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The Effect of Electoral Systems on Voting Behavior and Party Development: The Case of Canada

Chris Andrews

Eastern Illinois University

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The Effect of Electoral Systems on Voting Behavior and

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BY

Chris Andrews

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**The Effect of Electoral Systems on Voting
Behavior and Party Development:
The Case of Canada**

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Political Science Department

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Abstract

This thesis will explore three major areas of political science research: The timing of elections, Duverger's law and voter turnout. Each of these topics has been covered extensively in the literature. However, as with most areas of political science, there remain facets of each of these topics that deserve further examination. Chapter 1 begins this discussion with an introduction to each of these three topics and a description of the Canadian electoral and party systems.

Chapter 2 examines the impact of the timing of elections on the government party in Canadian parliamentary elections. This chapter shows that there are aspects of the study of election timing in presidential regimes that also pertain to the study of election timing in parliamentary regimes. In particular, this chapter finds that the "honeymoon period" described by Shugart and Carey (1992) and Shugart (1995) for presidential regimes relates to early election calls by the government in parliamentary regimes. The issues of sample size and susceptibility to operationalization limit the explanatory power of the analysis in this chapter. While these results show that future research in this area is warranted, these problems must be addressed in order to enhance these initial findings.

Duverger's law states that "the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system" (1964, 217). An important implication of the law is that the electoral system is a significant determinant of the number of parties. Chapter 3 shows that even when multi-partism appears at the national level, the district level can present a different picture depending on how the number of parties is counted. This number of competitive parties is determined by using the same LT index method as Gaines (1999). Using this vote share method, the results for the 1997 and the 2000 election confirm the pattern

established by Gaines for the elections from 1935 through 1993. By using seat shares instead of vote shares in the LT index, I find that Canadian elections at the riding level are more appropriately characterized as two-party or even one-party competition. This finding, which is the most significant contribution of this chapter, concurs with Duverger's (1964) hypothesis that Canadian exceptionalism at the national level is the result of different regional parties competing with national parties in different regions of the country.

There are two main methods that are used to study voter turnout. Single country studies, particularly in the case of the U.S., tend to focus on socioeconomic and behavioral variables while comparative studies tend to favor an analysis of institutional variables. In Chapter 4, I present an analysis of voter turnout using a combination of the two approaches. Chapter 4 presents a longitudinal analysis of Canadian turnout using the institutional variables explored in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as a snapshot analysis of the 1997 Canadian election. I use regional analysis to demonstrate the problem with using an aggregate analysis to explain a phenomenon that is affected by different variables in different regions. This analysis shows that different independent variables have a distinctly different effect on voter turnout in different regions. When combined in an aggregate analysis, these independent variables lose some of their explanatory power because of the contradictory effects observed in different regions.

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Chapter 1

Canada: The Electoral System and Political Parties

Introduction

Within the voting behavior and the party development literature, there is a vast array of approaches and methods used to analyze the relationship of voting, parties and the electoral system. One of the major divisions in these literatures is between a behavioral and an institutional approach. While this thesis combines the two approaches in the analysis of voter turnout, the thesis is largely based on an institutional approach focusing on the impact that electoral system design and its consequences have on the development of the party system and government formation.

This thesis will explore three major areas of political science research: The timing of elections, Duverger's law and voter turnout. Each of these topics has been covered extensively in the literature. However, as with most areas of political science, there remain facets of each of these topics that deserve further examination. There is also a substantial amount of interconnectedness between these areas as they relate to party development and voting behavior which is one of the major focuses of this work.

The largest body of work regarding the impact that the timing of elections has on government formation has focussed on presidential regimes and the effect of concurrent versus non-concurrent elections (Scheve and Tomz 1999; Shugart and Carey 1992; Shugart 1995). The parliamentary literature relating to election timing focuses on the use of no confidence votes or the policy making decisions of governments rather than the effect that election timing has on the electoral fortunes of parties (Huber 1996; Huber and

McCarty 2001; Johnston 1999; Petry et. al. 1999). There are institutional differences between presidentialism and parliamentarism that can account for some of the divergence in the research involving election timing. In a parliamentary regime, executive and legislative elections are always simultaneous while in a presidential regime that is not necessarily the case due to the separate nature of the two branches. Chapter 2 shows that there are aspects of the study of election timing in presidential regimes that also pertain to the study of election timing in parliamentary regimes. In particular, this chapter finds that the “honeymoon period” described by Shugart and Carey (1992) and Shugart (1995) for presidential regimes relates to early election calls by the government in parliamentary regimes.

Chapter 3 focuses on Duverger’s law which has been the subject of a large body of literature. Duverger’s law states that “the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system” (1964, 217). An important implication of the law is that the electoral system is a significant determinant of the number of parties. The explanation put forth by Duverger for countries that appeared to be exceptions was that while multipartism may exist at the national level, it is the result of two-party competition at the district level with different parties receiving support in different regions. Chapter 3 shows that even when multipartism appears at the national level, the district level can present a different picture depending on how the number of parties is counted. The generally accepted method for counting parties in political science is the LT index (described in detail in Chapter 3 and the Appendix). The problem with this index involves choosing which measure to use in the calculation. While most scholars use vote

shares, I demonstrate that using shares of seats won generates a significantly different result and may be a more appropriate method for counting parties.

There are two main methods that are used to study voter turnout. Single country studies, particularly in the case of the U.S., tend to focus on socioeconomic and behavioral variables while comparative studies tend to favor an analysis of institutional variables. In Chapter 4, I present an analysis of voter turnout using a combination of the two approaches. Both the time between elections which was the independent variable in Chapter 2 and the number of competitive parties which was the dependent variable in Chapter 3 are used as independent variables in the voter turnout analysis.

While each of these three chapters has a national level analysis at their core, there is also a strong regional component involved in Chapters 3 and 4. In the case of Chapter 3, a regional analysis is used to develop a response to Duverger's contention that regionalism is the explanation for Canadian exceptionalism. In Chapter 4, I use regional analysis to demonstrate the problem with using an aggregate analysis to explain a phenomenon that is affected by different variables in different regions. This analysis shows that different independent variables have a distinctly different effect on voter turnout in different regions. When combined in an aggregate analysis, these independent variables lose some of their explanatory power because of the contradictory effects observed in different regions.

While each of these chapters discuss very different topics there is a common theme binding them together. Each of the topics analyzed in this thesis is assumed to be heavily influenced by electoral system design. The design of the electoral system allows for the three possible means for calling an election that are discussed in Chapter 2. A key

component of the analysis in Chapter 3 is Duverger's contention that the design of the electoral system is the primary determinant of the number of parties. The timing of elections, number of competitive parties and margin of victory are all influenced by the electoral system design and appear as independent variables in the analysis of voter turnout in Chapter 4. Therefore, even though each chapter represents a separate analysis, the electoral system and its consequences figure prominently in the conclusions of each chapter.

Canada and Its Regions

In order to analyze the three topics discussed above, I have drawn on several elections from Canada. There are several reasons why Canadian elections are an appropriate sample for this analysis. First and foremost, I believe that Canada is an understudied country within American political science. Canada has one of the longest running uninterrupted democracies in the world and has a population of roughly thirty-

Table 1.1
Canada Population Breakdown as of 2001

<u>Province/Territory</u>	<u>Population</u>
Newfoundland	533,761
Prince Edward Island	138,514
Nova Scotia	942,691
New Brunswick	757,077
Quebec	7,410,504
Ontario	11,874,436
Manitoba	1,150,034
Saskatchewan	1,015,783
Alberta	3,064,249
British Columbia	4,095,934
Yukon*	29,885
Northwest Territories*	40,860
Nunavut*	28,159
Canada	31,081,887

Note:

* Indicates territory

Source: Statistics Canada Website <www.statcan.ca>.

one million people residing in ten provinces and three territories (see Figure 1.1 for a map of Canada and Table 1.1 for a population breakdown by province and territory).

Canada is an appropriate country to use for the election timing analysis in Chapter 2 because it has had elections called for various reasons (e.g., reaching the maximum time allowable between elections, the government calling early elections and the government being forced to hold early elections due to the loss of a no confidence vote in parliament).

Figure 1.1
Map of Canada



Source: Natural Resources Canada Website <www.nrcan.gc.ca>.

Canada is often cited as an exception to Duverger's law. Duverger himself recognized this potential problem and argued that regionalism in Canadian politics could provide the explanation for that apparent exception. For this reason, as well as the fact that Gaines (1999) presents an analysis of Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law, Canada provides an appropriate subject of the analysis in Chapter 3.

Since I am including the variables of time between elections and the number of competitive parties that are analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 as independent variables in the voter turnout analysis presented in Chapter 4, it is logical to further develop continuity by using Canada as the subject of that analysis as well. Finally, another reason for this study is the abundance of data available for Canada regarding each of the topics for the period from 1935 to 2000.

For the purposes of a regional study in Chapter 4, the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia will each represent a region while Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick will be grouped together as the Maritime Provinces, and Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta will be grouped together as the Prairie Provinces. Due to the fact that each of the territories (e.g., Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) consists of only one electoral district, they are not included in any regional analysis but are factored into the aggregate totals.

Canadian Electoral System and Government Formation

Canada has a parliamentary system of government modeled on the British system that currently has 301 electoral districts that are called ridings. The number of ridings has grown from 245 since 1935 (the first year that is involved in my analysis). Each of the ridings sends one representative to the national parliament. Those representatives are

elected based on a single ballot, simple-majority electoral formula, in which the candidate that receives the most votes wins. Once the representatives have been elected, the party that holds the majority of seats selects the prime minister (who in turn chooses the rest of the cabinet). In the absence of a majority party, there are two options. Either a group of two or more parties will align themselves together in order to form a coalition government, or a minority government will be formed. However, there has not been a coalition government in Canada since World War I so all of the governments under consideration in this study are either single majority or minority governments.

