: The relationship between occupational job growth and voting behaviour disappears when external political efficacy is included as a control variable.

The model also includes other control variables, mostly socio-demographic factors. These are: region, [10] unionization, [11] gender, [12] religion,[13] language,[14] age.

The hypotheses were tested using a dataset that pools the 1979 and the 1993 CES. This was done to overcome the problem of small sample sizes. Given that few respondents support non-mainstream parties to begin with, a cross-sectional election survey would include

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[10] Three dummy variables were constructed: one for the four Atlantic provinces (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), one for Quebec, and a third for the West (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia). Respondents who live in one of the three regions are given a score of 1 on the appropriate dummy variable, 0 otherwise. Ontario was selected as the reference group.

[11] A score of 1 is assigned to a respondent who belongs to a union.

[12] Male=1, female=0.

[13] Catholics assigned a 1, all others, including those who are not affiliated with any other religion, a 0.

[14] Francophones are assigned a 1, all others a 0.

even fewer such voters[15]. Add to that the fact that many of these voters do not supply valid replies to all of the items used in the multivariate analysis, then the probability of failing to find significant relationships (a Type II error) is high. For this reason, analysis of non-mainstream voting is facilitated by pooling together both CES surveys into a larger dataset.

The unprecedented success of non-mainstream parties in the 1993 election may impose a bias on the results. Therefore, a special dummy variable was included to account for the unusual nature of the 1993 election. In particular, respondents from the 1993 CES are given a score of 1, while those from the 1979 election are given a score of 0.

Results

The first test uses a multinomial regression model, with results reported in Table 2.2.[16] The positive coefficient for the variable "10-year change in occupational growth" shows that the more an occupational group is in decline the *more* likely a voter will opt not to vote, and the *more* likely a voter will choose a non-mainstream party.

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[15] In the 1979 CES, 422 respondents indicated having supported a non-mainstream party; the number rises to 679 in 1993

[16] See Appendix 2 for a complete detailed description of all variables used in this article.

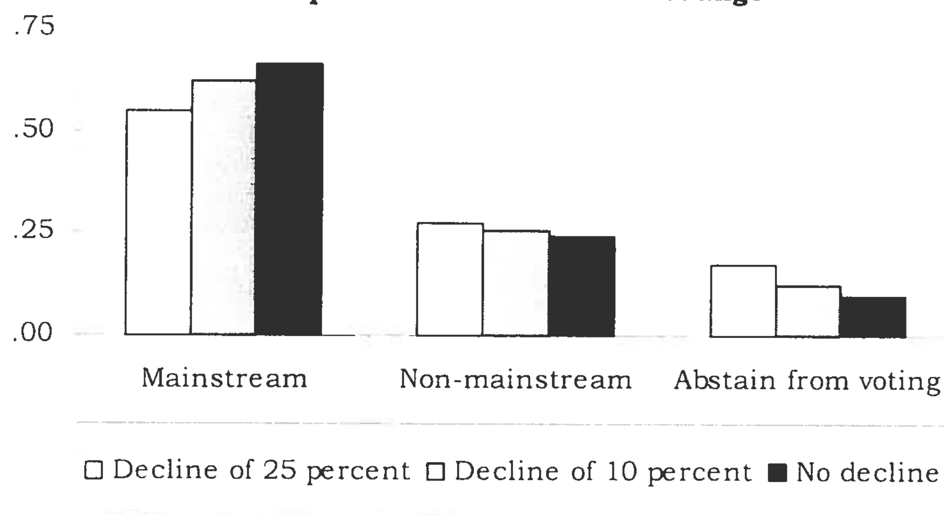
Table 2.2: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice, 1979 & 1993 Canadian elections

	Non-mainstream			Abstain from voting		
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.	
Occupational growth	**.012**	.006	$p<.05$	**.032**	.007	$p<.001$
Regional dummies						
Atlantic Canada	**-.609**	.178	$p<.01$	.223	.195	
Quebec	**.444**	.163	$p<.01$	.264	.232	
Western Provinces	**.732**	.113	$p<.001$	**.521**	.158	$p<.01$
Religion	-.144	.114		-.191	.153	
Language	.220	.155		.044	.213	
Age	**-.012**	.003	$p<.001$	**-.029**	.004	$p<.001$
Gender	.104	.094		-.007	.128	
Union	**.271**	.095	$p<.01$	-.083	.134	
1993	**1.067**	.095	$p<.001$	**.429**	.128	$p<.01$
Constant	**-1.425**	.181	$p<.001$	**-1.071**	.235	$p<.001$
Pseudo-R2	.073					
Log likelihood	-2412.49					
N	2909					

Note: The baseline category is vote for mainstream party.

Figure 2.1 provides a visual simulation of this pattern.[17] The effect, though not very large, is nonetheless noticeable, and continuous. Support for non-mainstream parties and the probability of abstention steadily increases as economic circumstances worsen. The shifts may appear slight, but in an election, a few percentage points either way can make the difference between winning a majority government, winning a minority government, and losing entirely. So any small shift of support away from the mainstream parties to any of the non-mainstream parties, especially if a non-mainstream party has a prominent regional presence, can yield to completely different electoral outcome.

Figure 2.1: Simulation of vote probabilities and occupational-level economic change



[17] Figure 2.1 was generated with Stata using Clarify, a macro developed by Tomz, Wittenberg and King (2003), and available at http://gking.harvard.edu/stats.shtml. (See also King, Tomz and Wittenberg, 2000). Its purpose is to demonstrate graphically the distribution of statistical models using simulation techniques. The charts show the relationship between the economic variable and the dependent variable, while setting all other variables (the control variables) to their mean values.

There are other significant effects, but the regional variables deserve some attention. Western Canadians appear here (as in other studies of Canadian voting) to be more prone to support non-mainstream parties. This is not surprising since Western Canada has traditionally been welcome to populist politics. The Progressives, the CCF, and Reform are three examples of parties that succeeded in the West. Between 1972 and 2000, non-mainstream parties garnered an average of 40% of the vote cast among the Western provinces.[18]

The result for the Quebec regional dummy is similar. Living in Quebec raises the probability of voting for a non-mainstream party compared to living in Ontario. Quebec has a history of voting for either the incumbent (usually the Liberals) or for a non-mainstream party, such as the Créditistes and the Bloc, so this finding does not run counter to expectations.

Atlantic Canadians are opposite to the West, both geographically and politically. Living in the Maritimes appears to lower the probability of voting for non-mainstream parties compared to either of the mainstream options. Again, this finding is no surprise, since the Atlantic provinces are widely known to support mainstream parties. Between 1972 and 2000, non-mainstream parties garnered on average 16% of the vote in the Atlantic provinces. This might at first appear curious, since living in Canada's poorest region apparently does not harm support for the mainstream. But Lipset (1959/1963) and Pinard (1971) point out

[18] Source: http://www.parl.gc.ca.

that it is impoverishment, and not poverty per se, that leads one to become politically volatile. At worse, the poor might simply disengage from politics. But when one faces continued economic decline, then support for non-mainstream parties becomes more palatable. The data here bear this out. When the simulation process applied to produce Figure 2.1 is repeated for the Atlantic provinces, only, the probability of abstention grows from about .10 for no decline in occupational growth, to .16 for a decline of 15 percent, to .23 for a decline of 30 percent. In comparison, the probabilities of abstention for Quebec, only, range from .09 (zero decline) to .18 (30 percent decline). Ontario appears the most participatory, with its abstention probabilities ranging from .08 to .17. While for the West, the range is from .10 to .21.

The next set of results examines the link between the independent variable (occupational job growth) and external political efficacy as the mediating step. In general, the mean score on the efficacy index for the pooled dataset is .4, which can be considered low, given the range of 0 (low) to 1(high). But an OLS regression model suggests that this already low level can drop further still among those respondents who work in declining occupations (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: OLS regression of political efficacy, 1979 & 1993 Canadian elections

Dependent variable: External Political Efficacy

	Coef.	Std. Err.	
Occupational growth	**-.003**	.001	p<.001
Regional dummies			
Atlantic Canada	-.018	.017	
Quebec	*.036*	.019	p<.10
Western Provinces	*-.023*	.013	p<.10
Religion	-.007	.013	
Language	-.015	.018	
Age	**-.001**	.000	p<.01
Gender	*.021*	.011	p<.10
Union	.005	.011	
1993	**-.071**	.011	p<.001
Constant	**.527**	.020	p<.001
Adj-R2	.050		
N	1751		
SEE	.220		

Voters in occupational groups that have shrunk relative to the overall labour market tend to score lower in political efficacy, .40 compared a score of .45 among voters whose occupation have grown.[19] This may not seem like a huge difference, but it is worth pointing out the impact of economic decline yields a larger impact on external efficacy than the Western regional dummy variable.[20] In addition, job growth is

[19] These scores were calculated by dividing up voters into two groups: 1) those whose occupations have shown negative growth (i.e., decline), and 2) all others. An independent samples T-test shows that the 11-point difference between the two groups is statistically significant (t=4.666, p<.001, df=1903).
[20] The "Occupational growth" variable obtained a beta of -.095, while the Western regional dummy scored -.050.

one of the few variables that reached statistical significance at $p<.05$ or better. The others being age and the 1993 dummy.[21]

When the model shown in Table 2.2 is re-run with external political efficacy as a control variable, the results confirm expectations (see Table 2.4). Political efficacy mediates between the exogenous factor of economic decline and vote choice. When the dependent variable is the probability of non-mainstream voting compared to mainstream, occupational decline completely loses its significance. This suggests quite strongly that the link between long-term economic conditions and vote choice is not direct. Voters who work in occupational groups that experience long-term economic decline are more likely to acquire more negative political attitudes, and it is these attitudes that guide such voters towards non-mainstream politics, as per Hypothesis 2.3.

But when the dependent variable is probability of not voting compared to voting mainstream, economic change at the occupational level remains significant. As was the case in Table 2.2, respondents are less and less likely to vote as their occupational group shrinks in size relative to the overall workforce. Furthermore, lower levels of external efficacy relate with high probabilities of abstention. In all, these mixed results provide partial confirmation of Hypothesis 2.3.

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[21] The actual p value associated with the Western dummy to the nearest thousandth is .062.

Table 2.4: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice, 1979 & 1993 Canadian elections

	Non-mainstream			Abstain from voting		
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.	
Occupational growth	.012	.007		**.026**	.011	p<.05
External political efficacy	**-.674**	.263	p<.05	**-1.756**	.416	p<.001
Regional dummies						
Atlantic Canada	**-.482**	.230	p<.05	.238	.306	
Quebec	**.799**	.217	p<.001	.574	.354	
Western Provinces	**.829**	.147	p<.001	**.773**	.234	p<.01
Religion	*-.283*	.150	p<.10	-.342	.233	
Language	.326	.205		.151	.320	
Age	**-.012**	.004	p<.01	**-.036**	.006	p<.001
Gender	.081	.122		-.034	.189	
Union	.201	.125		-.050	.196	
1993	**1.171**	.131	p<.001	*.346*	.196	p<.10
Constant	**-1.188**	.274	p<.001	-.350	.399	
Pseudo-R2	.093					
Log likelihood	-1303.56					
N	1631					

Note: The baseline category is vote for mainstream party.

Conclusion

The general findings validate a need to look at economic factors over the long-term, and a need to interpret voting behaviour not simply as support for or against the incumbent. Instead, a person's long-term economic experience within his or her occupational group influences attitudes about the overall political system, and those attitudes affect the propensity to vote, and among those that do, those attitudes affect the propensity to support non-mainstream parties. These findings confirm both Easton's assertion (Easton, 1975; Easton and Dennis, 1967) that worsening conditions erode citizen support for more diffuse political objects, such as the regime, and Lipset's theory (Lipset, 1959/63) that economic decline leads citizens to question the legitimacy of their political institutions.

But why would someone in such a situation blame the government? Why not simply attribute an occupation's demise to global economic factors? One possible answer could be that voters instantly blame the government for everything. The rise of the welfare state has expanded the role of the state in many domains to the point that citizens have increased expectations of what the government can and should address (see Pharr and Putnam, 2000). Since the Second World War, the expanded role for the state has gotten itself involved in promoting full employment, providing adequate public housing, regulating labour standard, etc. It is logical, then, for citizens to expect the modern state

to do something about economic problems. Voters could incorporate an understanding of the Canadian government as rather interventionist in the economy. Tax incentives and subsidies are structured to encourage and discourage particular types of economic activities. Often, policy is directed to particular industries or regions, which in either case indirectly affect the economic consequences of occupations predominant in a region or an industry. But the government does play a role in deciding which occupations deserve encouraging, be it through training programs or tax incentives. Therefore, voters who feel their particular occupation is no longer as valued begin to regard themselves as political outsiders, unable to influence government decisions in their favour. The awareness of such a reality would logically lead voters to see representative institutions as less responsive to their needs, and would logically lead such voters to withdraw from politics altogether or to support more "radical" parties. In either case, such voters see their democracy as a failure.

