Left/Right Asymmetries in a Multidimensional Universe: Citizens, Activists, and Parties

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Submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2010

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Political scientists have sought to unify under a single theoretical umbrella the explanations for the patterns of public opinion in the electorate and the patterns of party policy. Yet, these models have not taken account of potential differences between left-wingers and right-wingers in the ways that policy preferences are bundled together across multiple dimensions of political disagreement. The dissertation examines the origins and structure of political opinions on three dimensions of left/right disagreement: wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration. The overall argument is that the content and structure of opinions are fundamentally intertwined. As a result, left/right disagreement is multidimensional and asymmetrical. Left-wingers and right-wingers derive from different sources, and structure in different ways, their opinions about policy. These asymmetries appear in the patterns of public opinion, the preferences of party activists, and in the positioning of political parties.
Acknowledgments

I cannot pour out in a preface the considerable debt of kindness that I have accumulated from my family, friends, and teachers over the past 13 years. I will use the acknowledgments to describe how this dissertation came to be, and I will use a career of teaching and research to bequeath at every opportunity the debts that I have acquired. Let me move backwards, more or less, to the beginning of this project.

The following dissertation completes the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Toronto, where I have been a student, since 2003, in the Department of Political Science. I was Neil Nevitte’s student in a narrow and formal sense because he was my doctoral supervisor. I am Neil Nevitte’s student in a broader traditional sense because my development as a scholar owes more to him than to anybody else. It matters to me that his productivity and his generosity removed from my concerns the perpetual distraction of material considerations. And it matters to me that I was able to present my research in Italy, and then Chicago, because of him. But even more than these things, I am indebted for the quality of his advice about research, work ethic, criticism, writing, and, indeed, child-rearing. This was not just thesis supervision; it was out-and-out mentorship. That mentorship underpins the completion of this project.

My thesis committee—Randall Hansen, Jeffery Kopstein and David Rayside—shaped from the early stages the direction of this dissertation. Randall Hansen drew my attention to far-right politics, and Jeffrey Kopstein encouraged the leap from the psychology of public opinion to a more general view of politics which includes party policy. Both of these contributions figure crucially in the following chapters. David Rayside came aboard in a formal capacity near the end, and he made a number of suggestions in that capacity which improved the focus, structure and clarity of my argument. Before that, however, David Rayside’s insights about left/right ideology helped me to lay the theoretical groundwork that holds this dissertation together.

The thesis itself was conceived and written after I moved with my wife and daughter to Drumheller, Alberta, some 3000 kilometers away from the University of Toronto. In that respect, the dissertation is a small testament that technological achievements can overcome what Mackenzie King
once called the enduring Canadian problem of “too much geography.” I have put these technologies to many uses, but I value none more than my contact with Steve White and Chris Alcantara. Steve White’s influence on this dissertation is what a careful reader, starting from here, would later recognize as the “other side” of the methodological hurdles that I have had to face. Chris Alcantara’s honest criticism has shaped, more in parts than anyone, four of the seven chapters. I am convinced that a serious commitment to finding the right answers has always involved toiling anonymously, and often fruitlessly, against all kinds of limitations, including one’s own. There is no publicity or credit for this work, and it applies no less in attempts at good science than in attempts at good philosophy. Fortunately, these pursuits are the foundation of a high form of friendship; the kind of friendship that fends off intellectual loneliness and bouts of crippling despair.

If I had not been to the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, or, perhaps, never outside of it, I may have never so fully appreciated the legacy of administrative accomplishments which have made the largest university in the country feel as intimate, as personal, as the smallest. This is not just an institutional achievement. Joan Kallis and Carolynn Branton resolved my self-afflicted administrative quagmires, often before they emerged. My technology problems were addressed, literally within minutes, by Tuan Diep and Curtis Debi. And the generosity and professionalism of Neil Nevitte’s administrators, Liane Mahon and Maura McClellan, made my life as his student much, much easier.

Although the credit for this project starts and ends at the University of Toronto, my need to pursue it has a somewhat longer history. It began in September, 1998, when my lucrative career paths were corrupted by what I have since come to call an important “interaction effect.” In that case, it was the interaction of a great teacher, Patrick Malcolmson, and a great book, Plato’s Republic. It is an understatement to say that I was caught off guard, as an aspiring rich person, by two thousand year old insights in a required political philosophy course. I have since felt like a fly in the dark, circling to the point of nausea around the brightest lights that I can find, but having to retreat back to the shadows in order to land. I was fortunate to end up afterwards at McGill, where I met Elisabeth Gidengil. I simply
have not met any professor at any university who is more committed to students and their research. It was her commitment to my research, and her example, which focused my malaise toward science.

All of this has meant shirking the responsibilities that would prevent me, in most other circumstances, from pursuing an academic life. I am under no illusions about this luxury. I enjoy it because of the sacrifices that productive people have made on my behalf. Most directly, of course, are the sacrifices of my mother and father, Lynn and Brian Cochrane. My brother, Jonathan Cochrane, has hosted me for the past few months in Toronto. When he lost his eyesight in 1999, who would have thought that he would be in a position, as a 26 year old, to support, in luxury, his older brother? One answer, without question, was that he did. Before coming to Toronto in 2003, I lived in Montreal with my aunt and uncle, Patricia and Gerald Lavers. This living arrangement continued their history of generous support for my immediate family; indeed, I lived with them, as an infant, while my mother was a student.

I now receive generous funding from the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy, and remarkable hospitality from the Department of Political Science at Wilfrid Laurier University. As a Ph.D. student, I received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as from the Department of Political Science, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto. My Master’s degree at McGill was funded in large part by the Banque Nationale fellowship at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, and by the McGill Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. I received the Bishop Thomas F. Barry scholarship at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB. And I have had the opportunity to work on many occasions for employers where supervisors and co-workers were highly supportive of my academic pursuits. On this point, I am especially grateful to the City of Fredericton and to Adam Cougle, as well as to Ron Finnie, Errol Keetch, Royce Vanhorne, Dave Sibley, Steve Boucher, Adam Brewer, Stacy Gay, and Jared Phillips.
I will close by singling out the mooring which transcends all of the time and space in the story above: my wife, Christine Cochrane (Dalzell). Her refusal to see hard cases as lost causes is what keeps her going as a grade one teacher. Indeed, it keeps her going as my wife.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Origins of Left/Right Opinions 1

I. Theories of Left/Right Disagreement 4
II. The Components of Theoretical Unification 8
   A. Multidimensionality 8
   B. Mass-Elite Integration 13
   C. Left/Right Asymmetry 19
III. Structure of the Dissertation 23


Chapter 2: Learning the Language of Politics 33

I. Methodology and data summary 35
II. Hypothesis 39
III. Conclusion 45

Chapter 3: The Social Context of Racism 58

I. Theory 58
II. Methodology 62
III. Hypotheses 65
IV. Results 66
V. Discussion 74
VI. Conclusion 76

Part 2: Information, Predisposition, and Left/Right

Chapter 4: Policy Disagreement in Advanced Industrial States 90

I. Left/Right and Public Opinion 91
II. Left and Right in Comparative Perspective 93
   A. The Use of Left/Right 93
   B. The Meaning of Left/Right 95
III. The Organization of Left/Right Opinions 98
IV. Coherence and Fragmentation: The Role of Predispositions 108
V. Conclusion 110

Chapter 5: Left/Right Asymmetries in the Structure of Party Policy 120

I. Postulates and Hypotheses 121
II. Empirical Findings 123
III. Conclusion 128

Chapter 6: The Left/Right Divide in Canadian Politics 136

I. Ideology and Canadian Politics 138
II. Culture, Constraint, and Social Learning 140
III. Structure and Content of Left/Right Disagreement 143
IV. Does Ideology Matter in Canada? 145
V. The Asymmetrical Universes of Left/Right in Canada 149
VI. Conclusion 156

Chapter 7: Conclusion 165
Chapter One
The Origins of Left/Right Opinions

“Theoretical unification”, the achievement of explaining with fewer underlying assumptions a wider range of the observable connections between phenomena, is a driving goal of scientific research (Popper, 1968, Przeworski & Teune, 1970; King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). In this vein, political scientists have sought to unify under a single theoretical umbrella the micro-level of individual opinions and the macro-level of party competition (Adams, Merrill & Grofman, 2005; Roemer, 2001). At issue is the challenge of developing a single theory that accounts simultaneously for the policy preferences of individuals in the electorate and the patterns of policy disagreements between political parties.

This task has been hard to accomplish within the confines of existing theories. Behavioralists have tended to propose a “top-down” framework that attributes the opinions of voters to the policy positions of the partisan elite with which they identify (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960; Goren, 2005). Spatial theorists, by contrast, have outlined a “bottom-up” framework that explains the policy positions of party elites by pointing to the preferences of citizens in the electorate (e.g., Downs, 1957; Miller & Schofield, 2008). These rival explanations do not fit easily together in a single falsifiable theory. Even so, it is theoretically awkward to rely on one theory to explain the policy preferences of individuals in the electorate, and on an altogether separate theory to explain the policy preferences of the individuals in the political elite. Unifying these explanations is imperative.

This dissertation confronts this challenge by linking the policy preferences of individuals—voters and politicians alike—to a single framework of opinion formation. I argue,
building on Zaller (1992), Alford, Funk & Hibbing (2005), and others (McCloskey & Zaller, 1984), that political opinions take shape as individuals are exposed to sources of information, or “frames,” that prime them to consider an issue from the vantage point of an abstract idea that they are predisposed to accept. From this perspective, opinion formation is not simply about exposure to information. Nor is it simply about predispositions (c.f. Feldman, 1988). Rather, opinions form through an interaction between information and predisposition. On the one hand, people are unlikely to link a specific issue to an abstract value unless they have been exposed to an argument that primes them to do so (e.g., Hochschild, 1981). On the other hand, people are unlikely to accept an argument that primes them to consider an issue from the perspective of an abstract value that they do not hold. Information is influential when it “activates” a predisposition; a predisposition is influential when it is “activated” by information. Thus, it is the interaction between predisposition and information that matters.¹

This theoretical framework applies with equal facility to the policy preferences of citizens, activists, and politicians. It therefore holds out the promise of contributing to political science a unified theory of political competition; a theory that explains the patterns that exist across multiple policy domains in the positions of voters, activists, and political parties. In this respect, it explains more phenomena with fewer underlying assumptions. As we shall see, however, it can also explain these phenomena more accurately. Indeed, contrary to Zaller (1992) and Alford, Funk & Hibbing (2005), this dissertation argues that the information-predisposition framework generates predictions that challenge dominant assumptions about the very structure of political disagreement itself. More specifically, it suggests that people who are exposed to different information, or who hold different predispositions, are likely to differ from one another in two respects. First, they are likely to hold different opinions about issue(s). And second, they
are likely to disagree about how different issues fit together into a coherent bundle of opinions. As a result, the organization of political preferences is likely to be as contingent and variable as the content of those preferences. People who disagree in the “content” of their opinions are likely to disagree in the “organization” of their opinions.

This core argument has critical implications for one of the most enduring and universal concepts in political science (Bobbio, 1996; Laponce, 1981; Noel & Therrien, 2008): left/right political disagreement. According to Bobbio (1996), “‘left’ and ‘right’ are two antithetical terms which for more than two centuries have been used habitually to signify the contrast between the ideologies and movements which divide the world of political thought and action” (p.1). Even so, the categories of left and right are not values in themselves; they are vessels into which people pour specific content. Just what meaning people pour into these categories is an empirical question in its own right (Benoit & Laver, 2006, p. 131; Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990, p. 212). On this point, the main argument of this dissertation is that people who think differently about a political issue are likely to situate that issue alongside different elements of the political universe. Indeed, the central empirical finding is that left/right disagreement is asymmetrical; that left-wingers and right-wingers not only disagree in their opinions about issues, but they also disagree about the policy dimensions to which each issue belongs. In effect, left-wingers and right-wingers organize in different ways their opinions about policy.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. The first section reviews the existing literature on political disagreement and challenges the plausibility of three dominant assumptions that stand in the way of theoretical unification. I argue that the assumptions of unidimensionality, symmetrical disagreement, and a mass-elite dichotomy are unrealistic simplifications of empirical reality. Even so, questioning the empirical veracity of assumptions is not a sufficient
basis for abandoning those assumptions. Unrealistic assumptions may nonetheless generate predictions about empirical phenomena that are more accurate than those derived from more realistic assumptions (King, 1991). The second section therefore turns to a demonstration of how these simplifying assumptions actually do distort predictions about political disagreement. Taken together, there are reasons to suggest that we may need to alter in significant ways some key assumptions about the nature of political disagreement. The final section lays out the framework for the remainder of the dissertation.

I. Theories of Left/Right Disagreement

Theories of political disagreement commonly adopt at least one of the following postulates: unidimensionality (e.g., Downs, 1957; but see Budge, Klingemann, et al., 2001), mirror-image symmetry (e.g., Laponce, 1981, pp.116-9; but see Connover and Feldman, 1981, p.619), and a mass-elite dichotomy (e.g., Downs 1957, pp.28, 96-99; McClosky and Zaller, 1984, pp.12-13; Zaller, 1992, p.6). The first of these constraints manifests itself most clearly in the notion of a single left-right continuum; an assumption that has been examined on empirical grounds (Klingemann, et al., 2006). The second constraint, mirror-image symmetry, is the political science equivalent of Newton’s third law of motion: for every set of opinions there is an equal and opposite set of opinions. The third constraint, a mass-elite dichotomy, is at the centre of a core conceptual disagreement in the study of political competition: to what extent do voters respond to party cues rather than the other way around (Cambpell, et al., 1960, p.542)? Not since a mid-Twentieth Century paradigm shift away from group-level political sociological theories, and toward individual-level psychological and rational choice theories, has the
dominant theoretical view in political science been that citizens and elites are subject to precisely the same ideational pressures (e.g., Lipset, 1960, p.220).

This dissertation builds from a less ordered conceptualization of political disagreement. The core assumption is that there are no inherent or normative connections between opinions or policies about any two issues. The organization of party policies and individual opinions are dependent variables worthy of their own hypotheses. On this point, the evidence indicates that while people may be born with predispositions, they are not born with ready-made opinions (Alford, Funk & Hibbing, 2005; 2008; Hatemi, Medland, Morley, Heath, & Martin, 2007). Opinions are formed through interactions of individual-level factors like personality, religiosity, partisanship and rationality (i.e., self-interest), and societal influences like family upbringing, religion, party membership and socioeconomic class. Each of these influences generates a distinctive intersection of opinions for individuals and groups by affecting simultaneously more than one opinion. There are distinctive consequences for different configurations of influences. And each person is often subject to influences that push in opposing directions about exactly the same issues.

Conceptualizing opinions as intervening variables—that is, as ideas that do not exist a priori—limits the empirical prospects of mirror-image symmetry for three reasons. First, some of the best known influences on public opinion fail to generate comprehensive bundles of opinions about the universe of politically salient issues. Whatever the innate propensity toward religiosity, the dominant religious traditions in Western countries proscribe homosexuality and abortion but say little to nothing about tax policy and government spending initiatives. Thus, there is no guarantee that the complete preferences of any two individuals cover the same range of issues. Consequently, individuals may agree on some issues and disagree on others, but it is
also possible that there could be no agreement or disagreement of any kind in cases where two or more sets of preferences plough altogether parallel seigneuries of ideational terrain.

Second, opinion formation is an active process. This means that a “non-opinion” about an issue is the default position. Thus, diametrically opposing levels of exposure to a particular influence do not generate opposing opinions. Non-exposure to an influence should have no effect on opinions rather than an equal and opposite effect on the same range of opinions. Strongly pro-choice positions on abortion, for example, do not stem from “non-religion”, even though non-religion may underlie indifference and non-opinions about the issue. Conversely, strongly pro-life positions on abortion do not emerge from non-feminism, even though a non-commitment to gender equality may also underlie non-opinions and indifference about abortion. In short, different opinions about precisely the same issue stem nonetheless from different sources.

Third, two individuals can share the same opinion about the same issue, but for entirely different reasons. These different reasons can in turn underlie opposing opinions about some other issue. A highly religious citizen and a xenophobe may share an identical opinion about gays and lesbians, but they may part company in their opinions about abortion and immigration.

Taken together, there are few reasons to expect that symmetrical opposition across multiple policy dimensions is a characteristic of real-world political disagreement. Opposing positions about the same issue owe their origins to altogether different sources. These different sources, in turn, affect distinctive ranges of issues. Thus, people who disagree about policy positions on one issue are also likely to disagree about how that policy fits together with other policies. As a result, left/right disagreement is likely to be asymmetrical.
There are also reasons to doubt the theoretical utility of a mass-elite distinction. From an analytical distance, it seems reasonable to suppose that the interests of political parties are intimately associated with vote seeking and electoral success (Downs, 1957). Upon closer inspection, however, this intuition is less obvious. A political party is a conglomeration of leaders, activists, strategists and donors with shared and opposing objectives about the purpose and direction of the party (Flanagan, 2007; Kitschelt, 1994). If interests, beliefs and predispositions influence the opinions of voters in the electorate, then it seems reasonable to suppose that these influences bear down on the opinions of party activists as well. From this vantage point, political parties do not look like singular actors navigating strategically in an environment of inter-party competition. Indeed, it is problematic to suppose that the interests of actors within a party are unconditionally welded to the electoral success of the party itself. Partisan activists are unlikely to support strategic moves by their political party that include abandoning the range of policy positions that these activists advocate. As Kitschelt (1994) explains: “once parties are viewed as miniature political systems with contending actors, electoral strategies may make sense when they would not if parties were unitary actors. Party organization and internal politics affect a party’s effort to seek votes as well as its strategic view of office seeking and coalition building with other parties” (p.207). Party competition is a multi-level game involving the opinion dynamics of the population, internal party politics, and the positioning and manoeuvring of partisan competitors. Thus, party competition is about office-seeking, but it is not only about office seeking. And political parties are not singular actors navigating strategically in an environment of inter-party competition (Kitschelt, 1994).

In sum, there are reasons to question the notions of a single-dimensional political world, symmetrical preference structures, and a mass-elite dichotomy. Conceptualizing public opinion
as multidimensional and asymmetrical generates an image of an opinion universe where multiple dimensions swirl together in unique combinations for different individuals and groups. Indeed, bundles of opinions that appear “unconstrained” from one standpoint—e.g., partisanship—may appear “constrained” from another—e.g., financial self-interest, religion, or ideology (c.f., Converse, 1964, p.207; Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987; Luskin, 1987). And behavior that is rational for one individual may not be rational for another. Even so, it remains to be determined whether abandoning these simplifying assumptions in favour of more realistic ones actually improves our ability to make predictions about empirical phenomena. The next section demonstrates that it does.

II. The Components of Theoretical Unification

A. Multidimensionality

Political disagreement is multidimensional. Empirical research reveals not one left and one right, but multiple lefts and multiple rights (Connover & Feldman, 1981; Miller & Schofield, 2008; Weisberg, 1980). The dimensionality of political preferences is likely to affect predictions about how political parties compete with one another to occupy opinion-space that maximizes the electoral performance of their party. In one variant of this scenario, the electorate is normally distributed across a single dimension and two political parties compete with one another to occupy the opinion-space of the median voter. In a multi-party system, smaller parties may manoeuvre to the right or the left in order to occupy opinion-space that has been vacated by their larger, median vote-seeking competitors (Downs, 1957). Yet, the representation of multiple
opinions along a single dimension has an effect on the probability distribution that is nearly the opposite of its effect in multidimensional space. As more and more uncorrelated variables are added together, the probability distribution clusters in the center in one-dimensional space as it scatters away from the center in multidimensional space.

The reasoning behind these opposing trends is as follows. Assume that opinions X and Y are both measured on eleven point scales ranging from 0 to 10. The probability of being at any point in two dimensional space \((XY_{x,y})\) is simply the product of two probabilities \((X_x \times Y_y)\). Thus, a 40 percent probability of being at \(X_5\) and a 40 percent probability of being at \(Y_5\) translates into a 16 percent probability of being at \(X_5\) and \(Y_5\) simultaneously, assuming that X and Y are independent: \(Pr(XY_{5,5}) = Pr(X_5) \times Pr(Y_5) = .4 \times .4 = .16\). As more dimensions are added, the universe of opinion-space expands and the probability of being at any given point declines exponentially. Thus, \(Pr(XYZ_{5,5,5}) = Pr(X_5) \times Pr(Y_5) \times Pr(Z_5) = .4 \times .4 \times .4 = .064\).

However, when X and Y are combined in single-dimensional space to form continuum XY (e.g., \(XY = X/2 + Y/2\)), the equation is altogether different. In this case, the probability of being at point \(j\) on the XY continuum is the sum of the products of the probabilities of all possible combinations of X and Y whose sum divided by 2 is equal to \(j\). Since there are eleven combinations of X and Y whose sum divided by two is equal to 5, and only one possible combination that is equal to 0 or 10, the effects of combining two independent opinions in single dimensional space is to systematically increase the distribution at the center and to decrease the distributions at the extremes. If a third dimension were added, there is still only one combination whose sum divided by three is equal to 0 or 10 (i.e., 0 + 0 + 0 and 10 + 10 + 10), but there are now 84 combinations whose sum divided by 3 is equal to 5. As more dimensions are added, the size of the center decreases in multidimensional space and increases in single dimensional space.
Figure 1.1 illustrates these trends. The lettered columns in the figure correspond to three possible distributions of public opinion—normal, bipolar, and skewed—across two hypothetical variables, X and Y. The numbered rows display these distributions under different sets of assumptions about the dimensionality of public opinion and the relationship between dimensions. A.1, for example, depicts two hypothetical normal distributions across variables X (black line) and Y (grey line). A.2 plots these distributions in two-dimensional space under the assumption that the values of X and Y are independent. And A.3 plots these distributions under the assumption that the values of X and Y are correlated at lower values but not at higher values. A.4 and A.5 repeat these assumptions about the statistical relationship between X and Y, but, in these cases, the variables X and Y are combined together to form a single dimension, XY.

Notice, first, how the two-dimensional depictions of the distributions across X and Y in A.2, B.2 and C.2 look quite different than the single-dimensional depictions of exactly the same distributions in A.4, B.4, and C.4. A similar discrepancy emerges when comparing A.3, B.3 and C.3 to A.5, B.5 and C.5. From the one dimensional perspective, the distributions of individual preferences across X and Y are artificially biased toward the center. In effect, the number of observations at the center is inflated. By contrast, the two-dimensional perspectives in rows 2 and 3 do not inflate the center. Indeed, the discrepancy between the one- and two-dimensional vantage points is particularly pronounced in the case of the non-normal distributions in columns B and C. In B.2, for example, less than one percent of the observations are within a single point of center in two-dimensional space. Yet, when the same distributions across the same variables
are represented as a single dimension, as in B.4, 44 percent of the observations wind up within a single point of center. Certainly, vote-seeking politicians in a multiparty system might draw different conclusions about party strategy, depending on whether they see the distributions of voter preferences from a single or a multi-dimensional perspective.

In sum, a single dimensional conceptualization inflates the size of the center and decreases the size of the extremes. The assumption of unidimensionality is likely to affect our predictions in multiparty systems by exaggerating the strategic benefits of the political center. There are simply not as many voters at the “center” as a single dimensional depiction of voter preferences is likely to suggest.

Despite exaggerating the size of the center, the assumption of unidimensionality, while wholly inaccurate empirically, is nonetheless attractive from the standpoint of simplicity (Budge et al., 2001, p.62). Moreover, the assumption poses fewer problems for spatial theories of party competition in countries with closed two-party systems, like the United States, than it does in countries with open or multiple-party systems, like most other democratic countries. In decision-making contexts where there are more than two alternatives, spatial models must account for the dimensionality of preference structures. Indeed, it is possible that there could be no fixed “winning position” in multidimensional policy space under certain types of decision rules, including majority rule (Arrow, 1951; McKelvey, 1976; Plott, 1967). But in the rare set of countries with two-party systems, the winning position for a party is simply the “median on all lines” (Cox, 1987, p.487), regardless of whether political preferences are single-dimensional or multi-dimensional, and regardless of the distribution of voter preferences on those dimensions.

To illustrate this point, spatial models typically assume that the optimal policy position, b, of any individual, i, and the actual policy position, s, of any candidate, j, can be represented as
separate points on a straight line. Thus, \( b_i \) refers to the optimum position, \( b \), of the \( i^{th} \) decision-maker; \( s_j \) refers to the policy position, \( s \), of the \( j^{th} \) candidate. Moving along this line, the utility of each individual increases and then decreases, monotonically and symmetrically, as we move toward and then beyond their ideal point (Black, 1948). Thus, the utility of an individual for a candidate is inversely proportional to the policy space between the individual’s ideal point and the candidate’s actual position. From this standpoint, it is possible to represent the linear utility, \( U \), of the \( i^{th} \) individual for the \( j^{th} \) candidate as a function of the generic equation:\(^2\)

\[
U_i(j) = -\sqrt{(b_i - s_j)^2}
\]  

(1.1)

In effect, each person most prefers the candidate that is closest to her own position, and she least prefers the candidate that is furthest away from her own position.

In reality, each individual holds concurrent opinions about a wide range of subjects. A model of decision-making must therefore account for opinions about multiple issues. By repeating equation 1.1 across multiple issues, the linear utility of people for candidates becomes:

\[
U_i(j) = \sum_{n=1}^{n} -\sqrt{(b_{i,n} - s_{j,n})^2}
\]  

(1.2)

An individual’s utility for a candidate is a function of the inverse of the sum of the differences between the candidate’s policy positions and the individual’s opinions about those issues. From the perspective of party strategy, then, electoral success is determined by the number of voters
whose policy preferences are, on the whole, closer to the policies of that party than to the policies of any other party.

From this standpoint, neither the dimensionality nor the distribution of public opinion has much of an effect on the strategic context of party competition in a two-party system. In a two-party system, the strategic electoral pressures for both parties are toward the median (\( \bar{x} \)) position on all dimensions. The \( \bar{x} \) is a Nash equilibrium because a party cannot move unilaterally from \( \bar{x} \) without ceding to its opponent a winning position. If \( s_1 \) moves from \( \bar{x} \) to \( \bar{x} + 1 \) or \( \bar{x} - 1 \), and \( s_2 \) stays at \( \bar{x} \), then \( s_2 \) beats \( s_1 \) because, by definition, \( \bar{x} \) is closer to a greater number of voters than any other point in a distribution. Thus, for a majority of voters, \( U(2) > (U(1) \text{ if } U(1) \neq \bar{x} \) and \( U(2) = \bar{x} \). Notice as well that \( s_2 \) wins in this scenario, regardless of whether the distribution of voter preferences is clustered around the center as in a normal distribution, scattered away from the center as in a bipolar distribution, or clustered lopsidedly in either direction as in a skewed distribution. In a two party system, \( \bar{x} \) is the optimum position on all dimensions, no matter what (Cox, 1987).