The maximum time allowed between elections in Canada is five years. Unlike presidential regimes that have fixed election times, most parliamentary regimes have provisions for the calling of early elections. In the case of Canada, this can come about in two ways. The government can be forced to hold early elections if they lose a confidence vote in the parliament, or the government can choose to call the elections early.

Canadian Political Parties

Throughout the 1935 to 2000 period, there have been only two parties that have formed the government of Canada (for a listing of the major Canadian political parties see Table 1.2). The Liberal Party (LP) and the Conservative Party (now known as the Progressive Conservative Party or PC) have been the two mainstays among the party competition during this period. While other parties have come and gone, the LP and PC have been represented in each parliament included in this study. Several other parties have been represented periodically including the Social Credit Party (SCP), the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the New Democratic Party (NDP), the Bloc

Quebecois (BQ) and the Canadian Alliance Party or CAP (formerly known as the Reform Party or RP). The current parliament contains representatives from the LP, PC, BQ, NDP and CAP parties. The SCP is no longer in existence, and the CCF evolved into the NDP. As with many democracies, there are also minor parties that receive votes but have never seriously challenged to become a political force. This presents a sharp contrast to the American system in which only the Republican and Democratic parties have had significant representation since the mid 1800's. While the electoral systems are similar, the Canadian party system has demonstrated much greater fluidity than the American party system (though Canada has also had an extended period in which only two parties have formed the government).

Table 1.2
Canadian Political Parties

<u>Party Name</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Years in Parliament¹</u>
Liberal Party	LP	1935 -
Progressive Conservatives	PC	1935 -
Co-operative Commonwealth Federation / New Democratic Party	CCF/NDP	1935 -
Social Credit Party	SCP	1935 - 1957 1962 - 1979
Reform Party / Canadian Alliance Party	RP/CAP	1993 -
Bloc Quebecois	BQ	1993 -

Note:

¹Years in parliament represent only the years that are included in this study.

Sources: Munroe Eagles, James P. Bickerton, Alain G. Gagnon, and Patrick J. Smith. 1995. *The Almanac of Canadian Politics*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press., Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

As with much of the Canadian political system, the ideological basis for the political parties is largely based on the country's European heritage and the influence of the U.S. The British welfare state and ideas regarding the social responsibilities of government that were held by its founders are cornerstones for the ideology of the LP

(Christian and Campbell 1990). This party has been the most consistently successful party during the twentieth century. Out of the twenty governments included in this study, fourteen of them were formed by the LP. The six times that they did not form the government, they were the largest opposition party.

The ideological stance of the PC was heavily influenced by the British Tory Party in its earlier stages and later on by Reaganomics and neo-conservatism from the U.S. (Christian and Campbell 1990). The Conservatives were the second most successful party during most of the 1935 to 2000 period. They were able to form the government six times and were the largest opposition party eleven times. The PC's fortunes changed dramatically in the 1993 election in which they lost 167 seats and for the first time were no longer either the government or opposition party. This was partly due to the formation of the ideologically similar RP.

European socialism also played a role in shaping the ideology of some Canadian political parties. The British Labour Party provided much of the inspiration for the SCP and CCF parties (Christian and Campbell 1990). As the NDP was replacing the CCF and SCP parties, its leaders turned to the Swedish socialist government, the German Social Democrats and the Mitterand government in France for ideological guidance and ideas (Christian and Campbell 1990). None of these parties ever achieved the level of electoral success necessary to form a government or serve as the opposition, but at various times, they were each able to achieve a consistent level of representation allowing them to influence government.

A more recent development in Canadian political parties is the emergence of parties with a highly regional base of support and ideology. Beginning with the Parti

Quebecois (PQ) at the provincial level in Quebec and growing with the formation of the BQ at the national level, Quebec separatism has formed the foundation of a substantial political movement. Both of these parties run candidates solely within the province of Quebec. The PQ has served as the government of Quebec on multiple occasions since they first rose to power in 1976. The BQ received its largest share of seats in a stunning result in the 1993 general election in which they won enough seats to serve in the position of the opposition party (this came after the close vote in the 1992 Quebec referendum for independence).

The RP came into existence mainly as a splinter from the PC helping to cause its 1993 collapse and consisting mainly of representatives from the western provinces. While western separatism has been an issue, the RP also represented the more conservative elements of Canadian politics which has allowed them to maintain at least some nationwide popularity. Since renamed the CAP, the RP has served as the opposition following the last two general elections.

While there are certainly some ideological differences and even regional differences between the parties, they still generally fall into the category of catch-all parties as described by Kirchheimer (1966). The movement away from a strong ideological base has left parties vulnerable to the emergence of parties with similar ideological tendencies but with stronger individual leaders or organizational skills (Mair 1989). While political ideology is not a focus of this thesis *per se*, the number of political parties is possibly a function of the ideological distance between parties. The number of competitive political parties is a critical component of Chapters 3 and 4. Since compliance with Duverger's law is based on the number of political parties, how we

measure that particular quantity is a very important issue that will be examined in depth in Chapter 3. The number of competitive parties is also hypothesized to be a factor in voter turnout so it factors significantly into the analysis in Chapter 4.

Contributions of this Study

Chapter 2 examines the impact of the timing of elections on the government party in Canadian parliamentary elections. The study of the timing of elections has had its focus mainly on presidential regimes. This literature explores the differences between concurrent and non-concurrent elections, and how they impact the party of the president. The timing of elections clearly has an impact on the performance of political parties in presidential regimes, yet this area has received little attention in parliamentary studies. Chapter 2 shows that this is an area that should receive greater study in parliamentary regimes by demonstrating that the party that holds the position of government entering the election is affected differently depending on why the election was called.

Chapter 3 turns to an evaluation of Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law. This law states that the single-ballot simple-majority electoral system used by Canada should produce a two party system. However, Canada is an often-cited exception to this law because there are consistently more than two parliamentary parties. Duverger argued that the reason that Canada appears to be an exception is that the two party competition that he was referring to occurs at the riding (or district) level instead of at the national level. He also states that the reason for multipartism at the national level is that different regional parties challenge the national parties in different regions. This notion was challenged by Gaines (1999) in a study in which he determined that two-party competition did not accurately describe the national or riding level. Gaines also finds

that there was no regional effect contributing to this determination. Chapter 3 adds to Gaines' analysis by including the 1997 and the 2000 elections which confirms his results as long as the same measures are employed. I propose some additional measures, particularly an analysis of the competitive number of parties based on the share of seats received instead of using votes received as Gaines did, that present a drastically different story. This chapter calls into question the generally accepted method for measuring the number of competitive parties and provides some empirical rather than anecdotal support for Duverger's contention that Canada is not an exception.

The two primary approaches to the study of voter turnout address vastly different sets of variables. The socioeconomic behavioral approach stems primarily from the study of American politics and focuses on variables such as education and income (Almond and Verba 1963; Campbell et. al. 1960; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie 1993). The institutional approach is seen mostly in comparative studies and involves variables such as the number of parties, type of electoral system, type of government and performance variables such as the margin of victory and reelection of incumbents (Gray and Caul 2000; Jackman 1987; Jackman and Miller 1995; Studlar 2001). Chapter 4 presents a longitudinal analysis of Canadian turnout using the institutional variables explored in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as a snapshot analysis of the 1997 Canadian election. For the analysis of voter turnout in the 1997 election, I use a combination of socioeconomic and institutional variables in a riding level analysis.

The major contribution of each of these chapters is the demonstration of a need for further research in each of these areas including a re-conceptualization of the operationalization of certain variables used in the analysis. The findings in Chapter 2

show that the study of election timing and its impact on representation should not be limited to presidential regimes. Parliamentary regimes provide a unique area for study because the government has some control over the timing of elections. If it can be shown that timing affects outcomes, then the logical extension of that finding is that the government has some control over the outcome of elections. The findings in Chapter 3 suggest that Duverger's regional explanation for Canadian exceptionalism was correct. These findings are based on using seat shares in order to determine the number of competitive parties instead of the traditionally accepted vote shares. The voter turnout analysis in Chapter 4 includes a combination of the socioeconomic and institutional approaches to the study of this phenomenon and demonstrates some of the flaws of performing an aggregate level analysis. The aggregate picture is distorted by combining regions in which the independent variables have profoundly different impacts.

Methodology and Data

Due to the vastly different nature of each of the three topics covered in this study, there is no one methodology that is appropriate for all of them. Chapter 2 is mainly a qualitative study in order to determine if there is merit for a broader quantitative study into the relationship between the timing of elections and the impact that this has on the party in government. Chapter 3 involves the use of mathematical calculations to determine the number of competitive parties. Chapter 4 uses linear regression as the form of statistical analysis because it is most appropriate for analyzing the relationship of ratio level variables (including a single dummy variable). Each of these methods is appropriate for the topic under discussion in each chapter, and they present logical

opportunities for future research. Any single method of analysis is not enough to develop a complete picture and will leave important questions unanswered.

I chose to use the single case study of Canada for each of these chapters in order to maintain continuity between them. By focussing on a single country, it allows me to control for many potential intervening variables while at the same time demonstrating the need for further comparative study. The availability of the data was also a factor in the decision to focus solely on Canada. The longitudinal Canadian election data makes the findings of these chapters even more valid.

Chapter 2

Impact of the Timing of Elections on the Party in Government: Examples from the Canadian Case, 1940-2000

Introduction

An important area that is emerging as a focus of study in political science is the impact that the timing of elections has on government formation. Much of the work in this area has focused on presidential regimes and the impact that can be observed when comparing concurrent and non-concurrent election results (Scheve and Tomz 1999; Shugart and Carey 1992; Shugart 1995). The discussion on election timing in parliamentary regimes focuses on the use of no confidence votes to dissolve the cabinet and the government and the implications for economic policy making (Huber 1996; Huber and McCarty 2001; Johnston 1999; Petry et. al. 1999).