An extension to that line of reasoning leads to a conclusion that voters evaluate economic conditions at the level of an occupational reference group not merely as prosperity or lack thereof, but as a measure of fairness. If after 10 years one see his or her occupation continue to suffer while other occupations hold their own, or even grow, one begins to question whether higher powers have remained loyal to a some social contract of equitable distribution of costs and benefits, especially given an institutional setting that is characterized by policies

oriented towards providing generous welfare and income-redistribution programs and an inter-governmental equalization payment scheme, that taken as a whole, may lead citizens into believing that the state is set up to provide some measure of equality. Any deviation from such a path would lead the losers into believing that the system is beginning to fail them.

Although the data presented here does not directly validate such an argument, there is sufficient evidence to suggest something along those lines. There is a strong indication that voters in occupations that have been suffering long-term economic decline are more likely to behave as if they are clearly very upset at the political system. What is required now is to explore further these initial findings and the extent to which economic decline can drive a wedge among different groups of voters, and whether this wedge is understood as the failure of a democratic system's promise to deliver governance equitably.

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES AND NON-MAINSTREAM VOTING: THE DISCONTENT OF WORKING-CLASS VOTER WITH NO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Introduction

Any elected government that presides over economic decline is sure to lose support among the electorate. On this point, standard economic voting research is clear. But, if within a context of generalized economic growth (or even in a recession), some groups' circumstances keep falling over a long period while others do not fare as badly, members of the disadvantaged group can be expected to question the overall fairness of the political system, a sentiment that can rattle the foundation of a political system. The potential for long-term economic to galvanize opposition towards the *entire* political system is something economic voting research appears to overlook.

In order to fill this void, a certain demographic group will be analyzed to determine whether its long-term economic decline over a long period of time explains its increased propensity to support non-mainstream parties, and whether that electoral support yields implications for the overall legitimacy of the political system. The objective is to replicate some of the findings reported by Teixeira and Rogers (2000), whose work shows how since the early 1970s a particular demographic group in the United States has seen its economic conditions stagnate. After the post-Second World War heydays when everyone could expect to work hard and earn a decent living, the economic restructuring in the United States since the early 1970s has had consequences that adversely affected members of the white

working-class that lack post-secondary education. It is not to say that only this group suffered, but according to Teixeira and Rogers this group has seen its economic conditions deteriorate more than most others, and more importantly, this group has a high voter turnout rate, making any discontent politically salient.[1] Therefore, as they began to perceive that the gains and pains of economic progress are not being equitably distributed, they began to perceive the political system as unfair, perhaps focused more on elevating the status of other segments of the American population, such as minority groups and other "special interests." As a result, members of this lagging group emerged as an angry block of swing voters (i.e., the "forgotten majority") that has benefited the Republicans, which has capitalized on anti-government sentiments.[2]

This sort of analysis was applied only to the American electorate, but the economic changes experienced in the United States since the 1970s is a more global phenomenon. It is therefore useful to examine whether long-term economic decline has had a similar effect on voter behaviour in other countries. Canada is an obvious choice for a case study since its economy is highly integrated with that of the United States, and likely to be affected by similar economic changes. However,

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[1] Other research shows working-class unemployed American voters, regardless of race, tend to abstain from voting, unless mobilized during election campaigns that raise the salience of economic considerations (Southwell, 1996).
[2] One prominent feature associated with the Republican historical gains in the 1994 mid-term was Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" campaign theme and its focus to clean up, or dismantle, government.

unlike American politics, Canada lacks a racial cleavage. But in Canada, as in the United States, those in the working-class who lack post-secondary education bore the brunt of economic changes, especially since the recession of the early 1980s.

Three fundamental changes have impacted this group: 1) The rise of the modern "knowledge based" economy, which depends more on a highly educated workforce, leaving behind those who lack proper training; 2) the increase in the number of women who pursue post-secondary education and the increase in labour force participation rates among women, making the labour market more competitive; and 3) the decline of the industrial sector, which has been replaced by the growth of the service economy, a sector that has not readily replaced the high union wages of manufacturing plants. These changes may have contributed to the creation of a new underclass which, since the 1980s, has behaved politically in ways that can be interpreted to reflect their eroding conditions. As the analysis here will show, since the 1980s those in the working-class who lack post-secondary education have been voting increasingly for what is referred to here as "non-mainstream parties," parties other than the Liberal and Progressive Conservative, and this voting pattern is linked to a rejection of the political system. Others have detected a similar phenomenon in the United States. Third-party presidential candidate Ross Perot has attracted American voters who have suffered long-term economic decline or feel a greater sense of job insecurity (Mughan and Lacy, 2002) and who regard the political

system as unresponsive (Southwell and Everest, 1998). But such "third-party" candidates rarely emerge to mobilize disillusioned American voters, who otherwise opt not to vote at all.[3]

In contrast, Canadian voters generally often can choose a non-mainstream party, and often, such a party can be considered a viable force that can easily distinguish itself from the mainstream. Since Confederation in 1867, elections were primarily a two-way race between the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties.[4] Both parties formed within parliament at the founding of Canada; both parties alternated as government and official opposition; and both parties emerged as two political entities most clearly associated with the Canadian political system.[5] But other parties have appeared on the ballot, aside from the prominent "third" parties that rose.

Smaller, lesser known and more obscure parties field candidates and garner votes, but remain for the most part completely overlooked both by the media and by other political observers. This perhaps reflects a reality of voting in the context of Canada's plurality system. A voter

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[3] Ross Perot's relative success can be attributed to his personal wealth, given that money is an important resource in American politics. But money is not the only obstacle to potential "third parties" in the United States. The dominance of the two-party system may be explained, at least in part, to the primary system, which tends to draw a diverse array of candidates, many of which are more ideological extreme (see Brady, et al., 2005). In other words, candidates and voters who would otherwise belong to non-mainstream parties converge around the general ideological umbrella of either of the two mainstream parties.

[4] The original Conservative party of Confederation changed its name to the Progressive Conservative in the 1940s.

[5] It should be pointed out in 2003 the beleaguered Progressive Conservative party merged with the Alliance Party to form the new Conservative Party. Before then, and especially before the 1993 election, Canadian politics was dominated by the Liberal and PC parties.

who wishes to support any of the non-mainstream parties must ponder the extent to which he or she is prepared to cast a wasted ballot. Canada's electoral system favours large and centrist parties, almost guaranteeing other parties no more than a prominent presence in opposition. Hence, a voter who shifts support from one mainstream party to the other expresses a very different sort of message compared to one who shifts from any mainstream party to one that is non-mainstream. The latter requires far more "connection," since non-mainstream parties are not normally linked with politics as usual, and are also not expected to form the government.

As pointed out before, voters have mobilized around new and emerging parties, usually as a protest against what was perceived as a prevailing injustice. Often, the emergence of a non-mainstream party is based on economic discontent with the two mainstream offerings. The Social Credit and the forerunner to the New Democratic Party, the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation, were formed during the Great Depression. Other non-mainstream parties appear to have risen out of some sort of political grievance. For example, the Reform Party emerged in the Western provinces in the 1980s out of a widespread and growing sense of alienation and a belief that fundamental reforms (e.g., the "Triple-E" Senate) are needed to rebalance Canada's parliamentary system, in light of an apparent bias in favour of the two largest, most industrialized and most vote-rich Central provinces: Quebec and Ontario. The Bloc Québécois, which asserts the independence of

Québec, grew out of a sense of dissatisfaction with Canada's inability to address constitutional reform to accommodate Quebec's traditional demands for more autonomy. Other, lesser known non-mainstream parties, such as the Communists, Libertarians, Greens, and so forth, also promote fundamental changes. Even the NDP runs on a platform of fundamental reform, be it to the electoral system, the banking system, etc. But in all cases, non-mainstream parties promote policy platforms that address deep grievances by recommending fundamental changes. And they do this not only as part of their *raison d'être*, but also to be noticed. As Landes (2002) points out (see also Taggart, 1998), the policy platforms of non-mainstream parties are a stark contrast from the more pragmatic stands taken by the mainstream parties, and often "attacks the existing order and suggests the outlines of a new pattern of power relationships," (364) (see also Taggart, 1998). They criticize how Canada is governed, and assert fundamental reform at the system level. Also, non-mainstream parties share in common their extra-parliamentary origin, making them effectively *outsiders* in a political game of established insiders.

Perhaps as a reflection of their more marginal impact, non-mainstream parties have not drawn nearly as much empirical attention in Canada, at least not before the watershed 1993 election. Studies that seek to explain why voters would support non-mainstream parties are relatively few and far between. Perhaps the most well known examination of this phenomenon in Canada is from Maurice Pinard

(1971, 1973), who persuasively points to economic "strains" that have led to the rise of Social Credit in Quebec. But more recent work suggests that the increase support for non-mainstream parties stems from discontent towards, and dealignment from, the two mainstream offerings (Clarke and Kornberg, 1993, 1996; Clarke, et al., 2000), a move that may be driven by anti-state, anti-system, or anti-party sentiments (Bélanger, 2004; Gidengil, et al., 2001; see also Poguntke, 1996, and Sartori, 1976). Another obvious feature of the relatively recent success of non-mainstream parties is their regional orientation. As already mentioned, the Reform Party was founded to address a widespread sense of Western alienation and pushed for – among other things – the reform of Canada's Senate in order to raise the political influence of Western Canada, while the Bloc Québécois formed in 1990 after the collapse of the Meech Lake constitutional agreement that would have met the demands of Quebec nationalists, and has since been advocating the sovereignty for Quebec. Clearly, both parties' appeals are non-economic.

However, support for these two non-mainstream parties has varied from one election to the next, and in the case of Reform (and in its later incarnation as the Alliance Party) across regions, as well. All the while, the relative strength (or weakness) of Western provinces in the Canadian federation, and Quebec's relationship with the rest of Canada, has remained relatively constant. Again, it must be pointed out that other non-mainstream parties, such as the New Democratic Party, as

well as more obscure parties such as the Marxist-Leninists and Christian Heritage, have garnered votes, with support for all of these non-mainstream parties varying across time and space. This variation can be attributed, as the research here will show, at least in part, to economic factors. More precisely, the post-1980 economic decline of those in the working-class who do not possess post-secondary education has elevated their propensity to support non-mainstream parties. Such a vote is linked to a rejection of the political status quo, and this is substantiated by looking at this group's post-1980s drop in its overall sense of external political efficacy. Since the 1980s, this demographic group's already cynical attitude towards the political system grew worse, while their support for non-mainstream parties grew stronger. All of this suggests that voters who suffer long-term economic decline are prone to withdraw their support for the entire political system, and gravitate towards parties that advocate fundamental change. As highlighted in the next section, the prospect for such a phenomenon appears absent in the otherwise robust models that link economic conditions to voting behaviour.

Re-Conceptualizing Economic Voting

Economic voting has produced some of the most robust models in voting research. Then again, the basic premise of economic voting is not

overly counterintuitive. Put simply, voters hold the government responsible for economic conditions; ruling incumbents are more likely to be re-elected while presiding over good economic times, while electoral support tends to decline with economic stagnation. This is the main thrust of the "responsibility hypothesis."

How this plays itself out varies from one institutional or sociological context to another. For example, voters are more likely to attribute *personal* economic circumstances to government decisions (i.e., the egotropic effect) in institutional contexts where economic conditions are more closely dependent on government intervention, such as in welfare states (Nannestad and Paldam 1994, 1995, 1997). Voters in societies with a more individualistic political culture, such as in the United States, are not as likely to hold the government responsible for personal economic circumstances (Feldman, 1982, 1985; Sniderman and Brody, 1977). But in almost all cases, economic voting almost always includes an assessment of the national, or sociotropic, economy, while personal considerations yield generally weaker effects (Lewis-Beck, 1988).

Virtually all economic-voting studies focus on short-term economic changes. Sometimes the indicators are real-world statistical data, such as the change in unemployment rates one year prior to an election, or voter perceptions, which are tapped by election-survey questions through which respondents evaluate short-term economic conditions. Some noteworthy examples of each include Kramer (1971),

who linked aggregate-level income to support levels for U.S. House of Representative members of the same party as the incumbent president. Work by Fiorina (1978), Kinder and Kiewiet (1979, 1981) are examples of the latter, where survey data are used to illustrate the electoral consequences of voter perceptions about the economy. Such approaches produce highly accurate predictions about the electoral chances of an incumbent vis-à-vis its main opposition, especially in trying to predict results of a U.S. Presidential election (see Lewis-Beck and Tien, 2004). But rarely does economic voting research extend beyond the short-term. Voters are assumed to be myopic, able to recall and react to more recent economic change, rather than more long-term change (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994).