B. Mass-Elite Integration

The relative simplicity of the spatial model in a two party system makes these systems an attractive set of cases in which to test the core predictions of spatial theory, even though pure two-party systems are clearly the exception. The strategic pressures on both parties are toward the median. As a result, “…overlapping policies [are] a rational strategy in a two-party system” (Downs, 1957, p.135). Yet, conventional wisdom, and a good deal of empirical research, contends that there are systematic and enduring differences in the policy positions of political
parties even within two-party systems (Achen, 2002; Chappell & Keetch, 1986; Wittman, 1983). In other words, the empirical evidence does not conform to the theoretical predictions of the basic spatial model, even in the small number of cases where the predictions are most likely to work. Although the simplifying assumption of single-dimensional political disagreement can explain the flawed predictions in multi-party systems, it cannot do so in two party systems. What, then, accounts for the failures of political parties in two party systems to converge at the political center?

Spatial theorists have offered a few explanations for the discrepancy between their predictions and observations in two party systems. One explanation is that political parties in a two-party system resist slightly the centralizing pressures of electoral strategy in order to appeal to extremist voters. According to Downs (1957), “…each party structures its policies so that its net position is moderate, even though it makes a few concessions to the extremists. In this way, it hopes to keep the extremists from abstaining and yet woo the middle-of-the-roaders…” (p.134). The underlying assumption is that the utility of a voter for a party has to be high enough to justify for the voter the costs of voting; otherwise, the voter abstains.

A second explanation contends that voters “discount” the policy proposals of political parties (Adams et al., 2005, p. 24). According to this line of argument, voters expect that parties will have to compromise their policy positions in order to enact legislation while in government (Adams et al., 2005, pp. 24-25). As a result, voters do not take party policy platforms at face value. Rather, a citizen votes for the party whose policy proposals are more likely to result, after compromise, in the kind of legislation that the voter desires. For this reason, voters prefer political parties whose policy platforms are somewhat more extreme than their own position. Political parties, in turn, take account of voter discounting by proposing policies that are
somewhat more extreme than the policy preferences of the voters that the party is trying to attract. In this way, discounting explains why the parties in two-party systems position themselves to the left and the right of the median voter (Adams et al., 2005, p.25).

A third explanation, and the one adopted here, is that political competition is a multi-level game. From this perspective, office-seeking politicians face two sets of pressures. On the one hand, there are strategic imperatives that arise from competing against other political parties and candidates for the votes of citizens. On the other hand, politicians must navigate strategically an internal party environment by brokering alliances between factions of policy-seeking activists.

A policy position that is optimal from the standpoint of one of these environments may be suboptimal from the standpoint of the other. As Miller and Schofield (2008) explain, the strategic environment in a two-party system is characterized by an “electoral pull” that tugs toward the median voter, and an “activist pull” that tugs away from the median voter and toward ideological extremes (p.488). Party policy reflects the effort by politicians to balance these competing pressures. As a result, party policies, even in two-party systems, are to the right and to the left of the center.

This multilevel conceptualization of politics may well hold the key to a unified “three actor’ spatial model” (Aldrich, 1983, p.974) of party competition; a model that encompasses, simultaneously, the behaviour of voters, activists, and politicians. Indeed, the sine qua non of a unified theory is that its assumptions apply equally to each person, regardless of whether that person is a voter, an activist, or a politician. In this respect, Downs’ (1957) model is incomplete. On the one hand, Downs’ (1957) model is partially unified because he applies to all people the strict assumption of rationality. According to Downs (1957), each person “…moves toward his goals in a way which, to the best of his knowledge, uses the least possible input of scarce
resources per unit of valued output‖ (p.5). On the other hand, however, Downs (1957) posits that the outputs valued by politicians are different than the outputs valued by voters. Politicians "...act solely in order to attain the income, prestige, and power which come from being in office" (Downs, 1957, p.28). Voters, however, act to maximize their “utility”, a concept that Downs (1957) defines, tautologically, as whatever it is that a voter acts to maximize (Downs, 1957, p.36). Thus,

[i]t is possible for a citizen to receive utility from events that are only remotely connected to his own material income. For example, some citizens would regard their utility incomes as raised if the government increased taxes upon them in order to distribute free food to starving Chinese...because self-denying charity is often a great source of benefits to oneself (Downs, 1957, p.37).

Taken together, the voters in Downs’ (1957) model are rational, value-oriented policy-seekers; but the politicians are rational, materialistic office-seekers.

Wittman (1983) and Chappell & Keetch (1986) resolve the mass-elite dichotomy in Downs’ (1957) model by introducing to the strategic calculus of parties the same kinds of policy motivations that apply throughout the electorate. As Chappell & Keetch (1986) put it, “…parties win elections in order to formulate policies, rather than formulate policies in order to win elections” (p.881). Winning is an “instrumental variable” (Wittman, 1983, p.143). From one perspective, this makes sense. If policy motivations underlie the opinions of individuals in the electorate, then it seems reasonable to suppose that policy motivations affect the opinions of politicians as well. From another perspective, however, the assumption is problematic. Public policy is a public good. People receive benefits from policies whether or not they undertake the private costs associated with implementing them (Olson, 1965, p.16). Thus, the private costs of
political activism, particularly at the level of running for office, seem an incredibly steep price for an individual to bear for the sake of a collective good. In other words, just as the office-seeking model leaves virtually no room for non-material interests in the decision-calculus of politicians, the policy-seeking model does precisely the opposite; it leaves little room for private, material interests.

Instead of assuming whether politicians are office-seekers or policy-seekers, the following analyses assume instead that material interests are among the predispositions that can be activated, through exposure to information, to influence the opinions of voters and politicians alike. Values and material interests are predispositions that may bear down simultaneously on the political opinions of individuals.

The assumption that values and interests may matter simultaneously has three interrelated implications for unified theories of political competition. The first implication is that it is necessary to introduce into formal models of the concept of “issue salience” (Kaufman & Petrocik, 1999, p.874). People care more about some issues than they do about other issues. Thus, the utility of an individual for candidate, j, can be formalized as

\[ U_i(j) = \sum_{n=1}^{n} -g_{i,n}\sqrt{(b_{i,n} - s_{j,n})^2} \]  

(1.3)

where \( g_{i,n} \) is the importance, \( g \), that individual i assigns to issue n. In other words, the utility function is the inverse of the accumulated sum of the weighted policy differences between the person’s ideal positions and a candidate’s set of policy positions.

The second implication is that it is necessary to specify the conditions which affect the relative weight that people accord in their decision-making processes to values and material interests. To be sure, some people assign more weight to their values; others assign more weight to their material interests. For present purposes, the members of the former group are referred to
as “ideologues”, and the members of the latter group as “pragmatists” (see also, Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990; Miller & Schofield, 2008). The origin of the ideologue-pragmatist divide is a matter of ongoing debate among political psychologists and behavioural geneticists (Alford et al., 2005, p.157, fn.5). Yet, the relative influences of values and interests are not unaffected by environmental circumstances. When the material stakes are very high, it is conceivable that even ideologues may prioritize their own private material considerations ahead of their values.

The third implication, then, is that it is necessary to consider the kinds of pressures that bear down on individuals at different levels of the political process. On this point, there are reasons to suppose that pragmatic considerations are likely to dominate among politicians, even among those who are otherwise predisposed to ideological considerations. There are massive private benefits that accompany political office. And politicians need to win in order to enact policies (Wittman, 1983). Thus, as Downs (1957) posited, pragmatism is likely to trump ideology among politicians. Even so, pragmatism is unlikely to prevail throughout the party as a whole. Indeed, the circumstances at the level of party activists are altogether different. Rank-and-file activists receive few private benefits when their party wins an election. Thus, ideologues dominate among rank-and-file activists because the collective good of public policy cannot justify for rational pragmatists the private costs of political activism (c.f., Olson, 1965). In other words, the cost-benefit calculus of political activism has the effect of weeding out pragmatists and leaving only ideologues. Moreover, the material benefits associated with winning an election are unlikely to be sufficiently large for party activists to pull them away from the core ideological positions that animate their party activism.

In sum, the assumption that values and material interests are influences that may bear down simultaneously on the political opinions of each individual has ramifications for
predictions about party and voter behaviour. From the perspective of a multilevel conceptualization of politics, this means that pragmatic politicians navigate conflicting strategic pressures that arise, on the one hand, from the ideologically charged atmospheres within their political parties, and, on the other hand, from the context of inter-party competition. In two-party systems, these pressures are likely to pull in opposing direction. The situation is more complex in multi-party systems. In all cases, however, the strategic context of internal party environments is shaped to a considerable extent by the multidimensional policy preferences of party activists; just as the strategic context of electoral competition is shaped by the multidimensional policy preferences of voters and the multidimensional policy positions of other political parties. How voters and activists organize their policy positions across multiple dimensions of opinions is likely to affect in important respects how politicians are able to navigate strategically the internal party environment and the broader electoral environment. An explanation for the organization of these opinions is therefore an integral element of a unified theory.

C. Left/Right Asymmetry

There are a few reasons to think seriously about the origins of political opinions. First, as Williams (1968) observed, “it is the rare and limiting case if and when a person’s behaviour is guided over a considerable period of time by one and only one value…More often, particular acts or sequences of acts are steered by multiple and changing clusters of values” (pp.287-8). Thus, from the standpoint of individual behaviour, it is worthwhile to trace empirically those factors that create bundles of opinions by affecting simultaneously opinions about more than one
issue. Second, from a public opinion standpoint, the decisions of lone individuals rarely matter for politics, regardless of whether decision-making is conceptualized in rational or psychological terms (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995, p.290; Stimson, 1991, p.12). Thus, it is necessary to examine those factors that organize individuals into groups by affecting the opinions of more than one person.

The theoretical framework proposed here posits that opinions take shape when people are exposed to information that primes (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p.63) them to consider an issue from the vantage point of an abstract idea that they have been predisposed, whether by genetics (Alford et al., 2005; Hatemi et al., 2007), family upbringing (Lane, 1959), or social circumstance (Lipset, 1960; Sherif, 1966), to accept. Bundles of opinions are formed when a single predisposition is activated to affect simultaneously the opinions of individuals about more than one issue. On the whole, then, there are few reasons to suppose that the interaction of different predispositions and frames generates patterns of opinion that fit neatly into symmetrical clusters of opposing opinions about identical sets of political issues. The patterns of policy disagreement are likely to be asymmetrical. People with different predispositions, or who are exposed to different frames, may well disagree in their opinions about certain policy issues, but they are also likely to organize in different ways their opinions about policy. In other words, the disparate origins of opposing political opinions are likely to generate asymmetrical patterns of political disagreement.

These asymmetrical patterns are likely to affect how politicians balance the strategic pressures which emanate, on the one hand, from the context of internal party politics, and, on the other hand, from the context of electoral competition. To illustrate this point in an abstract way, assume, first, that an election is being fought on two policy dimensions, C and D, between two
parties, \( PARTY_1 \) and \( PARTY_2 \). Assume as well that all possible positions on these policy dimensions, denoted in Equations 1.1 – 1.3 by \( b \), can be represented as any integer between -10 and 10 (i.e., \( \{ b \mid b \) is an integer and \(-10 < b < 10 \})). Thus, the polar opposite left/right ideological positions on dimensions C and D are \( c_{-10} \) (left) and \( c_{10} \) (right), and \( d_{-10} \) (left) and \( d_{10} \) (right). \( PARTY_1 \) is to the left of centre on both dimensions; \( PARTY_2 \) is to the right of centre on both dimensions. The electorate is distributed so that the largest share of the voters are at the middle positions, \( c_0 \) and \( d_0 \), and the proportion of voters declines monotonically and symmetrically as we move away from the middle position in either direction.

Let us also assume, for simplicity, that there are an equal number of activists in each party, and that the distribution of opinions among activists is skewed toward the ideological extremes on at least one dimension. Activists are policy-seekers. Thus, they want to win elections without giving up their core ideological positions. In these circumstances, as Miller & Schofield (2008) observe, politicians face conflicting pressures: an “activist pull” toward the ideological extremes, and an “electoral pull” toward the centre where most of the voters are located. Yet, just as activists are unlikely to abandon their core ideological convictions on issues that they do care about in favour of pragmatic vote-seeking positions, so too are they unlikely to sacrifice the electoral viability of their party for the sake of procrustean ideological positions on policy dimensions that they do not care about. This point ties into the concept of “issue salience”, \( g \), in Equation 1.3 above. Indeed, Conger and McGraw (2008) uncover precisely this sentiment in their study of religious activists in the United States. As one activist put it, “...the greater the number of non-negotiables you have within your political arsenal, the more difficult task you have to get and maintain influence within political arenas” (quoted in Conger & McGraw, 2008, p. 261). Another activist explained the practical application of this principle:
“We interview virtually all the candidates…If they’re pro-life and they’re pro-family, then I say, ‘That’s all I need to know; you don’t have to run on my issue. You know, run on what will win in your area’” (quoted in Conger & McGraw, 2008, p. 261). In other words, policy-seeking activists support ideological positions on those dimensions that they do care about, but they support pragmatic vote-seeking positions on those dimensions that they do not care about.

From this standpoint, the way that activists organize their policy preferences across dimensions is likely to exert a substantial effect on predictions by influencing the strength of the activist pull within a political party. Returning to the abstract example, imagine that the predisposition that drives opinions leftward on dimension C also drives opinions leftward on dimension D, and vice versa. As a result, the activists in PARTY\textsubscript{1} tend to organize into a coherent bundle their preferences on dimensions C and D: those at C\textsubscript{10} are likely to be at D\textsubscript{10}, and those at D\textsubscript{-10} are likely to be at C\textsubscript{10}. Now imagine that the predisposition that drives opinions rightward on dimension C has no effect on opinions about dimension D, and vice versa. As a result, the activists in PARTY\textsubscript{2} do not organize into a coherent bundle their preferences on these dimensions. Many of the activists at C\textsubscript{10} push for vote seeking positions on dimension D (i.e., D\textsubscript{0}), and many of the activists at D\textsubscript{10} push for vote-seeking positions on dimension C (i.e., C\textsubscript{0}). The net effect of these asymmetrical patterns of political disagreement is that the activist pull is stronger in PARTY\textsubscript{1} than in PARTY\textsubscript{2}. The activists in PARTY\textsubscript{1} pull together on both dimensions in the same direction (i.e., away from vote-seeking positions). And the activists in PARTY\textsubscript{2} pull on both dimensions in opposing directions.

Taken together, there are reasons to question the assumptions of a single-dimensional political universe, symmetrical political disagreement, and a mass-elite dichotomy. These simplifying assumptions are not only unrealistic, but they also stand in the way of a unified
theory of political disagreement, and they distort predictions about the political environment. For these reasons, this dissertation outlines a framework of preference formation that abandons these assumptions. The framework posits that preferences form when people are exposed to information that activates their latent predispositions. Systematic patterns of preferences take shape when a predisposition affects more than one opinion for more than one person. As a result, people who disagree in their opinions about an issue are also likely to disagree about how that issue fits together with other issues in the political environment. A key observable implication of this core argument is that left/right disagreement is asymmetrical. Left-wingers and right-wingers derive from different sources, and structure in different ways, their opinions about politics. These asymmetries are likely to affect in predictable ways the patterns of public opinion and party policy in advanced industrial countries.

III. Structure of the Dissertation

Scientific theoretical frameworks, from Darwin’s theory of evolution to Downs’ economic theory of democracy, do not become falsifiable scientific theories until their blanks are filled in. A framework may posit that beneficial mutations survive and deleterious ones die out, but a falsifiable theory has to specify precisely what mutations are beneficial or harmful, and under what circumstances. A framework may posit that individuals act to maximize their utility, but a theory has to specify what that utility is and how an individual acts, under specific circumstances, to maximize it (e.g., Tsebelis, 1990). The information-predisposition framework is no exception.
This dissertation is therefore divided into two sections. The first section, comprised of Chapters 2 and 3, tests in different contexts the basic outline of the theoretical framework; namely, that political opinions are shaped by the interaction of individual predispositions and social sources of information about politics. Chapter 2 tests in the Canadian case how motivation and opportunity interact to shape citizens’ knowledge about the core language of politics. The analysis focuses in particular on the capacity of Canadians to locate their own policy positions in left/right space. The relatively recent emergence in the Canadian case of a political environment that is discussed in left/right ideological terms makes it an ideal testing ground for an investigation into the diffusion of basic political knowledge. The results of this analysis reveal, first, that it is not the motivation to learn or exposure to sources of information that matters, but it is the interaction between the two. Moreover, among those with high levels of motivation to learn about politics, there are predictable differences between segments of the population in the sources of information on which they rely.

Chapter 3 tests the same framework, but in a broader comparative perspective. This chapter hones in on how information interacts with predispositions to influence opinions about racial minorities. There is an ongoing debate about whether anti-immigrant sentiment in the population generates a “demand” for far-right anti-immigration parties, or whether the “supply” of anti-immigrant rhetoric from far-right parties generates anti-immigrant sentiment in the population. The chapter proposes an alternative account by positing that material conditions, the unemployment rate, predispose citizens to accept or reject the rhetoric, the issue frames, of far-right parties. The analysis adjudicates empirically between these rival explanations by exploiting the unique cross-time and cross-national breadth of the World Values Survey. The results of this
analysis indicate, again, that opinions take shape from the interaction of individual predispositions and social sources of information

The second section, comprised of Chapters 4, 5 and 6, fills in some of the blanks in the information-predisposition framework. These chapters outline and test a few basic assumptions about the predispositions that affect political opinions about three core elements of left/right disagreement: wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration. In particular, these chapters posit that the predisposition to equality underlies left-wing opinions about these issues, and the predisposition to religion, out-group intolerance, and free-market materialism underlies right-wing opinions about these issues. The results of the analysis in this section indicate that the distinctive origins of left-wing and right-wing opinions give rise to differences between left-wingers and right-wingers in the ways that they bundle together their preferences about these issues. These left/right asymmetries are reflected throughout Anglo-American and Western European countries in the patterns of public opinion, in the policies of political parties, and in the preferences of left-wing and right-wing activists.

Chapter 4, for example, begins by exploring the use and meaning of left and right in Western European and Anglo-American democracies. Drawing on individual-level survey evidence from the World Values Survey, the results of the analysis indicate that opinions about the economy, social morality, and immigration shape the left/right self-placement of citizens across a wide range of countries. Yet, while opinions about all three of these issues are powerfully associated with left/right self-placement, they are not at all associated with each other. In particular, citizens with right-wing opinions about the economy are no more likely than are other citizens to hold right-wing opinions about social morality and immigration. A closer inspection reveals that opinions about these issues are bundled together among politically
engaged left-wingers, but not at all in the public as a whole or by politically engaged right-wingers. These results are consistent with expectations: left-wingers and right-wingers organize in different ways their opinion about policy.

Chapter 5 shifts the level analysis from the field of mass opinion to the level of party policy. The analysis in this chapter draws leverage from a broad cross-national perspective in order to test for left/right asymmetry at the level of party policy. The analysis in this chapter uses data from Benoit & Laver’s (2006) survey of experts about the policy positions of political parties. The results indicate that left-wing parties invariably cluster in coherent left/right terms their policies about the economy, social morality, and immigration. Right-wing parties, by contrast, do not. Again, this finding is consistent with expectations.

Taken together, the results in Chapters 4 and 5 are promising from the standpoint of a unified theory of political competition. The same asymmetrical patterns of left/right disagreement that prevail at the level of public opinion appear as well in the patterns of party policy. Although these findings are consistent with the information-predisposition framework advanced in this dissertation, they are also consistent with the “top-down” partisanship model and the “bottom-up” rational choice model that were criticized at the outset. More specifically, both of these rival accounts would lead to the expectation that the patterns of public opinion would be the same as the patterns of party policy.

For this reason, Chapter 6 turns to an analysis of the political preferences of party activists in a critical case, the Canadian case. As it turns out, political parties in Canada organize their policies about wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration into symmetrical bundles of opposing opinions. In that respect, Canada is somewhat exceptional. Yet, the Canadian case is also exceptional in that it opens the opportunity to draw on unique evidence
from Cross and Young’s (2002) Survey of Canadian Political Party Members, a survey that gauges systematically the opinions of activists in Canadian political parties. An important methodological advantage of Cross and Young’s survey is that it asks identical batteries of survey questions to the activists in different political parties. It is therefore possible to compare directly the opinions of activists in different parties about the same issues. The analysis focuses in particular on the organization of opinions about economics, social morality and immigrants among the activists in the left-wing New Democratic and the right-wing Canadian Alliance parties. If the “top-down” or “bottom-up” models are correct, then the organization of political preferences among these highly engaged partisans should correspond to the patterns of party policy. If the information-predisposition theory proposed here is correct, then the same pattern of left-wing coherence and right-wing fragmentation should persist even among the most highly engaged activists in a country, like Canada, where the right-wing party advances right-wing positions across multiple dimensions of political disagreement.

The dissertation, in short, exploits a variety of methodological techniques and sources of data to test empirically, and across levels of analysis, the main observable implication of the core theory: left-wingers and right-wingers derive from different sources, and therefore structure in different ways, their opinions about politics. As a result, left/right asymmetries are theoretically predictable features of the empirical world. These differences manifest themselves as asymmetries in the multidimensional bundling of left/right positions by citizens, party activists, and political parties. Indeed, the differences persist within countries and between countries, and at the aggregate and individual-levels. By examining these differences at multiple levels of analysis, this dissertation underscores the favourable empirical prospects for a unified theory of
political competition. Indeed, the concluding chapter, Chapter 7, outlines some of the implications of left/right asymmetries for the development of such a theory.
Figures
Figure 1.1: Hypothetical probability distributions in one- and two-dimensional space

1. Distributions of X & Y.

2. Distributions across X & Y in two dimensions when X & Y are independent.

3. Distribution across X & Y in two dimensions when X & Y are co-dependent at lower values but not at higher values.

4. Distribution across a scale of $X/2 + Y/2$ when X & Y are independent.

5. Distribution across a scale of $X/2 + Y/2$ when X and Y are co-dependent at lower values but not at higher values.
Part 1

Testing the Information-Predisposition Framework of Opinion Formation
Chapter Two

Learning the Language of Politics: The Use of Left/Right in Canada

If political information stems from direct or indirect exposure to sources of information (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960; Converse, 1964; Druckman, 2004; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1987; McClosky & Zaller, 1984; Zaller, 1992), then the overarching sociological question is straightforward: what connects people who seek information to the elite sources who have it? This chapter builds from the core theory outlined in Chapter 1 by examining how Canadian citizens have learned to use the language of “left” and “right”. The evidence indicates that the key predictor of left/right usage in the Canadian case is the interaction between individual motivation to acquire information about politics and exposure to the social sources of information. Thus, there are systematic differences between people in the extent to which they seek out information about politics. And there are systematic differences between people in the extent to which they rely on different sources of information about politics.

Left/right usage in the Canadian case is an ideal testing ground for examining the process of social learning as it applies to basic information about politics. For much of its history, Canadian politics has been notable for the near complete absence of a left/right, liberal/conservative, ideological divide. According to Brodie and Jenson (1996), Canada’s two main parties, the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives (PC), were like “tweeledum” and “tweedledee”: “…essentially similar organizations opportunistically appealing to a variety of interests; ideology distinguishes neither the party activists nor the positions adopted by the parties” (p.59). Content analysis from the Comparative Manifesto Research Project supports this contention (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara & Tanenbaum, 2001; Klingemann, Volkens,
Bara, Budge & McDonald, 2006). The left/right positions of the Liberal and PC parties were virtually indistinguishable in every federal election between 1945 and 1979. Indeed, the supposedly “right-wing” PC party was rated lightly to the left of the Liberals in 8 of the 12 federal elections held over this timeframe. In this light, it is not surprising that Canadians in the 1960s and 70s treated questions about “left” and “right” as questions about “right” and “wrong” (Ogmundson, 1979). As recently as the 1984 Canadian Election Study, 40 percent of Canadians could not locate on a left/right scale their own policy opinions; fully 60 percent could not answer open-ended questions about the meaning of left/right (Lambert, Curtis, Brown & Kay, 1986).

Canadian politics changed, however, in the 1980s and 90s. The increasing levels of popular support for the left-wing New Democratic Party (NDP), and the emergence on the right of the fiscally and socially conservative Reform-Alliance Party, re-oriented Canadian politics around more typical left/right lines. Left/right differences are now reflected, clearly, in the values of party supporters in the electorate (Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau & Nevitte, 2002; Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil & Nadeau, 2000), in the policy preferences of political activists (Cross & Young, 2002), and in the content of party manifestos (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara & Tanenbaum, 2001; Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, Budge & McDonald, 2006).

The rise of a left/right ideological divide in Canada provides an opportunity to investigate empirically the dissemination of knowledge about political fundamentals. In this respect, the analysis differs from studies which examine people’s ability to recall the names of party leaders, specific items in party policy agendas, or other kinds of information that need to be continuously updated (e.g., Nadeau, Nevitte, Gidengil & Blais, 2008, p.235; Zaller 1992, p.25). If people do not understand the basic language of their political environment, then a straightforward question arises: namely, of what else are these people unaware? Have they learned the fundamental belief.
among sizable portions of the elite that there is a connection between levels of government taxation and levels of government spending (Converse, 1964)? Are they familiar with the “egalitarian” arguments that apply to controversial moral issues such as homosexuality and abortion? And what about the concept of “free market economics”, or any of the other basic ideas that political experts might take for granted?

Taken together, the theoretical framework advanced in Chapter 1 suggests that knowledge of left/right in the Canadian case is likely to stem from an interaction between a predisposition to acquire knowledge (i.e., motivation), and the availability of relevant information (i.e., the opportunity to do so). In 2005, about a fifth of the Canadian sample in the World Values Survey (WVS) said that they did not know their own position on the left/right continuum. So a useful place to begin is with a preliminary analysis of which segments of the population are able to position themselves in left/right space? And which are not?

II. Methodology and data summary

The current analysis draws on public opinion survey evidence from the 2005 wave of the Canadian World Values Survey (WVS). These data were collected through face-to-face interviews with a regionally stratified random sample of 2164 Canadians. The dependent variable, left/right usage (LRU), is dichotomous: were respondents able to position themselves in left/right space, yes (1) or no (0)? The key explanatory variables are media exposure (MEDIA), political interest (POLINT), political discussion (POLDIS), and formal education (EDUC) (see Appendix 2.E). The control variables are age (AGE), sex (MALE), and region of residence (URBAN). These are important controls. Men are more interested in politics than women;
younger people are more educated, but less politically interested, than are older people; and
levels of formal education are considerably higher in larger cities than they are in isolated rural
areas.3

Figure 2.1 summarizes the distributions of respondents across categories of the dependent
and independent variables. The bar at the left-hand side of the graphic represents the dependent
variable. Notice that 80 percent of respondents position themselves in left/right space; 20
percent do not know their position on the left/right continuum.