A commonly found feature in parliamentary democracies is a limit on the maximum amount of time that can pass between elections. The government, however, has the power to call elections before the completion of a specific time period. There are three possible methods of selecting the time for a parliamentary election: The government can choose to wait for the maximum allowable time, the government can call for early elections, or they can be forced to hold them due to a no confidence vote.

In this chapter, I analyze the impact of the timing of parliamentary elections through an examination of Canadian general elections during the period of 1940 to 2000.

I have developed three hypotheses for this chapter, one relating to each of the possible methods for calling an election:

Hypothesis 1: If the maximum amount of time passes between elections, the government party entering the election will lose seats or at the most maintain their seat share. The fact that they waited the full term indicates that there was no surge in their popularity for them to capitalize on, and that they were attempting to maximize their time in power by holding office until the end.

Hypothesis 2: If the government calls an election early, it will increase its number of seats. The fact that the government has chosen to hold the election early indicates that they must have a logical reason for doing so, and the most appropriate reason is to capitalize on an increase in popularity in order to increase their seat share.

Hypothesis 3: If the election is held because of a no confidence vote, the result will be a loss of seats for the government party. A no confidence vote sends a message to the electorate that the government is incapable of doing its job and can quite possibly lead to a change in the party in power.

There are several variables that I will look at to test these hypotheses. In each case, the dependent variable is the change in number of seats after an election for the party that held the position of government entering the election. The independent variables are the reason that the election was called, the length of time between the elections and the type of government prior to the election. The reasons for calling an election have been outlined above and are fairly straightforward. An election can be the result of a decision by the government to hold early elections, can be forced by a no confidence vote or can be called in order to comply with the proscribed time limit

approaching. The time between elections is simply the time that has passed since the last general election. The type of government prior to the election can be either one formed by a party that holds a parliamentary majority, or in the absence of a majority, a minority government (a coalition of multiple parties is also a possibility but has not occurred in Canada since World War I).

Election Timing in Presidential Regimes

As stated above, one of the primary focuses of the research on the timing of elections revolves around concurrent and non-concurrent elections in presidential regimes. Scheve and Tomz (1999) discuss the midterm loss typically observed by the party of the president in U. S. congressional elections. They determine that this loss can be attributed to the desire of moderate supporters of the president to maintain a balance between the executive and legislature to ensure that they can provide effective checks on each other. Shugart (1995), in both his individual work and his work with Carey (1992), agrees with this assessment of non-concurrent elections relative to the desire of the electorate to maintain a balance of power. The demonstration that election timing influences outcomes in presidential regimes does not directly apply to my work, but it serves as a basis to show that election timing is an important variable that should be studied. Both the Shugart (1995) and Shugart and Carey (1992) pieces include findings based on election timing in presidential regimes that are analogous to events in parliamentary regimes and are discussed further below.

Shugart (1995) determines that concurrent elections in presidentialism are more likely to produce a unified government. He also finds that the timing of non-concurrent elections has a significant impact on their outcomes. According to him, elections for

other offices that follow closely the election of the president generally show a growth in support for the president's party and that this support decreases as the temporal distance from the presidential election increases.

Shugart and Carey (1992) discuss the president's "honeymoon" period. They determine that elections during the first year of the president's term are the most beneficial for his/her party (Shugart and Carey 1992). As a final note on the honeymoon period, Shugart and Carey (1992) contend that elections held during that time frame tend to benefit third parties as well as the president's party at the expense of the second largest party. These findings can have important implications in parliamentarism that are not present in presidentialism. Since the government controls the timing of the next election in many parliamentary regimes, they can use this increase in popularity (the so-called honeymoon period) to their advantage by calling an early election to capitalize on this opportunity.

Electoral Cycles and Parliamentary Regimes

As far as the research on electoral cycles and parliamentary governments, there is a diverse range of topics covered, but not a significant amount of literature specifically addressing the institutional rules and constraints covering election timing. Huber (1996) identifies the need for more empirical research in the area of election timing, status of the government (majority versus coalition) and governmental popularity among other areas. He emphasizes that the presence of the confidence vote in parliamentary regimes is an important element that deserves to be a larger focus of the study of parliamentarism. Huber and McCarty (2001) examine the confidence vote by analyzing the differences between regimes in which the prime minister has unilateral power to demand the vote and

those in which the cabinet must approve such a decision. They determine that both circumstances can result in the inefficient termination of a cabinet and possibly inefficient dissolution of the government.

Much of the research on parliamentary electoral cycles involves financial policy (i.e., budgeting and tax increases or decreases) and the impact of economic events on the outcomes of elections (Johnston 1999; Petry et. al. 1999). In a study of Canadian provincial governments, Petry et. al. (1999) argue that economic policy is coordinated with predicted election timing in order to maximize the potential benefits from positive economic outlooks. They argue that the direction of causality is the important finding. They find that the government's perceptions about the possibility of calling a new election dictate its fiscal policy instead of the relationship in the other direction. In a study of the political business cycle and government popularity in Canadian elections, Johnston (1999) argues that there is a popularity cycle for the government party that exists between elections regardless of the economic conditions. He finds that government's popularity rises substantially closely following an election, then maintains a small variation near that peak until the next election approaches when it crashes back down to, or below, the level of the previous election. This parliamentary finding is very similar to the presidential findings of both Shugart (1995) and Shugart and Carey (1992).

Lupia and Strom (1995) contend that the two games that are constantly going on in parliamentary governments involve coalition building based on past results and an effort to predict the results of the next election and plan accordingly. They also conclude that the anticipation of the behavior of the electorate plays a critical role in determining the stability of both the cabinet and the government (Lupia and Strom 1995). Diermeier

and Stevenson (2000) build on Lupia and Strom's (1995) work and come to some additional conclusions. They argue that as a government approaches its maximum allowable time without an election, the benefits from staying in office decrease and thereby lead to more minor events being capable of leading to the dissolution of parliament.

Baron (1998) concludes that the length of the constitutionally allowed period between elections as well as the argument about minor events becoming more critical as the end of that period nears are the important factors contributing to the possibility of government termination. He argues that the proper way to study the longevity of parliamentary governments would be a combination of those two factors with an analysis of the political attributes of the state and society focusing on cleavages, institutions and party structure (Baron 1998).

In a finding that relates to one of the elections in this study, Weller (1994) shows that Canadian prime ministers have never been expressly forced out by their party even in times when they possessed very low popularity. Instead they make the choice to step aside on their own terms for the most part, possibly under pressure to resign, but never expressly removed from the position by their own party (Weller 1994). This is relevant to the work in this chapter because the 1968 Canadian election was called in an effort to consolidate the leadership following the resignation of a prime minister (Feigert 1989).

Implications

The electoral cycle and the timing of elections are important areas of study with implications on different aspects of party systems, government formation and government dissolution as well as policy implications. However, there is little in the area

of election timing and its effects on parties in parliamentary regimes. The information that does exist is mostly theoretical and speculatively based on opinion polls (Johnston 1999) or evidence from presidential regimes (Shugart and Carey 1992; Shugart 1995).

I examine the reason that an election was called and the resulting effect on the seat total of the party that held the position of government prior to the election in order to determine if any patterns can be observed. The importance of this research is that by presenting an empirical analysis of the relationship between election timing and the electoral fortunes of the government party, I demonstrate that this is an area deserving of the further inquiry.

Data and Methodology

There are four sources used for the data presented in this chapter. The bulk of the data comes from *Canada Votes 1935-1988* by Feigert (1989). This volume covers all of the Canadian general elections during the 1935 to 1988 period. Information regarding the 1993 election was reported in Eagles et al. (1995) *The Almanac of Canadian Politics*. Data for the 1997 election can be found in the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada's *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*, and the 2000 election is in the *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*.

I calculated the change in the number of seats for the government party by subtracting the number of seats that that party received in the previous election from the number that they earned in the election in question. The same method was used to determine the change in seats for the principle opposition party which was identified as the party with the largest number of seats prior to the election that did not form the government. Time between elections is also a subtraction calculation with all numbers

rounded off using six months as the cut-off. The type of government and the reason for calling the election have been determined from an examination of seat shares and the brief descriptions about each election provided in the data sources.

For the purposes of determining if an election was called early or called because of the five-year time limit, I set a cut-off point at nine months before the expiration. Any election called with more than nine months remaining was coded as an early call by the government. This was the hardest of the variables to operationalize because of the arbitrary nature of the decision and the lack of literature to use as guidance. I chose nine months because I felt that a full year would be too long to consider early while six months was too limited. This decision will be revisited below in the discussion of the results.

A strength of the data is that there were nineteen elections in the 1940 to 2000 period providing a good sample size for this initial study. A second strength that will be discussed in more length in the analysis of the results is that there is a good amount of variance in the values of the independent variables allowing for a more complete analysis of their impact on the dependent variable.

The most significant weakness that I see in this data is in my calculation of the change in number of seats. Since the base number used for the calculation is the seat total resulting from the previous election, any by-elections to fill vacated seats that occurred in the intervening period are not factored into the equation. I anticipate that accounting for the changes in seat total between elections would have some effect on the magnitude of the seat change. However, I expect that that change would be minimal since the number of by-elections is generally very small and due to the magnitudes that

were observed it is unlikely that this inclusion would have an effect of the direction of the seat change, which is the critical component of my analysis. This does, however, present a possible area for future expansion of this research.

As this is primarily an initial study into the impact of election timing in a parliamentary regime, I have chosen not to attempt complex statistical analysis in order to determine the precise relationship. The central methodology to this work involves an examination of the frequencies of the independent variables and a preliminary assessment of their relationship with the dependent variable of change in the number of seats for the government party. This is the best method of analysis for the data in question due to the primarily nominal nature of the independent variables.