A main contention here is that a short-term focus restricts the ability to explain what is arguably a more important implication of economic change: support for the political system as a whole. Whereas short-term economic changes clearly have an implication for the sitting incumbent, since a one-year change in something like the unemployment rate can be tied to government performance and the competence of its leaders, long-term economic changes lead voters into a different mind frame. As will be demonstrated, a long-term perspective suggests a vote calculus that is not merely an expression of approval for or against the current administrators, but a reflection of whether one regards the political system as legitimate.

It takes time for voters to react along the lines elaborated here. If a particular group in society suffers long-term economic decline, its support for non-mainstream parties may increase only marginally from one year to the next: observations made over a short period of time may not detect any movement. Yet, there may very well be a movement that suggests increased disapproval of the political system as a whole. But only a long-term perspective would be able to observe definitively such subtle patterns.

Standard economic voting research has little to say about this possibility, but it is not as if such a possibility has little theoretical basis. Easton (1975), for example, has stated that long-term decline in the performance of a government can lead voters to become increasingly disillusioned with the way they are being governed, pinning the blame not on any one political leader or party, but on the entire political system. Lipset (1959/1963) points out that generalized prosperity is needed in order for a society to maintain political stability. In other words, no identifiable group should emerge as an economic loser. This does not mean that everyone should have the same income or living conditions, but it does suggest that those who experience long-term economic decline will regard their plight not as personal misfortune, and not as the fault of any one party or leader, but as a violation of some social contract. Consequently, voters blame the political system for ripping them off. If this process does indeed take place, then such a losing group would be more likely to support political parties that

acknowledge the hardship and blame not any one set of political leaders, but the political system as a whole.

For sure, scandals and political corruption are bound to lead to similar consequences, but there are more structural reasons that lead voters to question the fairness of their political system. And although political reasons may form a large part of that discontent in Canada (e.g., Western alienation, Quebec separatism, etc.), economics is arguable one of the most important and fundamental drivers. Aside from the fact that healthy economic conditions help voters simply to survive, economic conditions also reveal status. Equality is a fundamental principle in all democratic societies, and anyone who believes the system has caused them to suffer systemic inequality is not likely to exhibit high levels of support for that system. Despite all efforts to give each citizen the same opportunities to advance economically, over time, the allocations of costs and benefits change in a society, with some segments carrying an increasingly heavier burden of the costs. This may be tolerated in the short term, since no one can reasonably expect to be a winner all the time, given the often rapid and unexpected shifts that characterize advanced industrialized economies. But no one expects to be a loser all the time, either. Yet, if this perception emerges, then voters who belong to a group that suffers persistent economic decline become increasingly aware of their emerging loser status, and consequently, are expected to begin regarding the political system as no longer able – or willing – to deliver benefits. In such a situation, the losing segment is

bound to react against the entire system, and accordingly begin to express their discontent by voting for non-mainstream parties.

Such phenomenon escapes the notice of conventional economic voting research. As stated before, the focus on the short-term fails to capture variations in support for non-mainstream movements, which tend to be more subtle. This short-term approach is more appropriate to explain temporary, ephemeral, fluctuations in voter preferences, which yield measurable implications for mainstream parties, vis-à-vis the mainstream opposition. But support levels for non-mainstream political movements also vary over time and across space. In order to analyze such a phenomenon, voting research must adopt a longer-term perspective.

Economic changes that unfolded during the last quarter of the 20th century offer an opportunity to examine this link between economic decline and support for non-mainstream politics. The period is marked by several deep recessions, high unemployment and major industrial restructuring, as well as resurgent economic growth (especially during the second half of the 1990s). If these changes matter to voters, then sector-by-sector discrepancies in economic health should yield political ramifications beyond what standard-economic voting can detect.

Diverging Economic Demographic Groups

One could argue that Canada, like many other industrialized countries, enjoys consistent growth over the long-term and that there is no need to look for economic causes of any simmering legitimacy crisis. Occasionally there may be a recession, but over the long haul, Canada's economy continues to expand. Indeed, Canada's Gross Domestic Product grew from $556 billion in 1981 to $945 billion in 2000.[6] So why is it that amid this prosperous trend, voters have supported non-mainstream parties, some of which have enjoyed unprecedented success?

Perhaps it is because the long-term growth that characterizes a national economy is experienced differently across sectors. Over the same long period of time, no two segments of the population are identical; some have enjoyed considerable prosperity, while others have lagged. One group in Canada that appears to have stagnated, at least more than usual, is the working-class – especially those in this group who do not possess post-secondary education. This group has always tended to be the most economically worse off, but this demographic group has witnessed a substantial long-term deterioration of its relative situation since the 1980s.

[6] Economic data was retrieved from Statistics Canada CANSIM database, Table No. 379-0017, which is set to 1997 constant Canadian dollars.

In order to illustrate these economic trends, unemployment rates from Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey* were used to generate a time series.[7] Two separate groups were defined. Group 1: individuals who lack post-secondary education and are employed in a working-class occupation; and Group 2: all others. Working class occupations include the following categories of Statistics Canada's Standard Occupational Categories: forestry, mining, processing, machining, fabrication, construction, clerical, service and transportation. These are mostly blue-collar and the low-paying "white collar" occupations. Foremen and other low-level or "shop-level" supervisory occupations are also included; management/executive and professional occupations (e.g., engineers, accountants, etc.) are not. Agriculture is also excluded, since it is a unique sector characterized by seasonal fluctuations in activity, government-support and supply-management systems (e.g., dairy and eggs). It is also a very small segment of the workforce.

During the period under study, the proportion of Canadian workforce employed in any of these occupational groups ranged from a peak of 51 percent in the late 1970s to a low of 44 percent in the mid-1990s. The proportion of the Canadian workforce that belongs to Group 1 ranged from a high of 35 percent in the 1970s to a low of 17 percent in the late 1990s.

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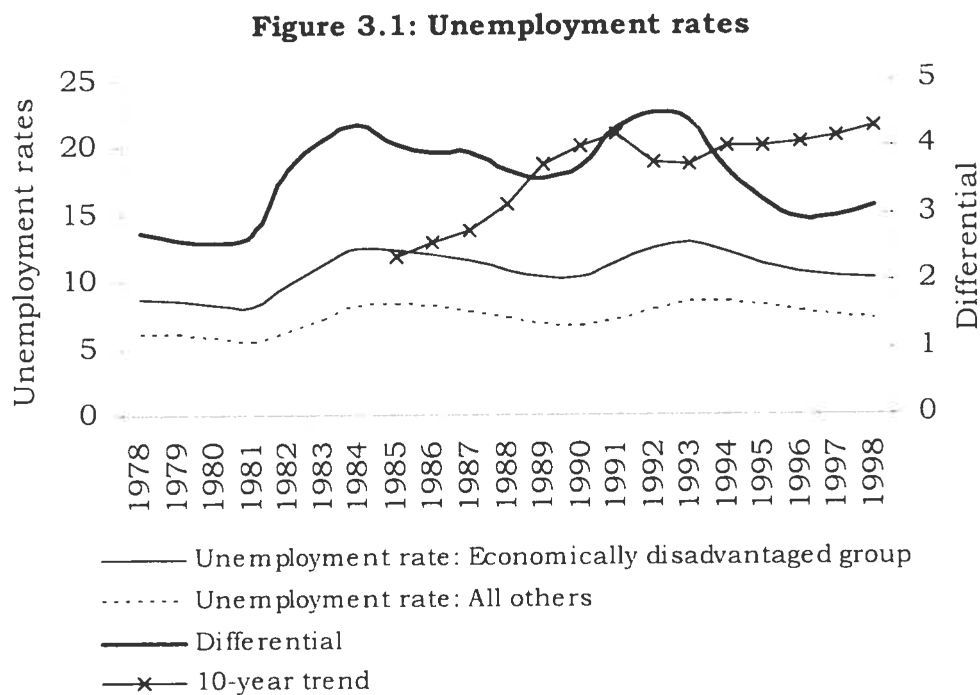
[7] Annually aggregated microdata datafiles of the *LFS* were made available for download from the Sherlock website (http://sherlock.crepuq.qc.ca/), but only for surveys 1976 onward.

Each group's unemployment rate is plotted in Figure 3.1. The differential between Group 1 and Group 2 is also plotted. The higher the differential, the worse off Group 1 is compared to Group 2. As the graph clearly shows, since the recession in early 1980s, Group 1 has suffered relatively higher unemployment rates, a trend that continued to get worse until the mid-1990s, only to level off slightly afterwards. But the differential remained above its pre-1980 levels. Unemployment rates and the associated differential line reflect three-year moving averages.

Figure 3.1: Unemployment rates



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

The series entitled "10-year trend" was generated using Excel's TREND function, which uses OLS to produce a regression coefficient. For each year from 1985 to 1998, a trend coefficient was calculated using the previous 10 years as the independent variable and the unemployment differentials of those 10 years as the dependent variable. For example, the "trend" at 1997 was 4.3, which is the slope coefficient for the regression model based on unemployment differentials between 1988 and 1997.[8] Positive values suggest worsening conditions. As the trend line clearly shows, the unemployment differential between Group 1 and Group 2 grew increasingly pronounced since the mid-1980s.

Studies conducted by Statistics Canada bear out this demographic group's economic decline. Crompton and Vickers (2000), for instance, report that since the 1980s, goods-producing and manufacturing jobs restructured as service-oriented industries expanded. Also, economies in the developing world were increasingly dominant in labour-intensive industries, leading to many plant closures in Canada and in other highly advanced industries. Older men in particular were more likely to face permanent layoff, especially those without proper education. Younger workers also suffered, especially since the 1990s. But in general, members of the working-class who lacked sufficient education have faced a long-term decline. At the same time, women were participating more in the labour market, and they

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[8] Since the available *LFS* microdata starts from 1976, the earliest long-term trend can only be generated for the 1976-1985 period.

were also acquiring more and more education, gaining ground in the labour market (see also Heisz et al., 2002, and Picot and Heisz, 2000).

It is clear that the increased demand for more educated workers, and the relocation of labour-intensive industrial processes to the developing world has hit hard the working-class, especially those who lack post-secondary education. This particular segment, already prone to suffer more economically, suffered the most amid the post-1980s economic restructuring. However, economic policy may also have played a role. Crompton and Vickers's study (2000) also suggests that shifts in labour market dynamics were a result of an anti-inflationary policy that was aimed at the stagflationary economy of the late 1970s. Such a policy slows down the economy and, consequently, increases unemployment. If, indeed, economic restructuring can be attributed to policies that were initiated by the Liberals in the 1970s, continued by the Progressive Conservatives in the 1980s-1990s, and continued once again by the Liberals since 1993, then it should come as no surprise to see voters from that most severely affected group react against both of the mainstream parties, and even against mainstream politics altogether.

Data and Methods

Canadian Election Study surveys from 1974 to 1997 were gathered to determine whether Group 1 votes any differently from Group

2.[9] A dummy variable was constructed whereby a score of 1 is assigned to respondents who are employed in a working-class occupation[10] and have no post-secondary education, and a score of 0 to all others. Respondents' reported voting behaviour was recoded into a variable with the following three categories: 1) vote for incumbent; 2) vote for mainstream opposition; and 3) vote for non-mainstream.

Since, as shown in Figure 3.1, the difference between the economic circumstances of Group 1 and Group 2 only began to diverge sharply since the early 1980s, election surveys were compiled into two separate datasets. The first dataset encompasses the results of the 1974 and 1979 CES surveys, and the second dataset encompassing the 1984 to 1997 surveys.[11] This arrangement permits a *before*-and-*after* analysis of voting behaviour.

Other variables were included as control variables, mostly to account for some of the main cleavages that characterize Canadian

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[9] Data from the 1974 and 1979 Canadian Election Studies were made available by ICPSR. Data were originally collected by Harold Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence Leduc, and Jon Pammett. The 1984 to 1997 data were provided by the Institute for Social Research, York University. The 1984 data were collected by R.D. Lambert, S.D. Brown, J.E. Curtis, B.J. Kay and J.M. Wilson; the 1988 data were collected by Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry E. Brady and Jean Crête; the 1993 data were collected by Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte; the 1997 data were collected by André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte. Data from the 1984-97 Canadian Election Study were funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Neither the ICPSR, SSHRC, nor the original collectors of the data bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretation presented here.

[10] The CES surveys track the respondents' occupations as per the Statistics Canada categories.

[11] The 1980 and 2000 CES were excluded because they do not track occupation.

electoral politics (see Blais, et al., 2002). These variables are: region,[12] unionization, [13] religion, [14] language, [15] gender [16] and age. Dummy variables were also included to account for particular election years, namely, 1974, 1984 1988 and 1993.

Once the variables were assembled and compiled into the two separate datasets, multinomial logistic regression models were generated to test the following hypothesis:

H3.1: Working-class voters who lack post-secondary education are more likely to vote non-mainstream compared to all other voters in elections held after the 1980s compared to elections prior to the 1980s.