In terms of formal education, 22 percent of the sample has a university degree and a
comparable proportion has a college diploma. The largest category, at 38 percent, consists of
High School graduates. Just 22 percent of the sample has less than a High School education and,
of these, more than two-thirds have at least “some” High School.

The distribution of respondents across categories of media exposure is similarly skewed.
“In the past week”, 15 percent acquired information about the world by relying on all forms
media that the survey asks about: newspapers, broadcasting, documentaries, books, and internet.
Only 2 percent had used none of these media in the week prior to their interview.

And finally, the distributions of respondents on political interest and political discussion
are more symmetrical. Respondents divide about evenly between lower and higher levels of
political interest, and a majority of respondents discuss politics at least “occasionally” with their
friends.

Figure 2.1 about Here

A. The direct effects of formal education, political interest, political discussion, and media
   exposure on the probability of left/right usage
Figure 2.2 displays the predicted values of left/right usage generated from the following probit model (Long & Freese, 2006):

$$Pr(LRU=1) = \Phi(\beta_0 + \beta_{AGE}AGE + \beta_{MALE}MALE + \beta_{URBAN}URBAN + \beta_{POLINT}POLINT + \beta_{POLDIS}POLDIS + \beta_{EDUC}EDUC + \beta_{MEDIA}MEDIA)$$

The heights of the bars represent the predicted probability that an individual within the tenth (-) and ninetieth percentile (+) of a given variable is able to locate herself on a left/right continuum, when all other variables in the model are set at their median level. Thus, 74 percent of respondents within the tenth percentile of media exposure are able to locate themselves on a left/right continuum, when formal education, political interest, political discussion and the control variables are all set to their average level. These estimates capture the independent effects that each variable has on the capacity of individuals to locate themselves in left/right space; they do not take into account, for the time being, the relationships between these variables.

These results show, first, that all four independent variables exert direct effects, in the expected direction, on the probability that respondents are able to locate themselves in left/right space. The largest difference emerges between respondents who are at opposite extremes in the frequency with which they discuss politics. On its own, moving from “never” to “frequently” discussing politics increases the probability of using the left/right continuum by 19 percentage points, from 68 to 87 percent, independent of the clear relationships that exist between political
discussion, on the one hand, and media exposure, political interest, and formal education on the other. The other predictors also exert direct and independent effects: media exposure (+8%), formal education (+8%) and political interest (+16%). These results indicate that Canadians acquire their knowledge of the left/right semantic through a variety of different channels.

Notice as well, however, that a high level on any one of the predictors translates into an approximately equal and high probability, about 85 percent, that an individual is able to position herself on the left/right continuum. Indeed, when the three other predictors are set at their median level, the use of the left/right semantic is rather common, between 68 and 74 percent, even among those respondents at incredibly low levels on any single variable of interest. These results are intuitive. People can learn the left/right semantic from exposure to any one of these sources. An individual does not need exposure to a wide variety of different sources of information in order to acquire basic political knowledge. A single source will suffice: paying attention to in-depth political analyses in the media; learning about politics in school; or even discussing politics with friends. Indeed, further analysis supports this proposition.

The bars on the right-hand side of Figure 2.2 compare the predicted probabilities of using the left/right continuum for respondents who are simultaneously within the top and bottom ten percent on all of the variables of interest. These results indicate that there is a 95 percent probability that a respondent can use the language of left and right when that respondent has a university degree, discusses politics frequently, and has high levels of both political interest and media exposure. High levels on all four variables of interest increase the probability of using the left/right semantic by between 7 and 13 percentage points, over and above a high level on any single one of the predictor variables. By comparison, extremely low levels on all of the predictor variables decrease the probability of using the left/right semantic by between 17 and 24
percentage points compared to extremely low levels on any one of the predictor variables. In short, the magnitude of the downward effect that accompanies low levels on all four variables is between 4 and 14 percentage points greater than the magnitude of the upward effect that accompanies high levels on all four variables. Exposure to no sources of learning is considerably more consequential for the ability to use the left/right semantic than is exposure to all of them. Learning basic political knowledge does not require numerous sources, but it does require at least one.

In sum, the regression analyses support the contention that respondents with higher levels of political interest, discussion, media exposure and formal education are more likely to be able to couch their political beliefs in the language of left and right. To this point the analysis supposes that the effects of each variable are constant across the sample of the entire population, that each of these variables exerts the same effects for all respondents. Deeper investigations of the data, however, reveal that this is not at all the case.

III. Hypothesis

The first hypothesis, $H_1$ contends that the magnitude of the positive relationship between political interest and political knowledge increases as exposure to formal education increases. Individuals may share the same predisposition to acquire information about politics, but converting this interest into knowledge is less costly for those with higher levels of formal education. Conversely, people with the same level of formal education may share the same opportunities to acquire information about policies, but the probability of converting this opportunity into knowledge is likely greater among those who are predisposed by high political
interest to do so. Thus, it is the interaction between opportunity (formal education) and predisposition (political interest) that matters.

To test this hypothesis, an interaction term—education multiplied by political interest—is added to probit model outlined earlier in Equation 2.1. A positive interaction effect suggests that the impact of political interest on political knowledge increases as level of formal education gets higher. That is, that political interest converts more efficiently into political knowledge for those with higher levels of formal education. The acquisition of knowledge is easier for those with higher levels of formal education.

Figure 2.3 provides a straightforward summary of the regression results. Levels of political interest are plotted along the x-axis. The y-axis corresponds to the probability that respondents are able to position themselves in left/right space. The lines in the graphic represent different levels of formal education. Notice, first, that higher political interest does not increase the probability that respondents with very low levels of education are able to position themselves in left/right space. Among these respondents, those with high political interest are no more likely than are those with low interest to identify their own position on the left/right continuum. In effect, the conversion rate between interest and knowledge is zero. For respondents with high levels of formal education, by contrast, political interest is associated with a very high probability (94.5%) that they are able to position themselves along the left/right continuum. Indeed, there is a 22 percentage point difference, among well-educated respondents, between those with no political interest and those with very high interest.
The results summarized in Figure 2.3 also indicate that formal education and political interest exert little by way of direct and independent effects on the probability of left/right self-placement. Notice how the lines representing the different levels of education converge at very low levels of political interest. Political interest does not affect the acquisition of political information in the absence of formal education, and formal education matters hardly at all in the absence of political interest. This finding is consistent with the information-predisposition framework. Educational institutions facilitate the conversion of political interest into political knowledge by reducing the costs (i.e., making available) of this information. A politically interested but less educated respondent is not as likely to acquire information about left/right self-placement because the costs of this information are higher. Alternatively, a politically disinterested respondent with ample opportunity to acquire political information is nonetheless unlikely to learn the language of left and right. In short, neither predisposition nor opportunity translates, on its own, into political knowledge; it is the interaction of predisposition and opportunity that matters.

Formal education is but one means of acquiring information about the political world. Discussions with friends and co-workers provide yet another opportunity to acquire information. People who discuss politics with their friends can learn the language of politics vicariously, even if they personally pay little attention to the media or have very low levels of political interest and formal education. Social communications have been said to serve as a particularly important source of knowledge for citizens who are disengaged from other sources of information, but who are motivated to acquire information about politics (Beck et al., 2002; Huckfeldt et al., 1995; Druckman, 2004; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Zaller, 1992, p.289).
Yet, social factors matter here too. If people with higher levels of formal education are likely to travel in better educated social circles, and if a higher level of formal education is associated with increased levels of political knowledge, then better-educated individuals who have not themselves learned the language of left/right are nonetheless more likely to associate with people who probably have learned the language of left/right. This is the essence of H2: political discussion with friends generates more political knowledge for individuals with higher levels of formal education. Paradoxically, political discussion is more fruitful for those in better educated social networks, and yet it is more necessary for those who are otherwise disengaged from sources of political information (Zaller, 1992).

Figure 2.4 summarizes the outcome of adding an interaction term—political discussion multiplied by formal education—to the probit model specified in Equation 2.1 above. Once again, the predicted probability of left/right usage is plotted along the y-axis, and levels of political discussion are set along the x-axis. The trend lines represent the estimated effect of discussion on left/right usage for respondents with different levels of formal education. Thus, the first finding is that the effect of political discussion on the probability of using left/right is conditional on level of formal education. Notice that the slopes of the trend lines are quite different. Political discussion increases the probability of left/right usage for respondents with very high levels of formal education, but not at all for respondents with very low levels of formal education. These findings are consistent with H2: political discussion is a more fruitful source of information for respondents with higher levels of formal education. In effect, the probability of bumping into the language of left/right is considerably higher for individuals who have a network of well-educated social connections.
To this point, the evidence suggests that the availability of high quality sources of information affects the extent to which people who want to acquire political knowledge are able to learn about the language of left and right; a higher level of formal education makes for an easier conversion of interest into knowledge, and it increases the effectiveness of discussion as a high quality source of information about politics.

The expectations regarding mass media are somewhat different. Mass media are available to large swaths of the population. The quality of information circulating in mass media does not change by virtue of respondents’ personal characteristics. A respondent with less than high school education is as likely as a university graduate to acquire basic political information if they both read the same magazines, books, newspapers or even internet sources about politics. If well-educated and less-educated individuals can acquire the same political information from exposure to a common sources of media; and if less educated individuals have less basic political knowledge to begin with; then, as H₃ contends, the same media exposure will serve to equalize the basic political knowledge held by highly educated and less educated individuals. In effect, learning something a first time is more important than learning the same thing over and over again from many sources. Astute observers who follow politics in the media are therefore likely to know the language of left and right, regardless of any differences between them in their level of formal education.

Figure 2.5 summarizes the results of adding an interaction term, media exposure multiplied by formal education, to the core probit model outlined earlier. Media exposure is plotted along the x-axis. It ranges, from left to right, between respondents, on the one hand, who
had no media exposure in the week before the survey interview, to respondents, on the other hand, who used all forms of media that the survey asks about: broadcasting, books, magazines, documentaries, internet and newspapers. The trend lines correspond to different levels of formal education. And the values on the y-axis represent the probability of left/right usage. Thus, notice the gaps between the trend lines when media exposure is at zero. When media exposure is very low, the difference in the predicted probability of left/right usage between university graduates (educ6) and those with less than High School education (educ1) is about 41 percentage points. In this scenario, the probability that a university graduate is able to use the language of left/right is nearly 84 percent; the comparable figure for those with less than High School education is just over 40 percent. Thus, less educated respondents who pay little attention to the media are about half as likely to use the language of left/right compared to their equally disengaged counterparts with higher levels of formal education.

Figure 2.5 about Here

But notice how the gaps between highly educated and less educated respondents are considerably larger when media exposure is low than when it is high. Indeed, the trend lines converge to a common point as media exposure increases. The interpretation is straightforward: the same level of exposure to the same kinds of media equalizes the probability of left/right usage between respondents with different levels of formal education. People with a very high motivation to learn about politics are able to do so, but they may well depend on different sources of information.
These findings overlap with the results from earlier analyses. Motivated individuals do not need to engage many sources of information in order to acquire basic information about politics. They do, however, need to engage at least one source. It is therefore not entirely surprising that low media exposure predicts ignorance of left/right among those with lower levels of formal education but not among those with higher levels. As the previous analyses demonstrate, well-educated respondents have other sources of basic political information. In all cases, however, people are unlikely to acquire information about politics unless they are predisposed by high political interest to take advantage of available opportunities. It is the interaction between motivation and opportunity that matters.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that formal education, horizontal communications, and exposure to the mass media provide opportunities for Canadians to acquire knowledge about political fundamentals. Formal education exerts both direct and indirect effects on the conversion of political interest into political knowledge. Educational institutions structure the opportunities and incentives for acquiring information. And formal education affects the amount of information circulating in social networks. Thus, political interest predicts left/right usage more effectively as level of formal education increases. And political discussions with friends generate more basic knowledge about politics for respondents with higher levels of education.

The findings in the case of media exposure were altogether different. The basic information circulating in the mass media is not so heavily contingent on the characteristics of the individuals at the receiving end. There are, of course, differences in the quantity and type of
media exposure between respondents with different levels of education. Even so, “high quality” sources of media are available to respondents with little education, and the evidence suggests that exposure to these sources allows respondents with lower levels of formal education to “catch up”, in effect, to their better educated counterparts.

These findings therefore conform to the central theoretical framework. The evidence points to an interaction between motivation and opportunity. Canadians with high political interest and high levels of formal education are fluent in the language of left/right; Canadians with low interest and high education, or high interest and low education, are not. Thus, it is not motivation or opportunity that matters, but the interaction between the two.

Similarly, the evidence indicates that there are systematic differences in the quality of the information that circulates in the social networks of Canadians with high and low levels of formal education. Political discussions with friends increase the probability of left/right usage for Canadians with high levels of formal education, but not at all for their counterparts with low levels of formal education. As it turns out, the effectiveness of horizontal communication as a mechanism of ideational diffusion is highly contingent and variable. Future research may well benefit from exploring more directly in experimental and natural settings the implications of this variability.

The analysis also suggests that different segments of the population may well depend to varying extents on different sources of information. Canadians with a motivation to learn about politics, but with lower levels of formal education, depend more heavily than their better educated counterparts on media as a source of information about left/right. To be sure, this differential dependence on media may not apply when it comes to the kinds of political information, like leader names and specific policy proposals, which need to be updated on a
continuous basis. Even so, the acquisition from media of foundational political information raises questions about the capacities of respondents with lower levels of formal education to assess the information in media against any kind of broader analytical background. As a result, it may turn out that people with high interest and low education are particularly susceptible to media frames.

Finally, from the standpoint of the information-predisposition framework, these results suggest, first, that there are differences between people in their predispositions to acquire information about politics. And they suggest, second, that there are differences between people in the sources of information that are available to them. These findings raise two questions. First, how might differences in the sources of information affect the probability of exposure to certain kinds of frames? And second, how might different predispositions affect receptivity to these frames? People with the same predispositions may be exposed to different frames. And people who are exposed to the same frame may well have different predispositions toward that information. If political opinions take shape from an interaction of predisposition and information, then either of these discrepancies could well generate disagreement about issues.
## Appendix 2.A

Table A.1: Interest, discussion, media exposure, and education as predictors of using the left/right continuum

| Variable                  | Coef.(SE)     | p < |z| |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----|---|
| Age                       | .003 (.002)   | .110 |   |
| Male                      | .214 *** (.066) | .001 |   |
| Rural/urban               | .016 (.012)   | .205 |   |
| Political interest        | .192 *** (.039) | .000 |   |
| Political discussion      | .327 *** (.058) | .000 |   |
| Education                 | .093 ** (.030) | .002 |   |
| Media exposure            | .067 ** .024  | .006 |   |
| Constant                  | -1.327 *** (.190) | .000 |   |

McFadden’s R²: .10

n: 2159

Notes:  
(1) * p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001;  
(2) Results are from probit regression;  
(3) Missing data imputed by MICE (10 imputations);  

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
## Appendix 2.B

Table B.1: Effect of interest-education interaction on the ability to use the left/right continuum

| Know left/right position = 1 | Coef.(SE) | $p < |z|$ |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Age                         | .003 (.002) | .122  |
| Male                        | .209 ** (.066) | .002  |
| Rural/urban                 | .016 (.012) | .187  |
| Political interest          | -.115 (.128) | .368  |
| Political discussion        | .327 *** (.058) | .000  |
| Education                   | -.075 (.073) | .300  |
| Media exposure              | .066 ** (.024) | .006  |
| Education * interest        | .075 * (.029) | .011  |
| Constant                    | -.450 (.331) | .174  |

<table>
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<th>McFadden’s $R^2$</th>
<th>.10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>2159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
(1) * $p < .05$  ** $p < .01$  *** $p < .001$;  
(2) Results are from probit regression;  
(3) Missing data imputed by MICE (10 imputations);  

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
## Appendix 2.C

Table C.1: Effect of discussion-education interaction on the ability to use the left/right continuum

|                        | Coef.(SE)  | \( p < |z| \) |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Know left/right position = 1 |            |               |
| Age                    | .003 (.002) | .139          |
| Male                   | .227 *** (.066) | .001          |
| Rural/urban            | .016 (.012)  | .188          |
| Political interest     | .192 (.039)  | .000          |
| Political discussion   | -.209 (.188) | .265          |
| Education              | -.129 (.080) | .107          |
| Media exposure         | .068 ** (.024) | .005          |
| Education * discussion | .132 ** (.074) | .003          |
| Constant               | -.243 ** (.353) | .492          |

McFadden’s \( R^2 \) .10
n 2159

Notes:
1. * \( p < .05 \)  ** \( p < .01 \)  *** \( p < .001 \);  
2. Results are from probit regression;  
3. Missing data imputed by MICE (10 imputations).

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Appendix 2.D

Table D.1: Effect of media-education interaction on the ability to use the left/right continuum

|                          | Coef.(SE) | p < |z|  |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|----|
| Know left/right position = 1 |           |     |    |
| Age                      | .003 (.002) | .072 |
| Male                     | .222 *** (.066) | .001 |
| Rural/urban              | .015 (.012) | .219 |
| Political interest       | .193 *** (.039) | .000 |
| Political discussion     | .328 *** (.058) | .000 |
| Education                | .237 *** (.073) | .001 |
| Media exposure           | .236 ** (.081) | .003 |
| Education * media        | -.041 * (.019) | .029 |
| Constant                 | -1.738 *** (.336) | .000 |

McFadden’s R² = .10
n = 2159

Notes: (1) * p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001;
(2) Results are from probit regression;
(3) Missing data imputed by MICE (10 imputations).

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Appendix 2.E

Question Wording & Variable Coding

Formal Education:
What is the highest educational level that you have attained?:
0. No formal education
1. Incomplete primary school
2. Complete primary school
3. Incomplete secondary school
4. Complete secondary school
5. Complete College/CEGEP
6. University-level education, with degree

Political Interest:
How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you:
1. Not at all interested
2. Not very interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Very interested

Political Discussion:
When you get together with your friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally or never?
1. Never
2. Occasionally
3. Frequently

Media: (A+B+C+D+E+F)
People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information (read out and code one answer for each):

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Source</th>
<th>Used it last week</th>
<th>Did not use it last week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily newspaper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News broadcasts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed magazines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In depth reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet, Email</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.1: Distribution of sample on left/right self-placement, education, media exposure, political Interest, and political discussion

Notes:  
(1) Missing data replaced by multiple imputation by chained equations (MICE) (Royston, 2004);  
(2) Data are weighted to offset survey design effects;  
(3) Some error due to rounding.

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Figure 2.2: Tenth (-) and ninetieth (+) percentiles of interest, discussion, media exposure and education as predictors of using left/right continuum

Notes: (1) Confidence intervals by delta method; dashes represent upper bound at 95% confidence; (2) Full regression results in Table A.1 in chapter Appendix 2.A; (3) All other variables are constant at their median level.

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Figure 2.3: Effect of political interest on the ability to self-locate in left/right space, by level of education

Notes:  (1) Full regression results in Table B.1 in chapter Appendix 2.B.

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Figure 2.4: Effect of the frequency of political discussion on the ability to self-locate in left/right space, by level of education

Notes:
(1) Full regression results in Table C.1 in chapter Appendix 2.C.

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Figure 2.5: Effect of media exposure on the ability to self-locate in left/right space, by level of education

Notes: (1) Full regression results in Table D.1 in chapter Appendix 2.D.

Source: World Values Survey (Canada), 2005
Chapter Three

The emergence since the early 1990’s of new far-right political formations that voice opposition to cultural diversity (Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 1992; Kitschelt, 1995) provides an ideal opportunity to answer these questions. How do predispositions and far-right frames interact to shape public support for far-right agendas? This chapter attempts to answer that question by drawing on a substantial body of cross-national and cross-time data. The analysis begins by canvassing two mainstream theories that try to explain anti-immigrant sentiment alternatively from social-structural and elite-centered perspectives. The chapter evaluates those bodies of theory and then proposes a third alternative account which posits that structural conditions predispose citizens to accept or reject the framing, by far-right elites, of the “immigration issue.” From this perspective, it is the interaction between predispositions and elite influences that matters. The empirical analysis draws on a large body of data to evaluate the comparative merits of all three explanations. The evidence indicates that the proposed alternative theory provides a superior explanation.

I. Theory

Two prevailing explanations for the rise of far-right parties approach the subject from opposing vantage points. On the one hand, “demand-side” explanations attribute the rise of far-right parties to the influence of contextual factors like economic disaffection on the opinions of native-born populations about racial minorities and immigrants (Betz, 1994; Cochrane & Nevitte, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995; Knigge, 1998; Taylor &
Moghaddam, 1994; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Lubbers, Gusberts & Scheepers, 2002; McClaren, 2003). One variant of this explanation contends that far-right parties are born and thrive on the inter-ethnic animosity that accompanies the increased competition between immigrants and native-born populations during periods of economic scarcity (Lipset, 1961; Sherif, 1966). In a nutshell, this line of argument contends that economic scarcity begets racism, and racism heightens the demand among native-born populations for far-right anti-immigration parties (Lubbers & Sheeers, 2000). In this scheme of things, the expectation is that there will be a link between the aggregate levels of racism in a society and the emergence and popularity of far-right parties.

A second line of explanation discounts the demand-side explanations and focuses instead on such “supply-side” factors as the organizational effectiveness, political prowess, and the influence of far-right parties and politicians (Norris, 2005; Rydgren, 2005). From the supply-side perspective, far-right parties are more than the passive beneficiaries of anti-immigrant sentiment. Rather, these parties help to create and foster these sentiments; a line of argument that is entirely consistent with the influential elite-centered models of ideational diffusion and public opinion that were outlined in Chapter 1 (Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964; Goren, 2004; McCloskey & Zaller, 1984; Zaller, 1992).

The plausibility of the demand and supply-side explanations confront different kinds of challenges. The main challenge facing demand-side explanations is empirical. Some studies find, for example, that aggregate levels of unemployment are associated with higher levels of support for far-right parties (Jackman & Volpert, 1996). Awkwardly, other studies have found precisely the opposite (Lubbers et al., 2002). In some cases, high unemployment turns out to be associated with lower levels of far-right support (Knigge, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005).
Equally troubling, at the individual level, there seems to be no connection between actual personal experience with unemployment and support for far-right parties (Ivarsflaten, 2005), and those findings prompt speculation that it is the fear of unemployment, rather than the experience of unemployment itself that matters more (McClaren 2003; Cochrane & Nevitte, 2007).

The principal challenge facing the supply-side explanation is a methodological one. It is difficult to advance plausible theory to the effect that far-right parties succeed in countries where far-right politicians are successful at drumming up support among native-born populations for anti-immigration agendas. In the absence of ways to quantify the skill and success of far-right politicians without referencing their levels of popular support, it is perilously close to a tautology to argue that far right parties succeed because they are organized successfully by skilful politicians (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005).

In short, demand- and supply-side explanations of far-right support ultimately play out on different sides of the perennial debate between “bottom-up” and “top-down” frameworks of opinion diffusion. The debate, in a nutshell, is whether elites shape mass opinion, or vice versa? To be sure, most researchers acknowledge that the state-society relationship is, at least to some extent, a mutually influential one (Downs 1957, 96; Skocpol 1985, 28). But pinpointing empirically the dynamics of these mutual influences is more difficult, particularly from within the confines of a non-tautological theory. Thus, it comes as little surprise that Putnam (1993, 181) and others (Inglehart 1997) argue that this kind of “…chicken-and-egg debate is ultimately fruitless”.

Be that as it may, there is no prime facie reason to regard supply-side and demand-side arguments as diametrically opposed, mutually exclusive explanations. The following investigation draws on elements of both the demand- and supply-side explanations to propose
and empirically examine an alternative account; an account based on the “information-predisposition” framework outlined in Chapter 1. In particular, it considers the possibility that mass opinions gain shape when elite frames interact with social context in such a way that audiences come into contact with points of view that they are predisposed to accept. When religious officials couch arguments about abortion, for example, in a language of religious doctrine, then the arguments are more likely to appeal to those who are highly religious than those who are not. Likewise, politicians who frame their support for such issues as same-sex marriage around the issue of equality are more likely to drum up support for their cause among people who are committed to equality. It is quite plausible, then, that public receptivity to the playing of the immigrant card, or the race card, might work in comparable ways. Far-right parties invariably do prime citizens to blame immigrants for unemployment (Betz 1990; 1994 Swyngedouw 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000), but the impact of that priming is probably more pronounced when the unemployment levels are high. In effect, this alternative specification draws attention to an elite-level “supply-side variable” (the presence of far-right party), and a structural “demand-side variable” (unemployment rate) and the question of how these variables interact with each other to influence opinions about racial minorities.

The central theory is twofold. First, it contends that racism stems in part from the framing of economic misery in racist directions by opinion-shaping elites. And second, it contends that these frames have more of an impact when the population is primed by structural forces to worry about the economy. Thus, the central expectation that emerges from the information-predisposition model is that it is the joint-effects of far-right rhetoric and high unemployment that increase national levels of racial animosity.
II. Methodology

An empirical exploration of this line of argument calls for a broad comparative approach. Consequently, the following analysis deliberately incorporates more cases across a broader time span than is typically the case. For entirely understandable reasons, the vast majority of studies of the dynamics of far-right parties focus only on countries that have far-right parties. But following that same approach in this case would be limiting. Indeed, that approach would not allow for a test of the principal component of information-predisposition framework; namely, that higher unemployment fuels racism in countries that have far-right parties, but not in countries that do not have far-right parties. But the corollary expectation is that higher levels of unemployment will not fuel racism in countries that do not have far-right parties.

Consequently, the strategy followed here casts a broader net and incorporates the full-range of European and Anglo-American OECD countries for which there is cross-time data coverage in the World Values Surveys (WVS). Specifically, the set of cases for analysis includes data from 20 different countries; it is possible to track 11 of these countries across a twenty-five year timeframe, and we can follow all but one, New Zealand, for at least a decade. One significant research design implication is that the cross-national coverage includes countries with and without far-right parties. The second research design implication is that the cross-time coverage extends backwards to include a timeframe that precedes the emergence of even the earliest new-right parties in Europe. It is therefore possible to compare publics cross-nationally at any given point in time, and to compare publics across time within any given country. Taken together, then, the spatial and longitudinal breadth of these data deliberately introduce analytical
opportunities that allow us to pinpoint systematically the differences that arise between those publics that are, and those that are not, exposed to the political rhetoric of far-right parties.

The empirical analysis exploits this comparative leverage by examining how a host of cross-time and cross-national contextual differences interact to affect the opinions of citizens about racial minorities. This approach taps multiple levels of analysis simultaneously. Some of the variables vary only between countries. Others vary across time within countries. And still others vary between individuals. The effects of these variables cannot be estimated in the same model as if they are all derived from an equal number of independent observations. The analysis therefore turns, where necessary, to mixed-effects regression, a strategy which enables us to specify that there are multiple levels of analysis that need to be examined simultaneously (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008).