Discussion and Results

An important fact to note is that there is some alternation of power exhibited in these elections. As shown in Table 2.1, both the Liberal and the Conservative parties spend time as the government party and as the opposition. They also each presided over three minority governments during their terms in office. This is important to note because it reduces the possibility that the conclusions made are party specific. If the results are not party specific, then it becomes increasingly likely that they are a product of systemic features. While a party specific outcome would have limited any findings to the specific case of Canada and these particular parties, a systemic effect should also be applicable to other similar parliamentary governments.

The first hypothesis was in regards to the effect of waiting the maximum possible time (five years in the case of Canada) to call an election and its impact on the

government party's seat change. I posited that the maximum length represented a lack of opportunity for the government to gain seats by calling an election early and that the

Table 2.1
Government Party, Opposition Party, and Government Type Preceding Elections: 1940 to 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Government Party</u>	<u>Opposition Party</u>	<u>Type of Government</u>
1940	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1945	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1949	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1953	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1957	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1958	Conservative	Liberal	Minority
1962	Conservative	Liberal	Majority
1963	Conservative	Liberal	Minority
1965	Liberal	Conservative	Minority
1968	Liberal	Conservative	Minority
1972	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1974	Liberal	Conservative	Minority
1979	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1980	Conservative	Liberal	Minority
1984	Liberal	Conservative	Majority
1988	Conservative	Liberal	Majority
1993	Conservative	Liberal	Majority
1997	Liberal	Bloc Quebecois	Majority
2000	Liberal	Reform/Alliance	Majority

Sources: Munroe Eagles, James P. Bickerton, Alain G. Gagnon, and Patrick J. Smith. 1995. *The Almanac of Canadian Politics*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press., Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

result would be a negative seat change or no change at all. The seat change for both the government and opposition parties as well as the reason for calling the election and the time between elections can be seen in Table 2.2. This hypothesis appears to be correct. The government waited the full five years in six of the nineteen cases under analysis. In five of those six instances the government party lost seats, with the exception being 1940, the first election in the study. The five losses were substantial as well. The smallest total of seats lost was twenty-seven in 1979. It appears that waiting the full five years is not a

good strategy for a government party to undertake. Possible reasons for this phenomenon will be discussed below.

Table 2.2
Party Seat Change and the Reason for and Timing of Canadian Elections: 1940 to 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Government Party Seat Change</u>	<u>Opposition Party Seat Change</u>	<u>Reason For Election</u>	<u>Years Since Previous Election</u>
1940	8	0	Five Year Limit	5
1945	-56	27	Five Year Limit	5
1949	65	26	Govt. Called Early	4
1953	-19	10	Govt. Called Early	4
1957	-66	61	Govt. Called Early	4
1958	96	-56	Forced	1
1962	-92	50	Govt. Called Early	4
1963	-21	30	Forced	1
1965	2	2	Govt. Called Early	2
1968	14	-25	Govt. Called Early	3
1972	-46	35	Five Year Limit	5
1974	32	-12	Govt. Called Early	2
1979	-27	41	Five Year Limit	5
1980	-33	33	Forced	1
1984	-107	108	Five Year Limit	5
1988	-42	43	Govt. Called Early	4
1993	-167	94	Five Year Limit	5
1997	-22	-10	Govt. Called Early	4
2000	17	6	Govt. Called Early	3

Sources: Munroe Eagles, James P. Bickerton, Alain G. Gagnon, and Patrick J. Smith. 1995. *The Almanac of Canadian Politics*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press., Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

The second hypothesis involves elections that are called early by the government. The anticipated result in this case would be a gain in seats for the government party. In ten of the nineteen cases, elections were the result of an early call by the government. In 50% of these elections, the government party gained seats. While the picture appears to be mixed, a reassessment of the operationalization of early election calls presents a slightly different conclusion for each of the first two hypotheses. If the limit for inclusion as a full five-year election cycle is extended to include all elections called within the final

twelve months, four cases would be re-classified from early elections to full five year elections. The results of this change as it pertains to the elections previously categorized as early elections can be seen in Table 2.3. This change would adjust the breakdown of full term cases to a total of ten, with two cases in which the government party gained seats and eight instances in which they lost seats. This only strengthens the previous findings in relation to waiting the full time to call elections. It also demonstrates that these variables are highly sensitive to operationalization and that this is an area that will need to be addressed in any further investigation.

Table 2.3
Re-operationalization of Early Elections from a Nine Month to a Twelve Month Cut-Off

<u>Year</u>	<u>Government Party Seat Change</u>	<u>12 Month Cut-Off Limit</u>
1949	65	Five Year
1953	-19	Five Year
1957	-66	Govt. Called Early
1962	-92	Five Year
1965	2	Govt. Called Early
1968	14	Govt. Called Early
1974	32	Govt. Called Early
1988	-42	Five Year
1997	-22	Govt. Called Early
2000	17	Govt. Called Early

Sources: Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

After the re-classification, six elections are still considered to be early calls by the government. Of those six, four times the government party gained seats and only twice did they lose seats. Coincidentally, the two elections that represent government losses in this category are 1957 and 1997 which also happen to represent the two longest durations between elections among these six cases. This certainly seems to suggest that the government benefits the most from calling an election early in their mandate; although,

the results remain murky due to the operational sensitivity of the independent variable. This finding is interesting in that it relates to the “honeymoon period” discussed by Shugart and Carey (1992). The main difference in this instance is that rather than capitalizing on the honeymoon period through party gains in municipal or other lower level elections, the government party is able to turn their honeymoon into more seats in parliament and a stronger position in government.

Another interesting note about elections that were called early by the government involves minority governments. By comparing Table 2.1 to Table 2.3, it can be seen that three of the six early call decisions (1965, 1968 and 1974) were made by minority governments. All three of those early elections resulted in a seat gain for the government party. In two out of the three instances, the seat gain was enough for the party to establish a majority government. The possibility of gaining enough seats to form a majority is a very good incentive for minority governments to call early elections.

The third hypothesis was that elections forced by a vote of no confidence would result in a decrease in seats for the government party and most likely their defeat. As Table 2.2 shows, there were only three cases in which this situation arose, and once again the results are mixed. In two of the three cases, the government party lost seats and their position. In 1958 the Conservatives not only gained seats, but they were able to switch from a minority government to a majority party government. It is possible that this instance is an anomaly but that would certainly require a larger sample size to determine.

There is one other extremely important variable that could possibly have had an impact on the seat gain that I have not included in the discussion so far and that is the size of the parliament. The number of members of parliament changed six times during the

period under investigation. The first year in which each new assembly size was used and the change from the previous size can be seen in Table 2.4. While it is undeniable that

Table 2.4
Change in the Total Number of Members of Parliament: 1940 to 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Seats</u>	<u>Change</u>
1940	245	--
1949	262	17
1953	265	3
1968	264	-1
1979	282	18
1988	295	13
1997	301	6

Sources: Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

the number of seats available will have some effect on the number of seats that a party wins, an examination of the elections that coincided with the changes in parliament's size demonstrates that this does not present a significant challenge to my findings. In each of the six cases in which the parliament's size changed, the government party's number of seats moved in the opposite direction. When the assembly size was increased, the government party lost seats, and in the one instance that it was decreased, the government party gained seats. This could possibly be a backlash against the government for re-districting and a result of incumbents losing some of their advantage by having different constituents. The exception to this rule that occurred in 1949 does not present a challenge to my findings. The number of seats was increased by seventeen that year, but the government party gained sixty-five seats. While the additional available seats may have played a role in that increase, there was still clearly something else at work driving the Liberal's seat increase as it is substantially larger than could be accounted for by those added to the parliament.

Conclusion

As the analysis indicates, the first hypothesis seems to be accurate. It appears that using the full term allowable between elections is not a good decision for governing parties. The general trend observed from both of the first two hypotheses is that the longer the government waits to call the election, the worse their chances for gaining seats. Conversely, it appears that the odds for success increase if the government calls the election early. The earlier the better, and it is possible that this is a representation of the honeymoon period commonly associated with lower level elections in presidential regimes and the governmental popularity cycle identified in parliamentary regimes (Johnston 1999; Shugart and Carey 1992).

It is also possible that there is a relationship between the full five-year wait and the mid-term backlash phenomenon often observed in presidential regimes (Scheve and Tomz 1999; Shugart and Carey 1992; Shugart 1995). While the government party lost seats in eight of the ten cases in which it waited near the maximum allowable time to call the election, they only lost their position as the governing party three of those times. This could be a demonstration of some level of frustration with the government from the electorate and a desire to send a message without removing them from power. Another possible manifestation of this phenomenon can be seen in the fact that in fifteen of the nineteen elections under consideration, the opposition party heading into the election either gained seats or maintained their pre-election level of representation.

To really test the third hypothesis would require more cases. Three cases are not enough to determine a pattern (especially when there is a significant difference in one of them). A larger sample size would be necessary to reach any real conclusions, and this is true of all three hypotheses. While these results are important, it is impossible to make larger generalizations to parliamentary regimes as a whole given the limited number of cases. What I believe that this research does accomplish is to show that election timing in parliamentary regimes is an area worthy of further scholarly inquiry. A cross-national study incorporating other parliamentary democracies in which the government and opposition have similar powers regarding the calling or forcing of elections would be the best way in which to fully ascertain the impact of election timing on the fortunes of the government party.