The dependent variable is vote choice, with "vote for incumbent" set as the base category. The Liberal party was the incumbent in 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1997, while the Progressive Conservative party was the incumbent in 1988 and 1993.

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[12] Three regional dummy variables were constructed: Atlantic (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island); Quebec; and West (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia). Respondents who live in one of the three regions are given a score of 1 on the appropriate dummy variable, 0 otherwise. Ontario was selected as the reference group. Respondents from any of the northern territories were excluded due to small sample sizes.
[13] A score of 1 is assigned to a respondent who belongs to a union.
[14] Catholics are assigned a 1, all others, including those who are not affiliated with any other religion, are assigned a 0.
[15] Francophones are assigned a 1, all others a 0.
[16] Male=1, female=0.

Table 3.1a shows that in the elections held from 1984 to 1997, a respondent from Group 1 is more likely to vote for non-mainstream parties, compared to supporting the incumbent party. [17] Belonging to Group 1 has no bearing on voting for the mainstream opposition party compared to voting for the incumbent. In other words, voters do not appear to differentiate the two mainstream parties, regardless of economic conditions. But having suffered long-term economic decline raises the probability of voting non-mainstream over the incumbent. It must be pointed out that this effect is not the strongest (the highest coefficient is the "Western Provinces" variable, reflecting Canada's strong regional cleavage), but it is significant even while controlling for other factors.

Analysis was repeated with the 1974 to 1979 dataset, and yielded expected results (Table 3.1b). As per the first hypothesis, belonging to Group 1 has no bearing on the probability of voting non-mainstream compared to the incumbent for elections held before the 1980s. The "Economically declining demographic group" variable fails to achieve statistical significance. Again, the strongest factor is region.

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[17] See Appendix 3 for a complete and detailed description of all variables used in this article.

Table 3.1a: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice, 1984 to 1997 Canadian elections

	Mainstream opposition			Non-mainstream		
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.	
Economically declining demographic group	.023	.069		**.152**	.073	p<.05
Regional dummies						
Atlantic Canada	**.317**	.101	p<.01	**-.297**	.124	p<.05
Quebec	-.027	.124		-.151	.139	
Western Provinces	.027	.081		**.961**	.084	p<.001
Religion	.028	.076		**-.315**	.081	p<.001
Language	-.169	.123		**.477**	.136	p<.001
Age	.003	.002		**-.007**	.002	p<.01
Gender	-.084	.064		-.034	.066	
Union	**.184**	.071	p<.01	**.516**	.070	p<.001
1984	**1.686**	.098	p<.001	**-.401**	.094	p<.001
1988	**.296**	.095	p<.01	**-.902**	.083	p<.001
1993	**1.934**	.121	p<.001	**.874**	.111	p<.001
Constant	**-.952**	.134	p<.001	.067	.133	
Pseudo-R2:	.102					
Log likelihood	-6445.60					
N:	6549					

Note: The base category is incumbent party.

Table 3.1b: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice, 1974 to 1979 Canadian elections

	Mainstream opposition			Non-mainstream		
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.	
Economically declining demographic group	*-.190*	.115	p<.10	-.100	.139	
Regional dummies						
Atlantic Canada	.217	.155		**-.532**	.222	p<.05
Quebec	**-.900**	.216	p<.001	*-.393*	.235	p<.10
Western Provinces	**.666**	.146	p<.001	**.678**	.178	p<.001
Religion	**-.886**	.141	p<.001	**-.388**	.171	p<.05
Language	**-.462**	.210	p<.05	-.005	.221	
Age	.005	.003		**-.016**	.004	p<.001
Gender	.071	.119		-.031	.142	
Union	**-.286**	.130	p<.05	**.607**	.142	p<.001
1979	**.580**	.135	p<.001	**.508**	.165	p<.01
Constant	-.296	.231		*-.543*	.284	p<.10

Pseudo-R2: .104
Log likelihood: -1701.08
N: 1827

Note: The base category is incumbent party.

The generalization that can be drawn from these two sets of results is that voters in the economically weaker Group 1 did not vote any differently from those who belong to Group 2 during the more "equitable" period before the pivotal 1980s, but when economic conditions became less "equitable," voters in the worse off Group 1 began to vote in a manner that is clearly more distinguishable and more suggestive of their growing discontent.

The next step examines the link between economic decline and vote choice through the mediating effects of external political efficacy, which measures the extent to which a respondent feels that the political system is responsive to his or her needs. Political efficacy was originally set up out of a more general five-item scale[18] (Campbell, et al., 1954). Subsequent research (Balch, 1974; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Lane, 1959) differentiates internal efficacy, which measures the extent to which a respondent feels personally capable of influencing the political system, and external efficacy, which has already been defined.

Efficacy measures have been used in seminal research in political culture to differentiate societies with more participant populations (Almond and Verba, 1963). Despite "broad brush" descriptions about an entire society's political culture, efficacy levels can vary across sectors

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[18] The original survey items are: i) "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think;" ii) "The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in this country;" iii) "Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things;" iv) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does;" and v) "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on."

within the same society. For example, one's efficacy has been linked to socioeconomic status (Wu, 2003). In Canada, Gidengil (1990) finds lower levels of efficacy among Canadians living in more "peripheral" economic regions, compared to the higher scores of those who reside in "central" economic regions. This suggests a link between economic circumstances and attitudes towards the political system.

As a concept related to political culture, efficacy is a durable personality trait that develops through socialization and is unlikely to fluctuate easily and quickly (Easton and Dennis, 1967; Iyengar, 1980). But, as mentioned earlier, even Easton (1975) recognizes the possibility that long-term decline in conditions can lead people to hold more critical views of their political system. Therefore, those who suffer long-term economic decline, such as respondents who belong to Group 1, are expected to manifest lower levels of external political efficacy compared to those, such as in Group 2, who have not fared as badly. In addition, the durability of attitude traits means that efficacy is not likely to change over the short-term. Therefore, if there are any changes to one's level of efficacy, it must be examined over the long-term.

Since Group 1's economic decline compared to Group 2 began in the 1980s, an "efficacy gap" is expected to emerge, and in turn, this "efficacy gap" is expected to explain the link between long-term economic circumstances and the propensity to vote non-mainstream. These expectations can be summarized with the following hypothesis:

H3.2: Working-class voters with no post-secondary education have lower levels of external political efficacy than other respondents.

H3.3: Political efficacy is a mediating factor that explains why working-class voters with no post-secondary education are more likely to vote non-mainstream after the 1980s.

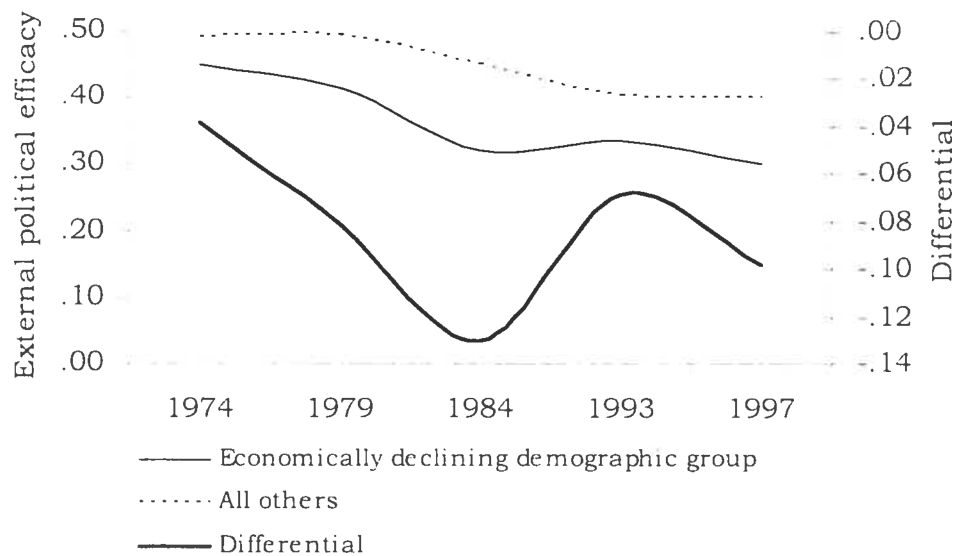
External political efficacy was computed using two items found in the election surveys (except the 1988 CES), namely: i) "I don't think that the government cares much what people like me think," and ii) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does."[19] The scoring was set to a 0 to 1 range, where 0 indicates disagreement with the statement and 1 indicates agreement. In such a scoring scheme, high values suggest *lower* levels of efficacy. Figure 3.2 shows trends for each demographic group. Three main observations can be drawn from that chart. First, all respondents show a general decline in external political efficacy. Second, as expected, respondents in Group 1 (solid line) are consistently less efficacious (score lower on the political efficacy index) than respondents in Group 2.[20] Third, and most importantly, the gap between the two groups widened since the mid-1970s, peaked in 1984, but never recovered to pre-1980s levels. Clearly,

[19] The external efficacy index yields a Cronbach's alpha of .6601 for the 1974-1979 dataset, and .6089 for the 1984-1997 dataset.

[20] Group 1's lower sense of political efficacy compared to Group 2's during the 1984-1997 is confirmed through an independent samples t-test ($t=-13.575$, $df=5944$, $p<.001$, two-tailed).

it appears that members of the working-class who do not possess post-secondary credentials have become increasingly disillusioned with the political system.

Figure 3.2: Political efficacy, 1974-1997



Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1974-1997

The next step is to determine whether this trend is tied to non-mainstream voting. Two steps are involved. First, ordinary least squares regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which membership in the generally more disadvantaged Group 1 explains sense of political inefficacy. Results in Table 3.2 show that, overall,

belonging to Group 1 yields a lower sense of political efficacy.[21] This is true for both the pre-1980s and the post-1980s periods, although the effect is higher in the latter time period, with a coefficient of -.072 for the 1974-1979 period compared to -.105 for 1984-1997. Furthermore, the variable "Economically declining demographic group" is the most influential, with a beta score of -.170 for the 1974-1979 period, increasing to -.177 for the 1984-1997 period, while age ranks in second place. No other variable appears to yield a greater weight on political efficacy – not even region.

In the second step, the models in Table 3.1a were re-run with the politically efficacy variable (see Table 3.3). As expected, membership in Group 1 loses its significance in explaining vote probabilities when external political efficacy is included in the model. This suggests that political efficacy functions as an intervening variable, mediating the effect of long-term economic decline and the propensity to vote non-mainstream. Furthermore, political efficacy emerges as a major factor, ranking a close second behind the "Western Provinces" dummy.

A simulation (see Figure 3.3) was generated to illustrate the relationship between the key variables.[22] Belonging to Group 1 raises

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[21] The OLS analysis does not include respondents from the 1988 wave because efficacy items were not employed during that election study. As a result, the 1988 dummy was dropped.

[22] Figure 3.3 was generated with Stata using Clarify, a macro developed by Tomz, Wittenberg & King (2003), and available on http://gking.harvard.edu/stats.shtml. (See also King, Tomz & Wittenberg, 2000). Its purpose is to demonstrate graphically the distribution of statistical models using simulation techniques. The charts show the relationship between the economic variable (whether one belongs to the economically disadvantaged group) and the vote

the probability of voting non-mainstream. Furthermore, Group 1's average political external efficacy score of .32 is 10 points behind Group 2's average of .42. The general pattern here is fairly clear: Long-term economic decline leads voters to hold more negative attitudes about the political system, and in turn, this increases their chances of voting for a non-mainstream party.[23]

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variable, while setting all other variables (the control variables) to their mean values.

[23] Analysis was repeated with different versions of non-mainstream. If NDP voters are excluded (under the assumption that the NDP is not a *true* non-mainstream party), then the relationship between long-term economic decline and non-mainstream voting fails to attain significance. This is probably due to the fact that the exclusion causes the proportion of respondents who claim to have supported a non-mainstream party to drop from about a third to about a quarter. In another version, fringe and more marginal parties are excluded, but this has not produced different results. This discussion is taken up further lin the Conclusion on page 162.