A. Data and Measures

Racism features as a key variable in both the demand- and supply-side models of far-right support. Here, racism is operationalized as not wanting “people of a different race” as neighbors. From this vantage point, Figure 3.1 summarizes aggregate-levels of racism in cross-time and cross-national perspective. The first finding in Figure 3.1 is that there are notable cross-time variations within countries. In some countries, the cross-time trend was downward. Along with the Portuguese and the British, for example, Icelanders, Swedes, Finns and Americans all became less likely to say that they did not want people of a different race as neighbors. In other countries, including Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland, the trajectory of cross-time change worked in the opposite direction. These diverging trends have the effect of balancing each other
Levels of racism for all of the countries hover between seven and nine percentage points for each of the five time-points in the WVS. The slope of the cross-time change is an almost perfectly flat, at .0001. Not surprisingly, this miniscule change does not approach statistical significance.

The presence, and absence, of far-right parties is another important variable. The strategy for identifying far-right anti-immigration parties proceeds in two stages. The first step entails a review of the general literature to identify, and record, which parties have taken strong anti-immigration positions. The second step involves checking these initial screenings against the expert survey data gathered by Lubbers (2004) and Benoit and Laver (2006). It turns out that both approaches yield quite consistent results and a reasonably comprehensive list of far-right parties in 20 countries. The selected cases and their electoral performance in national legislative elections between 1980 and 2008 are summarized in Table 3.1.

For the purposes of the ensuing analysis a country is considered to have a far-right party if a far-right party has received more than four percent of the popular vote in at least two national legislative elections since 1980. This threshold is arbitrary. But it has the effect of reducing on both sides the number of marginal cases. In the countries that are coded as having a far-right party, one or more far-right parties received at least six percent of the popular vote in a national
election between 1980 and 2008. And in the countries coded as not having far-right parties, only one far-right party, the Sweden Democrats, received more than two percent of the popular vote in any two elections since 1980. As the summary data reported in Table 4.1 show, significant far right anti-immigration parties emerged on the electoral landscape in 10 of 20 countries included in the analysis; they took at least a four percent share of the vote in 56 of the 155 legislative elections held in these countries between 1980 and 2008.  

III. Hypotheses

The empirical approach adopted in this analysis is explicitly comparative. At issue is the question of how well the information-predisposition framework does when it is compared with both its demand-side and supply-side rivals. If the demand-side explanation is correct, then we should expect to find that, $H_1$, far-right parties are more likely to succeed in countries and periods where there are higher levels of racism and/or unemployment. The logic of the argument is twofold. First, racism and unemployment are associated with higher levels of demand for far-right parties. And second, far-right parties are more likely to be present in countries where there is high demand.

If the supply-side explanation is correct, then the expectation is that, $H_2$, levels of racism will increase across time in countries that have far-right parties, but they will not increase in countries that lack far-right parties. In this particular case, note, it is not the absolute-levels of racism that matters, as in $H_1$. What matters instead is the rate and direction of change. The logic of the argument is that if far-right parties generate racism, then the relative levels of racism should increase in countries that have far-right parties. This is a cross-time implication.
If the alternative explanation proposed here has any traction, then the analysis should uncover a conditional interaction between the unemployment rate, the presence of far-right parties, and racism. In fact, there are two empirical variants to explore. One expectation is that, \( H_3 \), higher levels of unemployment are associated with higher levels of racism in countries that have far-right parties, but not in countries without far-right parties. This is a cross-sectional implication. The second expectation is that, \( H_4 \), even in countries that eventually acquired far-right parties, higher unemployment rates are associated with higher levels of racism post-1990, after the far-right parties emerged, but not pre-1990, before these parties emerged. This is a cross-time implication.

IV. Results

A. Demand-side models versus Supply-side models

Table 3.2 illustrates the results of using the unemployment rate and aggregate levels of racism to predict which countries did and did not acquire a far-right party at the national level. These effects are tested separately, in different models, because an important variant of this of argument, the ethnic competition hypothesis, contends that a high unemployment rate begets racism, which in turn begets far-right success (Lubbers & Sheepers 2000). Thus, we are not interested in independent effects, per se. The regression models control for year and the standard errors are adjusted for clustering by country. The results of the analysis indicate that neither the unemployment rate nor aggregate levels of racism are associated statistically with the emergence of a far-right party. In the case of aggregate levels of racism, at least, the effect
operates in the expected direction, even if the effect itself does not approach even the most
generous levels of statistical significance. But the unemployment rate works in the altogether
opposite direction of the expectation predicted in H$_1$. More specifically, a higher unemployment
rate is much more closely associated with a lower probability that a far-right party emerges,
rather than a higher probability.$^{11}$ In these respects, the results of this analysis do not at all
support the demand-side explanations of far-right support. H$_1$ is not supported.

Table 3.2 about Here

At first glance, the lack of empirical support for the demand-side explanations of far-right
support might suggest somewhat pessimistic prospects for the supply-side explanations. The
debate between proponents of demand-side and supply-side explanations, after all, could well
turn on different interpretations of the very same evidence. For example, when the proponents of
demand-side explanations see a connection between higher levels of racism and higher levels of
far-right support, they could attribute the higher level of far-right support to higher levels of
racism. But when supply-side proponents see a connection between racism and far-right support,
they could attribute the higher levels of racism to the trickle-down effect of far-right elite on
mass opinion. Thus, demand and supply-side explanations depend to some extent on
diametrically opposing causal interpretations of precisely the same evidence. It is precisely for
this reason that cross-sectional evidence is not particularly helpful in trying to disentangle
empirically these rival theories.

An alternative way to address this challenge is to exploit the cross-time breadth of the
WVS data. Unlike many other sources of cross-national public opinion evidence, the cross-time
coverage of the WVS extends backwards to a period that precedes the emergence of even the earliest far-right parties. The electoral breakthroughs for most far-right parties did not occur until the late 1980s/early 1990s; a full decade after the first wave of the WVS was carried out. And even the Front Nationale in France, the pioneering far-right party perhaps, did not receive its electoral breakthrough until 1986. This feature of the WVS data allows us to test a crucial cross-time implication of the supply-side hypothesis. Namely, \( H_2 \): countries with far-right parties will tend to become more racist over time, at least when compared to countries without far-right parties.

The logic behind this hypothesis is as follows. If racism begets far-right parties, as the demand-side explanations contend, then far-right parties stand better chances of electoral success in countries with higher levels of racism, regardless of whether those levels of racism are increasing or decreasing across-time in the individual countries. But, as the cross-sectional data have already shown, levels of racism have no such effect. But if far-right parties generate racism, as the supply-side explanations contend, then the expectation is that countries with far-right parties will become more racist with the passage of time, regardless of whether the populations in these countries are comparatively racist in cross-sectional perspective. The litmus test for the supply-side hypothesis, in other words, is not the absolute or relative levels of racism in a country. Instead, it is the direction of cross-time change in countries with far-right parties compared to those without far-right parties.

Figure 3.2 plots the cross-time trends in the probability of not wanting racial minorities as neighbours for respondents in countries that have had experience with far-right parties (light bars), and those have not (dark bars). This stage of the analysis uses a contextual variable, the presence of a far-right party, to predict the opinions of individuals. Thus, the results summarized
in Figure 3.2 are derived from mixed-effects logistic regression (full results in Appendix 3.A).
Recall that the cross-time trend for all the countries considered together is just about perfectly flat. But also recall from the discussion of Figure 3.1 that the flatness of the aggregate trend belies important differences between countries in the direction of cross-time change. The significant finding for present purposes from the results summarized in Figure 3.2 is that there is a systematic element to these cross-national differences.

Notice that the probability of not wanting racial minorities as neighbours declined somewhat between 1980 and 2008 among respondents in the ten countries that did not have far-right parties. For these respondents, the probability of not wanting racial minorities as neighbours declined from just over nine percent in the early 1980s, to about five percent by 2008. Not surprisingly, therefore, the direction of cross-time change in aggregate national levels of racism was at least slightly negative in eight of these ten countries. These declining levels of racism are consistent with the kinds of cross-time change that we might expect to find in light of the rising levels of formal education, a variable that is strongly associated with lower levels of xenophobia at the individual-level (Nunn, Crocket & Williams, 1978; Betz 1994).

The results are quite different when it comes to the direction of cross-time change among respondents in the 10 countries that do have far-right parties. Notice the lighter bars in Figure 3.2. In the early 1980s, just fewer than 6.5 percent of the populations in these countries did not want to have people of a different race as neighbours. That figure increased to more than eight percent by 2008. At the aggregate level, national levels of racism increased at least slightly in
seven of these ten countries. Viewed in isolation, the magnitude of this shift may not seem particularly striking. But these findings are striking when compared to the direction and magnitude of change in countries without far-right parties. The declining racism in the countries without far-right parties, and the rising levels of racism in the countries with far-right parties, represents an overall shift of about six percentage points in the relative levels of racism between these two groups of countries. The direction of this shift is statistically significant at greater than 99 percent confidence. The evidence, then, supports strongly the empirical implications of H2: compared to populations in countries without far-right parties, the populations in countries with far-right parties have become more racist over time.

These initial analyses lend considerably more support for the supply-side theories than for the demand-side theories. Neither levels of unemployment nor levels of racism are associated statistically with the emergence of far-right parties. The presence these kinds of connections is a key implication of the demand-side hypothesis, H1. But while more racism does not improve the prospects for far-right parties, the existence of far-right parties does appear to generate more racism. In cross-time perspective, the levels of racism in countries with far-right parties increased across time, even as the levels of racism declined over the same timeframe in other advanced industrial countries. This evidence is consistent with the key empirical implication of the supply-side model: far-right parties appear to be more than just passive beneficiaries of racism; they are, rather, drivers of racism.

B. Information-Predisposition and Structure-Agency
The notion that political parties, including far-right parties, ride passively atop a sea of public opinion is a notion that runs contrary to the empirical evidence uncovered, so far, here and elsewhere (Goren, 2004). Yet, the supply-side model seems to be an oversimplification as well. The mindsets of citizens are hardly just blank grey screens that can be shaken and erased at the whims of politicians. A more likely possibility is that people’s receptivity to elite framing is largely contingent on factors that are beyond the influence of political parties. In the case of far-right parties, the key frame that is widely promoted by these parties is the notion that immigrants take jobs away from native-born populations. And the expectation is that far-right parties will be more successful at turning native-born populations against racial minorities at moments when the unemployment rate is high than when the unemployment rate is low. In other words, a high unemployment rate predisposes citizens to accept the frame that immigrants are taking their jobs. The corresponding cross-national expectation is that far-right parties will be more successful at promoting racism in countries with high unemployment rates than in countries with low unemployment rates.

The observable implications of this line of reasoning are twofold. The first expectation, \( H_3 \), is that unemployment predicts racism in countries that have far-right parties, but not in countries that do not have far-right parties. And the second expectation, \( H_4 \), is that the connection in countries with far-right parties between the unemployment rate and racism is further contingent on the temporal dimension. Specifically, the observable implication is that levels of unemployment and racism will be correlated after far-right parties have emerged, but not before the emergence of far-right parties. In other words, the social learning of racism requires a supply-side variable, in this case the existence of a far-right to blame immigrants for
unemployment. And it requires a structural demand-side variable, a high unemployment rate that predisposes citizens to accept the anti-immigrant economic frames of far-right politicians.

Figure 3.3 directly compares the effects of the unemployment rate on the probability of expressing racist sentiment for respondents in countries with and without far-right parties. The light and dark bars represent respondents in countries with and without far-right parties, respectively. The height of the bars represents the predicted probability of racism. And different rates of unemployment are plotted along the horizontal axis. Thus, there are two key findings from Figure 3.3. First, levels of racism do not increase alongside the unemployment rate in countries without far-right parties. The heights of the dark bars are more or less constant, and they certainly do not get higher, as the level of unemployment increases. The second finding, however, is that racism increases alongside the unemployment rate in countries that do have far-right parties. In countries with far-right parties, the probability that a citizen does not want somebody of a different race as a neighbor increases more than eight-fold, from just about four percent to 34 percent, as the level of unemployment moves from the lowest (.5%) to the highest (18.5%) values observed in these data. This finding is consistent with H3: the unemployment rate predicts racism in countries that have far-right parties more effectively than it does in countries that do not have far-right parties.

If far-right parties animate the link between racism and unemployment, as the information-predisposition framework proposes, then we should also expect to find that the connection between racism and unemployment in the countries with far-right parties should not
be evident prior to the emergence of far-right parties in those countries. The unemployment rate should only predict racism after the emergence of far-right parties. This is the essence of $H_4$. Figure 3.4 illustrates the results of testing this hypothesis by adding an interaction term, year multiplied by the unemployment rate, to a regression analysis that predicts the level of racism in countries that eventually acquired far-right parties. The expectation is that the interaction will be positive and significant. In effect, the unemployment rate will not predict levels of racism in the early 1980s, prior to the emergence of far-right parties. But the unemployment rate should emerge as a predictor of racism more effectively as far-right parties become more strongly established in these countries.

Figure 3.4 about Here

The finding summarized in Figure 3.4 is consistent with $H_4$. The y-axis represents the effects of a one-percentage point increase in the unemployment rate on the probability of a respondent not wanting people of a different race as neighbors. The x-axis represents time. Thus, the line in the graph represents, for different years, the effects of the unemployment rate on the probability of racism in far-right countries. Notice the direction and magnitude of the trend. The effect of the unemployment rate on racism is virtually zero throughout the 1980s. The magnitude of the effect increases to substantively and statistically significant levels, however, by the 1990s. Indeed, by 2008, a one percentage point increase in a country’s unemployment rate is associated with more than a three percentage point increase in probability of a citizen expressing racial animosity.
This evidence is straightforward. The unemployment rate does not predict aggregate levels of racism prior to 1990, a period that predated, for the most part, the rise of far-right parties in these countries. But the unemployment rate does predict aggregate levels of racism from 1990 onward, after far-right parties emerged. Indeed, the magnitude of this effect increases substantially with the passage of time. This is consistent with H4. The link between unemployment and racism was non-existent prior to the emergence of far-right parties. But the link appeared and became increasingly strong as far-right parties emerged and cemented their positions across wider swaths of these countries.

V. Discussion

The foregoing analysis adjudicates empirically between the supply-side and demand-side models of far-right support. To fairly evaluate empirically between these rival theories required a broader comparative approach than is typically the case. This approach allowed the analysis to isolate the effects of the presence of far-right parties in two ways. The first involves cross-national comparisons between the cases that have far-right parties and the cases that do not. The second involves isolating these effects by comparing across-time within the countries that acquired far-right parties the periods before and after these parties emerged.

The results of this analysis reveal that neither the demand-side nor the supply-side explanations hold up particularly well, on their own, to empirical scrutiny. On the one hand, the populations in countries where far-right parties did emerge were no more racist than the populations in countries where far-right parties did not emerge. Certainly, this evidence challenges the notion that the emergence and success of far-right parties, or indeed, their non-
existence and failure, is but a reflection of the levels of racial animosity in particular countries. On the other hand, however, the effectiveness with which far-right parties are able to generate racial animosity among a population is geared to a considerable extent by the level of unemployment in that country. The critical conditioning role of a structural variable, the unemployment rate, is at odds with the view that the levels of racism in a population are but a reflection of supply-side, elite-level framing effects.

Indeed, closer inspection of these data point to an important interaction between a structural demand-side variable, the unemployment rate, and an elite-level supply-side variable, the presence of a far-right party, in the explanation for racial animosity in OECD countries. The effectiveness of far-right parties at generating racial animosity is influenced to a considerable extent by the level of unemployment. At the same time, however, whether the unemployment rate translates into racial animosity is conditional on the presence of a far-right party. In this respect, it is neither the unemployment rate nor the presence of a far-right party that matters, but the interaction between the two.

The observable implications of this core argument, that neither the demand-side nor the supply-side model is able to work in isolation from the other, play out in cross-national and cross-time perspective. The demand-side model does not work because neither levels of racism nor unemployment plausibly predicts the emergence of far-right parties. Furthermore, a high unemployment rate does not translate as if by magic into racism. Far-right parties provide the linkage. It is for this reason that the connection between unemployment and racism is confined, in the first case, to countries that have far-right parties. And it is confined, in the second case, to the time-periods within these countries after far-right parties emerged.
That said, the supply-side model fares only marginally better. The effectiveness of far-right parties at generating racism is conditional on the level of unemployment in the country. Far-right parties are able to generate racism when a greater proportion of the population is primed by high unemployment to look to politicians for the sources, and solutions, to their country’s economic problems. In short, there is no systematic connection between racism and unemployment when and where there are no far-right parties, but there is a strong connection between racism and unemployment when and where there are far-right parties.

VI. Conclusion

Over the past two and a half decades, rising levels of immigration from new source countries have altered fundamentally the ethnic and racial composition of advanced industrial countries. Advanced industrial societies, including traditionally homogenous ones, have had to address the challenges of integrating new immigrants into established economic, social and cultural settings. Far-right anti-immigrant political parties have emerged in a good number of these countries to offer their own solutions to this challenge. Typically, these parties advocate, first, lowering the future intake of immigrants, particularly immigrants from certain ethnic, racial, and religious groups. And they advocate, second, restricting the economic and cultural rights of existing immigrants, by such strategies as formalizing preferential hiring practices that discriminate against immigrants.

These parties draw attention to issues surrounding immigration and diversity, and try to exploit them for electoral gain. But it is a mistake to suppose that far-right parties emerge as some kind of natural negative reaction by native-born populations against rising levels of ethnic diversity. Comparing cross-nationally and cross-time the stocks of foreign-born populations and
levels of ethnic diversity in advanced industrial countries introduces a variety of methodological challenges (Lemaitre 2005). But the available evidence is that the stocks of foreign populations in a country affect neither the levels of racial animosity in that country, nor the probability that a viable far-right fragment will emerge on that country’s electoral landscape. The reality is that far-right parties have fared considerably better, and levels of racial animosity are considerably higher, in some low-diversity societies like Denmark and Norway than in some higher-diversity societies like Sweden, Germany, and Canada.

The presence of immigrants in advanced industrial states nonetheless presents far-right politicians with an opportunity to generate controversies that pry open new policy spaces for their party. As agents, far-right parties generate these controversies by blaming immigrants for unemployment, crime, and a host of other social ills. But the effectiveness of far-right rhetoric at mobilizing racial animosity seems to be shaped to a considerable extent by structural factors that predispose citizens to accept or reject the framing of the immigration issue by far-right elites. These structural factors lie beyond the control of far-right politicians.

The unprecedented gains of far-right anti-immigrant political parties in the 2009 European Parliamentary elections, gains made at the height of an historic recession, are certainly consistent with the information-predisposition theory proposed here. But the economy is not the entire story. Economic misery gives to far-right parties a thread of widespread concern that is then spun in anti-immigrant directions. Identifying the precise micro-dynamics that explain the impact on citizens of far-right frames and economic misery is an important subject for further research. The results presented here indicate that economic misery and far-right rhetoric are not at all deterministic. Citizens do not follow mindlessly the cues of far-right politicians. Nor do
they automatically turn against racial minorities when economic conditions go sour. It is the
interaction between predisposition and information that matters.

These results are consistent with the core findings from Chapter 2. Just as the interaction
between individual predispositions and social sources of information gives rise to differences
between individuals in their exposure to information about politics, so too does this interaction
give rise to differences between citizens in their opinions about race. The results in Chapters 2
and 3 therefore overlap on a key theoretical point outlined at the outset: people’s opinions are
shaped by social sources of information, but their likelihood of exposure to this information, and
their probability of accepting this information, is conditional on key predispositions which vary
from citizen to citizen. The process of opinion formation is neither endogenous nor exogenous
to the individual. It is both.
Table 3.1: Electoral Performance of far-right parties in 20 OECD Countries, 1980-2008

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<td>21.9%</td>
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<td>Front Nationale (FN)</td>
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<td>National Democratic Party (NDP)</td>
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<td>German People’s Union (DVU)</td>
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<td>Republicans (REP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lega Nord (LN)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS Tricolore Flame (MS-FT)</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>&lt;.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
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<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centre Democrats (CP/CD)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
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<td>9.7</td>
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<td>List Pim Fortuyn (LPF)</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party for Freedom (PVV)</td>
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<td>5.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand First</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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Table 1 continues on next page
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress Party (FrP)</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
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<td>9.2</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>National Renewal Party (PNR)</td>
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<td>National Democracy (DN)</td>
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<td>&lt;0.1%</td>
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<td>Phalange Espanola de las Jons</td>
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<td>&lt;0.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Democracy (NyD)</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden Democrats (SD)</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss People's Party (SVP)</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>28.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss Democrats (SD)</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motorists'/Freedom Party (FPS)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>British National Party (BNP)</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
(1) The coverage of legislative elections in the United States is for presidential election years only;  
Source: Political Data Yearbooks & National Election Reports
Table 3.2: Aggregate levels of racism and unemployment as predictors of the emergence of far-right parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pr(FRAIP = 1)</th>
<th>Racism</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef. (SE)</td>
<td>p &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>.021 (.098)</td>
<td>.828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.151 (.124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.186 (.950)</td>
<td>.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McFadden R²</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (1) * p < .10  ** p < .05  *** p < .01;  
(2) Results are from probit regression;  
(3) Results suppressed for year;  
(4) Units are percentage points;  
(5) Bootstrapped standard errors (1000 replications) are adjusted for clustering on country.

Source: World Values Survey & stats.oecd.org
Figure 3.1: Percentages of populations in OECD countries that do want people of a different race as neighbours, 1981-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>BEL (17%)</th>
<th>FIN (25%)</th>
<th>GER (12%)</th>
<th>NOR (12%)</th>
<th>FRA (23%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>BEL (11%)</td>
<td>ITA (10%)</td>
<td>ESP (10%)</td>
<td>NOR (9%)</td>
<td>ESP (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK (10%)</td>
<td>USA (10%)</td>
<td>FRA (9%)</td>
<td>ICE (8%)</td>
<td>USA (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UK (9%)</td>
<td>AUT (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>AUS (6%)</td>
<td>SWE (6%)</td>
<td>CAN (5%)</td>
<td>AUS (5%)</td>
<td>SWE (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRL (6%)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1995-98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2004-06</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Values Survey
Figure 3.2: Cross-time change in the probability of not wanting people of a different race as neighbours, for countries with and without far-right parties

Notes:  
(1) Values are predicted values;  
(2) Regression results in Table A.1 in Appendix 3.A.

Source: World Values Survey and Political Data Yearbooks
Figure 3.3: The effect of the standardized unemployment rate on the probability of not wanting people of a different race as neighbours, for countries with and without far-right parties.

Notes: (1) Values are predicted probabilities; (2) Unemployment rate standardized as percentage of the labor force; (3) Regression results in Table B.1 in Appendix 3.B.

Source: World Values Survey, stats.oecd.org, and Political Data Yearbooks
Figure 3.4: The effect of the standardized unemployment rate on the probability of not wanting people of a different race as neighbours, in countries with far-right parties, by year

Percentage point change in the probability of racism per one percentage point increase in unemployment

Year

Notes:
(1) Values are predicted probabilities;
(2) Regression results in Table C.1 in Appendix 3.C.

Source: World Values Survey, stats.oecd.org, and Political Data Yearbooks
Appendix 3.A

Table A.1: The impact of far-right parties on the cross-time trajectory of racial intolerance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racism</th>
<th>Main Effects Model</th>
<th>Interaction Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef.(SE)</td>
<td>p &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAIP = 1</td>
<td>.050 (.197)</td>
<td>.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year (1981= 0)</td>
<td>-.007 (.007)</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAIP * Year</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.501 *** (.164)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prob > chi2             | .54                | .04          |
Observations            | 98417              | 98417        |

Group Variables: Country (n = 20) & Wave (n = 71) (Integration Points = 7)

Notes:  
(1) * p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001;  
(2) Results are fixed effects from multilevel mixed effects logistic regression; random intercepts estimated for country & wave;  
(3) Missing data imputed via multiple imputation by chained equations (MICE).  
(4) Figure 3.2 based on interaction model.  See notes for Figure 3.2.

Source: World Values Survey & stats.oecd.org
Appendix 3.B

Table B.1: The impact of the standardized unemployment rate on inter-racial animosity, for countries with and without far-right parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racism</th>
<th>Main Effects Model</th>
<th>Interaction Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef. (SE)</td>
<td>p &lt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAIP = 1</td>
<td>.060 (.200)</td>
<td>.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>.004 (.023)</td>
<td>.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAIP * Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.064 *** (.222)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prob > chi2 .95 .01
Observations 98417 98417

Group Variables: Country (n = 20), Wave (n = 71), Integration Points (n = 7)

Notes:  
1) * p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001;  
2) Results are fixed effects from multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression; random intercepts estimated for country & wave;  
3) Missing data imputed via multiple imputation by chained equations (MICE).  
4) Figure 3.3 based on interaction model. See notes for Figure 3.3.

Source: World Values Survey & stats.oecd.org
## Appendix 3.C

Table C.1: The impact of the standardized unemployment rate on inter-racial animosity, in FRAIP countries, by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racism</th>
<th>Main Effects Model</th>
<th></th>
<th>Interaction Model</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef.(SE)</td>
<td>p &lt;</td>
<td>z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td>.376</td>
<td>- .044 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>.133 ***</td>
<td>(.038)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>- .007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year * Unemployment</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.009 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.420 ***</td>
<td>(.275)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-2.684 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prob > chi2: .00  
Observations: 42895

Group Variables: Country (n = 20) & Wave (n = 71), (Integration Points = 7)

Notes:  
(1) * p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001;  
(2) Results are fixed effects from multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression; random intercepts estimated for country & wave;  
(3) Missing data imputed via multiple imputation by chained equations (MICE).  
(4) Figure 3.4 based on interaction model. See notes for Figure 3.4.

Source: World Values Survey & stats.oecd.org
Part 2

Information, Predisposition, and Left/Right
Chapter Four

Policy Disagreement in Advanced Industrial States: The Content and Structure of Left/right Opinions

The information-predisposition framework has a number of standalone implications; implications that are helpful in their own right for understanding phenomena of interest to political scientists. This framework helps to explain the acquisition of basic political information, as the analysis of the Canadian case in Chapter 2 has illustrated. And it helps to explain the cross-time trajectory of racial animosity in advanced industrial countries, as the comparative analysis in Chapter 3 has demonstrated. Both of these findings fill holes in important bodies of existing literature. For present purposes, however, the more salient consideration is that the explanatory leverage of the information-predisposition framework enhances its credibility as a way of thinking about opinion formation.