Chapter 3

Canadian Exceptionalism to Duverger's Law: Gaines Revisited

Introduction

The premises and implications of Duverger's law have been the subject of a vast body of literature within the field of political science. Duverger states that "the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system"(1964, 217). He further states that apparent exceptions can be explained away by factors such as regionalism within states, or by looking at the district rather than national level. Duverger argues that when a state has a multi-party system at the national level it is not an exception if there is still two-party competition at the district level as long as there are different parties competing in different regions. One implication of Duverger's law is that electoral design is the determinant of party structure within a state, specifically through influencing the number of parties that exist. According to Duvergerian logic, a decision to implement a single-ballot, plurality type system is destined to produce a two-party system. While Duverger mentions that historical factors such as social cleavages may also contribute to the development of two-party competition, this institutional factor is perceived as the critical component (1964, 217).

Two of the most commonly noted exceptions to this "law" are India and Canada. Gaines (1999) studies Canadian General Elections from 1935 through 1993 in order to

assess the status of Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law by focusing on district level rather than aggregate data. One of Duverger's assertions is that when it appears that multi-party systems have developed at the national level in plurality-based systems with single member districts (SMDs), the district (or riding as it is called in Canada) level is still categorized as two-party competition (1964, 222). In other words, even though several parties are represented in the national assembly, a country can still comply with Duverger's law if the individual districts demonstrate two-party competition without the same two parties competing in each district. Gaines finds multipartism at both the national and the district level.

The purpose of this chapter is to extend Gaines' analysis by including data from the last two Canadian elections that took place in 1997 and 2000 and also to incorporate some additional measures in order to expand the findings. The hypothesis of this chapter is that the appearance of Canadian exceptionalism at the national level also holds true when examining the data on a riding-by-riding or district-level basis as long as Gaines' methods are employed. I examine the electoral results from each of the 301 ridings for the general elections of 1997 and 2000 and compare the results to those achieved by Gaines in his earlier study as well as presenting some additional measures that diverge from his findings. An analysis of the number of competitive parties based on seat shares supports Duverger's contention that the presence of regional parties is the reason for the multipartism at the national level.

Duverger's Law

Duverger proposed that single-ballot, plurality elections with SMDs tend to produce two-party competition. He also proposed that "the simple-majority system with

second ballot and proportional representation favour multipartism” (Duverger 1964, 239). Riker terms the first statement Duverger’s law and the second Duverger’s hypothesis (1982, 754).

Duverger proposes that there were two sets of factors influencing the development of two-party systems under plurality elections with SMDs (1964, 224). First, he discusses the mechanical effect that is characterized by fusion or elimination. Fusion can be characterized as the absorption of minor parties by larger parties in order to maximize electoral opportunity; larger parties can co-opt the ideas of smaller parties in order to widen their voter support, and smaller parties can use this as a means to achieve greater political influence (1964, 224). Elimination is a hybrid of what Duverger terms the mechanical and psychological effects. Minor parties are under-represented under this type of electoral system in terms of their relative share of seats as compared to their share of the vote. Since only the candidate with the most votes is rewarded with a seat, parties whose candidates perform well, but come up short of victory, receive no immediate reward for their efforts. Unless they perceive that future victory is a legitimate possibility, their goals can be more effectively met by joining forces with a larger party bringing the larger party greater voter support in exchange for a stronger position of political power for the members of the smaller party. Duverger contends that this mechanical effect contributes to the psychological effect of voters not wishing to waste their vote so they switch their allegiance to the major party that they are most closely aligned with (1964, 226). As the voters see that the smaller party that they are aligned with does not have a chance to gain representation on its own, they will support a larger party in order to have a greater impact on who is representing them in government.

Cox (1997) discusses both the mechanical and psychological effects that contribute to Duverger's law. Cox concurs with Duverger's assessment that given the proper knowledge (i.e., the relative electoral strength of parties or candidates or both in a given election), voters will act strategically and produce a trend toward two-party competition over time. Palfrey (1989) agrees that if voters act rationally, elections involving multiple candidates should result in only two receiving votes. The critical component of both the Cox (1987) and Palfrey (1989) analysis is that they rely on the voters being completely informed and acting in a completely rational manner with the strategic maximization of the impact of their vote being their ultimate goal. In other words, they assume that voters will vote for the party that is closest to their ideological stance and has a legitimate chance of winning instead of choosing which party to support on a strictly ideological basis.

Blais and Carty (1991) support the institutional approach to studying voting behavior by presenting an empirical study that demonstrates that anticipation by voters and elites of the mechanical effect leads them to act strategically. They confirm that the psychological effect is present but emphasize that since the mechanical effect influences the psychological effect, it should remain the focus of study. Similarly, Taagepera and Shugart (1993) state that the aggregate effect of individual actor's actions based on their knowledge of the mechanical effects of political institutions are predictable and posit that institutional design can therefore be a basis for broader, generalized models of political behavior. Through his analysis of competitive party behavior, Strom (1990) also emphasizes a need for greater exploration of the impact that political institutions have on the behavior of parties and individual actors. Along the same lines, Neal (1998) states

that future research in this area should shift from merely establishing a relationship between institutional factors and party system development towards establishing causation. The emphasis in the literature described above is clearly on the mechanical effect which is the logical focus of study as it more readily lends itself to quantitative analysis than the psychological effect does.

National or District Level Focus of Study

One of the major questions about Duverger's law is whether it applies to the national or the district level. Duverger's main argument is based on national level analysis, but he does address the relevance of a district level approach. He concedes that the district races may be more individualized and that the simple-majority, single-ballot system with SMDs:

...tends to the creation of a two-party system inside the individual constituency, but the parties opposed may be different in different areas of the country. The simple-majority system therefore makes possible the creation of local parties or the retreat of national parties to local positions (1964, 223).

Gaines (1999) and Reed (2001) present individual country case-studies in which they focus on district level data. In the case of Italy, Reed (2001) states that Duverger's law should be seen as a two-step process. First, two-candidate competition is established at the district level through the mechanical and psychological effects as described above. Successful candidates will then gradually coordinate into two parties at the national level in order to maximize their effectiveness and influence as legislators. Reed further argues that these two processes are complimentary and that it will take time to establish two-party competition on a nationwide level (Reed 2001). For Canada, Gaines (1999) uses hypothetical strategic voting scenarios to demonstrate that while Duverger's law may indeed appear at the national level, it is at the district level where it should be most

strongly evidenced based on Duverger's explanation of possible exceptions. Gaines' findings are discussed in detail further below.

Canadian Exceptionalism

Duverger addressed the possibility that Canada is an exception to the law. He stated that the appearance of Canadian exceptionalism at the national level could be explained away by two-party competition at the local level, with regional parties competing in different areas of the country. His argument was that the Liberal and Conservative parties were the only national parties, and the Labor and Social-Credit parties were concentrated in certain provinces (Duverger 1964, 223). Gaines (1999) begins with this assumption and proceeds with a district level analysis of Canadian elections from 1935 through 1993 in order to test the hypothesis that two-party competition is in existence at the district-level. His results show that this hypothesis does not accurately describe party competition in Canada. Gaines (1999) finds that Canada exhibits multipartism at both the national and district levels. I have chosen to extend Gaines' research to include the 1997 and the 2000 elections in order to determine whether or not the patterns discovered by Gaines have continued. In addition, this additional data provides me with the opportunity to include other measures that Gaines did not use. Since the data for 1997 and 2000 include the results from each individual riding, it is possible to look at the margin of victory and the seat distributions for each province. These measures tell a different story than that told by the measures that Gaines used.

Gaines' results are replicated in the 1997 and the 2000 elections, but there are some questions posed below regarding the methods he used to analyze the data. I

propose that a closer examination of his methods brings the results into question, specifically by looking at the results for individual ridings and adding a measure of the margin of victory. Additionally, I find that if the analysis is based on seat shares instead of vote shares, Canada will not prove to be an exception to Duverger's law.

Data

Two sets of data are used in this chapter. First, there are the data gathered by Gaines (1999) from the Canadian General Elections from 1935 to 1993. Second, there are the additional data that I collected for the 1997 and the 2000 elections. This second group of data can be found in the reports of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada published in the *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997: Official Voting Results Synopsis*, and in the *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000: Official Voting Results Synopsis*.

The variables of vote shares, seat shares and margin of victory were collected directly from these sources. These variables were then used in calculations to determine the values for the other the variables of the effective number of parties based on both votes and seats, as well as the vote share total of the top two parties. Values for the vote shares (the percentage of valid votes received) of each party for each of the 301 ridings were reported in the Chief Electoral Officer's reports. The margin of victory was also reported as a percentage, representing the difference in total vote share of the first and the second place candidate in each riding. Seat shares were reported in raw numbers that I then converted into percentages for the purpose of comparison to vote shares. Seat shares are simply the percentage of available seats that a given party received. The value of the top two vote percentage variable was calculated by adding together the percentage of the vote of the first and second place candidate in each riding. Finally, the number of

competitive parties, in terms of both votes and seats, was determined by using the LT index developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979). The LT index is discussed in further detail below and in the Appendix.

One strength of this data set is that it is longitudinal in that it goes back to 1935 and encompasses twenty elections. There were concerns mentioned in the literature that the effects of Duverger's law take time to manifest themselves. This is not a concern because of the sixty-five year period covered by this study. Another strength is that for both the 1997 and the 2000 election, the data comprises the full 301 ridings. The large sample size alleviates concerns that any findings might be anomalous.

Methodology

Laakso and Taagepera (1979) developed a method for measuring the number of effective parties in elections (or assemblies) that is based on their relative size rather than a strict counting of those receiving votes (or seats) or developing a threshold point (i.e., receiving greater than 10%). The LT index is:

$$N = (\sum p_i^2)^{-1}$$

where N equals the number of competitive parties, and p is the vote (or seat) share for the i^{th} party. Their rationale was that this measure provides an easy visualization of the number of competitive parties, in contrast to the Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration and Rae-Taylor fractionalization indices, which also measure the number of parties but produce results on a 0 – 1 scale (Laakso and Taagepera 1979, 23-24). I use this index both because it is used by Gaines to ascertain the number of effective parties for the 1935 to 1993 period and due to its acceptance as the standard method for measuring this phenomenon (Cox 1997, 29). For an example of the LT index refer to the Appendix.