Table 3.2: OLS regression analysis of external political efficacy, 1974 to 1997 Canadian elections

Dependent variable: External political efficacy

	1974-1979			1984-1997		
Independent variables:	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.	
Economically declining demographic group	**-.072**	.013	p<.001	**-.105**	.008	p<.001
Regional dummies						
Atlantic Canada	-.024	.019		**-.048**	.012	p<.001
Quebec	**-.053**	.023	p<.05	**.050**	.016	p<.01
Western Provinces	-.025	.016		**-.030**	.009	p<.01
Religion	.013	.017		**-.026**	.009	p<.01
Language	**-.056**	.021	p<.01	-.003	.016	
Age	**-.002**	.000	p<.001	**-.002**	.000	p<.001
Gender	.013	.013		**.031**	.007	p<.001
Union	**.032**	.014	p<.05	-.008	.008	
1979	-.008	.015		-	-	-
1984	-	-	-	**.042**	.008	p<.001
1993	-	-	-	**.025**	.011	p<.05
Constant	**.596**	.026	p<.001	**.468**	.014	p<.001
Adjusted-R2:	.065			.055		
SEE:	.205			.269		
N:	1066			5527		

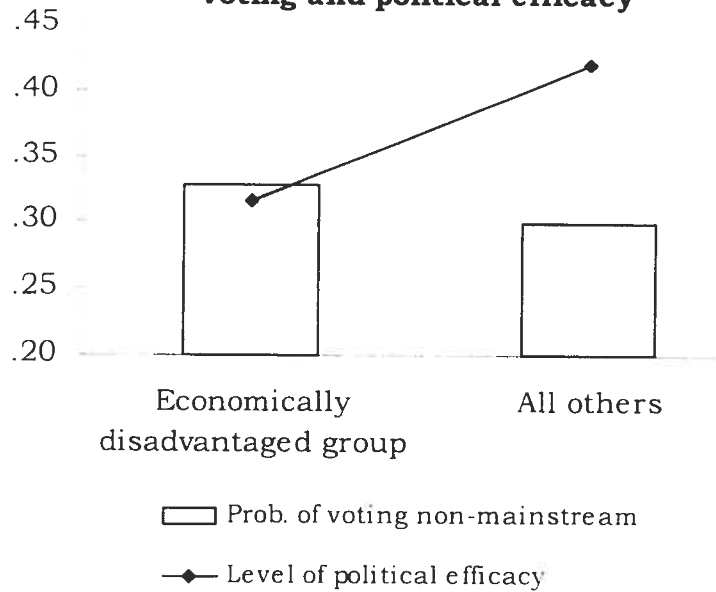
Bold values are statistically significant at p<.05 or lower.

Table 3.3: Multinomial logit estimates of vote choice, 1984 to 1997 Canadian elections

	Mainstream opposition			Non-mainstream		
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.	
Economically declining demographic group	-.048	.094		-.051	.099	
External Political efficacy	*-.297*	.155	$p<.10$	**-1.032**	.161	$p<.001$
Regional dummies						
Atlantic Canada	**.512**	.136	$p<.001$	-.011	.157	
Quebec	*.342*	.176	$p<.10$	.146	.189	
Western Provinces	**.397**	.107	$p<.001$	**1.119**	.110	$p<.001$
Religion	-.454	.100	$p<.001$	**-.637**	.104	$p<.001$
Language	.077	.177		**.755**	.186	$p<.001$
Age	-.001	.003		**-.009**	.003	$p<.01$
Gender	.108	.085		.083	.087	
Union	**.206**	.096	$p<.05$	**.505**	.094	$p<.001$
1984	**1.734**	.102	$p<.001$	**-.291**	.098	$p<.01$
1993	**1.968**	.138	$p<.001$	**1.014**	.131	$p<.001$
Constant	**-.837**	.181	$p<.001$	**.426**	.185	$p<.05$
Pseudo-R2: .114						
Log likelihood -3869.25						
N: 4028						

Note: The base category is incumbent party.

Figure 3.3: Simulation of non-mainstream voting and political efficacy



Conclusion

The analysis reported here leads to three key conclusions. First, there is a link between long-term economic decline and a propensity to vote for non-mainstream parties. More precisely, long-term economic decline affects how voters evaluate the entire political system. This expresses itself not only in lower external political efficacy, but more concretely as a vote against those political parties that are associated with the political system. Clearly, the history of Canada as dominated by either Liberal or Progressive Conservative governments leaves voters with no doubt that a vote for any of these parties endorses the status

quo, while a vote for a non-mainstream party sends an entirely different sort of message.

Second, research could benefit by expanding the perspective with which we study the link between economic conditions and the vote. The standard approach of examining only the short-term, be it through survey questions or actual real-world conditions, is too narrow. The extent to which such a short-sighted perspective can inform electoral outcomes cannot extend much beyond accounting for the popularity of the incumbent government. A long-term perspective reveals something far more critical, with implications that are not restricted simply to the incumbent or the mainstream opposition, but to the entire political system.

Third, and this probably deserves more attention, voters appear sensitive to what may be perceived as changes to a "social contract." When the benefits and burdens of society shift from one sector to another, the losers appear to regard this shift not as a random act for which no one can be blamed. The economic shifts that occurred during the 1980s clearly adversely affected some Canadians more than others, and they behaved politically accordingly. But it may not be economic decline, per se, that yields potentially destabilizing political consequences, but a sense of being "shafted." At no point in the data series was Group 1 ever in an economically superior position. But being economically weaker is not what drove some voters in Group 1 to vote non-mainstream; it was the *widening* gap between it and Group 2. If

equality, or egalitarianism, is a Canadian value, then the economic inequality that grew wider since the 1980s may have left some voters feeling unfairly punished by the political system, leading many of them to support non-mainstream parties that are not tainted by the very same system.

Conclusion

The main point of the research presented here is that at the margins of a healthy democracy, non-mainstream parties garner support from voters, support that must be understood as more than simply a choice like any other. A voter who chooses a non-mainstream party is expressing a different sort of message than one who supports any of the mainstream offerings. In particular, those who support non-mainstream parties tend to be motivated by a higher level of discontent directed towards the entire political system, and their choice to support a non-mainstream party reflects a generalized rejection for politics as usual.

An examination of voter behaviour in this light brings together two different subfields of political science, namely political sociology and its emphasis on legitimacy, and political behaviour and its emphasis on choice. The findings presented here show that the legitimacy of the political system can be measured through individual vote choices, which in turn can be explained through structural economic changes.

The particular condition examined here is the economy, particularly long-term economic decline, which yields implications that are quite different than what standard economic-voting models could reveal. By looking at economic voting through a long-term perspective, economic changes are seen to weigh not on a voter's evaluation of the incumbent party's competence, but instead on the overall sense of

attachment and legitimacy for the whole political system. In standard economic voting, voters upset with the incumbent would normally shift support towards the mainstream alternative. The findings here suggest that long-term economic decline leads to no discernable shift of electoral support toward the mainstream opposition. Instead, long-term economic decline benefits non-mainstream parties. This general hypothesis is confirmed by the findings contained in each of the three articles, each of which adopts a different approach.

Chapter 1 followed an aggregate approach. Provincial-level federal election results from 1979 to 2000 were pooled together and related to long-term and short-term economic data. The results show that while support for the incumbent is explained by short-term economic conditions, support for non-mainstream parties is not. Instead, non-mainstream voting is explained by long-term economic changes.

Chapters 2 and 3 take these results further, by revealing that attitude mediates the link between long-term economic decline and non-mainstream voting. Each of the two perspectives reveals a pattern whereby experience with long-term economic decline leads one to feel less efficacious, which in turn draws one closer to non-mainstream political parties. In Chapter 2, that experience was felt at the occupational level. Those employed in occupations that were in long-term decline were more likely to manifest lower levels of external political efficacy and to support non-mainstream parties, compared to those employed in occupations that did not suffer long-term decline.

Chapter 3 showed that those employed in working-class occupations and who also lacked post-secondary education experienced an economic decline that was more marked and more severe than what others experienced during the economically volatile period since 1980.[1] Members of this demographic group saw their already lower levels of external political efficacy drop further and consequently they voted more for non-mainstream parties.

With these findings, two general conclusions can be drawn. First, long-term economic factors must be *qualitatively* distinguished from short-term economic factors. Research into voting behaviour does not always make this distinction. And second, long-term economic change is a consistently significant factor in explaining voter support for non-mainstream parties. The significance of long-term economic conditions remains resilient even when other, perhaps more "important" political factors are taken into account. Also, the effect appears to bear its weight more heavily on attitudes and orientations towards the political system, a phenomenon that may take a long-time to develop, but an effect that may remain relatively durable.

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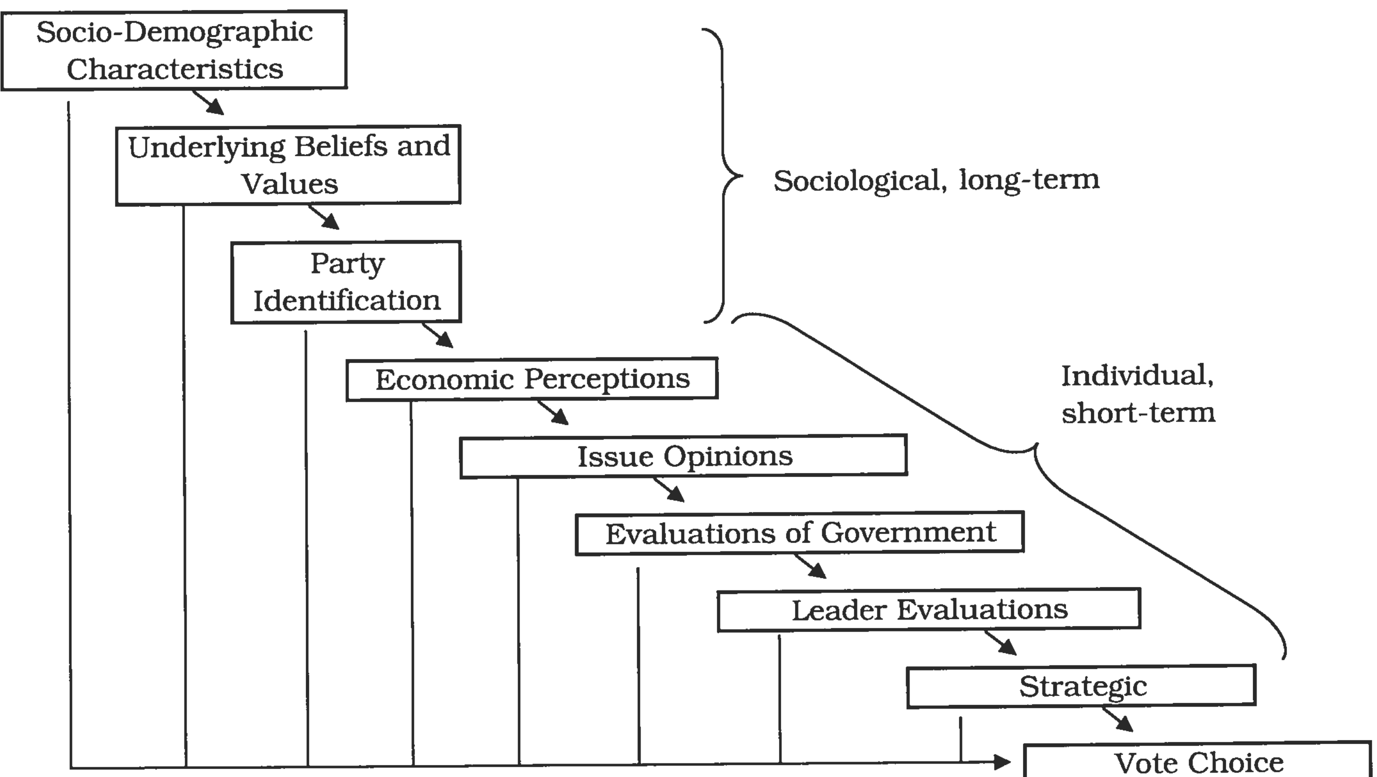
[1] Note that the occupations defined as "declining" in Article 2 are not always the "working-class" occupations that form part of the definition of the declining socio-demographic group in Article 3.

1- Long-Term vs. Short-Term: A Qualitative Distinction

One of the more elaborate voting models, the multi-stage voting model (Blais, et al., 2002; Jackson and Jackson, 2006; Miller and Shanks, 1996), includes "economic evaluations" or "economic perceptions" as just one single component of an otherwise long list of factors that go into the vote calculus (see Figure C.1). The model distinguishes between the more remote, more sociological, and more long-term factors, such as socio-demographic factors (e.g., religion, gender), from the more proximate, individual and short-term factors, such as evaluation of the party leaders.

Long-term factors generally explain voter alignments. For example, Catholics tend to support Liberals (see Blais, 2005). Short-term considerations are used to explain brief deviations from otherwise well established partisan alignments. In this model, economics is seen as short-term. Hence, Liberal identifiers may withdraw support from the Liberal party if it presided over an economic recession. Indeed, this might partly explain the Liberal election loss in 1984 and the Progressive Conservative loss in 1993. This pattern appears validated in other studies, in particular those conducted in the United States, upon which this model is based (Miller and Shanks, 1996).

Figure C.1: Multi-stage vote model



Source: Blais, et al., 2002; Jackson and Jackson, 2006; Miller and Shanks, 1996.