The next three chapters apply the information-predisposition framework to develop a unified theory of left-right disagreement. As we shall see, the observable implications of this theory challenge prevailing views about the patterns of party policy and public opinion in advanced industrial countries. To be sure, the left/right division is fundamental. But the theory presented here suggests that the predispositions which underlie left-wing opinions are qualitatively different than the predispositions which underlie right-wing opinions. In the political universe, as it turns out, the left and the right are not mirror-image reflections of each other.
I. Left/Right and Public Opinion

Most citizens orient themselves politically through the language of “left” and “right” (Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990, p.212; Laponce, 1972, p.452). The left/right semantic is enduring. Laponce (1972) observes that the left/right dimension “…is so basic to our perception and interpretation of both our physical and social environments that it belongs to that group of symbolic structures which…provide a key to man’s understanding of himself and his society” (p.455). The left/right semantic is widespread (Budge & Klingemann, 2001, p.19); so widespread that Alford, Funk and Hibbing (2005, p.153) wonder if it is not inherent to humans as humans: a manifestation of genetically underpinned ideational cleavages that shape in similar ways the political landscapes of different countries.

There are, of course, important nuances to the simplifying language of left and right. First, not everyone can identify their own position in left/right space, and some use these terms incorrectly (Lambert, Curtis, Brown & Kay, 1986, p.547). Second, the categories of left and right are not values in themselves; they are vessels into which people pour specific content. Just what meaning people pour into these categories is therefore an empirical question in its own right (Benoit & Laver, 2006, p.131; Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990, p.212). The meanings attached to left and right have evolved (Connover & Feldman, 1981, p.643), and the continuum is multidimensional (Blais et al., 2002, p.112; Weisberg & Rusk, 1970, p.1179). Thus, next-door neighbours can use the same label to denote altogether different beliefs. An additional nuance comes from evidence indicating that the categories of left and right are not simply controvertible. These labels may capture different priorities (Gilens, 1988, pp.44-45). But there is no guarantee that a value which epitomizes the left necessarily has its antithesis reflected in the right (Connover & Feldman, 1981, p.619).
Given these nuances, the persistence of the left/right semantic and its wide application in multiple cross-national settings is intriguing. Empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated the utility of the left/right continuum for comparative studies of voter and party positioning (Kim & Fording, 1998, pp. 76-77, but see Benoit & Laver, 2006, pp. 132-136), and those findings raise an important question: if left and right embody clusters of opinions that have no necessary or “logical” connection to one another (Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, Budge & McDonald, 2006, pp. 5-6), then why do these categories take on approximately similar meanings in different countries? If there is nothing, for example, that conceptually or logically connects support for lower taxes, on the one hand, with opposition to homosexuality on the other, then why should both of these values predict consistently the left/right self-placement of respondents in so many different contexts?

One possible answer to that question is that there are attitudinal predispositions that structure in predictable ways the opinions of respondents about a variety of topics. According to these individual-level explanations, different “personalities” (Alford et al., 2005, p. 157) or broad “value orientations” (Van Deth & Scarborough, 1995, p. 6) underlie disagreements about multiple issues simultaneously. A second structural possibility centers on social cleavages. Individuals belong to groups—class, religion, race, ethnicity—and group loyalties influence individuals’ views about more than one topic (Gooding, 1975, pp. 516-517; Lane, 1959, p. 197; Lipset, 1960, p. 203). Thus, the opinions that give meaning to the categories of left and right may be bundled together because they are grounded in cleavage structures. And these opinions may be similar from one country to the next because they are grounded in cleavage structures that countries share in common (e.g., rich versus poor, young versus old, religious versus secular). A third possible explanation to consider involves the influence of elites or “opinion leaders” (Druckman
& Nelson, 2003, p.729; Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944, p.58; McCloskey & Zaller, 1984, p.13; Zaller, 1992, p.6). As Converse (1964) observed nearly a half-century ago: “…the shaping of belief systems of any range into apparently logical wholes that are credible to large numbers of people is an act of creative synthesis characteristic of only a miniscule proportion of any population” (p.211). Non-elites may acquire these “belief systems” via “social learning” (McCloskey and Zaller, 1984, p.259). From this vantage point, the meaning of left and right might be similar cross-nationally for a combination of reasons related to etymology (e.g., Klingemann et al., 2006, p.6) and cross-national ideational diffusion (e.g., Rydgren, 2005, p.415).

This chapter addresses three questions. First, what opinions give meaning to the categories of left and right? Second, to what extent do individuals organize their policies and opinions along similar and coherent left/right lines? And finally, how do social factors and predispositions influence the public’s organization of left/right opinions? This investigation is cross-national in scope; it draws on individual level cross-sectional data. The analysis begins by exploring empirically the usage and meaning of left/right in comparative perspective. The second section considers how individual voters organize their opinions about immigration, economics and social morality. And the final section of the analysis explores the influences of formal education and political engagement on the organization of left/right opinions.

II. Left and Right in Comparative Perspective

A. The Use of Left/Right
The use of left/right is widespread; but it is not universal. Figure 4.1 plots the percentage of respondents from each country who “don’t know” their own position on the left/right continuum. The first finding, clearly, is that there are significant cross-national variations in the use of left/right. Notice that only small proportions of respondents in Norway (2%), Finland (3.8%), the Netherlands (4.0%), Sweden (4.2%), Denmark (5.1%) and France (5.5%) are unable to position themselves in left/right space. While considerably larger shares of the populations in Italy (22.4%), Luxembourg (20.2%), New Zealand (19%), Canada (17.8%) and Ireland (16.8%) “don’t know” their own position in left/right space. Taken together, the prevalence of left/right usage varies from a high of 98 percent in Norway to a low of 78 percent in Italy.

There is, however, an important sub-text to the aggregate findings reported in Figure 4.1. In each country, levels of political interest and formal education are powerful predictors of left/right usage. That said, cross-national variations in political interest and formal education explain only a small portion of the cross-national differences in left/right usage. Indeed, the greatest cross-national variation occurs among less-educated and politically disengaged respondents. In all but one country, more than 95 percent of politically interested and university-educated respondents are able to position themselves in left/right space. Even in Italy, the exceptional case, some 92 percent of the well-educated and engaged respondents are able to place themselves on the left/right continuum. Thus, the cross-national variations among politically interested and university-educated respondents are minimal. There are, however, important differences cross-nationally among the less-educated and among the more disengaged
respondents. Why these patterns persist is an intriguing question in its own right; and how that question is answered has clear implications for the consequences of missing data for cross-national analyses. That said, the overall findings are consistent with the intuition that knowledgeable observers of politics across a wide range of countries are able to speak a common political language of left and right. But does the language of left and right carry similar meanings across different national contexts?

B. The Meaning of Left/right

Opinions about immigration, social conservatism and free-market economics figure prominently in a number of comparative analyses of the left/right continuum (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara & Tanenbaum, 2001; Benoit & Laver 2006; Klingemann et al., 2006; Lubbers 2004). This analysis draws on individual-level public opinion data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Social Survey (ESS). The construction of each measure—anti-immigration, social conservatism and free market support—corresponds closely to coding protocols that are commonly followed elsewhere (Budget et al., 2001; Benoit & Laver 2006; Lubbers, 2004; Klingemann et al., 2006). The measure of free market support in the WVS, for example, combines answers to questions about income equality, government welfare and competition (c.f., Budge et al., 2001, pp.224-226). The social conservatism dimension taps opinions about abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia (c.f., Benoit & Laver, 2006, p.168). And the anti-immigration dimension is captured using a question about support for restrictive immigration policies (c.f., Lubbers, 2004, p.4).
One straightforward strategy for examining the meaning of left and right entails measuring, for each country, the statistical relationship between left/right self-placement and outlooks toward immigration, social conservatism and free market support, respectively. The findings summarized in Figure 4.2 reflect the correlation coefficients that emerge from separate analyses, in each country, of the relationship between respondents’ opinions about each of these issues and their self-placement in left/right space. These coefficients range from -1 to 1. A correlation coefficient above zero indicates that anti-immigration, social conservatism and free-market support are associated with rightward self-placement. Negative correlation coefficients indicate that these opinions are associated with leftward self-placement. And coefficients that are indistinguishable from zero indicate that opinions on that dimension are statistically unconnected to left/right self-placement in a given country.

The first notable finding to emerge in Figure 4.2 is that anti-immigration sentiment is not significantly correlated with left/right self-placement in Finland (.036) and Ireland (.055), and it is only weakly correlated with left/right identification in Canada (.058) and the United States (.089). In Italy (.245), France (.245), Belgium (.225), Germany (.220) and the Netherlands (.214), by contrast, opinions about immigration are linked more strongly with left/right self-identification. Similar cross-national differences emerge when it comes to social conservatism. Social conservatism correlates significantly with left/right self-placement in all countries except Sweden (.014). But the magnitude of the correlation varies considerably between Norway (.076) at one end and the United States (.306) at the other. Finally, it turns out that free-market
orientations are the strongest and most reliable correlate of left/right placement. Free-market support is associated with left/right self-placement at statistically significant levels in all countries, and particularly strongly in Sweden (.558), Denmark (.435), New Zealand (.428), Australia (.393), Norway (.361), Finland (.362), the United States (.317) and the Netherlands (.313). In sum, the findings from these individual-level data summarized in Figure 2.2 are quite consistent with Benoit and Laver’s (2006, 134) findings about the policy positions of political parties: there are slight cross-national variations in the degree to which different opinions give meaning to the language of left and right.

A second important finding that emerges from Figure 4.2 is that the meaning of left and right is substantively similar from one country to the next. In 15 of 17 countries, for example, anti-immigration sentiment is associated with left/right self-placement at statistically significant levels and in the expected direction. The same pattern applies to social conservatism in 16/17 countries and to free-market support in 17/17 countries. Clearly, these data support the proposition that the left/right continuum provides a reasonably reliable way of simplifying the patterns of political disagreement in a number of countries. In none of these countries are the results wholly counterintuitive. In no country are anti-immigration sentiment, social conservatism and free-market support associated with leftward self-placement. Thus, using the language of left and right to characterize opinions about immigration, social conservatism and the free-market is efficient in the sense that it conveys the same meaning across a broad range of countries.

There are cross-national variations in the extent to which respondents are able to locate themselves on the left/right continuum. There are also subtle cross-national differences in how strongly different opinions correlate with left/right self-placement. But it is the cross-national
similarities, rather than the differences, that are the most striking. In the first case, nearly all respondents with high levels of formal education and political interest are able to position themselves in left/right space, regardless of the country in which they live. And in the second case, opinions about immigration, social conservatism and the free market correlate in the expected direction with left/right self-placement in virtually all of the countries. Consequently, speaking about left-wing and right-wing positions on immigration, social conservatism, and economic redistribution are likely to convey the same meaning to informed observers of politics regardless of national context. In these respects, the left/right continuum represents a reasonably reliable and widely comparative simplification of these axes of political disagreement.

III. The Organization of Left/Right Opinions

Knowing that opinions about immigration, social conservatism and free-market economics are all associated with left/right self-placement is not the same as knowing whether any of these opinions are connected to each other. Knowing how these outlooks are organized is important for analyses of the left/right continuum for a combination of reasons. First, each individual simultaneously holds many opinions. As Williams (1968) observed: “it is the rare and limiting case if and when a person’s behaviour is guided over a considerable period of time by one and only one value. More often, particular acts or sequences of acts are steered by multiple and changing clusters of values” (pp.287-288). Second, party competition is not simply about adopting positions that people support; it is equally about avoiding issue positions that people oppose (Downs, 1957, p.138). The organization of opinions is important from this vantage point, for example, because political parties may attract voters with their policy positions on one
issue but then repel those very same voters with their position on a different issue. A winning issue is important (Petrocik, 1996, p.828); but so too is a “winning formula” (Kitschelt, 1995, p.275). And third, the organization of opinions is central to explanations of left/right that focus on individual predispositions. The veracity of “left-wing” and “right-wing” personalities, ideologies and orientations is contingent not simply on the connections between different opinions and left/right self-placement, but also on the interconnections between the different opinions that give meaning to left and right. That vantage point hitches analyses of the left/right semantic to a theory of belief systems. That said, exploring why these opinions are organized together puts the cart before the horse. The preliminary question to consider is an empirical one: are right- and left-wing opinions actually bundled together in a meaningful way.

The findings in Figure 4.3 summarize the correlation coefficients from a series of bivariate analyses of individual opinions about immigration, spending versus taxes, social conservatism and the self-location of voters in left/right space. The first finding is that views about each of these issues clearly are connected to left/right self-placement. As the previous analyses suggest, opinions about immigration (.13), free market support (.29) and social conservatism (.16) are all associated with left/right self-placement. But, the significant finding from the vantage point of the theory explored here is that there is little relationship between the different views themselves. Anti-immigration correlates with social conservatism (.10) via homosexuality (.17), but neither of these outlooks are associated with economic viewpoints. In effect, a right-wing opinion about the economy is just as likely to accompany left-wing opinions about both immigration and social conservatism. And a left-wing opinion about the economy is as likely to accompany right-wing opinions about immigration and social conservatism. These same patterns are consistent cross-nationally, with but one notable exception: social
conservatism is associated with free market support in the United States ($r = .15$, $p < .001$). That exceptional case aside, the results of these analyses quite clearly suggest that individuals do not typically organize their opinions in “coherent” left/right terms.\textsuperscript{15}

Figure 4.3 about Here

From one standpoint, the apparent incoherence of left/right opinions at the individual-level is surprising; perhaps even disconcerting (Converse, 1964). Political parties tend to organize their policy positions in coherent left/right terms (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006), and exposure to elite discourse is an important source of political opinion at the mass level (Converse, 1964; McCloskey & Zaller, 1984; Zaller, 1992). From this vantage point, the incoherence of left/right opinions may reflect the cognitive disengagement of mass publics from the political world. Yet, while elite frames are an important influence on individual opinions (Druckman & Nelson 2003, p. 729; Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944, p. 58; McCloskey & Zaller, 1984, p.13; Popkin, 1991, p.47; Zaller, 1992, p.6), recall how the in analyses in Chapters 2 and 3 drew attention to the conditioning effects of latent predispositions as factors that mitigate the influence of information. Moreover, there are different sources of information in advanced industrial countries. If political parties organize their policies in coherent left/right terms, then at least two influences on public opinion, partisanship and the political elite, may well serve to shape in left/right terms citizens’ opinions about economics, immigration and social conservatism. But there are many other influences on public opinion in advanced industrial countries, not least of which, as the analyses in Chapter 2
indicated, is formal education. How might formal education affect the patterns of left/right disagreement?

A. Formal Education and the Fragmentation of Left/Right Opinions

Levels of postsecondary education in advanced industrial countries have risen steadily over the past several decades. In advanced industrial countries, young people are consistently more likely than their predecessors to have higher levels of formal education. Young people are also increasingly likely to have parents with higher levels of formal education. Thus, the effects of postsecondary education on individual opinions may occur directly from exposure itself, or indirectly via its influences on the kinds of values that parents pass onto their children. There are several reasons to suppose that formal education exerts a fragmentary impact on the organization of left/right opinions.

Individuals with higher levels of formal education have more money, more income-potential, and greater financial security. To the extent that support for income equality is lower among those who stand to lose financially from wealth redistribution, it is reasonable to conjecture that formal education and income drive economic outlooks rightward. But there are also reasons to suspect that financial security affects opinions about immigrants. First, native-born populations in vulnerable economic situations have to compete with immigrants for jobs and wages (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000, pp.65-67; Lubbers, Gusberts & Scheepers, 2002, p.349; McClaren, 2003, pp.915-916; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, ch.3). If “inter-ethnic competition” for scarce resources generates hostility toward foreigners, then higher levels of formal education and income may dampen animosity toward immigrants by insulating people from having to compete at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy.
Economic competition, however, is not the only driver of anti-immigrant sentiment. A second factor to consider is out-group intolerance. Out-group intolerance extends beyond animosity toward immigrants; it also includes negative opinions about such other out-groups as gays and lesbians. Individuals who do not like racial minorities, or people who are “different”, are likely to express hostility toward immigrants regardless of their own personal financial prospects (Nunn, Crocket & Williams, 1978). Indeed, these individuals are also likely to express lower levels of support for gays and lesbians. Exposure to higher levels of formal education mitigates these opinions. Racism, for instance, is a socially deviant opinion in advanced industrial countries (e.g., Zaller 1992, pp.10-11). Such opinions may circulate in households or within closed social networks, but they find little support among the intellectual elite. Thus, formal education may increase out-group tolerance in at least two ways. First, it brings individuals into contact with the opinions of the intellectual elite. And second, if affects the composition, size and openness of individual social networks (Granovetter, 1973, pp.1377-8).

Figure 4.4 sorts European respondents by exposure to formal education and plots their mean level of opposition to income equality (black bars), gays and lesbians (dark grey bars), and immigrants (lighter bars). These results are consistent with the central expectations. As formal education increases, economic opinions move rightward (higher) and opinions about immigrants and gays and lesbians move leftward (lower). Exposure to formal education is thus associated with right-wing opinions about income equality and left-wing opinions about immigrants and gays and lesbians. Not surprisingly, then, the direct net effect of formal education on left/right self-placement in Europe is neutral (-.03). But it is neutral not because it is inconsequential for the opinions that give meaning to left and right, rather because it fragments these opinions by moving them in opposing directions.
These same findings persist when the analysis is broadened to include Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, the findings persist when opinions about gays and lesbians are substituted with opinions about social conservatism more generally. In effect, higher levels of formal education are associated, on the one hand, with right-ward opinions about economics and, on the other hand, with left-ward opinions about immigration and social conservatism. Formal education pulls the opinions of citizens in ways that oppose directly the bundles of party policies between which voters must chose in elections.

The effects of fragmented opinions are not inconsequential for left/right self-placement. Consider the left/right self-placement of European respondents with “extreme” left and right opinions about income equality and immigrants. Figure 4.5 sorts these respondents along the x-axis into three categories: those with far left positions about income equality and immigrants (“left-left”), those with “mixed” right/left or left/right opinions, and finally those with far right-positions on both issues. The proportions of these respondents that fall into each category are listed parenthetically beside the labels on the x-axis. And the heights of the bars represent the percentage of respondents within each category who identify with the left, center and right of the left/right continuum. Thus, for instance, 65 percent of respondents with left-wing opinions about both income equality and immigrants locate themselves to the left of center on the left/right continuum. And 54 percent of respondents with far right-wing opinions about both issues identify on the right-hand side of the political spectrum. Not surprisingly, therefore, the first finding is that respondents are more likely to identify on the left when they hold extreme left-
wing positions about both income equality and immigration; and they are more likely to identify on the right when they hold extreme right-wing positions about both issues.

Figure 4.5 about Here

But notice also that the proportion of respondents with mixed opinions (55%) is more than twice as large as the proportions with either left-left (23%) or right-right (22%) opinions. Moreover, those with mixed opinions are about equally likely to identify on the left (29%), center (37%) and right (34%) of the political spectrum. In other words, more than half of all respondents with extreme positions on immigration and income equality hold one opinion at the left-wing extreme and another opinion at the right-wing extreme. And of these respondents, fully 66 percent identify on one side of the left/right continuum even though they hold opinions about either income equality or immigrants that are usually associated with the opposite end of the political spectrum.

One possible explanation for these patterns is salience; some respondents prioritize one of their opinions ahead of the other. Thus, among those with extreme left positions on income equality and extreme right positions on immigrants, some may place themselves on the left because they place their economic outlooks ahead of their opinions about immigrants. And some identify on the right because they prioritize their opinions about immigrants ahead of their views about wealth redistribution. That said, a large group of these respondents (37%) also identify in the center. It may be that these respondents accord equal weight to both positions. As a result, they are conflicted irreconcilably vis-à-vis the patterns of party competition on these issues. It is entirely reasonable to suppose that some respondents locate themselves at the “center” of the
political spectrum because they hold conflicting views on equally salient but different dimensions.

B. Political Engagement and the Organization of Left/right Opinions

Formal education is an important (and spreading) influence on public opinion in advanced industrial countries, but there are other notable sources of influence to consider. Church attendance, for instance, is a strong predictor of social conservatism ($r = .33$) even though it is only weakly connected to both free-market support ($r = .03$) and opposition to immigration ($r = -.04$).\(^{18}\) Even so, religiosity is likely an important factor that holds together in the minds of many citizens the different opinions that make up the measure of social conservatism: homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia. But there is yet another influence on public opinion that merits particular attention in the context of left/right opinions: ideological disagreement among the political elite themselves. The patterns of ideational competition at the elite level may well be quite different than the patterns of public opinion at the mass-level (Converse, 1964, p.252).

Figure 4.6 sorts respondents along the x-axis according to their level of “political engagement”: a scale (Cronbach’s Alpha = .78) constructed by combining answers to WVS questions about levels of political interest and the importance that respondents’ accord to politics in their lives. The percentage of the sample within each category of political engagement is added parenthetically beneath the values on the x-axis. The lines in Figure 4.6 represent the correlations between levels of free-market support, on the one hand, and levels of social conservatism (dark line) and opposition to immigration (lighter line) on the other. Bivariate
analyses were performed separately for respondents within each level of political engagement. Correlation coefficients above zero signify that opinions about the free-market, social conservatism and immigration are bundled together in coherent left/right terms. And coefficients below zero signify precisely the opposite; right-ward opinions about the economy are associated with left-ward opinions about social conservatism and immigration, or vice versa.

Figure 4.6 about Here

The first finding to note from Figure 4.6 is that free-market support is indeed associated with opinions about social conservatism and immigration. But also note that the direction and magnitude of the association varies considerably by levels of political engagement. Among those with lower levels of political engagement, right-wing opinions about the economy are associated with left-wing opinions about social conservatism ($r = -0.06$, $p < 0.001$) and left-wing opinions about immigration ($r = -0.07$, $p < 0.001$). As political engagement increases, however, the direction of these correlations gradually reverses. The correlations approach zero for those with median levels of political engagement. And for those with very high levels, there is a strong and positive relationship between free-market support and both social conservatism ($0.27$, $p < 0.001$) and anti-immigration ($0.20$, $p < 0.001$). In effect, it is only that minority of respondents with very high levels of political engagement who tend to organize their opinions about the free-market, social conservatism and immigration in coherent left/right terms. For the more sizable segments of the population with lower levels of political engagement, by contrast, a right- or left-wing opinion about the economy accompanies, more often than not, precisely the “opposite” opinion about social conservatism and immigration.
The results in Figure 4.6 suggest that, for politically engaged individuals, opinions about immigrants, social conservatism and economics are all organized together in coherent left/right terms. But there is an important caveat to consider: the coherence of these values is not evenly distributed across the left/right continuum. The analysis summarized in Figure 4.7 focuses more precisely on those respondents with higher than average levels of political engagement (>2.5) and then summarizes, for left/right identifiers, the correlation between their economic opinions, on the one hand, and their opinions about immigrants (light bars) and social conservatism (dark bars) on the other. Higher correlation coefficients indicate that these opinions are organized together; in effect, that a left-wing opinion about the economy accompanies a left-wing opinion about immigration and social-conservatism. And a negative coefficient suggests that these opinions are organized “against” each other in left/right or right-left bundles.

Figure 4.7 about Here

The first finding, clearly, is that opinions about free-market economics are bundled together with opinions about immigration and social conservatism for politically engaged left-wingers. For those on the left, and especially the far left, opinions about these issues run together in the same direction: a left-wing opinion about the economy is associated with left-wing opinions about moral issues and immigration. As self-placement moves rightward, however, the pattern reverses. Notice that the height of the bars declines as the values along the x-axis move from left to right. Indeed, for those on the right, opinions about social conservatism and immigration are not at all connected to opinions about the free-market. For these respondents, opinions about these issues tend, more often than not, to run in opposing directions.
Even for right-wingers with high levels of political engagement, the “economic-right”, “moral right” and “anti-immigrant right” are altogether distinctive. Indeed, the only attribute that these opinions apparently share in common is that they are “not-left”.

IV. Coherence and Fragmentation: The Role Predispositions

What explains the discrepancy between the coherence of these opinions for politically for politically engaged leftists and the fragmentation of these opinions for politically engaged conservatives? The information-predisposition framework answers both questions. In the process, the framework moves toward a concrete theory of left/right disagreement.

Politically engaged left-wingers are anomalous in an important respect: they are affluent, well-educated, and yet they still support income equality and wealth redistribution. Indeed, income does not at all predict market outlooks among the most highly engaged left-wingers. Their commitment to wealth redistribution stems not from economic self-interest or financial insecurity, but from an abstract commitment to the egalitarian principles that lie at the core of left-wing ideology (Bobbio, 1996). In other words, the left-wing elite are predisposed to the abstract idea of equality. Yet the principle of equality extends beyond market outlooks; it also encompasses attitudes toward gays and lesbians, racial minorities, immigrants, and women’s rights. Thus, the kinds of underlying values that motivate an affluent and well-educated individual to support greater wealth redistribution are also associated with more favorable dispositions toward out-groups, and lower levels of social conservatism. Leftists at the elite level bundle together their opinions about wealth redistribution, social morality and immigration
because a predisposition to a single abstract idea, human equality, affects opinions about all three issues.

The situation is different on the political right. Right-wing opinions about gay rights are shaped by a predisposition to religion, but religion does not affect opinions about tax policy or immigration. Right-wing opinions about wealth redistribution are shaped to a considerable extent by a predisposition to the abstract idea of free-market materialism, but a predisposition to the free-market does not affect opinions about social morality and immigration. And right-wing opinions about immigration and gay rights stem in large part from out-group intolerance, but out-group intolerance does not affect opinions about wealth redistribution. Unlike the predisposition to equality, in short, the predispositions that underlie right-wing opinions do not reach across the economic, social and immigration dimensions. As a result, free-market support, anti-immigrant sentiment and social conservatism are linked together on the “right” because they share in common an opposition to elements of the left-wing ideology. Free-market supporters oppose left-wing economic outlooks; social conservatives oppose left-wing moral values; and those who are hostile to out-groups oppose left-wing positions on immigration. But there is no inherent predisposition that brings these opinions together for those on the right.

Taken together, the coherence of left/right opinions about immigration, social conservatism and economics is confined, in the first case, to the relatively small segment of the population for which politics is very important. And this coherence is confined, in the second case, to the even smaller segment of the population who are simultaneously politically engaged and on the left. This asymmetry may well stem in part from the “purifying” effect of affluence on left-wing identifiers. Politically engaged citizens, on the left and the right, enjoy higher levels of financial security. What is “left over” on the left as affluence increases are individuals whose
support for wealth redistribution is rooted not in a concern for their own financial well-being, but in a general commitment to the egalitarian principle at the core of left-wing ideology. These highly engaged citizens are likely to have been exposed to issue frames that activate their predispositions (Hochschild, 1981). Thus, the types of elite who support the economic left are also likely to support immigration, out-groups, and non-traditional moral outlooks.