The top two vote percentage which is also used by Gaines and the margin of victory are calculations based on the vote totals from each riding. If there is strict two-party competition then the top two candidates should receive 100% of the votes. The further that this value deviates from 100%, the less likely it is that two-party competition accurately describes the riding (Gaines 1999, 841). I have included margin of victory because it provides insight into whether or not there is really any competition at all (which brings into question the results achieved by some of the other measures).

The LT index and top two vote percentage are appropriate measures for studying the relevance of Duverger's law in Canada since they provide an estimate of the effective number of parties and measure the distance between the top-two vote getters and the Duvergerian hypothesis that they should total 100%. I include the variable of margin of victory and an analysis of the number of competitive parties based on seat distribution because I believe that they will demonstrate some of the problems with using the other measures and stimulate some possible lines of inquiry for further study.

Discussion and Results

The addition of the electoral data from the 1997 and 2000 Canadian General Elections to Gaines' data set has had the expected result of reaffirming Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law. As can be seen in Table 3.1, the average number of competitive parties per riding, based on the LT index, in each province as well as at the nationwide level remains above two in each case for the 1997 and the 2000 elections and above three in several cases. As Table 3.1 indicates, the trends observed by Gaines have continued, and two-party competition does not accurately describe Canadian elections at either the national or district level.

Table 3.1
Number of Competitive Parties in Canadian General Elections: 1935 to 2000

Year	Canada	Newfoundland	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
	<u>3.3</u>	-	<u>2.1</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>3.6</u>
1935	3.3	-	2.1	2.5	2.3	2.6	3.1	3.6	3.6	3.2	3.6
1940	2.7	-	2.0	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.3	3.0	3.4	3.4	3.2
1945	3.7	-	2.2	2.7	2.5	3.5	2.8	3.5	2.9	4.0	3.9
1949	2.8	1.7	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.7	3.4	3.2
1953	2.9	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.5	3.4	2.8	3.2	3.9
1957	3.0	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.6	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.9
1958	2.4	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.9
1962	3.2	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.4	3.2	2.8	3.2	2.8	3.2	3.8
1963	3.2	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.5	3.1	2.7	3.1	2.6	3.1	3.7
1965	3.3	1.9	2.0	2.4	2.4	3.4	2.8	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.8
1968	3.0	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.6	3.1
1972	3.3	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.5	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.4	3.2
1974	3.0	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.1	2.2	2.9
1979	3.1	2.9	2.2	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.0	2.8
1980	2.9	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.6	2.0	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.1	2.9
1984	2.7	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.2	2.8	2.0	2.7
1988	3.0	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.6	3.0	3.2	2.8	2.9	3.3
1993	3.9	1.9	2.1	2.9	2.5	2.7	2.8	3.4	3.8	2.8	3.9
1997	4.1	2.8	2.6	3.4	3.1	2.7	2.9	3.2	3.2	2.5	3.0
2000	3.8	2.6	2.6	3.1	2.9	2.5	2.7	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.8
Average	3.2	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.8	3.2
SD	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.4

Sources: Brian J. Gaines. 1999. "Duverger's Law and the Meaning of Canadian Exceptionalism." *Comparative Political Studies* 32:835-61., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

According to Duverger, even when multiple parties are represented in the national assembly, under this type of electoral system we should still see two-party competition at the local level with different parties in different districts. There are clearly parties that perform well in particular geographical regions in the 1997 and the 2000 elections while performing poorly or being non-existent in others. The two strongest examples of this phenomenon are the Reform/Alliance (RP/CAP) and the Bloc Quebecois (BQ). The RP/CAP party performs quite well in the west while having little electoral presence east of Manitoba. With its base of support being Quebec separatism, the BQ is entirely limited to Quebec and does not even present candidates outside of the province.

Table 3.2
Number of Competitive Parties Distributions for Canadian General Elections: 1935 to 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
1935	2.68	0.67	1.24	5.54
1940	2.26	0.49	1.25	4.80
1945	2.70	0.57	1.60	4.51
1949	2.36	0.46	1.17	4.18
1953	2.37	0.57	1.00	4.10
1957	2.46	0.60	1.00	4.11
1958	2.24	0.38	1.57	3.69
1962	2.70	0.44	1.47	3.98
1963	2.64	0.44	1.39	3.96
1965	2.69	0.45	1.64	4.02
1968	2.52	0.40	1.21	3.66
1972	2.64	0.35	1.50	3.72
1974	2.51	0.32	1.44	3.32
1979	2.48	0.36	1.36	3.12
1980	2.43	0.42	1.48	3.12
1984	2.53	0.37	1.52	4.04
1988	2.69	0.38	1.51	3.88
1993	2.75	0.62	1.42	4.53
1997	2.89	0.44	1.72	4.48
2000	2.68	0.44	1.50	3.74

Sources: Brian J. Gaines. 1999. "Duverger's Law and the Meaning of Canadian Exceptionalism." *Comparative Political Studies* 32:835-61., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

While these parties provide evidence that there is an element of regionalism in Canadian politics, the fact remains that, as can be seen in Table 3.2, the average riding more closely represents three-party competition than two-party competition.

The second measure that Gaines (1999) used to assess Canada's position relative to Duverger's law is the total vote share of the top two candidates in each riding. Under Duvergerian two-party competition, this number is expected to be 100%. As can be seen in Table 3.3, the data for 1997 and 2000 continues the trend evidenced by the 1935 to 1993 elections. The average vote share of the top two candidates has been lower than 85% in every election since 1962. The 75% average in 1997 represents the lowest that this measure has been in the entire period under investigation, as does the 92.6%

Table 3.3
Average Top Two Vote Share Distributions for Canadian General Elections: 1935 to 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
1935	81.6	12.4	41.5	100.0
1940	90.6	11.2	52.8	100.0
1945	81.5	11.5	55.2	100.0
1949	88.0	9.6	62.4	100.0
1953	88.1	11.5	57.8	100.0
1957	86.1	12.9	51.9	100.0
1958	90.3	9.2	61.4	100.0
1962	80.9	9.8	52.7	100.0
1963	81.8	9.7	55.6	100.0
1965	80.4	9.8	53.4	100.0
1968	83.7	8.2	61.0	100.0
1972	80.6	7.4	63.8	98.2
1974	83.2	6.6	65.3	100.0
1979	81.8	5.9	67.5	95.5
1980	82.5	6.0	67.0	96.1
1984	82.9	6.6	61.3	96.6
1988	80.4	7.2	58.8	96.3
1993	77.4	8.8	56.3	98.0
1997	75.0	6.8	54.2	92.6
2000	79.6	6.6	63.8	96.2

Sources: Brian J. Gaines. 1999. "Duverger's Law and the Meaning of Canadian Exceptionalism." *Comparative Political Studies* 32:835-61., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

maximum value in the same year. As recently as 1974, there was at least one instance where the vote percentage of the top two candidates totaled 100% leaving no doubt as to whether there was greater than two party competition in that particular riding.

While the results from the 2000 election do show a small increase across the board, the 79.6% average top two vote share is still the third lowest total among the twenty elections surveyed. With a gap of greater than 20% between the Duvergerian expectation and the Canadian reality, this measure provides yet more support for Canada's status as a legitimate exception to Duverger's law. The examination of both the number of competitive parties and the vote share of the top two finishers, demonstrate that Duverger's law is not in evidence in Canadian elections at the riding level. Both variables show that strict two-party competition is not an accurate description of voting behavior in this case.

Upon further analysis on a case-by-case basis, it becomes apparent that there are some definite weaknesses with these measures. A fairly typical example of the weakness regarding the LT index becomes apparent by looking at the results from the Calgary East riding in the 1997 election. Five candidates received votes in this riding: The RP candidate won with 45%, followed by a Progressive Conservative (PC) candidate with 24.6%, a Liberal (LP) candidate with 22.8%, a New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate with 6.5% and a Natural Law Party (NLP) candidate rounding out the field with 1.1%. The LT index returns a value of 3.13 competitive parties in this riding (see the Appendix for this example). While it is clear that three parties received significant electoral support by achieving greater than 20% of the vote, the large margin of victory for the RP candidate brings into question whether the LT index is a good measure of the number of

parties competitively contesting an election. The 3.13 value for the LT index suggests that there were slightly greater than three competitive parties in this particular riding. However, no candidate was within 20% of the victor. If you combined the vote totals of the second and third place finishers, they would have barely been able to defeat the first place finisher. There is a large enough quantity of similar results from other ridings to suggest that another method for counting competitive parties should be explored.

Table 3.4
Average Margin of Victory in Canadian General Elections: 1997 & 2000

<u>Province</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
Newfoundland	8.4	28.2
Prince Edward Island	4.8	8.5
Nova Scotia	10.4	11.3
New Brunswick	14.4	16.4
Quebec	18.2	19.3
Ontario	25.9	26.6
Manitoba	16.2	18.0
Saskatchewan	12.6	20.5
Alberta	30.2	36.8
British Columbia	19.6	25.6
Net Average	20.8	23.7

Sources: *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

The average margin of victory helps to assess the value of the LT index as indicated in the example of Calgary East. Table 3.4 shows the average margin of victory broken down by provincial and national averages for the 1997 and the 2000 elections. With five of the ten provincial cases in 1997 and eight of the ten provincial cases in 2000 exhibiting average margins in excess of 15%, there is significant evidence that there is a lack of competition in general, let alone two-party competition. When it is taken into consideration that Ontario accounts for over one-third of the electoral districts and has average margins of victory greater than 25% for both of the elections, this general lack of

competitiveness is further emphasized. This phenomenon is similar to the vanishing marginals observed in the study of American politics. The general concept behind the vanishing marginals is that the increase in margin of victory for incumbents is lowering the number of races that are close, thereby increasing the incumbency advantage (Mayhew 1975). Ansolabehere, Brady and Fiorina (1992) have found that even with a large increase in the average margin of victory for incumbents over the last thirty years, the percentage of incumbents who are defeated each year has remained relatively constant. This finding seems to indicate that margin of victory may not even be the most appropriate measure of competitiveness as far as future prospects are concerned, yet I believe that it still is a valid measure of how competitive one single election is.