Paradoxically, the study upon which this newer version of the multi-stage model is based (Blais, et al., 2002) argues that economic perceptions, and not real-world economic conditions, explain vote choice. Proof of this is provided by the divergence between a decline in actual unemployment from 1993 to 1997 election and perceptions among the electorate that unemployment had actually gotten worse (Nadeau et al., 2000). This suggests that voters are unable to evaluate accurately short-term economic conditions. If Nannestad and Paldam (1994) are correct that voters are unable to evaluate economic conditions in the long-term, then the findings reported by Blais et al. (2002) challenge the notion that voters are even able to get the short-term right. Perhaps – and this might be a fruitful avenue for future research – economic perceptions of the short-term are based on actual experience over a longer period of time and in turn may be mixed up with some other short-term considerations.

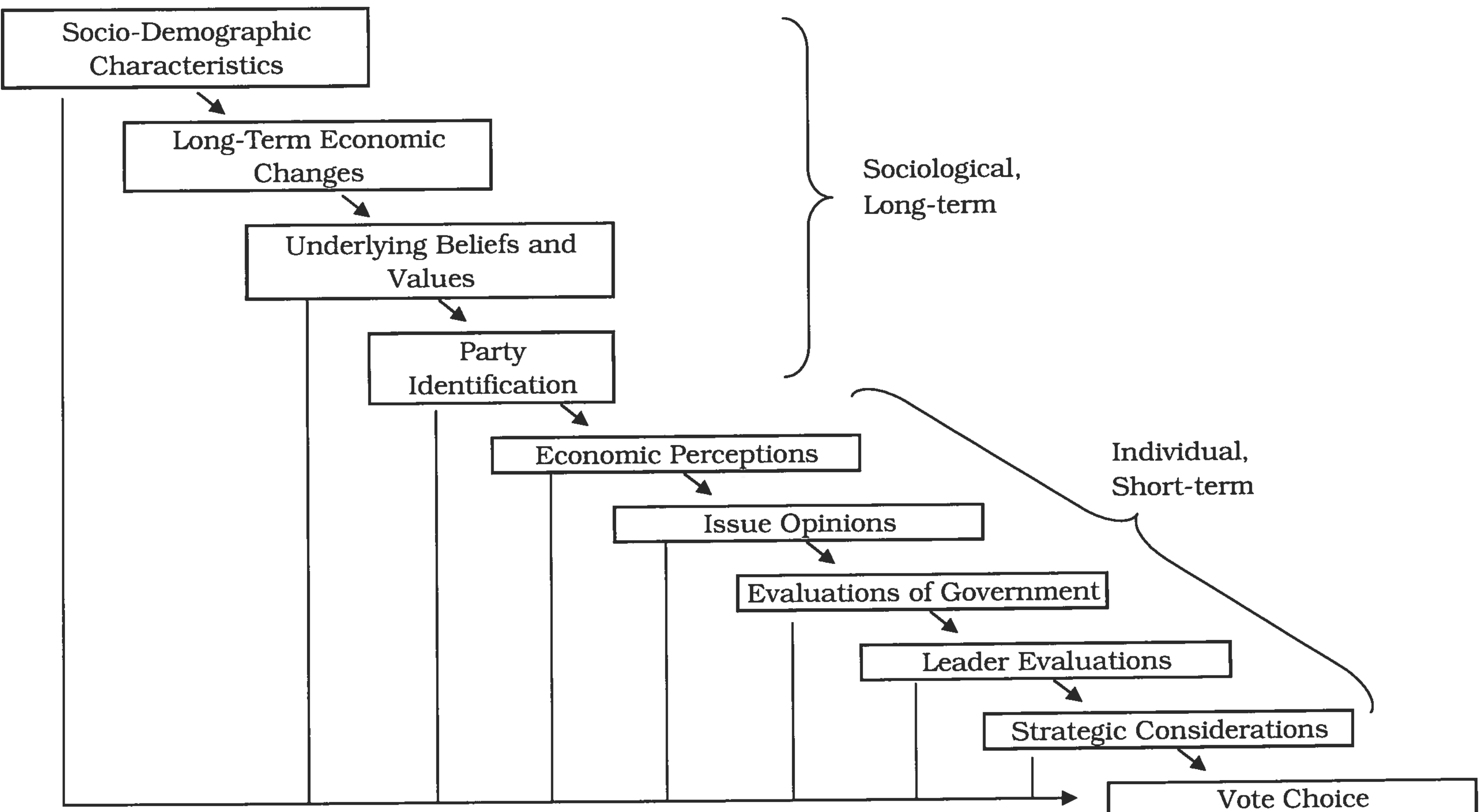
But the results reported in this research project suggest that voters are able to respond accurately to the short-term. As reported in Chapter 1, support for the incumbent varies with short-term term economic changes. More importantly, the long-term most certainly yields a predictable consequence, and in ways that are not fully compatible with this multi-stage model, or with the "voter myopia" hypothesis.

Economic conditions looked at on a long-term dimension appear to explain the extent to which voters align or de-align from the mainstream parties. The findings do not suggest a new voter alignment

along any of the non-mainstream parties, but at the very least, long-term economic decline does not bode well for any of the mainstream parties, leading to an electoral field that includes a broader sense of voter discontent that is aimed at the political system as a whole. This suggests a need for the multi-stage model to separate economic evaluations into short- and long-term evaluations, or, more accurately, to retain short-term economic perceptions as it is (or even to replace it with "short-term conditions") and include long-term changes to economic conditions as a new entry.

Furthermore, the relationship between long-term economic decline and the propensity to vote non-mainstream appears mediated by a psychological dimension, political efficacy. Therefore, this new stage necessarily precedes values and beliefs. Figure C.2 shows a suggested modified version of the multi-stage model.

Figure C.2: Modified multi-stage vote model



Source: Blais, et al., 2002; Jackson and Jackson, 2006; Miller and Shanks, 1996.

This is not to say that the original multi-stage model is incorrect, but that the vote-choice calculus is a more complex process, and that economics functions as a far more exogenous and antecedent factor than previously assumed. Also, if economics plays on both the short- and the long-term, then economics as a whole emerges as far more central to the vote calculus, and not just another component.

2- Resiliency of Results

The second general conclusion flows from the consistency of the results in confirming the general hypothesis, that is, long-term economic decline tends to lead one to vote non-mainstream. No matter how this hypothesis is tested, the evidence points to the same conclusion. The three different perspectives pursued here produce solid results that confirm the relevance of long-term economic conditions in explaining non-mainstream voting, even when controlling for other variables.

However, one potential objection is the relatively weak effect that long-term economic decline appears to yield on the vote. Other variables are sometimes more able to explain non-mainstream voting (see Table C.1).

Table C.1: Factors that influence non-mainstream voting

	Article		
	1-Province	**2-Occupation**	**3- Demographic Group**
Long-term economic decline	Second-most influential factor	Among the weakest of the significant factors	Among the weakest of the significant factors
Region	Strongest factor (esp., living in the West)	Strong factor (esp., living in the West and in Quebec)	Strong factor (esp., living in the West)
Election year	-	1993	1988 (negative) and 1993

Region in particular emerged as a very important factor. In fact, the regional dummy variables are among the strongest predictor of non-mainstream voting. Living in the West, especially, has a considerable impact on voting non-mainstream. But the regional variables did not negate the effect of economic conditions. Even when accounting for region, which represents many of the key political cleavages that are well known to characterize Canadian governance (see, for example, Smiley, 1971), long-term economic decline remains significant.

A negative regional factor is living in the Atlantic provinces. Voters in this region appear to support mainstream parties fairly consistently. Although there is some suggestion that even there long-term economic decline takes its toll on mainstream voting (see Figure 1.3c), and almost invariably, non-mainstream support is inversely

related to living in what is arguably Canada's most economically depressed region.

What might explain these regional variations? The possibility for such diverse responses to the same stimulus is consistent with an understanding of Canada as divided along key dimensions outlined by Smiley (1971), each of which is more salient in some parts of Canada than in others. For example, the English-French cleavage is arguably more salient in Quebec than anywhere else in Canada, while the East-West cleavage seems more salient in Western Canada. But these cleavages are not simply differences of opinion. They reflect a perception by one group that they are disadvantaged, that they are, in effect, losers in a system that is biased. When such a group suffers economic decline, its response may be rooted in light of these cleavages. In sum, the formation of political movements in Canada must be grounded in a regional context, even though the causes may be similar across the country. But this level of heterogeneity falls outside the confines of this project, but it would certainly add a much needed level of sophistication to the understanding of Canadian political behaviour.

Therefore, if cleavages vary in their salience from one region to the next, the manner in which voters express themselves will vary. In Quebec, discontent against the entire political system may express itself through support for sovereignty (as was seen after the sponsorship scandal broke); in Atlantic Canada, resentment may express itself through withdrawal and disengagement; in Western Canada, discontent

tends to fuel the growth of populism; in Ontario, discontent tends to fuel support for left-leaning parties, such as the NDP (see Henderson, 2004; Simeon and Elkins, 1974).

A similar set of factors may explain why non-mainstream parties, particularly the populist and radical right, have grown in Europe. Although the rise of such parties is not unique to countries in economic decline, there is some suggestion that support within any country seems to be higher among those most likely to have suffered economic decline. For example, support for the non-mainstream right is generally higher among males, whites, members of the lower socio-economic class, those who lack advanced education, (Fieschi and Heywood, 2004), and during times of rising unemployment (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Givens, 2002). Golder (2003) highlights an interaction between unemployment and immigration. In other words, economic decline and pre-existing orientations (i.e., political culture, attitudes) may interact to explain what encourages or constrains the emergence of this particular brand of right-wing non-mainstream parties. Whether similar factors explain why the left was more a prominent non-mainstream movement in a previous time in Europe is something that falls outside the confines of this project, but it is curious that the non-mainstream space typically occupied by the left is not more dominated by the right.

Aside from region, support for non-mainstream voting is also affected by factors unique to particular election years, vindicating those who believe election campaigns do indeed have an effect. As shown in

Table C.1, the 1993 election shows up as a particularly good year for non-mainstream voting, while the negative coefficient for the 1988 election dummy (see Table 3.1a) reflects the widespread belief of that particular election as being essentially a referendum on the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, with voters dividing themselves accordingly between the reigning Progressive Conservatives and the anti-free trade Liberals (see Johnston, et al., 1992).

Certainly, this suggests a need to look beyond just economics as the cause of different electoral patterns. Non-mainstream voting and voter discontent are not only and not always based on economic factors, and the research presented here in no way suggests that other, non-economic, factors should be ignored.

But what is remarkable in all these results is that even when accounting for particular election years, region and other factors that characterize the main cleavages of Canadian politics, and factors that clearly are strong and robust, long-term economic decline nonetheless remains relevant.

Furthermore, economic decline appears to weigh heavily on political efficacy. In both Articles 2 and 3, long-term economic decline emerged as the *strongest* factor that explains external political efficacy. As shown in Table C.2, region, particular election years, age, and other demographic characteristics appear much weaker.[2] Long-term economic decline, whether conceptualized as a decline in occupational growth or a

[2] The 1993 election year ranks a close second in Article 2.

decline of a particular socio-economic demographic group, is the strongest factor that brings down political efficacy. If voters are becoming increasingly cynical and cranky about mainstream politics, and if this troubling trend yields a potential threat to political stability in Canada, then one needs to consider long-term economic decline as a key dimension in electoral politics.

Table C.2: Factors affecting political efficacy:
Comparing beta scores from Articles 2 and 3

Dependent variable: External political efficacy

	Beta scores			
Independent variables:	Article 2		Article 3	
Long-term economic decline Occupation (Article 2) Demographic group (Article 3)	**-.175**	p<.001	**-.177**	p<.001
Regional dummies				
Atlantic Canada	-.030		**-.058**	p<.001
Quebec	**.056**	p<.10	**.076**	p<.01
Western Provinces	**-.051**	p<.10	**-.052**	p<.01
Religion	-.018		**-.046**	p<.01
Language	-.025		-.005	
Age	**-.089**	p<.001	**-.087**	p<.001
Gender	.030		**.055**	p<.001
Union	.032		-.013	
1984			**.075**	p<.001
1993	**-.156**	p<.001	**.033**	p<.05

Another potential objection concerns the conceptualization of "non-mainstream." This category has been defined as any party other

than the Liberal or Conservative party. However, whether the NDP really qualifies as non-mainstream should be further examined, given that the NDP has occupied office at the provincial level and that it has supported various Liberal minority governments. But when this party is excluded from analysis, results are inconsistent. The models in Article 1 are replicated, but the standard error of the estimate grows considerably. In Article 3, excluding the NDP renders insignificant the relationship between long-term economic decline and non-mainstream voting. Excluding the NDP does not appear to have negatively impacted results in Article 2. All this suggests that it might be prudent to continue regarding the NDP as a non-mainstream party, at least at the federal level. Also, by excluding the NDP, the proportion of CES respondents who claim to have supported a non-mainstream party drops considerably, from about a third to about a quarter. This leads to a bias, whereby analysis of non-mainstream voting would be overwhelmed by support for the Reform/Alliance and Bloc Quebecois parties. Perhaps the NDP's policy views more directly appeal to economic discontent than the other two parties, a point that merits further exploration.