V. Conclusion: Predispositions, Value Fragmentation, and the Politics of Left and Right

While the language of left and right is widely understood in advanced industrial countries, left/right self-placement for many respondents involves making choices between economic outlooks, on the one hand, and opinions about immigrants and morality on the other. The same tradeoffs may also apply to voting. A citizen who “strongly” supports income equality and “strongly” opposes immigration carries two opinions into a ballot booth, each of which pulls with equal intensity in opposing directions. From a methodological standpoint, these voters suppress the magnitude and reduce the efficiency of regression models that aim to predict left/right self-placement or vote choice. When these citizens vote according to their economic outlooks, for instance, they nonetheless bring their opinions about immigrants into the support base of the political party for which they vote. Thus, a voter on the economic left may wind up supporting a left-wing political party even though his opinions on immigration are wholly at odds with the policy positions of his preferred party. The reverse is equally true. Many voters who support far-right anti-immigration parties hold economic outlooks that are diametrically opposed to the kinds of anti-welfare state policies with which these parties are often identified. Under these circumstances, political opinions “as a whole” cannot matter a great deal to vote
choice because a majority of respondents do not organize their political opinions in ways that align with the packages of policies that parties present to electorates.

A second implication of these findings is that a sizable portion of the “political center” is comprised of individuals whose opinions are not at all “centrist” in the conventional usage of the term. Indeed, among those with extreme positions on immigrants and wealth distribution, a majority of these respondents are located at one extreme on one issue and at the opposite extreme on the other. Respondents with extreme but “mixed” opinions are about as likely to identify in the center as on the left or the right of the political spectrum. And left/right and right-left opinion patterns are substantially more common than either “left-left” or “right-right” patterns. Thus, “inconsistent” opinions are not the exception to the rule, but rather the normal pattern of public opinion.

Finally, these results also suggest that the information-predisposition framework helps to explain the patterns of left/right public opinion in advanced industrial countries. Indeed, this framework works very well and requires only a few plausible assumptions about the precise predispositions that shape left/right political opinions about wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration. These predispositions are equality on the left, and religion, free-market materialism, and out-group intolerance on the right. The predisposition to the abstract idea of equality affects opinions on the social, economic and immigration dimensions. But religion, free-market materialism, and outgroup intolerance do not. As a result, the predisposition to equality generates a multidimensional bundle of opinions for those on the left that does not exist, typically, for those on the right. Leftists and rightists derive from different sources, and structure in different ways, their opinions about policy. The distinctive
predispositions that give rise to left-wing and right-wing opinions generate asymmetries in the patterns of left-right opinions about economics, social morality, and out-groups.
Figure 4.1: Use of Left/right in Cross-National Perspective

Notes: (1) The figures for the United States and New Zealand are taken from the second module of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). The data for European countries are derived from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2002-2006. The Canadian data come from the 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey (WVS). WVS data were used in the Canadian case because the CSES data were derived in Canada from the mail-back component of the Canadian Election Study; (2) 17.8% of Australian respondents are coded as missing in the CSES data, but there is no explicit "don't know" category for these respondents.

Sources: ESS (2002-2006); CSES (Module 2); WVS (2000-2005)
Figure 4.2: Anti-Immigration, Moral Conservatism and Free-Market Support as Correlates of Left/right Self-Placement

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Notes: (1) The following 18 countries are included in the analyses: Australia (AUS), Austria (AUT), Belgium (BEL), Britain (UK), Canada (CAN), Denmark (DEN), Finland (FIN), France (FRA), Germany (GER), Ireland (IRE), Italy (ITA), Luxembourg (LUX), Netherlands (NED), New Zealand (NZL), Norway (NOR), Sweden (SWE), Switzerland (SUI) and the United States (USA). Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995. Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey.

(2) Results are correlation coefficients, **p < .01  *p < .05.

Notes: (1) The following 18 countries are included in the analysis: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995. Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. The question about immigration was not asked in the 1990 wave of the WVS. Thus, the analysis of the relationship between market outlooks and opinions about immigration does not include Danish respondents. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey;
(2) n = 19742. Missing cases are deleted listwise;
(3) Results are correlations coefficients, **p < .001  *p < .01.

Source: World Values Survey, 2000-2005
Figure 4.4: Opinions about Income Equality, Immigrants and Gays & Lesbians, by Years of Formal Education

Notes:  
(1) Bars represent upper bound at 95% confidence;  
(2) The following 14 countries are included in the analysis: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.  
(3) Variables in graphic standardized on 0-1 scales to the mean of immigrant outlooks.

Figure 4.5: Left/right Self-Identification by the Organization of Extreme Opinions about Income Equality and Immigrants

Notes:
(1) Analysis is of the 2377 respondents with extremely negative (0) or positive (10) opinions about immigrants, and who “strongly” support (1) or oppose (4-5) income equality;
(2) The following 14 countries are included in this analysis: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Source: European Social Survey 2002-2006
Figure 4.6: Correlation between Free-Market Support, Social Conservatism and Opposition to Immigration, by Level of Political Engagement

Notes:
1. The following 18 countries are included in the analysis: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States; Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995. Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. The analysis of the relationship between market outlooks and opinions about immigration does not include Danish respondents. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey;
2. Correlations are statistically significant (at > 99%), except in the middle category of engagement (2.5) where the coefficients are indistinguishable from zero.

Source: World Values Survey 2000-2005
Figure 4.7: Correlation between Free-Market Support, Social Conservatism and Opposition to Immigration among Respondents with High Levels of Political Engagement (>2.5), by Left/Right Self-Placement.

Notes:
(1) The following 18 countries are included in this analysis: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995.
(2) Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. The analysis of the relationship between market outlooks and opinions about immigration does not include Danish respondents. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey.
(3) ** p < .001  * p < .01

Source: World Values Survey 2000-2005
Chapter Five

Left/Right Asymmetries in the Structure of Party Policy: Right-Wing Fragmentation and Left-Wing Coherence in Comparative Perspective

This chapter widens the empirical front in the campaign to bring individual opinions and party competition under the same theoretical umbrella (Achen, 2002; Adams, Merrill & Grofman, 2005; Miller & Schofield, 2008; Roemer, 2001). The findings from Chapter 4 point to systematic differences between individuals and groups in the ways that policy preferences about multiple issues are bundled together. The following analysis focuses on the implications of these differences for the patterns of party competition in Anglo-American and Western European countries on three dimensions of left-right disagreement: wealth redistribution, immigration, and social morality.19

Wealth redistribution is a longstanding source of political disagreement in democratic countries (Laponce, 1981). Issues surrounding gay rights and immigration have gained prominence in more recent years (Betz, 1994; Inglehart, 1977; 1990; 1997; Kitschelt, 1995; Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990). The article examines how the origins of opinions about these issues shape the contours of left/right disagreement. The central questions are whether, and why, parties with left-wing or right-wing positions on the economy systematically adopt left-wing or right-wing positions on immigration and social morality. On this front, the important advantage of a comparative approach is that it allows the analysis to disentangle the broader trends in party positioning from the peculiar patterns of competition and alliances that may prevail from time to time in individual countries.
In short, this chapter extends the core argument from Chapter 4 to the level of party policy. This core argument is that the content and structure of opinions are fundamentally entwined. The distinctive origins of left-wing and right-wing ideas give rise to differences between left-wingers and right-wingers in the ways that individuals bundle together their opinions about wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration. The patterns of party policy are predictable outgrowths of these differences.

I. Postulates and Hypotheses

The analysis in the last chapter suggests that there are at least four distinct ideological predispositions that play key roles in shaping left-right opinions on the economic, social, and immigration dimensions. These predispositions are equality (Bobbio, 1996), free-market materialism (Inglehart, 1977; 1990; 1997), religion and out-group intolerance (Laponce, 1981). From this standpoint, political disagreements emerge when different predispositions push in opposing directions on opinions about the same issue. While a commitment to the principle of equality may underlie support for same-sex marriage (Matthews, 2005), it does not follow that a commitment to “inequality” is what drives opposition to same-sex marriage (Bobbio, 1996). Rather, opposition to same-sex marriage stems from altogether different ideologies, like religion or out-group intolerance. This distinction is more than pedantic. It opens the possibility of fundamental differences between left-wingers and right-wingers in the way that they structure their opinions about the political world. These asymmetries are likely to manifest themselves at the level of party policy via the influences of core beliefs and values on the policy-seeking positions of party activists (Aldrich, 1983; Chappell & Keech, 1986; Wittman, 1983).²⁰
According to Bobbio (1996), the ideological underpinning of the political left is the abstract commitment to equality. Equality binds together for left-wing activists their opinions about the economy, social morality, and immigrants. The results in Chapter 4 support this line of argument. Engaged left-wingers who support wealth redistribution, despite their own socioeconomic security, are likely to adopt left-wing positions on the social and immigration dimensions. The observable implication at the level of party policy, then, is that left-wing parties that are far removed from the center on any one of these policy dimensions are likely to be far-removed from the center on the other policy dimensions as well. Thus, the first expectation, $H_1$, is that political parties with left-wing positions about the economy will also tend to hold left-wing positions about social morality and immigration.

Recall, however, that the evidence points to a different conclusion when it comes to religion, free-market materialism, and out-group intolerance. These ideological influences do not transcend to the same extent as equality the multiple dimensions of left-right disagreement. Religions tend to generate right-wing opinions about social morality, but they are not systematically one-sided when it comes to wealth redistribution and immigration (Laponce, 1981). Free-market materialism generates right-wing opinions about the economy. But free-market materialism does not affect opinions about immigration and social morality (Inglehart, 1997, 109). And those who harbour out-group animosity are likely to express negative opinions about people who are different, including, typically, gays, lesbians, racial minorities, and immigrants, but there is little reason to suppose that out-group intolerance affects opinions about wealth redistribution (Ivarsflaten, 2005), at least insofar as that redistribution does not benefit disproportionately people from undesirable out-groups (Gilens, 1995; 1996).
More formally, then, the second hypothesis, $H_2$, is that political parties with right-wing positions on social morality will not necessarily adopt right-wing positions on the economic and immigration dimensions. The third hypothesis, $H_3$, is that parties with right-wing opinions on the economic dimension will not necessarily have right-wing opinions on the social and immigration dimensions. And the fourth hypothesis, $H_4$, is that parties with right-wing opinions on the immigration dimension will tend to have right-wing opinions on the social dimension, but they will not necessarily have right-wing positions on the economic dimension. The core point in the case of $H_4$ is that the people who dislike out-groups are probably more likely to express negative opinions about immigration and homosexuality. In effect, then, $H_2$ and $H_4$ combine to suggest that anti-immigrant parties are socially conservative, but socially conservative parties are not necessarily anti-immigrant.

II. Empirical Findings

To test these hypotheses, the analysis turns to data from Benoit and Laver’s (2006) survey of experts about the policy positions of political parties. Benoit and Laver (2006) surveyed a total of 993 political scientists and national political experts from Western European and Anglo-American countries. Each expert was asked to locate the positions of the political parties in their country on a common battery of policy dimensions. These data are useful in research designs where it is necessary to treat the policies of a political party as potentially different than the opinions of the party’s supporters in the electorate. The current analysis focuses in particular on party positions in 21 countries along three dimensions of left-right disagreement: “taxes versus spending”, “immigration” and “social liberalism”. The cross-national breadth includes the twenty-one Western European and Anglo-American countries that
were covered in Benoit and Laver’s (2006) survey. And the analysis includes all of the political parties that received at least some (i.e., > 0.0%) of the popular vote in a national election.22

Overall, the political parties in Benoit & Laver’s survey are distributed somewhat unevenly across the immigration and social dimensions. About sixty percent of the parties are to the left of the center (i.e., <10.5) on each of these dimensions. On the economic dimension, the parties divide symmetrically to the left and right of the centre. There are 81 parties on the economic left (53%); 72 parties on the economic right (47%). Nevertheless, party policies on the economic, social and immigration dimensions are firmly connected. The correlations (Pearson’s r) between positions on the economic dimension and positions on the social and immigration dimensions are .59 and .73, respectively. The correlation between party policies on the immigration and social dimensions is even stronger: .82. These relationships can be illustrated in another way: moving ten points to the right on the economic dimension is associated, on average, with a seven point increase in social conservatism and an eight point increase in anti-immigration. Similarly, there is a nine point increase in social conservatism that accompanies each ten points rightward on the immigration dimension.

A closer inspection of party policies reveals that the strength of the linkages between party policies on the economic, immigration and social dimensions varies systematically across the political spectrum. Figure 5.1 plots the positions of parties on the economic (x-axis) and immigration (y-axis) dimensions. Political parties that combine their policy positions into “left-left” packages are in the bottom-left quadrant of the plane; parties with “right-right” packages are in the top-right quadrant. Thus, the axis of “left-right” disagreement runs diagonally from the bottom-left to the top-right corner in the graph. Linear (OLS) regression estimates of the magnitudes of the relationships are provided underneath the Figure.23 Notice how the positions
of political parties—the dots in the graph—appear to trend diagonally from the bottom-left to the upper-right. The OLS estimates confirm this observation: the line of best fit begins at 2.4 on the y-axis when tax/spend is at one (i.e., $1.53 + 1(.878) = 2.4$), and it slopes upward to 19.1 on the y-axis when tax/spend is at twenty (i.e., $1.53 + 20(.878) = 19.1$). Note as well that the parties on the economic left are clustered together. By comparison, the parties on the economic right are much more dispersed. As positioning on the economic dimension moves from left to right, the distance between the points in the graph increases substantially. The interpretation is straightforward. Immigration and economic policies are bundled tightly by parties on the left. But the immigration policies of political parties on the economic right are spread more evenly across the left-right continuum.

Figure 5.1 about Here

The results summarized in Figure 5.2 reflect a more pronounced version of the same pattern. Party positions on the economic dimension are summarized along the x-axis, and the y-axis corresponds to policy positions on the social liberalism dimension. Notice, first, that the regression line runs from the southwest to the northeast quadrant: the line begins at 3.1 on the social liberalism scale when tax/spend is at one (i.e., $2.36 + 1(.721) = 3.081$), and it ends at 16.8 on the social liberalism scale when tax/spend is at twenty (i.e., $2.36 + 20(.721) = 16.78$). In this case, however, the discrepancy between the coherence of the economic left, on the one hand, and the fragmentation of the economic right, on the other, is even more striking. The left-wing parties are huddled together in the bottom left quadrant. But the social policies of economically conservative parties are strewn across the left-right continuum. Indeed, of the twenty-eight
parties on the far economic right (i.e., >15), forty percent of them are to the left of center in their social policies. By comparison, not one of the thirty parties on the far economic left (i.e., < 5) is to the right of center in its social policies. There is, in short, a clear left-left pattern, but there is no corresponding right-right pattern. More formally, the magnitude of the relationship between the economic and social dimensions declines as economic policies move from left to right.

Figure 5.2 about Here

One plausible explanation for the fragmentation of the right is that there are, in effect, two rights: an economic right and a non-economic right. Parties on the economic right adopt right-wing positions on taxation and spending; parties on the non-economic right take up right-wing positions on social liberalism and immigration. A direct implication of this line of argument is that measuring the fragmentation of economically conservative parties by looking separately at their positions on the social and immigration dimensions is tantamount to double-counting: right-wing parties are not twice fragmented in their social and immigration policies, but singularly fragmented between an economic and a non-economic right.

The evidence in Figure 5.3 provides little support for this line of reasoning. Figure 5.3 plots the positioning of political parties on the immigration and social dimensions. Here, the connection between policies on the immigration and social dimension is very strong. The trajectory of the regression line slopes upward from left to right: it begins at 2.0 on the social dimension when immigration policy is at one (i.e., $1.163 + 1(.878) = 2.04$), and it ends at 18.7 on the social dimension when immigration policy is at twenty (i.e., $1.163 + 20(.878) = 18.7$). Indeed, the variation on the immigration dimension explains 66 percent of the variation on the
social dimension. But the magnitude of the aggregate relationship is not distributed evenly across the left-right continuum. The results indicate a great deal of left-wing coherence. The parties in the bottom-left corner of the graphic are tightly clustered. Of the 32 political parties on the far pro-immigrant left (i.e., < 5), 100 percent are to the left of the center on the social dimension. And of the 44 parties on the far social left (i.e., < 5), all but one of these parties (98%) are to the left of center on the immigration dimension.

Figure 5.3 about Here

The distribution of parties on the right, by contrast, is more spread out. There is no single “non-economic” right. But there is a caveat. Far-right anti-immigration parties are socially conservative, but socially conservative parties are not opposed to immigration. Of the 27 political parties on the far anti-immigrant right (i.e., > 15), all but three (89%) of these parties are to the right of center in their social policies. Despite the social conservatism of anti-immigration parties, 13 of the 43 political parties (30%) on the far social right are actually to the left of center in their immigration policies. In short, the fragmentation of the right is somewhat uneven. There appears to be little about social conservatism that generates opposition to immigration, but something about opposition to immigration that generates social conservatism. There is an unrequited relationship, it seems, between the anti-immigrant right and the socially conservative right.

Taken together, the results of these analyses indicate that party policies on the economic, immigration and social dimensions are organized coherently among parties on the left, but not among parties on the right. These findings differ in a few ways from the kinds of expectations
that arise from the “economic-left/social-left” and the “economic-right/social-right” dichotomies (e.g., Connover & Feldman, 1981, p.618; Miller & Schofield, 2008, p.433). There is little evidence of a distinction between an “economic left”, on the one hand, and a “non-economic left” on the other. The political parties that are on the economic left are simultaneously on the immigration and social lefts. Indeed, there are 30 political parties on the far economic left (i.e., < 5); 100 percent of these parties are simultaneously to the left of center on the immigration and social dimensions. In effect, there is only one left on these issues; not two. H1 is therefore confirmed.

The evidence for a distinction between the “economic” and “non-economic” right is similarly tenuous, but for precisely the opposite reason. In this instance, there appear to be three rights, rather than two rights. There is an economic right, a social right, and an anti-immigrant right. As a result, the political parties that occupy the “right-wing” on a single-dimensional left-right continuum are in fact scattered, in multiple dimensions, across the political landscape. Socially conservative parties are not invariably committed to right-wing positions on the economic and immigration dimensions. H2 is therefore confirmed. Fiscally conservative parties are flexible in their positions about social issues and immigration. H3 is therefore confirmed. And anti-immigrant parties are systematically conservative in their positions on social issues, but they are spread quite evenly across the economic dimension. H4 is therefore confirmed as well.

III. Conclusion

This chapter builds from the argument that the discrete ideological underpinnings of left-wing and right-wing ideas generate asymmetries between the left and the right in the ways that ideologues bundle together their opinions across multiple dimensions of political disagreement. Party policies reflect these asymmetries as differences between left-wing and right-wing parties
in the cross-national consistency of their positions on the economic, social and immigration dimensions. In particular, the positions of left-wing political parties are bound across multiple dimensions by the tendency of left-wing activists to organize around the principle of equality their opinions about wealth distribution, social morality and immigration. The same level of constraint does not apply for political parties on the right. The influence of various right-wing ideologies is not spread as extensively across the multidimensional space of political disagreement.

These findings have significant implications for the formal theories about the internal dynamics of political parties outlined in Chapter 1. Left-wing parties are more likely than are their right-wing counterparts to resemble an assemblage of like-minded individuals. Right-wing parties, by contrast, look more like a pragmatic coalition of different groups, particularly when these parties run on right-wing agendas across multiple policy dimensions. Simply, economic, social and immigration positions do not fit together as naturally on the right as they do on the left. This finding is certainly consistent with the evidence uncovered in Chapter 4.

These internal configurations may turn out to be mixed blessings for right-wing and left-wing parties. On the one hand, the ideological coherence within left-wing parties may render them less susceptible to fragmentation, at least on those policy dimensions that are within the reach of egalitarian frames. On the other hand, however, the concerted multidimensional pull of left-wing activists may make it more difficult for pragmatic politicians to manoeuvre these parties toward the political center. These parties are less nimble in that their positions on one dimension are constrained by their positions on other dimensions. In mixed right-wing parties, by contrast, social conservatives are likely to work alongside party pragmatists for office-seeking positions on the economic dimension (e.g., Conger & McGraw, 2008, p.261). And fiscal
conservatives are likely to work alongside party pragmatists for office-seeking positions on the social dimension. Presumably, neither the fiscal conservatives nor the social conservatives will want to jeopardize their party’s shot at political power for the sake of ideological purity on policy dimensions that they care nothing about. In effect, then, right-wing pragmatists are less constrained; they may be able to pit ideologues against each other in a way that the pragmatists on the left cannot. As a result, the “electoral pull” may be stronger vis-à-vis the “activist pull” in multidimensional right-wing parties than it is in multidimensional left-wing parties (Miller & Schofield 2008, p.435). Even so, the activist pull that drives left-wing parties leftward, drives right-wing parties apart. In this respect, left-right differences in the origins and organization of opinions pose unique strategic challenges for left-wing and right-wing parties.
## Appendix 5.A

Sample sizes and response rates

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<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>17.0</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>48.1</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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Notes: (1) Australia not included in the total response rate calculations.

Source: Benoit and Laver (2006, 158-159)
## Appendix 5.B

### Party names and abbreviations, by country

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<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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Source: Benoit & Laver (2006)
Figure 5.1: Party Policy on the Economic and Immigration Dimensions in Two-Dimensional Space

OLS estimates & diagnostics: obs. = 153, a = 1.527, b = .878, se = .052, t = 16.92, Adj. R² = .51, Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg χ² = 9.45 (p < .01)

Source: Benoit & Laver 2006
Figure 5.2: Party Policy on the Economic and Social Liberalism Dimensions in Two-Dimensional Space

Notes: (1) New Zealand Missing on Social Liberalism
OLS estimates & diagnostics: obs. = 145, a = 2.356, b = .721, se = .082, t = 8.82, Adj. $R^2 = .35$, Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg $\chi^2 = 10.34$ (p < .01)

Source: Benoit & Laver 2006
Figure 5.3: Party Policy on the Immigration and Social Liberalism Dimensions in Two-Dimensional Space

Notes: (1) New Zealand Missing on Social Liberalism
OLS Estimates & Diagnostics: obs. = 145, a = -1.163, b = -0.878, se = 0.052, t = 16.92, Adj. R$^2$ = .66, Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg $\chi^2 = 9.45$ (p < .01)

Source: Benoit & Laver 2006
Chapter Six

Asymmetries in the Origins and Organization of Left/Right Opinions by Party Activists: The Left/Right Ideological Divide in Canadian Politics

The observation that the same patterns of left/right asymmetry persist at the levels of public opinion and party policy is certainly consistent with the information-predisposition theory proposed in this dissertation. It is also promising from the standpoint of the effort to develop a single theory to account simultaneously for the opinions of citizens in the electorate and the policies of political parties. That said, the overlap between the patterns of public opinion and the patterns party policy is also consistent with the “top-down” partisanship model, and the “bottom-up” rational choice model, outlined in Chapter 1. According to the partisanship model, the patterns of public opinion should mirror the patterns of party policy because individuals take their cues from political parties (Goren, 2005). And according to the rational choice model, the patterns of party policy should mirror the patterns of public opinion because political parties take their cues from the electorate (Downs, 1957). To be sure, as Chapter 1 argued, neither the partisanship model nor the rational choice model is able to unify theoretically the micro-level of individual opinion and macro-level of party policy. The partisanship model can explain public opinion, but not party policy; the rational choice model can explain party policy, but not public opinion (see also Tsebelis, 1990). By those facts alone, the principle of “Occam’s Razor” would lead us to reject these accounts in favour of the information-predisposition theory proposed in this dissertation.

Even so, there are ways to adjudicate empirically between these rival explanations. This chapter turns to a closer inspection of the social and economic preferences of the party activists
in one country, Canada, where both the left-wing and right-wing parties adopt coherent bundles of policy positions on the economic and social dimensions. At the level of party policy, in other words, Canada is one of a handful of countries where right-wing economic, social and immigration positions are all bound together in the platform of a major right-wing party. From the standpoint of the “top-down” and “bottom-up” models, then, we should expect to find that the policy preferences of left-wing and right-wing activists reflect the same symmetrical patterns of left-right disagreement that persist at the level of party policy. Left-wing activists should hold left-wing positions on both the economic and social dimensions. And right-wing activists should hold right-wing opinions on these dimensions.

According to the information-predisposition theory outlined in Chapter 1, however, left-wing and right-wing opinions stem from the activation by frames of altogether different predispositions. From this perspective, the patterns of public opinion and party policy overlap not because the latter causes the former, or vice versa, but because both are ultimately derived from a common process of opinion formation. Even so, the arguments in chapters 4 and 5 contend that the main predisposition that gives rise to left-wing opinions is qualitatively different than the predispositions that spawn right-wing opinions. Moreover, each predisposition affects different ranges of issues. From this standpoint, the patterns of left-wing coherence and right-wing fragmentation should persist, even among party activists in a country like Canada, where both the left-wing and right-wing parties happen to organize their positions across multiple dimensions into coherent bundles of left-wing and right-wing policies.

In short, the social and economic preferences of Canadian party activists offer an opportunity for a critical test of the information-predisposition theory proposed in this
dissertation; a test that allows us to adjudicate empirically between the information-
predisposition theory and rival explanations. It is to this test that the analysis now turns.

I. Ideology and Canadian Politics

The traditional “brokerage” model of Canadian politics leaves little room for ideology:
ideology is procrustean and brokerage is pragmatic (Bickerton & Gagnon, 2004; Brodie &
Jenson, 1996; Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc & Pammett, 1996; Johnston, 1988; Mallory, 1984). This
brokerage account is increasingly hard to reconcile with growing bodies of empirical evidence
(Carty, Cross, & Young, 2000). Public opinion surveys consistently uncover value differences in
the electorate between the supporters of different parties (Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau & Nevitte,
2002; Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil & Nadeau, 2000). Surveys of party members find that pre-
existing policy preferences underlie the political activism of party activists (Cross & Young,
2002). And content analyses of party manifestos reveal systematic and enduring differences in
the policy platforms of Canadian parties (Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara & Tanenbaum,
2001; Klingemann, Volkens, Bara, Budge & McDonald, 2006).

Even so, the primary problem with the brokerage model is a conceptual one. It is a
fundamental mistake to suppose that brokerage and ideology are inimical models of political
operation. Office-seeking politicians need party activists to support them. Policy-seeking
activists need their party’s politicians in power. This quid-pro-quo between policy-seekers and
office-seekers is what drives brokerage politics. How this brokerage plays out, and how it
shapes party policy and party competition, depends on the structure of the ideologies that stir
party activists.
This chapter examines the structure of left/right disagreement among parties and party activists in Canada. The categories of “left” and “right” underlie a language of ideological disagreement that is used the same way in Canada as it is elsewhere to characterize party and voter positions across a number of policy dimensions (Gibbins & Nevitte, 1985; Lambert, Curtis, Brown & Kay, 1986). The economic dimension and the social dimension are especially salient in Canada (Blais et al., 2002; Cross & Young 2002; Nevitte et al., 2000; Nevitte & Cochrane 2007).  