The results from the riding of Saint-Léonard--Saint-Michel for the 2000 election illustrate one problem with the top two vote total measure. The 92.2% value for this variable in this riding appears to be a strong indicator that two-party competition is occurring. A closer look reveals that the LP candidate received 76.7% of the vote with no other candidate receiving greater than 14.5%. It would be difficult to argue that this riding represents anything other than single party dominance. Another problem with this measure is exposed through an examination of the Windsor--St. Clair riding results from 2000. The 80.7% value for the top two vote share indicates that this riding does not exemplify two-party competition. A closer look at the top three vote finishers shows the victorious NDP candidate with 40.8%, the second place LP candidate with 39.9%, and the third place RP/CAP candidate with 13.5%. The top two finishers are separated by less than one percentage point and are over twenty-five percentage points above the next best performer. This certainly seems to be a good example of a two-party race. While

there are clearly some problems with the measures, even after further inspection it does not appear that two-party competition is an accurate description of Canadian elections.

Table 3.5
Effective Number of Parties Vote-Seat Comparison for Canadian General Elections: 1997 & 2000

<u>Province</u>	<u>1997</u>			<u>2000</u>		
	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Newfoundland	2.82	1.96	-0.86	2.60	1.69	-0.91
Prince Edward Island	2.61	1.00	-1.61	2.59	1.00	-1.59
Nova Scotia	3.36	1.98	-1.38	3.14	2.95	-0.19
New Brunswick	3.11	2.63	-0.48	2.85	2.17	-0.68
Quebec	2.74	2.13	-0.61	2.55	2.05	-0.50
Ontario	2.88	1.04	-1.84	2.72	1.06	-1.66
Manitoba	3.24	3.15	-0.09	3.05	3.38	0.33
Saskatchewan	3.25	2.18	-1.07	2.74	1.82	-0.92
Alberta	2.54	1.17	-1.37	2.31	1.26	-1.05
British Columbia	3.02	1.73	-1.29	2.77	1.53	-1.24
Canada	4.09	2.98	-1.11	3.77	2.54	-1.23

Sources: *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

Another method for analyzing the impact of Duverger's law is to examine the translation of votes to seats and then assess the number of competitive parties in the parliament. Table 3.5 represents a comparison between the number of competitive parties based on votes and the number of competitive parties based on seats for the 1997 and the 2000 elections. It is clear from the results for the number of competitive parties based on seats that, in that sense, two-party or even one-party competition is a more appropriate description rather than the multipartism suggested by some of the other variables. This brings to light another important facet of the discussion of competitive parties. What exactly does competitive mean, and how competitive can a party be, regardless of vote share, if it is unable to turn votes into seats? According to vote shares, Alberta, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island appear to be close to three-party competition

in both elections, but when the seat distribution is examined, it appears that they are closer to one-party monopolies.

A second important implication from the number of competitive parties in terms of seats comes from a national level examination. The results of 2.98 competitive parties in 1997 and 2.54 in 2000 indicate that there were between two and three competitive parties in parliament for those years (see Table 3.5). When looking at the actual breakdown of parliamentary seats, it is clear that the three parties having the biggest impact are the LP with 51.5% and 57.1%, the RP/CAP with 19.9% and 21.9%, and the BQ with 14.6% and 12.6% in the 1997 and 2000 elections respectively. These numbers suggest that regionalism might be an explanation for Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger.

The LP is the only example of a party that has had success throughout the country. Both the RP/CAP and the BQ derive most of their success from a particular region. The BQ has never even run a candidate outside of Quebec. The regional nature of party preference is examined in depth for the 1997 election by Gidengil et al. (1999). They determine that the political agenda of voters differs from region to region across Canada in the critical areas of ideological leaning and economic perceptions. Based on his analysis of vote shares, Gaines (1999) rejected the idea that regionalism was the explanation for Canadian exceptionalism. The seat share analysis presented in this chapter indicates that regionalism does seem to be an appropriate depiction of the nature of Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law. This area clearly deserves more exploration, particularly in light of the fact that it was posited as a reason for Canada's apparent exceptionalism by Duverger himself in his initial writings.

Conclusion

After analyzing the data from the 1997 and the 2000 Canadian general elections and comparing the results to those found by Gaines (1999), it is clear that these two elections fit well into his findings regarding the number of competitive parties and vote share of the top two finishers in each riding. The result of Gaines' analysis of both variables leads to the conclusion that Canada is an exception to Duverger's law at both the national and the district level. However, upon further examination, it appears that these two measures may not be the most appropriate. Nevertheless, it does still appear that two-party competition does not accurately describe the majority of Canadian ridings. In most cases, either multi-party or one-party would be a better way to describe the competition.

With the addition of the data for the 1997 and the 2000 elections, I have been able to propose two additional measures (margin of victory and seat-based number of competitive parties) that may provide greater insight into the true status of Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law. If the measure of electoral success is shifted from merely receiving votes to actually turning those votes into victories and seats in parliament, then a different conclusion can be reached. This analysis supports Duverger's contention that regionalism is the primary reason that Canada does not appear to comply with his law at the national level. It is clear that in terms of seats, different regions can be accurately characterized as two-party competition with different parties involved in different regions. Further analysis along these lines can hopefully provide a more complete picture.

Chapter 4

Voter Turnout in Canadian General Elections: A Longitudinal and Case Study Analysis

Introduction

Voter turnout is an important issue in any representative democracy. While it is not the only measure of citizen participation, it is a measure that is easily quantifiable and therefore is readily accessible for statistical analysis. The issue of voter turnout is of particular interest in Canada due to the fact that turnout has been declining steadily over the past few general elections (see Table 4.1). The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the impact that several factors have had on the determination of voter turnout in Canadian elections since 1940 with an emphasis placed on the 1997 election.

This analysis has two separate sections. First, I examine the dependent variable of national voter turnout levels from 1940 to 2000 in regards to the independent variables of the time between elections and the number of competitive parties. The time between elections was discussed at length in Chapter 2 and the number of competitive parties was the focus of Chapter 3. For the purposes of this analysis, voter turnout has been calculated by dividing the number of ballots cast by the number of electors that are on the list (registered voters). The time between elections is rather self-explanatory and is measured in months for this analysis. The number of competitive parties has been calculated using vote shares in the LT index that was described in detail in Chapter 3 and the Appendix. I hypothesize that both of the independent variables will have an inverse relationship with voter turnout. In other words, as the number of competitive parties and the time between elections increase, voter turnout will decrease.

Table 4.1
Nationwide Turnout in Canadian General Elections: 1940 to 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Turnout%</u>
1940	69.9
1945	75.3
1949	73.8
1953	66.9
1957	74.0
1958	79.4
1962	80.1
1963	79.2
1965	74.8
1968	75.7
1972	76.7
1974	71.0
1979	75.8
1980	69.3
1984	75.3
1988	75.5
1993	69.6
1997	67.0
2000	61.2

Sources: Munroe Eagles, James P. Bickerton, Alain G. Gagnon, and Patrick J. Smith. 1995. *The Almanac of Canadian Politics*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press., Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

The second part of the analysis involves an in-depth look at the 1997 election. Due to the availability of demographic data for each riding, I am able to analyze voter turnout for all 301 cases within this election. I have chosen to use a combination of variables that represent both institutional and socioeconomic factors that influence turnout. Based on the literature and the data that is available, I have chosen variables representing the institutional factors including the number of electors in the riding, the number of competitive parties, margin of victory and the status of the incumbent. The socioeconomic variables included in this study are education, unemployment and income. Voter turnout and the number of competitive parties are determined the same as described above. Margin of victory is the difference between the percentage of votes

received by the winner and the first runner up in each riding. The status of the incumbent is a dummy variable representing whether or not the previous office holder was re-elected. Education is operationalized as the percentage of the population of each riding with a university education. Unemployment is the percentage of the workforce who are without jobs, and income is operationalized as the average income among residents of each riding. The number of electors in each riding is the number of eligible voters. Based on the literature, I hypothesize that education and income will have a positive relationship with turnout, and the other five variables will have an inverse effect.

Socioeconomic Status and Political Participation

Since the 1950's, a large body of literature regarding citizen political activity has focused on a behavioral approach to voting and the impact of socioeconomic status (SES). The literature has consistently found SES to be an important factor. With their ground breaking and standard setting book *The American Voter*, Campbell et.al. (1960) examined American voting behavior in the 1950's, focusing mainly on the 1956 election. One of their many findings was the fact that SES and other demographic variables impacted party choice among voters. The majority of their work centered on individuals' political knowledge (or the lack thereof), which leads to party identification as the principle determinant of voter choice. The ignorance and apathy among voters that they discovered is a contributing factor to declining voter turnout. Almond and Verba also expand this area with their classic work *The Civic Culture* (1963). In this work, they studied citizen participation in political activity in the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Mexico. While their study was aimed at a much broader theme, its relevance to this

chapter lies in their identification of education and income as comparative variables that had a positive relationship with political participation.

The importance of these particular variables was again highlighted in a cross-national study by Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) and a study of participation in the U.S. by Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie (1993). In their study, Verba, Nie and Kim determined that increased levels of SES were a strong indicator of increased levels of participation. This was particularly evident in the more industrialized countries in their study such as the U.S. and the Netherlands. Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie re-examine the status of SES as a determinant of political participation and find that it is still a strong predictor. They also determine that it is becoming increasingly important as the gap between those with high and low SES grows and the issues that affect those who do not participate get ignored. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) add variables relating to resources such as community involvement and free time available to individuals to the standard SES model. Nevertheless, they maintain that the traditional variables of education and income are the primary factors that influence what resources are available to an individual. In particular, they find that a minor increase in income can drastically increase one's political participation.