Similarly, it is worthy to explore whether the results obtained in all three articles would repeat if analysis excludes marginal parties, those with less than a reasonable hope to win even one seat. But excluding such parties leads to another set of inconsistencies. Results in Article 1 and 3 are substantially the same, but in Article 2, the relationship between long-term economic decline and non-mainstream

voting fails to attain significance. In sum, the broad definition of non-mainstream here has some merit.

Now, why long-term economic decline has a heavy impact on attitude, but a relatively light impact on voting, is something that remains unanswered. One interpretation points to institutional constraints. Voters who suffer long-term economic decline are more prone to vote non-mainstream, but the plurality electoral system may cause many such voters to abandon their first non-mainstream choice and instead opt for a more winnable mainstream second choice. The possibility for such a dynamic is examined briefly in the next section.

3- Potential Objections and Qualifications

The perspective presented here is rather unique. Rarely do researchers in economic voting employ a long-term perspective, and rarely does voting research interpret results as an expression for or against the legitimacy of the entire political system. But in a way the overall results seem rather unsurprising. It makes sense for long-term losers to blame the system for their declining conditions and eventually withdraw support for that system. But despite the intuitive plausibility of the results that were presented here, there are some potential objections that need to be pointed out.

The next sub-sections examine four potential objections or qualifications. In particular, the research project's retrospective perspective; ambiguities with the central concept of "non-mainstream party;" the choice of attitude measures; and the consequences of non-mainstream voting. All of these points require some further discussion.

• *Retrospective vs. Prospective*

The project examined voting behaviour through retrospective lens, whereby voting behaviour is explained by using *past* economic data. On the surface, there may not need to be any justification, simply because one's knowledge of his or her long-term history is expected to be far better than forecasts of the long-term future. But on the other hand, voters do have expectations, and if long-term economic decline leads voters to support a non-mainstream party, then certainly they have in mind some idea of what such a party could do in the future. In a similar vein, support for any mainstream party may partly reflect that party's stand on how to manage the economy over the long-term. Voters can, therefore, align their long-term economic interests to an appropriate party.

There is a possibility for this type of voting. In the short-term, Nadeau and Lewis-Beck (2001) point out how in American presidential elections voters evaluate the potential future economic prospects of

candidates when neither is seeking re-election. There is nothing to suggest voters do not extend their evaluations into the long-term. After all, it is rational to consider the long-term, since many important decisions in life, such as assuming a mortgage to purchase a house, are not only economic, but require a long-term commitment and a sufficient level of economic health over that long period of time.

The problem with a long-term prospective voter is that it is difficult to measure. One's support for a non-mainstream party can reflect future expectations of what that party can do. If a party seems favourable to a particular sector, then voters who identify with that sector can decide whether to support that party. But there are at two problems.

First, all this assumes that a party delivers what it promises. Also, even if a party does deliver on its promises, there remains the distinct possibility that the policy ideas would nonetheless fail. Just because a party promises to enact certain measures aimed to help a certain sector does not automatically imply that those measures will work, or continue to work, in the long run. All this makes it hard to build a dataset that matches a voter's choice in one election with the expected long-term economic performance that a particular party.

Second, the only parties that can be judged on their ability to enact appropriate economic policy are those that form governments. Non-mainstream parties generally sit in opposition, and generally expect to remain in opposition. Therefore, they can make all kinds of promises

and claims without fear that one day they will actually have to be accountable to them. Voters may be cognizant of such a constraint. Instead of seeing such a vote as a waste, support for non-mainstream parties might be used to send a signal to the wining mainstream party that something is amiss, and that future election gains depend on that party's appropriate reaction to redress long-term grievances.

In sum, a vote for a non-mainstream party may reflect future expectations of what that non-mainstream party promises to deliver, or used to pressure the mainstream winning party to produce the same desired results. In any case, a prospective approach is difficult to apply. That is why the retrospective approach applied here is seen as more feasible. It also more closely ties into an analysis of how voters' attitudes have evolved over time to reflect their dwindling economic conditions, since a main point of this research is that support for non-mainstream parties reflects a general decline in attitudes towards the political system, and this in turn was caused by disappointing conditions over the long-term.

• *Ambiguity of the "Non-Mainstream" Concept*

The concept of a non-mainstream party is clear to the Canadian case, at least up until the 2000 general election. No other party other than the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives has ever governed

Canada. All other parties have done no better than to sit on the opposition benches. Even in minority governments, none of the other parties ever formed part of a coalition government. As mentioned previously, Canada produced only one coalition government (1917-1920), and even that was formed between Conservative and Liberal MPs. Certainly, the NDP has functioned as a major player, bolstering Liberal minority governments in exchange for certain policy provisions. But even here, the NDP remained an opposition party. Aside for some bragging rights of having forced a Liberal government to pass this or that budget provision or legislative bill, and a moderately successful history of winning some elections at the provincial level, the NDP cannot claim to have a history as a governing party in Canadian federal politics. They remain a non-mainstream party that cannot even to claim to have ever formed the official opposition.

But since the 2004 election, the lines between non-mainstream and mainstream have blurred. The PC-Alliance merger may be regarded as a blend of both mainstream and non-mainstream parties. So at best, the new Conservative party is a meso-mainstream party. However, an argument can be made that the new Conservative party is comprised mostly of the old Reform/Alliance party, with far less of it comprised of whatever was left of the old PC party. So it is not obvious how to interpret a vote for the Conservative party. Is it a vote for a non-mainstream party, and therefore, attractive to those who feel that the political system needs fundamental change? Or is the new Conservative

party more mainstream, attracting votes for those who wish to see more stability? Is it as mainstream as the Liberals?

Also, and this was pointed out in the conclusion of Article 1, the concept of non-mainstream employed here may not easily apply elsewhere, particularly in countries whose electoral systems are far more proportional, and consequently produce multi-party systems. Often, governments are led by coalitions of two or more parties. Aside from the more extremist fringe parties that are almost always in opposition, some coalition members are parties that can be considered "radical." For example, the ultra-orthodox party Shas was a member of Yitzhak Rabin's coalition government in Israel in 1992; the anti-immigrant populist rightwing Austrian Freedom Party was a junior member of a coalition government led by the conservative Austrian People's Party in 2000. In Canada's plurality system, such parties would not stand a chance of becoming part of any coalition.

Perhaps the concept should not be construed simply as a dichotomy, but more in terms of degree. A party then can be placed along an ordinal continuum that includes intermediate levels of mainstream*ness*. At the more "mainstream" end of the continuum would include such parties as the Liberal Party of Canada, the Republican and Democratic Parties of the United States and the Social Democrats in Germany. The opposite end of the continuum would include clearly non-mainstream parties such as the Bloc Québécois, Ralph Nader's Green Party, the British National Party, and the Japanese Communist Party.

The more grey middle area would include those parties that have formed part of a ruling coalition, although as a junior member. Perhaps one level below that would include those parties that have not officially become part of a coalition, but have nonetheless provided support for a government, such as Canada's NDP and Denmark's People's party.[3] A revised conception of "non-mainstream" should also take into account a party's history. There was a time in Britain when the Liberal party was the mainstream competitor to the Conservatives. Now, the Liberal party is a third party at best, and Labour has, since 1945, won many general elections, and now ranks with the Conservatives as Britain's two main parties. How should the Liberals be classified? Does a long period of absence from power disqualify a party as mainstream? How long should a party have to sit in opposition before its "mainstream" status expires? Clearly, the concept "non-mainstream" could be elaborated further. Perhaps a mathematical formula could be designed to quantify a party's level of mainstream*ness* by taking into account certain key factors, such as the party's proportion of cabinet seats, number of coalition partners, tenure in office, and duration in opposition. In sum, the concept of non-mainstream might need some more careful revision.

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[3] Castles and Mair (1984) comes close. They score parties using a left-right scale that ranges from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). This may seem appropriate for most cases, but it can lead to an interpretation of parties which is too focused on ideological distance as opposed to an insider-outsider status. For example, their results show that a score of 2.1 separates the NDP (3.2) and the Liberals (5.3), while the distance between what is clearly a more non-mainstream party, the Social Credit (7.8), and the Progressive Conservatives (6.5) party is only 1.3. Under this scheme, Social Credit is closer to the mainstream than the NDP, a conclusion that is debatable.

• *Attitude Measures*

Political efficacy functioned as a key factor in explaining why long-term economic decline raises the propensity to vote non-mainstream. As the summary results show, the inverse relationship between long-term economic decline and political efficacy is very strong. The longer one suffers economic decline, the more the political system will be regarded as unresponsive, and consequently, the more likely one begins to manifest lower levels of external political efficacy. But is political efficacy the only attitude that mediates the relationship between eroding conditions and voter support for non-mainstream parties? Another potentially relevant attitude is "trust."

Definitions of "trust" vary, but in general, trust is an evaluative attitude about individuals or administrations. Political trust in particular is a belief that political leaders can be expected to render good governance. It is an index of survey items that refer to incumbents, leaders (i.e., actual people), or a particular administration (e.g., party in power). For example, one item is as follows: "Do you think the people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?"[4] The referent "people in government" conjures mental pictures of the head of government, such as the prime

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[4] Both the American National Election Study and the Canadian Election Study use similarly worded items.

minister, key cabinet members, or more generic images of politicians or civil servants. In any case, the item points to people.

The concept has recently drawn a considerable amount of attention in comparative political analysis, particularly in trying to explain why citizens vote less and appear to be more cynical towards the political establishment, especially since the 1970s (see, for example, Hardin, 2000; Newton, 1999; Newton and Norris, 2000). One recent Canadian study (Bélanger and Nadeau, 2005) points to an inverse and consistent relationship between trust and support for third parties (NDP, Reform and Bloc Québécois), while political trust appears to yield almost no impact on voter support for the mainstream opposition party.

On the surface, one could draw parallels between declines in political trust and declines in political efficacy, both in Canada and abroad. Both trends seem to have taken place over the same economically turbulent period, and both have led to similar results: the rise of non-mainstream parties, voter cynicism and lower turnout. But political trust and political efficacy are different concepts. They may correlate very well, but they measure different phenomenon, and yield different implications.

Trust is a central idea to the more broad study of social capital, which has also been on the decline, but not necessarily because of economic decline. According to Putnam (2000), the decline of social capital is a result of older cohorts, who were raised during a period when social engagement (especially through church groups) was more

commonplace (or expected), being replaced by younger cohorts, who lived under a different social context, such as suburbanization, the advent of television and secularization. The decline of social engagement has therefore led to a decline in overall levels of trust, since, as Newton (1999) points out, trust is something that strengthens with interpersonal contact (i.e., engagement). Therefore, the decline in social capital has constrained the development of any form of public trust. In sum, this phenomenon's relationship with economic decline may only be coincidental, and seems more tied to sociological, not structural, changes.

Another problem with political trust is that it may not necessarily function as a valid measure of system-wide disaffection. As mentioned before, indicators of trust measure evaluations of particular leaders, incumbents or administrations. They do not primarily focus on the extent to which the political system as a whole is responsive to its citizens. Trust items may not strictly measure "specific" political support, but they tap into evaluations of political actors rather than the overall regime. Also, one reason why measures of trust capture some system-wide sentiments is because citizens may naturally progress from having a sense of mistrust for particular leaders into a more generalized rejection of the political system. As Hetherington points out: "As problems go unsolved over a series of administrations, citizens may begin to question the regime," (1998: 792). In other words, as trust for political actors continues to dwindle, negative views of the political

system will eventually follow. Put more simply: specific measures of trust and the more system-wide evaluations correlate over time.

Also, since trust items refer to more specific political actors, negative trust can be addressed through regular elections. As Abramson and Finifter (1981) point out: "Disaffection with incumbents can, in principle at least, be remedied through the electoral process," (298). Simply elect new leaders, or vote for the mainstream opposition. But the propensity to support non-mainstream parties benefits from negative evaluations of the entire political system, not just particular leaders. Even the mainstream official opposition is seen as dysfunctional or unable to exact adequate change.

However, it must be acknowledged that non-mainstream parties do not only focus their criticism against the system. They do name names and do point out how this or that leader has failed the public. Such an approach renders relevant the concept of political trust. However, a large part of a non-mainstream party's *raison d'être* is to challenge politics as usual, in its entirety. They criticize the overall political system's inability to respond effectively to citizen demands. In this light, external political efficacy seems more appropriate, since it is a more specific measured of support for the entire political system, and not any particular administration or particular incumbents.