Yet, as the results in Chapters 4 and 5 reveal, knowing that economic and social values are connected to the left/right continuum is not the same as knowing whether these values are connected to each other. Indeed, the concept of ideology refers to the interconnections, the “constraints”, which bind opinions about multiple issues into coherent bundles of political viewpoints (Converse, 1964, p.252; Johnston, 1988, p.58). On this front, existing studies of ideological disagreement are often bound in Canada, as they are elsewhere, by the important assumption that left-wingers and right-wingers organize their thoughts into symmetrical bundles of opposing opinions about identical sets of political issues (Cross & Young, 2002; Laponce, 1981; Nevitte & Cochrane, 2007; but see Johnston, 1988). The left and the right, in effect, are but mirror-images of one another.

This chapter builds from the information-predisposition theory to test a less ordered conceptualization of political disagreement for the Canadian case. Although the left/right ideological cleavage has come to influence Canadian politics to a greater extent than it has the past, the core argument in this chapter is that the assumption of mirror-image symmetry between the left and the right is fundamentally inaccurate. The structure of policy opinions varies with the content of those opinions. This variability poses altogether different political challenges for left-wing and right-wing parties.
II. Culture, Constraint, and Social Learning

There are two prevailing ways of thinking about the lines of ideational division in Canada. The first strategy is a broad ecological approach rooted in the concept of culture (Bell, 1992; Horowitz, 1966). The challenge from this perspective is to identify and explain aggregate-level differences between groups. The focus is on the content of opinions; that is, what people think about the issues. Lipset (1986), for example, contrasts the “achievement-orientation”, “egalitarianism” and “individualism” of Americans with the “ascription”, “elitism” and “group-orientation” of Canadians. Wiseman (1996), similarly, sets out to explain why Albertans are more individualistic and religious than their counterparts in the rest of the country. In these cases, the analytical vantage point is the group-level. Lipset (1986) says nothing about whether the group-oriented Canadians are also the elitist ones, or whether the achievement-oriented Americans are also the egalitarian ones. Wiseman (1996) does not ask whether religious Albertans are especially individualistic, or whether individualistic Albertans are at all religious. In short, group-level analyses underscore the differences between groups across multiple dimensions of political thought, but they do not examine the belief systems of the individuals within those groups.

The second strategy focuses on the structure of public opinion; that is, how people organize their policy preferences about multiple issues. The unit of analysis is mixed. The core concept is “constraint” (Converse, 1964, p.252). From here, researchers search via statistical induction for patterns of relationships between variables. How these variables cluster most efficiently into separate “dimensions” of opinion is said to illuminate the underlying factors that constrain them. Laponce (1981), for example, discovers three dimensions of opinion: a
“religion” dimension, an “economy” dimension, and a “hierarchical group centrism”
“free enterprise”, and “out-groups”. Cross and Young (2002) find two strong dimensions,
“social tolerance” and “laissez-faire economics”, and two weak dimensions, “provincial powers”
and “populism”. This approach is inductive. Laponce (1981) does not say why there are three
dimensions of opinion, rather than one, or two, or twenty-six dimensions. And Cross and Young
(2002) do not explain why opinions about a distinct society clause for Quebec load more
strongly on their “social tolerance” dimension than on their “provincial powers” dimension. In
these cases, the objective is to simplify and describe, rather than explain, the contours of public
opinion. Thus, individual opinions are allowed to vary, but only along those dimensions that
most efficiently describe the structure of public opinion for the group as a whole. In short, the
content of public opinion varies at the individual level, but the structure of public opinion varies
at the group-level.

In this chapter, the information-predisposition theory is explored. The unit of analysis is
the individual. The core concept is “social learning” (McClosky and Zaller, 1984, p.12). In its
broadest sense, social learning is the notion that political opinions form through interactions of
individual-level factors like personality, religiosity, partisanship and rationality, and social
factors like family upbringing, religion, party membership, and socioeconomic class (e.g.,
Alford, Funk & Hibbing, 2005). Many of these influences generate distinctive bundles of
opinions for individuals and groups by affecting simultaneously more than one opinion. From
this standpoint, the content and structure of opinions are indissolubly connected. A religion that
proscribes homosexuality and abortion affects the content of opinions by generating right-wing
opinions about each of these issues. And it affects the structure of opinions by linking these
issues together as precepts in a single doctrine.

Thinking about opinions in this way, as intervening variables, reshapes the prevailing
template of ideational disagreement in two respects. First, conceptualizing opinion-formation as
an active process means, for any issue, that a “non-opinion” is the default position.
Diametrically opposing levels of exposure to a single influence do not generate opposing
opinions about the same issues. Non-exposure has no effect on opinions, rather than an equal
and opposite effect on the same range of opinions. Thus, opposing thoughts about precisely the
same issue stem from altogether different sources, rather than from different levels of exposure
to the same source.

Second, tracing to common origins the content and structure of opinions means that
people who differ in the substance of their opinions are likely to differ in the organization of
their opinions. How people think about a political issue is likely to affect in important respects
how they situate that issue with other elements of the political universe. The homogenizing
assumption inherent in the prevailing methodology of statistical induction—exploratory factor
analysis of a single national sample—does not square with the view that the structure of public
opinion is as contingent and variable as the content of public opinion.

In sum, there are different ways to look at ideological disagreement. We may look at it,
in a cultural sense, as differences between groups in the content of opinions about multiple
issues, thereby imputing to the opinion-sets of individuals the issue-by-issue positions that
distinguish their country, region, province, or linguistic group from other countries, regions,
provinces, or linguistic groups. Alternatively, we may look at ideological disagreement in a
structural sense by narrowing the level of analysis and ploughing inductively for underlying
patterns between variables. And finally, we may look at ideological disagreement from the standpoint of individual predispositions interacting with the social environment to produce differences between people in the origins, organization, and content of their opinions. Certainly, the latter of these approaches is the most demanding theoretically insofar as it requires that researchers conjecture in advance about potential sources of opinion. It is also more rewarding theoretically because it covers simultaneously the content and structure of opinions. But does it describe more accurately the Canadian political environment? It is to these questions that the analysis now turns.

III. The Structure and Content of Left-Right Disagreement

Richard Johnston (1988) observes that “the very idea of ideology presupposes a hierarchy of ideas” (p.59). Ideologies emerge from core ideas that people consult when they develop their opinions about issues. One of these ideas, as earlier chapters outlined, is the prescriptive belief in human equality (Bobbio, 1996). Egalitarianism underwrites for a large number of people an assortment of left-wing opinions, including opinions about economic equality, racial equality, gender equality, and the equality of gays and lesbians (e.g., Noël & Thérien, 2008; Matthews, 2005). Other beliefs are similarly far-reaching. A belief in the divinity of scripture engenders, in many cases, right-wing opinions about abortion and homosexuality (Lapone, 1981). A belief in the efficiency of free-market capitalism begets right-wing opinions about tax policy, government regulation, and welfare spending (Blais et al., 2002; Nevitte et al., 2000). And a belief in the superiority of one’s own group may well breed, by extension, negative opinions about people who are different; including, typically, gays, lesbians, racial minorities, and immigrants.
(Laponce, 1981). It is well nigh impossible, of course, to list every foundational belief, let alone the potentially creative and idiosyncratic ways that people apply them to their political environments. But the inability to see to the edges of the ideological universe does not mean that the big ideas at the center have to be discarded. On this point, instruments tuned toward the nexus of political disagreement consistently detect the telltale signs of equality, religion, capitalism and intolerance (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006). These beliefs push on opinions about some of the same issues. But each belief also bears on opinions about distinctive configurations of issues. The central hypothesis to be explored is straightforward. Just as there are differences in the foundational ideas that underpin left-wing and right-wing opinions, so too are there differences between the left and right in the ways that people lump political issues together into ideologically coherent bundles of ideas about the political world.

The empirical analysis proceeds in two stages. The first part hones in on the policy space of the political parties themselves. This stage of the analysis turns, first, to Benoit and Laver’s (2006) survey of experts about the policy positions of political parties, and, second, to content analyses of party platforms from the Comparative Manifesto Research Project (CMRP) (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006). Benoit and Laver (2006) surveyed national political experts, including 104 experts from Canada, and asked each of them to locate the positions of their country’s parties on a common battery of policy dimensions. The CMRP examines systematically the content of the election platforms proposed by political parties in democratic countries, including those proposed by Canadian parties in 18 federal elections between 1945 and 2000. These data are particularly useful in research designs, such as this
one, where it is necessary to treat the policies of a political party as potentially different than the opinions of the party’s supporters in the electorate.

The second stage of the analysis turns to data from the Study of Canadian Political Party Members (SCPPM). The SCPPM is a regionally stratified random mail-back survey of 3872 card-carrying members of five Canadian political parties: Liberal (L), Progressive Conservative (PC), Canadian Alliance (CA), New Democrat (NDP), and Bloc Quebecois (BQ). The survey, conducted in 2000, provides a snapshot of partisan opinions at a moment in Canadian history when the traditional brokerage parties, the Liberals and the PCs, were flanked on both the left and right by two procrustean ideological parties: the NDP and Canadian Alliance. The SCPPM asks respondents for their opinions about “economic issues” like wealth redistribution and private healthcare; and “social issues” like equal rights, cultural minorities, and immigration. These data make it possible to examine the ways that activists on the left and the right bundle their opinions about left/right political issues. Taken together, the empirical analyses converge on the question: do left-wingers and right-wingers organize their political preferences in different ways?

IV. Does Ideology Matter in Canada?

There are discernable lines of ideological division that crisscross the Canadian party landscape. Benoit and Laver (2006) asked national experts about the left/right positions of the political parties in their country across a number of policy dimensions. The experts were asked to pinpoint the location of each party on scales that range from extreme left-wing scores of 1 to extreme right-wing scores of 20. According to the Canadian experts, the NDP and the Canadian
Alliance were 15 points apart on the social dimension, 13 points apart on the economic dimension, and 9 points apart on the immigration dimension. Indeed, there was a 13 point spread between the NDP and the Alliance on the overall scale of left/right ideology. The size of this ideological gap is impressive. It is greater than the distance between, for example, the Labour and Conservative parties in Britain (5.5 points), or between the Democratic and National parties in Australia (7.1 points), or between the Democrats and Republicans (9.5 points) in the United States. Indeed, in Austria, the Greens and the far-right Freedom Party are separated by 12 points. And 14 points separates the Communist Party in France from the far-right National Front. These findings stand as a forthright challenge to the conventional wisdom that party politics in Canada is quintessentially non-ideological. Even so, it is difficult to compare cross-nationally the judgments of experts about the left/right positions of the political parties in their respective countries. These finding leave open an important line of questioning: do Canadian parties emit particularly strong ideological signals? Or is it that weak ideological signals stand out more clearly against the ostensibly pragmatic background of Canadian political history?

Evidence from the CMRP addresses precisely this question. The CMRP gathers evidence about the left/right positions of political parties through systematic content analyses of party election platforms. The content analyses rely on a single set of coding criteria to classify line-by-line the policy content of party manifestos. The results are quantified as the percentage of sentences that each platform devotes to different kinds of arguments. A score of 8 on the “free enterprise” dimension indicates that 8 percent of the sentences in an election platform support free-market capitalism. A score of 15 on the “welfare state expansion” dimension suggests that 15 percent of a party platform promotes the expansion of social welfare programs. Taken together, there are 57 policy categories into which content may be coded; 26 of these categories
can be linked together in a single scale of left/right.\textsuperscript{30} In this way, the CMRP facilitates direct cross-national and cross-time comparisons of the left/right positioning of a host of political parties, including Canadian ones.

Figure 6.1 summarizes in left/right space the results of the CMRP’s content analyses of party manifestos in Canada. The x-axis represents time. The y-axis represents the left/right continuum. Thus, the points in the graph track across time the left/right location of party platforms in each Canadian federal election between 1945 and 2000. From this vantage point, the results in Figure 6.1 reflect the same broad outline of ideological disagreement that Benoit and Laver pick-up in their 2002 survey of Canadian political pundits—the New Democratic party (NDP) is to the left, the Reform-Alliance party (REF) is to the right, and the Liberal (L) and Progressive Conservative parties (PC) are to the center-left and center-right, respectively. But there is another finding that deserves attention. Notice the cross-time trajectory of Canada’s two traditional governing parties: the Liberals (L) and Progressive Conservatives (PC). Up until the late 1970s, the Liberals and Conservatives oscillate in left/right space like two pragmatic brokerage parties chasing through time the fleeting concerns of non-ideological voters. Their left/right positions are essentially interchangeable. Indeed, the supposed right-wingers, the Conservatives, are to the left of the Liberals in 8 of the 12 elections between 1945 and 1979.

Things changed, however, in the 1980s. As the data in Figure 6.1 show, the ideological gap between the left and the right widens first during the 1980s, and it widens again in 1993 as the populist Reform party supplants the Progressive Conservatives as the dominant force on the
Canadian right. Indeed, the election platforms of the NDP and the Reform party stretched the left/right continuum in Canada to an extent—about 60 points, on average—that exceeds even the polarizing effects of fringe parties in most European countries. Since 1990, for example, the platforms of left-wing and right-wing parties are separated by no more than 70 points in France, 60 points in Germany, 50 points in the Netherlands, 40 points in Britain, 35 points in Australia, and 25 points in the United States. In short, Canada’s major political parties were divided ideologically in the latter decades of the Twentieth Century to an extent that they had not been divided previously. And the new ideological divide is wide by cross-national standards.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that Canada’s governing parties used to orbit each other at the non-ideological midpoint of the left/right continuum. That system flew apart in the 1980s. Content analyses of party manifestos and surveys of political experts now detect powerful signals of ideological disagreement in the Canadian case. At first glance, these findings are at odds with the traditional concept of brokerage politics. But that conclusion skirts a conceptual question: are ideological and brokerage politics inherently incompatible? The short answer is no. Office-seeking politicians need ideologues in order to win elections; policy-seeking ideologues need sympathetic politicians in power. To be sure, ideology limits the room for brokerage, and vice versa (Cross and Young, 2004). Policy-seeking activists are unlikely to abandon the mainstays of their ideological agenda in order to win elections. Thus, groups of activists will not fit together in a coalition if they hold irreconcilable and non-negotiable policy preferences on the same issues. But this is consistent with any other kind of brokerage. And people with non-negotiable preferences about altogether different issues may be able to work together quite effectively. For this reason, the structure of policy opinions among left-wing and right-wing activists may well bear in important respects on the political prospects of left-wing
and right-wing parties, especially in the ideologically-charged atmosphere of the 1990s and beyond.

In short, left/right ideology plays a key role in Canadian politics. Understanding the dynamic of that key role, however, requires an analysis of the ways that left-wingers and right-wingers organize into bundles their opinions about policy. It is important to consider, then, whether left-wingers and right-wingers structure in different ways their opinions about the political world. The central expectation is that they do.

V. The Asymmetrical Universes of Left-Wingers and Right-Wingers in Canada

The expectations outlined in Section II posit that left-wingers and right-wingers organize their political environments in distinctive ways. More specifically, left-wingers bundle coherently their economic and social opinions because a pervasive left-wing idea, equality, affects both sets of opinions. The ideological environment is different for those on the right. There is nothing about free-market materialism that begets right-wing opinions about social morality. And there is little about religion that engenders right-wing opinions about taxation and social welfare. Indeed, neither free-market support nor religion is likely to generate right-wing opinions about immigration and racial minorities. When it comes to economic and social issues, in effect, the overall hypothesis is that there is one left and multiple rights.

The SCPPM is useful for testing these expectations for a number of reasons. First, these data were collected from identical mail-back surveys administered to random samples of respondents drawn from the membership lists of all five political parties represented in Parliament (Cross & Young 2002, 865). Thus, precisely the same questions are used to gauge
the opinions of members from different political parties—including the NDP and the Canadian Alliance, the far left and right of Canadian politics, respectively. Second, the survey asks these respondents for their opinions about batteries of economic and social issues that are at the core of left/right disagreement. Respondents are asked to weight spending on social programs against tax-cutting and deficit reduction (SOCPROGS). And they are asked for their opinions about wealth redistribution (INCEQUAL), employment insurance (EI), healthcare user fees (USERFEES), private versus public sector job creation (PRIVSECTOR), raising tuition (TUITION), private health care (HEALTHCARE), equal rights (EQUALRIGHTS), new lifestyles (NEWLIFESTYLE), special treatment of minorities (MINORITIES), immigration (IMMIGRATION), and bilingualism (BILINGUALISM). With these data it becomes possible to examine directly the ways that left-wing and right-wing activists structure their answers to identical batteries of questions about a wide range of economic and social policy issues.

This stage of the analysis turns to factor analysis to compare the answers of NDP and Alliance members to the battery of social and economic policy questions in the SCPPM. There are two broad families of factor analysis. The most common manifestation of factor analysis in Canadian public opinion literature is drawn from the body of closely related statistical techniques that are known, collectively, as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). These statistical tools enable researchers to reduce the number of variables in their analyses by identifying how co-variation between multiple observed variables can be accounted for by smaller numbers of unobserved, underlying “factors”. Variables that load on a common factor are often combined together to form aggregate indices. In this respect, EFA is a highly effective data reduction strategy. Even so, there are a few reasons why EFA cannot effectively test theoretical expectations about underlying patterns between variables. Not the least of these reasons stems
from the so-called “rotational problem”. A factor solution can be transformed, or “rotated”, to another factor solution that fits the empirical data equally well (Harman 1976, pp. 27-28). Thus, EFA is appropriate for data reduction, where researchers can accept whichever factor solution involves the fewest number of factors. But EFA is not generally appropriate for comparing across groups how effectively the same factor models explain the structure of opinions among the individuals in those groups.

The following analysis therefore turns to a second family of statistical tools known as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA requires that researchers specify in advance their theoretical expectations about whether, and how, underlying latent factors give rise to patterns between multiple observed variables. A theoretical model is built and tested for how well it fits the empirical evidence. CFA is particularly suited for testing different theoretical expectations against the same body of evidence, and for testing the same theoretical expectations against different bodies of evidence. Both of these aspects are helpful in the current case. Indeed, this stage of the analysis tests two CFA models against the answers of party members to the battery of social and economic policy questions in the SCPPM. 31

The first model, a straightforward single-dimensional model, posits that policy opinions are linked together by a single underlying dimension. This model supposes, first, that the people with left-leaning opinions about welfare spending also hold left-leaning opinions about social morality and immigration. And it supposes, second, that the people who hold right-wing opinions about welfare spending also hold right-wing opinions about social morality and immigration. The two-dimensional model, by contrast, divides these policy questions into two separate categories. The first category covers social issues like immigration, newer lifestyles, and bilingualism. And the second category asks about such economic issues as wealth redistribution,
employment insurance, and healthcare user fees. In effect, the first model proposes that people think about economic and social issues together, and the second model suggests that people assign social and economic issues to different spheres of opinion. The theoretical expectations are that the single dimensional model works considerably better when applied to the opinion structure of NDP members than to Alliance members, and that the two-dimensional model makes more sense in the case of Alliance members than in the case of NDP members.

The results of testing the one-dimensional model against the policy opinions of NDP and Alliance members are summarized in Figure 6.2. The standardized factor loadings, $\lambda$, appear in the middle of the inside arrows in the diagrams. And the summary statistics of model fit are underneath each figure. The first finding in Figure 6.2 is that the one dimensional model describes more effectively the opinion structure of NDP members than it does the opinion structure of Alliance members. Notice the factor loadings for the model on the left-hand side of the Figure. These results indicate that all but two of these questions load for NDP members at .5 or higher on the single underlying dimension proposed in Model 1. Even the two exceptions, INCEQUAL (.44) and MINORITIES (.44), are relatively well connected to the underlying dimension. But notice as well that the three strongest loadings for NDP members are EQUALRIGHTS (.74), IMMIGRATION (.71) and SOCPROGS (.66). For Canadians as a whole, these variables have been found to represent three altogether separate values dimensions: social morality (EQUALRIGHTS), out-groups (IMMIGRATION), and economics (SOCPROGS) (Laponce, 1981; Nevitte et al., 2000). In the case of NDP members, by contrast, these variables load together atop a single dimension. For NDP members, it seems, there is an intimate connection between their opinions about social and economic issues.
The findings are quite different when it comes to Alliance members. These results are summarized on the right-hand side of Figure 6.2. Notice, first, that there is clear evidence of a pattern in the policy opinions of Alliance members. Their opinions about HEALTHCARE (.61), TUITION (.59), USERFEES (.58), INCEQUAL (.56), PRIVSECTOR (.56), EI (.50) and SOCPROGS (.46) are all bound together by their common connection to a single underlying dimension. The dimension is decidedly economic. Indeed, the second finding is that the social morality of Alliance members is weakly if at all connected to their economic opinions. The views of Alliance members about EQUALRIGHTS (.37), BILINGUALISM (.34) and MINORITIES (.31) are only weakly connected to the single underlying dimension in Figure 5.2. And their opinions about NEWLIFESTYLE (.18) and IMMIGRATION (-.09) are not at all connected to this underlying dimension. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that Alliance members organize their opinions about economic issues around the concept of the “free market”. As it turns out, however, Alliance members do not bundle together their economic opinions with their social opinions.

To this point, the results highlight fundamental differences in the patterns of opinions among NDP members, on the one hand, and Alliance members on the other. Figure 6.3 illustrates the contours of these differences more precisely. In this case, the model posits a two dimensional picture of left/right opinion structure. The first dimension captures opinions about economic issues, and the second dimension brings together opinions about social issues. In this light, the first finding is that two dimensional model fits quite well the opinion structure of NDP and Alliance members. Note how economic opinions cluster together for NDP and Alliance
supporters, and so, for the most part, do social opinions. But notice, first, that the correlation between the economic and social factors is considerably higher in the case of NDP members (.73) than in the case of Alliance members (.35). Notice also that IMMIGRATION (.76) loads strongly on the social dimension for NDP supporters, but not at all (.09) for Alliance supporters. In short, the evidence suggests again that social and economic opinions are more tightly intertwined among NDP members than among Alliance members. Indeed, opinions about immigration are a central feature of the social dimension for NDP members, but they do not fit at all on the social dimension for Alliance members.

Figure 6.3 about Here

Taken together, the results of the confirmatory factor analyses indicate that there are distinctive patterns of opinion among NDP and Alliance members. These findings are consistent with the view that the origins, content and structure of opinions are fundamentally different on the left than they are on the right. Indeed, Figure 6.4 juxtaposes the left/right positions of Canadian party platforms in the Comparative Manifesto Research Project (CMRP), with the level of correlation between the economic and social factors for party members in the SCPPM. The left/right positions of party platforms are plotted along the x-axis. The y-axis represents the level of correlation between opinions on the economic and social dimensions for respondents in the SCPPM. These latter results are derived from replicating for Bloc Quebecois, Liberal, and PC members the same two-dimensional CFA model outlined above in Figure 6.3. Notice how the relationship between the economic and social dimension weakens as party positioning moves from the left to the right. Indeed, there is but a slight deviation from this trend for the two parties
at the centre, the Liberal and PC parties. Even so, the overall trend is straightforward. Economic and social opinions are bound together more tightly by activists on the left than they are on the right.

Figure 6.4 about Here

The evidence presented here is consistent with the arguments advanced in earlier chapters: a deep seated commitment to equality brings together into a coherent bundle of left-wing opinions the social and economic viewpoints of egalitarians (Bobbio, 1996). The pattern of opinions among Canadian party members, particularly NDP members, is consistent with this argument. But while a commitment to equality shapes the social and economic opinions of left-wingers, it is not a commitment to inequality that shapes the social and economic opinions of right-wingers. Rather, right-wing opinions stem largely from free-market support and religion. On these points, Alliance members in the SCPPM are far more likely than NDP members to attend church on a weekly basis (42% vs. 26%), and they are nine times more likely to agree that the government should leave job creation entirely to the private sector (73% vs. 8%). Yet, while free-market support shapes the opinions of economic conservatives, the concept of the free-market does not extend to the realm of social opinions. And while religion brings together the social opinions of religious conservatives, it does not affect their opinions about economic issues. Moreover, neither religion nor free-market support bears in any way on opinions about immigrants. Consequently, the patterns of left/right disagreement are asymmetrical. The concept of equality reaches across social, economic and immigration dimensions. Religion and free-market support do not.
VI. Conclusion

The evidence in this chapter indicates that left-wingers and right-wingers organize in different ways their opinions about the political world. This finding makes sense from the standpoint of the information-predisposition theory in this dissertation. People who differ in the content of their opinions are likely to differ as well in the structure of their opinions. The Canadian Alliance, for example, was in effect a coalition of highly religious social conservatives and free-market supporting economic conservatives. There was little overlap between the social and economic values of Alliance members. For NDP members, by contrast, their social and economic values are intertwined. Indeed, many NDP members think about moral and economic issues in terms of how they relate to a single underlying value, human equality. The end result is that moral and economic values are organized more coherently on the left than they are on the right. To simplify somewhat, the notion of a single dimension of left/right disagreement is a decidedly left-wing idea. And the notion that economic and social issues belong to separate spheres of consideration is a decidedly right-wing idea.

These findings are not consistent with the top-down partisanship models or the bottom-up rational choice models of opinion diffusion. The opinions of activists simply do not mirror the patterns of party competition in Canada, as both of these accounts would lead us to expect. To be sure, there may well be some room for these explanations in the Canadian case. There was a weak positive relationship, after all, between the economic and social opinions of Alliance members. But the relationship between these dimensions was considerably weaker on the right than it was on the left. Indeed, the magnitude of the connection between activist preferences on these dimensions declines as party positioning moves from left to right.
Finally, these findings also suggest that we need to rethink the traditional non-ideological model of Canadian politics. We also need to think more broadly about the relationship between ideology and brokerage. And we need to examine more closely the contours of ideological disagreement. But the implications of these findings are perhaps more pressing when they are considered simultaneously rather than when they are viewed separately. One implication, for example, is that parties with right-wing positions about economic and social issues may be more prone to fragmentation than are their counterparts with left-wing positions on these issues. This implication certainly seems to apply to the Canadian setting. Over the last decade, Canada has had four major right-wing parties: Progressive Conservative, Reform, Canadian Alliance, and Conservative. To be sure, the fragmented state of the Canadian right has not revolved exclusively around economic and social policy. But there is evidence that these kinds of policy disagreements may have played a role (Blais et al., 2002; Cross & Young, 2004; Laycock, 2002). It remains to be seen whether a unified Conservative party can outlive its one and only leader, or, for that matter, withstand the focusing influences of an electoral downturn.

A second set of implications emerging from these findings concerns the political dynamics within parties themselves. As Downs (1957) points out, pragmatic political actors often try to moderate their party’s policy positions in order to win political power. But not all political actors are pragmatic (Wittman 1983; Chappell & Keech 1986). Indeed, Kitschelt (1995) finds that internal party politics is in large part a struggle between policy-seeking activists, on the one hand, and office-seeking politicians on the other. One important question to consider, then, is whether and how different bundles of opinions among ideological activists affect these internal party struggles. In the case of a party that includes social and economic conservatives, for example, one possibility is that the economic conservatives may join forces
with party pragmatists to push for more moderate positions on the social dimension, whereas the social conservatives may join forces with party pragmatists to push for more moderate positions on the economic dimension. Ideologues in this kind of right-wing party, as Chapter 1 suggested, may push against each other for vote-seeking positions on the social and economic dimensions. Thus, pragmatic politicians in right-wing parties may be able to leverage their party’s ideologues against each other in a way that the politicians in left-wing parties cannot.
Figure 6.1: Left-Right Position of Party Election Platforms in Canada, 1945-2000

Figure 6.2: The opinion structure of NDP and Alliance members in one dimension

NDP

\[ \delta \]

EQUALRIGHTS 0.45
IMMIGRATION 0.50
SOCPROGS 0.56
NEWLIFESTYLE 0.59
PRIVSECTOR 0.64
BILINGUALISM 0.65
USERFEES 0.70
EI 0.73
TUITION 0.76
HEALTHCARE 0.80
INCEQUAL 0.81
MINORITIES 0.81

\[ \lambda \]

\[ \zeta \]

Alliance

\[ \delta \]

HEALTHCARE -0.63
TUITION -0.65
USERFEES -0.67
INCEQUAL -0.69
PRIVSECTOR -0.69
EI -0.75
SOCPROGS -0.79
EQUALRIGHTS -0.86
BILINGUALISM -0.89
MINORITIES -0.90
NEWLIFESTYLE -0.97
IMMIGRATION -0.99

MODEL SUMMARY (NDP):
Chi-Square = 247.24, df = 54
P = 0.000, RMSEA = 0.077

MODEL SUMMARY (Alliance):
Chi-Square = 512.22, df = 54
P = 0.000, RMSEA = 0.091

Notes: (1) Results are standardized solutions from Confirmatory Factor Analysis, using Robust Diagonally Weighted Least Squares estimation (Jöreskog, 1990).
(2) Missing data imputed using Expectation Maximum (EM) algorithm for multiple imputation;
(3) Number of observations = 606 for NDP; 1036 for Alliance.

Figure 6.3: The opinion structure of NDP and Alliance members in two dimensions

MODEL SUMMARY (NDP):
Chi-Square = 126.86, df = 53
P = 0.000, RMSEA = 0.048

MODEL SUMMARY (Alliance):
Chi-Square = 223.42, df = 53
P = 0.000, RMSEA = 0.056

Notes: (1) Results are standardized solutions from Confirmatory Factor Analysis, using Robust Diagonally Weighted Least Squares estimation (Jöreskog, 1990).
(2) Missing data imputed using Expectation Maximum (EM) algorithm for multiple imputation;
(3) Number of observations = 606 for NDP; 1036 for Alliance.

Figure 6.4: The co-variation between the economic and social factors for Canadian political party members, by left/right position of party manifestos

Appendix 6.A: Question Wording & Variable Coding

SOCPROGS

We are interested in knowing your views about how the federal government should allocate its budgetary surplus. Please rank the following alternatives in order of priority, from the highest priority (1) to the lowest priority (3). A. Decrease personal income taxes; B. Pay down the national debt; C. Increase spending on social programs. [ranking of C]

For each of the statements below, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree…

INCEQUAL

…The government must do more to reduce the income game between rich and poor Canadians [1 = strongly agree … 4 = strongly disagree];

EQUALRIGHTS

…We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

USERFEES

…Health care user fees should be instituted as a cost-control measure [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

MINORITIES

…Minority groups need special rights [1 = strongly agree … 4 = strongly disagree];

EI: Employment insurance should be harder to collect than it is now [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

PRIVSECTOR
…The government should leave it entirely to the private sector to create jobs [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

NEWLIFESTYLE

…Newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

TUITION

…Universities should make up revenue short-falls by raising tuition fees [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

HEALTHCARE

…If people are willing to pay the price, they should be allowed to use private medical clinics [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree];

IMMIGRATION

…Immigrants make an important contribution to this country [1 = strongly agree … 4 = strongly disagree];

BILINGUALISM

…We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in this country [1 = strongly disagree … 4 = strongly agree].
Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Left/Right Asymmetries and Unified Theories of Party Competition

This dissertation began with the observation that political scientists have sought to unify under a single theoretical framework the patterns of public opinion and the patterns of party policy. This task has been hard to accomplish from within the confines of existing approaches. On the one hand, the top-down partisanship model uses the patterns of party policy to explain the opinions of individual citizens. This framework explains the patterns of opinions in the electorate (Goren, 2005), but it does not explain the patterns of party policy. The partisanship model cannot explain, for example, why the contours of party policy fit roughly the same left-right pattern from one advanced industrial country to the next.

In some respects, the bottom-up rational choice model suffers from precisely the opposite shortcoming. On the one hand, it makes sense to suppose that political parties follow strategically the patterns of opinion in the electorate. Politicians have a great deal to gain from winning elections. On the other hand, however, the rational choice framework does not effectively explain the origins of the voter opinions that politicians are said to follow. Thus, the rational choice framework cannot explain why the patterns of public opinion look so similar from one advanced industrial country to the next.

Chapter 1 contributes to the task of theoretical unification by outlining an information-predisposition framework of opinion formation. In this framework, political opinions take shape as people’s predispositions interact with information that circulates in the social environments that surround them. From this perspective, it is conceivable that the same latent predispositions are held by large swaths of people. Moreover, the same process of opinion formation shapes the
policy preferences of voters, activists, and politicians alike. Thus, the patterns of political disagreement may well look remarkably similar across countries and across time. And the same patterns that persist at the level of public opinion are likely to be reflected in the patterns of activist preferences and party policy.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. In Part 1, Chapters 2 and 3 tested the basic logic of the information-predisposition framework by testing in different contexts its observable implications. Chapter 2 hypothesized that the acquisition of political knowledge in the Canadian case is affected, on the one hand, people’s predisposition to acquire information about politics, and, on the one hand, by their exposure to high quality sources of information. The results confirmed this core hypothesis; it was the interaction between predisposition and sources of information that mattered.

Chapter 3 applied the information-predisposition framework to address in a broad comparative and cross-time perspective an enduring debate about the connection between racism and far-right parties. The central expectation in this chapter was that anti-immigrant sentiment would stem in part from an interaction between exposure to far-right frames, on the one hand, and the predisposition to accept those frames on the other. The analysis posited and tested one predisposition in particular: economic concerns. The results of the empirical analysis were consistent with expectations. Although neither the unemployment rate nor the presence of a far-right party turned out, on their own, to have much of an effect on people’s opinions about racial minorities, the interaction between these variables had a very large effect. More specifically, exposure to far-right rhetoric about immigrants turned out to have more of an impact on opinions about immigrants when people were predisposed by a high unemployment rate to worry about
job losses. Again, it is the interaction between predisposition and information that shapes opinions.

In Part 2, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 extended the basic information-predisposition framework to construct a theory that explains the patterns of public opinion and party policy on three dimensions of left/right disagreement: wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration. The core theory posits that left/right opinions are shaped in large part by four significant and widely held predispositions: equality, religiosity, free-market materialism, and out-group intolerance. People who are predisposed to equality are more likely to adopt left-wing positions on the economic, social and immigration dimensions. Typically, left-wing positions on these issues tap the same egalitarian impulse: income equality, gender equality, racial equality, and the equality of gays and lesbians. Highly religious people, by contrast, tend to adopt right-wing positions on the social dimension because the dominant religious traditions proscribe homosexuality and abortion. Free-market materialists adopt right-wing positions on the economic dimension, particularly since wealth redistribution is thought to interfere with the pace of economic development. And those who dislike people who are different than themselves are likely to adopt right-wing opinions about people that they believe to be different, including, typically, gays, lesbians, racial minorities, and immigrants. Thus, different predispositions interacting with different frames give rise to differences between people in their opinions about wealth redistribution, social morality, and immigration.

A key implication that emerges from this line of reasoning is that the organization of opinions is likely to be as contingent and variable as the content of opinions. Simply, people who think differently about issues are likely to bundle those issues together into altogether different packages of opinions. The disparate sources of left-wing and right-wing opinions give
rise to differences between left-wingers and right-wingers in the ways that opinions are organized across multiple dimensions of policy disagreement. The predispositions that matter on the left are not the same as those that matter on the right. Those who place a premium on equality are likely to hold left-wing opinions about the economy, social morality, and immigration. But it is not a predisposition to inequality that shapes right-wing opinions about these issues. Rather, right-wing opinions stem from altogether different predispositions: free-market materialism, religion, and out-group intolerance. The significant conceptual and empirically demonstrated point, however, is that free-market materialism does not beget right-wing opinions about social morality and immigration. And, similarly, religion does not generate right-wing opinions about immigration and the economy. As a result, opinions about economics, social morality and immigration fit together more naturally on the left than they do on the right.

From this perspective, left/right disagreement is likely to be asymmetrical because left-wingers and right-wingers acquire from different sources, and thus structure in different ways, their policy preferences. These opinion dynamics are reflected in the coherence of the political left, and the fragmentation of the political right, in the patterns of public opinion outlined in Chapter 4. This same left-right asymmetry is reflected in the cross-national patterns of party policy outlined in Chapter 5. And it persists, as Chapter 6 revealed, even among the preference structures of party activists in a country, like Canada, where the left-wing and right-wing parties happen to oppose each other on multiple dimensions with coherent left/right packages of party policy. In short, the asymmetrical contours of left/right disagreement have been established theoretically and empirically.

Further research would benefit from taking account of these asymmetries. Left/right asymmetries are likely to affect the utility functions of voters, the strategic context of electoral
competition, and the internal dynamics of political parties. For example, the mass-elite
discrepancy in the structure of left-wing opinions, discussed in Chapter 4, may well affect the
utility that many voters derive from left-wing parties. Left-wing positions on the economic,
social and immigration dimensions are clustered together for political activists on the left. As a
result, left-wing parties tend to organize their policies about these issues in a coherent bundle of
left-wing opinions. Problematically for left-wing parties, however, opinions about these issues
are not always bundled together in the population as a whole. Some citizens, particularly those
at the lower echelons of the socioeconomic hierarchy, support left-wing positions for reasons
other than an abstract predisposition to equality. Even if they are predisposed to equality,
politically disengaged citizens are not typically exposed to the kinds of frames that link multiple
issues to abstract ideas (see, especially, Hochschild, 1981). Indeed, many citizens with left-wing
opinions about the economy tend to hold right-wing opinions about social morality and
immigration. And many people who are drawn to left-wing parties on social issues and
immigration tend to hold right-wing positions on wealth redistribution. For these citizens, the
decision to vote for a left-wing party requires that they weight competing considerations on the
economic, social, and immigration dimensions. In effect, this mass-elite discrepancy means that
left-wing parties tend to pitch coherent left-wing electoral platforms to populations that do not
always hold coherent bundles of opinions about these issues. Most voters who are attracted to
the left on one of these dimensions are simultaneously repelled from the left on some other
dimension. Taken together, the mass-elite discrepancy on the left may well mitigate the support
for left-wing parties in the population as a whole.

The dynamics of opinion structure on the right are very different. In this case, the
dividing lines cut not between masses and elites, but between different groups of elites. Social
conservatives, economic conservatives, and anti-immigrant conservatives do not agree, for the most part, in their opinions about social, economic and immigration issues. In multi-party systems with proportional representation, there is little multidimensional coherence on the right between party policies on these dimensions. Even so, right-wing activists tend to work together in plurality electoral systems. Indeed, they have little choice. In plurality systems, economic and social conservatives have to work to combine their bases of support in the electorate in order to muster enough votes to compete against their left-wing rivals.

The internal dynamics in these mixed right-wing parties are likely to be quite different than the dynamics within left-wing parties. The fusion in a single party of economic and social conservatives, for example, may generate strong pragmatic currents on both of these dimensions. Economic conservatives are likely to support vote-seeking positions on the social dimension, and social conservatives are likely to support pragmatic positions on the economic dimension. Presumably, party activists do not want to lose votes for the sake of ideological purity on policy dimensions about which they care little. For this reason, office-seeking politicians in mixed right-wing parties may be able to leverage their party’s activists against each other in a way that office-seeking politicians in left-wing parties cannot.

Clearly, mixed right-wing parties have to deal with the perennial threat of fragmentation. If the influences of economic and social conservatives in right-wing parties are equally balanced, then the pragmatic pressures may be strong enough to push party policy so close to the centre that the ideologues in both camps defect from the party. In this scenario, the party’s ideologues may break off to form separate parties. This is less likely to occur in multidimensional left-wing parties, where the lines of internal division pit ideologues against pragmatists, rather than ideologues against other ideologues. In left-wing parties, the principal challenge revolves around
moving the party to the political center. If a split were to occur along these lines, the ideologues are likely to form a party together. Thus, the left-wing party that is further removed from the center on one dimension is likely to be further removed from the center on all of the dimensions. The results in Chapter 5 are certainly consistent with this line of speculation.

Taken together, this dissertation has established that there are systematic and predictable differences between segments of the population, and between left-wingers and right-wingers, in the origins, content, and structure of policy preferences. Left/right asymmetry has a number of implications: it affects the ways that policy preferences are projected, and aggregated, in the political environment; it affects the utility that voters derive from parties; it affects the strategic context of party competition; and it affects the internal dynamics within political parties. The asymmetries between the left and right at the levels of public opinion, party activism, and party policy are all predictable consequences of the information-predisposition theory outlined in this dissertation. The theory and evidence converge at a single point: left-right asymmetry is a fundamental characteristic of the political universe.
Notes

1 A consequential “framing effect” occurs when different specifications of the same issue generate support for altogether different policies (Druckman & Nelson 2003, 730). Different frames may “prime” people to consider an issue from the standpoint of different values (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p.63). Thus, people are more likely to support a particular policy position when that position is framed in such a way that it primes them to consider the issue from the vantage point of a belief that they hold dearly. For example, an argument about abortion that is framed in the language of religious doctrine is more likely to appeal to those who place a premium on religion than to those who do not. Thus, it is not so much a person’s exposure to a frame that matters; and it is not so much a person’s predispositions that matter. Rather, it is the interaction of exposure and predisposition that matters. To simplify somewhat, people have to have heard an argument in order to accept it; but they do not have to accept an argument simply because they have heard it.

Recent empirical work points in similar ways to an interaction between individual predispositions and the context of social learning (Hatemi, et al., 2007; Huckfeldt et al., 1995). Alford, Funk & Hibbing (2005), for example, note that the

[c]hildren of Methodists are likely to be Methodists not because there is a gene for Methodism or even a personality particularly oriented toward Methodism, but because of parental socialization. Thus, even as attitudes connected to religiosity and religious beliefs and activities (e.g., Sabbath observance, church authority, belief in heaven, religious fundamentalism, frequency of attendance) were found to be shaped more by genetic inheritance than by parental views on those issues, identification with a particular religious group was shaped more by socialization and almost not at all by genetics (p.158).
By extension, the same predisposition to religiosity could well interact with a different set of frames, a different religion, to generate a completely different set of opinions. In a similar vein, Huckfeldt et al. (1995) find that

> [t]he social flow of political information is produced as a consequence of individual preferences operating within larger environments of opinion. Citizens obtain political information from other citizens in the context of politically divergent and environmentally specific opinion distributions. They also impose their own preferences in selecting information sources. Neither individual preference nor the environment is solely determinate, and thus the information that citizens ultimately obtain through social channels of communication is contingent on the particular intersection between the individual and the environment (pp.1025-6).

In short, consequential political opinions take shape as individual predispositions interact with the issues frames circulating in the social environment to create clusters of opinions among groups of people. Just how predispositions intersect with the social environment is an empirical question in its own right.

2 The difference between $b_i$ and $s_j$ is squared in the equation so that it returns the same result regardless of whether the value of $b_i$ is, say, smaller by 2 or larger by 2 than the value of $s_j$ (e.g., $(2 - 4)^2 = (4 - 2)^2$). The square-root of the squared difference simply returns the result to the original metric (e.g., $\sqrt{(2 - 4)^2} = \sqrt{-2^2} = \sqrt{4} = 2$) and, in so doing, transforms the utility function from a quadratic one to a linear one (cf. Adams et al., 2005, p.17). And there is a negative sign in front of the equation because a voter’s utility for a party decreases as the space between the voter’s position and the party’s position increases. In other words, the equation is negative because more distance means less utility.

3 Income was included as a control variable in background analyses. Income is not included in these models because it is inconsequential and it generates non-random missing data.
4 These results are statistically significant at greater than 99% confidence.

5 Respondents with the lowest level of education (i.e. none) are excluded from the graphic. The direction of the relationship between interest and knowledge was slightly negative for these respondents, but the magnitude of that relationship was not statistically different than zero.

6 Drawing on the Converse (1967)/Zaller (1992) model, Nadeau et al. (2008) posit and test a different hypothesis. They posit that media effects have the least impact on respondents with low and high levels of political knowledge. In the case of those with low knowledge, the authors suggest that the absence of a media effect may well have to do with either their low levels of exposure to political information in the media, or their lack of sufficient knowledge to process that information. People cannot be influenced by political information in the media if they are not exposed to those messages. And, equally, people cannot be influenced by new information if they do not have the knowledge to connect that information to the political environment. Those with high levels of knowledge, by contrast, are likely to be exposed to new political messages in the media, but their stock of existing knowledge insulates them from being influenced by any new information that they may come across. For these reasons, the segments of the population that are most likely to be influenced by media messages are the medium-knowledge groups; that is, the groups who have enough interest to seek out political information in the media, and just enough knowledge to link up that information with their political environment, but not enough knowledge to resist the new information to which they are exposed. The work of Nadeau et al. (2008) differs in two important respects from the analysis here. First, from the standpoint of a knowledge/information dichotomy, the focus in this chapter, the use of left/right, is about very basic political knowledge, rather than either campaign information, or
other types of political knowledge, like the names of premiers, which need to be updated quite regularly. Second, unlike their analysis, the current analysis controls for the amount, as well as the type, of media exposure. While respondents with lower and higher levels of education tend to use different kinds of media, different amounts of media, and even the same media for different purposes, the current analysis controls for these differences in order to discern whether citizens with high and low levels of formal education depend to varying extents on the media, writ large, as a source of information.

It is worthwhile to consider whether people with higher levels of formal education take greater advantage of the media as a source of information. The evidence indicates that they do. In a direct and practical sense, then, the media is probably used to greater effect as a source of knowledge by individuals with higher levels of formal education. But this line of questioning is somewhat peripheral to the current analysis. It is akin to exploring whether well educated respondents have higher levels of political interest or discuss politics more frequently with their friends. The more relevant question for present purposes is whether citizens with different levels of formal education are able to glean information about left/right from exposure to the same media. When it comes to the use of left/right, the evidence indicates that they do. Thus, unlike political interest and discussion, which exacerbated the differences between respondents with different levels of formal education, the expectation for media exposure is that it should equalize these differences.

For the most part “immigrant” has become a proxy for “race.”

The analysis includes anti-immigration parties that scored 8.5 or higher on Lubbers' (2004) immigration restriction scale, and 17.0 or higher on Benoit and Laver's (2006) scale.
The Freedom Party (FPO) in Austria is not counted as a FRAIP prior to the 1990 election (Betz 1994; Riedlsperger 1998). Similarly, the Progress Parties (FrP) in Denmark and Norway are not counted as FRAIPs until the 1987 and 1989 elections, respectively (Svasand 1998; Andersen & Bjørklund 2002). And the Swiss People’s Party (SVP) is not considered a FRAIP prior to the 1995 election (McGann & Kitschelt 2005; Skenderovic 2007). These transitions correspond in all cases to the adoption by these parties of an anti-immigration agenda that they had not previously promoted. Legislative elections are counted only during presidential election years in the United States. They are counted only since 1990 in Portugal. And the two elections in Ireland in 1982 are counted as a single election.

A higher unemployment rate has also been found by others to suppress support for FRAIPs, despite theoretical expectations to the contrary (Knigge 1998).

In effect, this before-after design implies that there are controls in place for a variety of country specific characteristics.

A high unemployment rate does not increase racial animosity in countries without FRAIPs at any period in time. Indeed, a higher unemployment rate is associated with lower levels of racial animosity in these countries for much of the past 30 years. More recently, however, this effect has dissipated.

Political interest is not gauged in the second module of the CSES. Thus, political knowledge questions were used as substitutes for political interest in the United States and New Zealand.

By “coherent”, I mean the extent to which left- or right-wing opinions on one dimension correspond with left- or right-wing opinions on other dimensions.
The precise causal relationship between income and formal education is difficult to disentangle empirically. On the one hand, the evidence suggests that children from well-educated and wealthier households are considerably more likely to pursue postsecondary education. On the other hand, jobs with high educational requirements tend to pay better than jobs with little or no requirements. Regardless of the precise direction of causality, it is clear that higher incomes, greater job security and better financial prospects are all linked empirically to higher levels of formal education. For this reason, we are not interested, in the current analysis, in the “independent effects” of education; that is, in the effect of education when controlling for a host of other variables, like occupation, income, urban-rural, or political interest (Blais et al., 2002), to which level of formal education is clearly related.

The cross-nationally comparable education question in the WVS asks about a respondent’s age when they completed, or expected to complete, their highest level of formal education. As a result, the question is substantively different from the ESS question that gauges years of exposure to formal education.

Analyses based on WVS data, with controls for age and country. Countries in the analyses include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995. Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey.

The twenty-one countries included in the analysis are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg,
Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.

There are key non-ideological influences on mass opinion, such as socioeconomic status, which operate at cross-purposes on aspects of left-right disagreement (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). As a result, many citizens support the political left on some dimensions and the political right on others (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Miller & Schofield, 2008). Even so, the highest levels of political activism are confined almost exclusively to segments of the population with high levels of socioeconomic status (Lindquist, 1964; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). Moreover, incurring the costs of political activism makes little sense from the narrow cost-benefit standpoint of private self-interest (Olson, 1965). The private incentives that politicians glean from electoral victory are virtually non-existent for rank-and-file activists (Downs, 1957). In this sense, it is not surprising that existing empirical research points toward ideological considerations, rather than self-interest, as the dominant source of motivation among political activists (Cross & Young, 2002). These ideological considerations are the focus of this chapter.

The experts were asked for each dimension to position the political parties in their country on a twenty-point scale ranging from 1 to 20. The placement criteria on the “taxes versus spending” dimension compares “promotes raising taxes to increase public services (1)”, on the one hand, to “promotes cutting public services to cut taxes (20)”, on the other. Experts were asked to position parties on the immigration dimension between “favours policies designed to help asylum seekers and immigrants integrate into [country name] society (1),” versus “favours policies designed to help asylum seekers and immigrants return to their country of origin (20).” And the social liberalism dimension is bounded between “favours liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia (1),” at one extreme, and “opposes
liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia (20),” at the other extreme. The survey also includes a question about the “left-right” positioning of political parties in all of the countries except France. Thus, the data on left-right positioning for parties in France are derived from Lubbers’ (2004) survey of experts about the positioning of political parties in Western Europe.

22 See Appendix 5.A for sample sizes and response rates. See Appendix 5.B for party coverage, names, and abbreviations.

23 Estimates are provided for the intercept (a), slope (b), standard error (se), statistical significance (t), and the percentage of explained variance ($R^2$). For samples of this size, a t-value of 1.98 indicates a statistically significant relationship at the 95 percent level; a t-value of 3.35 indicates a statistically significant relationship at the 99.9 percent level. The Chi-Square of the Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity gauges the extent to which the deviation of points from the slope varies across levels of x (i.e., the pattern of the residuals). A statistically significant result indicates that the observations deviate to different extents at different points along the regression line (i.e., that the error is heterogeneous).

24 Brodie and Jenson (1996) describe brokerage parties as “…essentially similar organizations opportunistically appealing to a variety of interests; ideology distinguishes neither the party activists nor the positions adopted by the parties” (p.59).

25 The economic dimension captures left/right disagreement about issues like taxation and welfare, and the social dimension taps left/right disagreement about issues like multiculturalism, abortion, and same-sex marriage.
Remarkably, the underlying factors in Laponce’s (1981) opinion survey in 1962 are nearly indistinguishable from the social, economic and out-group dimensions that Blais et al. (2002) describe in their own survey some 40 years later.

Even so, the results are contingent on the decisions of researchers about which variables to include in their analyses. As Johnston (1988) points out, “factor analysis is imprisoned by the measures with which it begins” (p.65).

These data were collected by Lisa Young and William Cross, with funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The data were provided by Lisa Young.

The surveys do not ask respondents for their opinions about abortion or gay rights, which have been shown in other analyses to be central components of social morality (Blais et al., 2002; Nevitte et al., 2000; Nevitte and Cochrane, 2007).

Budge and Klingemann (2001) explain that “the [left/right] scale generally opposes emphases on peaceful internationalism, welfare and government intervention on the left, to emphases on strong defence, free enterprise and traditional morality on the right” (p.21).

These variables are ordinal variables. Thus, the CFA models use diagonally weighted least squares estimation and draw from matrices of polychoric coefficients. Missing data are imputed using the full list of variables in each model and the Expected Maximum algorithm for multiple imputation. A comparison of the models with and without missing cases indicates that the patterns of missing data do not affect the results; the results are the same regardless of whether, and how, the missing cases are replaced with imputed values.

The relatively weak loadings for INCEQUAL and MINORITIES are not entirely counterintuitive. In the case of INCEQUAL, there are low levels of variation among NDP
members in their answers to this question. 97 percent of NDP respondents agree, and 81 percent agree strongly, that the government should do more to reduce income differences between the rich and the poor. This level of consensus does not emerge in the answers of NDP members to any of the other policy questions in the analysis. When it comes to MINORITIES, the lower loading may well stem from the ambiguity of the question itself. In particular, the question asks simply whether respondents agree or disagree that “minority groups need special rights”. An affirmative answer to this question appears to have been interpreted by many respondents as an indictment against the skills of people from minority groups, rather than as support for targeted programs like affirmative action. For example, further analysis of answers to this question reveals that 72 percent of those with left-wing opinions about immigrants disagree or disagree strongly that minorities need special rights. Even so, 81 percent of those with right-wing opinions about immigrants disagreed with the proposition that immigrants need special right. In this respect, many respondents do appear to have interpreted this question in an intuitively left/right manner; that is, as a normative question about giving special rights to minorities. Even so, the question is nonetheless ambiguous.

References


Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES Module 2 Full Release [dataset]. June 27, 2007. These materials are based on work supported by the American National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov) under grants SES-0112029 and SES-0451598, the University of Michigan, and the many organizations that fund election studies by CSES collaborators. Any opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in these materials are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organizations.


Department of Sociology, University of Nijmegen. Data archived and distributed by the Netherlands Institute for Scientific Information Services (Steinmetz Archives).