• *Why vote non-mainstream?*

Another potential objection concerns an omission. Although the link between long-term economic decline and non-mainstream voting has been established, and although this is tied to political efficacy, one central question remains unanswered: What benefits might a voter derive from supporting a party that clearly could do no better than win enough seats to form a viable opposition party, and at worse, shift votes away from a second-choice contender thereby allowing a lesser preferred third-choice candidate to win. This question is centered not so much on what motivates voters to choose non-mainstream parties, but what satisfaction do they get from having done so? As Anderson et al. (2005) point out, voters who supported parties that did not win an election tend to have less favourable evaluations of the electoral process. This is true in general, and includes parties that might otherwise have won an election (i.e., the mainstream opposition). But how do voters evaluate the democratic process after knowingly voting for a losing non-mainstream party? Worse still (and this applies particularly to Canada's plurality system), how does a voter respond after having cast a vote for an un-winnable non-mainstream party, and then seeing his or her *least*-preferred candidate win the constituency?

These questions are not just academic. As shown in Figure 1.1 in the first article, voting in Canada has shown remarkable trends in favour of non-mainstream parties that have no realistic chance of

forming a government. If indeed the survival of a democracy depends on the consent of the losers, then the survival of Canada's democracy depends not only on that almost 60 per cent of the electorate that does not cast a vote for winner party (since a party typically needs little more than 40 per cent of the vote in order to form a majority government), but also on that 25 to 45 per cent of voters who over the course of the last few decades have supported parties that are *consistent losers*. If there is any legitimacy crisis that will erupt in Canadian politics, it may emerge from that portion of the Canadian electorate that considers itself a consistent loser both at the ballot box and in the economic agenda.

4- Final Remarks

Some general concluding remarks can be made by drawing an analogy with a completely different field. In the world of consumer behaviour, a change in consumer tastes in the market often leads to a demand shock. This is natural, and expected, although the shock can be costly to the provider of a good or service that has gone out of style. But in the marketplace of political ideas, the consequences of demand shocks are not always benign, and almost never just local. When voters change their "tastes," it may lead the emergence of new political parties. But when that change stems from discontent, then the context becomes less stable and potentially more dangerous. Voter discontent suggests a

failure of the regime. which opens the door to both potentially progressive ideas (democratization, reform, policy innovation, etc.), and also reactionary and potentially authoritarian movements. It is not necessarily predictable which way society will go.

It is also not easy to identify the beginnings of such trends. Typically, all the attention in an election is given to the largest parties. Smaller parties hardly get any media coverage. It is only when non-mainstream parties begin to win seats or begin to measure high in public opinion polls that the presence and growth of such movements get noticed. And if it takes voters a long period of time to develop a taste for non-mainstream parties, then the reversal may require at least as long a period of time.

If a growing non-mainstream party threatens politically stability or even liberal democratic principles, then surely one should not sit idly by and wait for this movement to simply "fizzle out." Furthermore, the fact that some of their supporters are driven by sentiments that suggest disapproval of the entire political system imposes a certain political agenda. Voters clearly expect some things to get done, and until they see a long-term record of positive results, they are not likely to return to mainstream parties.

So what's a government to do? First, one should not be led to believe that the growth of non-mainstream parties necessarily implies a march down towards a revolution. That is definitely a possibility, and history shows that societies can turn against regimes that fail to

respond appropriately to pressing problems. But Canada may not be a good case for regime failure. Non-mainstream parties are not necessarily destabilizing or violent. Some aspects of the policy platforms of non-mainstream parties may be innovative, some even radical, and followers (and sometimes even leaders) of non-mainstream parties spew out the occasional intolerant remark. But in general, the Canadian political system appears sufficiently responsive. The centrist Liberal party has a history of leaning a little to the left and a little to right, depending on the political winds. Also, Reform/Alliance recognized that greater electoral success can only come about by shifting closer towards the mainstream, which included a merger with whatever remained of the Progressive Conservative party. Institutionally, then, Canada appears to have shock absorbers in place, and the Canadian political culture appears to demand centrist parties that make every effort possible to behave "mainstream."

But if the rise of electoral support for non-mainstream parties is indeed tied to voter discontent with the political system as a whole, then one obvious solution is to reform the political system. But this solution is not always feasible.

Any political reform that requires constitutional amendments is off the table. Even non-constitutional reform, such as reforming the electoral system, is proving difficult to accomplish. So, for the foreseeable future, don't bet on institutional reform to cure political ills.

But one thing that governments can do, and sometimes do well, is put in place policies that encourage more equitable economic conditions. It is not to say that the Canadian government should embrace socialism, but if there is a group that is suffering long-term economic decline, then the state can step in. Either the state can draft policies to reverse a decline, or, if the decline is seen as necessary as part of an industrial evolutionary process (e.g., the rise of the automotive industry implied a decline in occupations such as ferriers, whip makers, stagecoach builders, etc.), then programs can be put in place to help retrain and reintegrate those being left out by economic change. Healthy macroeconomic management is the least that a government can pursue, and if it does that well, it may minimize the strength of potentially destabilizing political movements.

Furthermore, institutional reform may be facilitated by positive economic conditions. In other words, future political and institutional reform to improve Canada's democratic and federal system may require first that the state ensure that Canadians generally feel that their economic needs are satisfied. Or, minimally, citizens who struggle economically must not be given any reason to feel that the state has abandoned their plight.

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Appendix 1:

Outline of Variables for Article 1

The units in the dataset used in Article 1 are provincial-level voting and economic data for seven elections years (1979, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1993, 1997 and 2000). For each election, and for each province, the following was determined:

Vote share for incumbent party: Provincial-level percentage of votes won by the ruling incumbent party in a general federal election. The incumbent was the Liberal Party in 1979, 1984, 1997 and 2000, and the Progressive Conservative Party in 1980, 1988 and 1993.

Vote share for non-mainstream parties: Provincial-level percentage of votes won by parties other than the Liberal or Progressive Conservative Party, including independents.

Long-term participation rate: The 10-year percentage change in provincial-level labour-force participation rate. The figure is calculated for each election year, as follows:

$$\Delta PL_{py} = \frac{P_{py} - P_{p(y-10)}}{P_{p(y-10)}}$$

where ΔPL_{py} is the 10-year percentage change in labour-force participation rate for a province (sub-script p) at election year (sub-script y);

P_{py} is the labour-force participation rate for a province p at year y;

$P_{p(y-10)}$ is the labour-force participation rate for a province p at 10 years before the general federal election held at year y.

Long-term unemployment rate: The 10-year percentage change in provincial-level unemployment rate. The figure is calculated for each election year, as follows:

$$\Delta UL_{py} = \frac{U_{py} - U_{p(y-10)}}{U_{p(y-10)}}$$

where ΔUL_{py} is the percentage change in unemployment rate for a province (sub-script p) at election year (sub-script y);

U_{py} is the unemployment rate for province p at year y;

$U_{p(y-10)}$ is the unemployment rate rate for a province p at 10 years before the general federal election held at year y.

Short-term participation rate: The one-year percentage change in provincial-level labour-force participation rate. The figure is calculated for each election year, as follows:

$$\Delta PS_{py} = \frac{P_{py} - P_{p(y-1)}}{P_{p(y-1)}}$$

where ΔPS_{py} is the percentage change in labour-force participation rate for a province (sub-script p) at election year (sub-script y);

P_{py} is the labour-force participation rate for province p at year y;

$P_{p\,(y-1)}$ is the labour-force participation rate for a province p one year years before the general federal election held at year y.

Short-term unemployment rate: The 10-year percentage change in provincial-level unemployment rate. The figure is calculated for each election year, as follows:

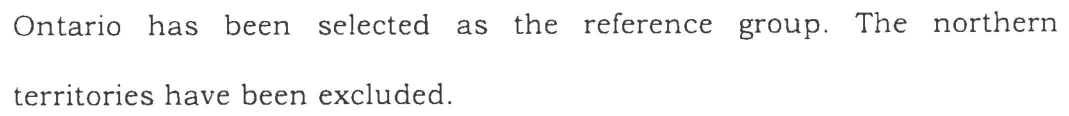
$$\Delta US_{py} = \frac{U_{py} - U_{p(y-10)}}{U_{p(y-10)}}$$

where ΔUS_{py} is the one-year percentage change in unemployment rate for a province (sub-script p) at election year (sub-script y);

U_{py} is the unemployment rate for province p at year y;

$U_{p(y-1)}$ is the unemployment rate for a province p one year before the general federal election held at year y.

Atlantic, Quebec, West: Regional dummy variables. A score of 1 is assigned to a unit if the province belongs to one of these regions.


Ontario has been selected as the reference group. The northern territories have been excluded.

APPENDIX 2:

Outline of Variables for Article 2

The units in the dataset used in Article 2 pooled together the 1979 and the 1993 Canadian Election Study.

Vote choice: A categorical variable based on reported voting behaviour of respondents from the 1979 and the 1993 Canadian Election Study (post-election wave). A score of 1 is assigned to respondents who reported voting for the incumbent (i.e., the Liberals in 1979; the Progressive Conservatives in 1993), a 2 if they reported a vote for a non-mainstream party, and a 3 if they reported to have abstained from voting.

10-year change in occupational growth rate: A respondent of a particular election year is assigned a value pertaining to the long-term economic change of his or her occupational group. The long-term change is based on the labour market data drawn from the Canada Census nearest to the election year and 10 years prior (i.e., respondents from the 1979 and 1993 CES are assigned values drawn from, respectively, the 1971 and 1981 Census, and the 1981 and 1991 Census). Negative values reflect shrinkage; positive values reflect

growth. For purposes of analysis, positive values are set to zero, while negative values are converted to positive scores.

External political efficacy: An additive composite measure based on two CES questions: 1) "I don't think that the government cares much what people like me think," and 2) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." For each questions, a score of 0 is assigned to those who answered "Strongly agree," .33 to "Agree," .66 to "Disagree," and 1 to "Strongly disagree." Non-response (e.g., don't know, refused to answer, etc.) are factored out. The scores on each of these questions are added. The sum is then divided by 2 in order to bring the index to a 0 to 1 scale.

Atlantic, Quebec, West: Regional dummy variables. A score of 1 is assigned to a respondent if he or she resides in one of these regions. Ontario has been selected as the reference group. The northern territories have been excluded.

Religion: A dummy variable whereby respondents who are Catholic are assigned a score of 1, all others a 0.

Language: A dummy variable whereby respondents who are francophone are assigned a score of 1, all others a 0.

Age: A numeric variable that represents the age of each respondent.

Gender: A dummy variable whereby a score of 1 is assigned to males, 0 to females.

Union: A dummy variable whereby a score of 1 is assigned to respondents who have indicated membership to a labour union.

1993: A dummy variable that assigned as core of 1 to respondents from the 1993 Canadian Election Study.

APPENDIX 3:

Outline of Variables for Article 3

Datasets were compiled by pooling together Canadian Election Study surveys from 1974 to 1997.

Vote choice: A categorical variable based on reported voting behaviour of respondents from the 1974 to the 1997 Canadian Election Study (post-election wave). A score of 1 is assigned to respondents who reported voting for the incumbent (i.e., the Liberals in 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1997; the Progressive Conservatives in 1988 and 1993), a 2 if they reported a vote for a mainstream opposition party, and a 3 if they reported to have voted for a non-mainstream party.

External political inefficacy: An additive composite measure based on two CES items: 1) "I don't think that the government cares much what people like me think," and 2) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." For each questions, a score of 1 is assigned to those who answered "Strongly agree," .66 to "Agree," .33 to "Disagree," and 0 to "Strongly disagree." Non-response (e.g., don't know, refused to answer, etc.) are factored out. The scores on each of these questions are added. The sum is then divided by 2 in order to bring the index to a 0 to 1 scale.

Economically declining demographic group: A dummy variable that assigns a score of one to respondents who fulfill the following three criteria: employed in a working-class occupation (forestry, mining, processing, machining, fabrication, construction, clerical, service, transportation), and have indicated an educational attainment level of below the post-secondary level (high-school diploma and less).

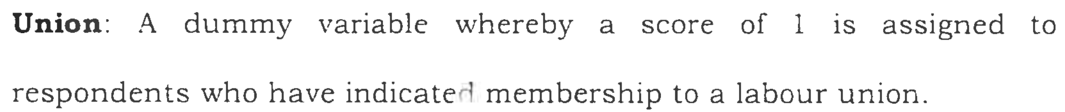
Atlantic, Quebec, West: Regional dummy variables. A score of 1 is assigned to a respondent if he or she resides in one of these regions. Ontario has been selected as the reference group. The northern territories have been excluded.

Religion: A dummy variable whereby respondents who are Catholic are assigned a score of 1, all others a 0.

Language: A dummy variable whereby respondents who are francophone are assigned a score of 1, all others a 0.

Age: A numeric variable that represents the age of each respondent.

Gender: A dummy variable whereby a score of 1 is assigned to males, 0 to females.



Union: A dummy variable whereby a score of 1 is assigned to respondents who have indicated membership to a labour union.

1979, 1984, 1988, 1993: Election-year dummy variables. A score of 1 is assigned to a respondent if he or she has participated in the election study of one of these years.