Education and income are clearly considered to be important variables in the study of voting behavior. They are also excellent variables to use in this study because there is significant variance in their values across the 301 ridings. I have chosen to also include unemployment because it is a further measure of the socioeconomic level of an area and there are regions within Canada in which the rate of unemployment is much

higher than the national average (See Tables 4.3 and 4.5). While these three variables are not a complete picture of SES, they are certainly the foundation of that measure.

Institutional Variables and Political Participation

While the socioeconomic approach is primarily an American politics approach, institutional analysis is an approach largely found in the field of comparative politics. Gray and Caul (2000) determine that an approach that focuses entirely on SES cannot completely describe levels of political participation, particularly voter turnout. They point out that education and income have been on a steady upward trend over the last half century but that voter turnout over the same period has been in decline. They argue that institutional variables such as the electoral system and the number of political parties are more important variables for comparative analysis of political participation. Studlar (2001) also argues for an institutional approach and states that institutional variables such as margin of victory and number of parties should be used in concert with traditional SES variables in any attempts to model political participation. He states that since participation is shaped by so many different factors, the best way to develop a complete picture is through combining the approaches.

Jackman (1987) finds that the greater the number of political parties that are involved in an election, the less likely people are to vote. Jackman and Miller (1995) present a cross-national study of voter turnout in the 1980's based on institutional variables. Two of the variables that they focus on are of particular relevance to this chapter. They find that competitive elections should increase the levels of voter turnout (this is represented in this chapter as the margin of victory variable). Similarly to

Jackman's (1987) earlier finding, Jackman and Miller (1995) also find that multipartism depresses turnout (this is represented by the number of competitive parties variable).

One other institutional variable that receives a significant amount of discussion in the literature is compulsory voting (Jackman and Miller 1995; Franklin 1999). Making voting compulsory is certainly a way in which to increase turnout. While this is not directly relevant to this study as voting has never been compulsory in Canada, there is a related issue that is relevant. Prior the 2000 election, it was the responsibility of the government to register all eligible voters. Pammett and Vickers (2001) posited that the removal of this feature from Canadian politics is the primary cause for the significant decline in voter turnout from the 1997 to the 2000 election (see Table 4.1). This will certainly become a variable of greater importance if similar results continue to be seen in future elections. At this time, it is too early to make a judgment on the impact that the elimination of compulsory registration has had on voter turnout.

Data and Methodology

The sources of the data for voter turnout, time between elections, number of competitive parties, number of electors, margin of victory and the status of the incumbent are all from the government and have been used in Chapters 2 and 3. The variables of education, unemployment and income were obtained from the Federal Electoral District Profiles generated by the government agency Statistics Canada and are based on the 1996 census.

Voter turnout is reported as a percentage in each of these sources. A description of the method used to calculate the number of competitive parties can be found in Chapter 3 and the Appendix. Margin of victory and the time between elections are both

subtraction calculations. The incumbent is identified for each of the ridings in the *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*, and then I coded the variable 1 if they won and 0 if they were defeated. Unemployment is reported as a percentage, and income is reported in Canadian dollars as an average of the income of residents over the age of fifteen. Education is calculated by dividing the number of residents with a university education by the number of residents over the age of fifteen.

One strength of this data set is that there are nineteen cases for the first analysis and 301 for the second which creates a good sample size. There are enough cases to be able to assume with confidence that any observed trends are not anomalies. Another strength of this data is that it represents a combination of the institutional and the socioeconomic approaches that will hopefully create a more complete picture than either approach would be able to do on its own. One weakness, already discussed in Chapter 3, is the accuracy of the LT index in determining the number of competitive parties. However, I still believe that this index is the best measure available to determine the number of parties competing in a single election in a single district. Another weakness is that for the socioeconomic data, the numbers are based on the population over the age of fifteen which is below the voting age. Therefore, citizens who cannot contribute to the voter turnout are influencing the measures of some of the independent variables. This is an unfortunate element of the way that the census data was compiled, but it is unlikely to have a major impact on the outcome of my analysis.

In order to test these hypotheses, I will use linear regression as the form of statistical analysis. Regression is the most appropriate method because all of the variables are ratio measures, with the exception of the single dummy variable for

incumbency, and this is the method that provides the most powerful analysis with multiple independent variables at this level of measurement.

Longitudinal National Turnout

The first analysis that I performed was with the dependent variable of national voter turnout for the years of 1940 to 2000. The independent variables for this analysis were the time between elections and the number of competitive parties in each election. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.2. The R^2 value of .069 shows that these independent variables do not explain the variance in voter turnout. Table 4.2 shows that the number of competitive parties has a statistically significant relationship with voter turnout (at the .10 level) and that that relationship is in the expected direction. As I predicted, voter turnout decreases as the number of competitive parties increases. However, the model has very little explanatory ability. The time between elections did not turn out to be statistically significant.

Table 4.2
Regression Analysis: Nationwide Turnout in Canadian General Elections: 1940 to 2000

Dependent Variable – Voter Turnout	
	Standardized Beta
Time Between Elections ¹	.016
Number of Competitive Parties	-.420*
Adjusted R^2 = .069	
N = 19	

Notes:

* $p < .10$

¹ Time between elections is measured in months.

Sources: Munroe Eagles, James P. Bickerton, Alain G. Gagnon, and Patrick J. Smith. 1995. *The Almanac of Canadian Politics*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press., Frank Feigert. 1989. *Canada Votes 1935-1988*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., *Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 2001. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

Part of the reason for the low R^2 value is that there were only two independent variables, and they both represented institutional factors. As the literature discussed above suggests, electoral participation is influenced by many factors both institutional and socioeconomic. The finding regarding the influence of the number of competitive parties is important and will be discussed in further detail below with the analysis of the 1997 election. As that analysis also includes socioeconomic data, it will address the issue of turnout combining the two approaches for a hopefully more complete picture.

Turnout in the 1997 General Election

As with the above analysis, the R^2 value shown in Table 4.3 is not overly impressive at .101. Table 4.3 also shows that five of the seven independent variables had the anticipated sign. The number of competitive parties, margin of victory, unemployment and the re-election of an incumbent were all inversely related to turnout, and education was shown to have a positive relationship with the dependent variable. The number of electors had a positive relationship, and income an inverse relationship with turnout, both of which were unanticipated results. Table 4.3 shows that the number of electors, the number of competitive parties, margin of victory and education were the only independent variables to have a statistically significant relationship with voter turnout.

Once again, this demonstrates that there is a substantial number of variables that contribute to determining voter turnout. I included a range of independent variables that covered both socioeconomic and institutional factors, yet there is still a significant lack of explanatory ability from the model that I developed. A possible alternate theory is that my analysis is too broad. Different variables may have a different impact in various

regions which could create problems when an aggregate analysis is conducted. For this reason, I present a follow-up analysis by breaking the data into regional groupings.

Table 4.3
Regression Analysis: Nationwide Turnout in the 1997 Canadian General Election

Dependent Variable – Voter Turnout		
	Standardized	Mean
	<u>Beta</u>	
Number of Electors	.139**	65,327
Number of Competitive Parties	-.325*	2.89
Margin of Victory	-.398*	20.8
Education	.255*	22.2
Unemployment	-.068	10.6
Income	-.122	24,813
Incumbent	-.024	70.1 ¹

Adjusted $R^2 = .101$
N = 301

Notes:

** p < .05

* p < .01

¹ The incumbent was re-elected in 70.1% of the ridings (211 out of 301).

Sources: *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*. 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., Statistics Canada Website <www.statcan.ca>.

Regional Analysis of Turnout in the 1997 Election

For this section of this chapter, I have divided Canada into five commonly used regional groupings: The Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, and British Columbia. The Maritimes include the provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, and the Prairies are made up of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (See Figure 1.1). Table 4.4 shows the results for these five separate analyses, and Table 4.5 shows the mean values for each of the variables in each region. As Table 4.4 illustrates, no two regions have the same results. Only Quebec and British Columbia have the same sign for all of the variables, but they differ in magnitude and statistical significance.

Table 4.4
Regression Analysis: Regional Turnout in the 1997 Canadian General Election

	Dependent Variable – Voter Turnout				
	<u>Maritimes</u>	<u>Quebec</u>	<u>Ontario</u>	<u>Prairies</u>	<u>British Columbia</u>
	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Number of Electors	.570**	.098	.093	-.403*	.245
Number of Competitive Parties	.095	-.681*	-.261	.317***	-.375***
Margin of Victory	.070	-.544*	-.403**	.217	-.465**
Education	.128	.500*	.369**	.453*	.112
Unemployment	-.571**	-.600*	-.129	-.601*	-.390
Income	-.540***	-.287***	.023	-.100	-.065
Incumbent	-.455**	.100	-.015	-.056	.214
Adjusted R ²	.371	.377	.238	.625	.403
N	32	75	103	54	34

Notes:

All beta values are standardized.

*** p < .10

** p < .05

* p < .01

Sources: *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*, 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., Statistics Canada Website <www.statcan.ca>.

Table 4.5
Regional Means for Dependent and Independent Variables in the 1997 Canadian General Election

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Maritimes</u>	<u>Quebec</u>	<u>Ontario</u>	<u>Prairies</u>	<u>British Columbia</u>
Voter Turnout %	68.1	73.8	65.4	61.2	65.4
<u>Independent Variables</u>					
Number of Electors	54,175	69,029	69,085	60,180	68,591
Number of Competitive Parties	3.1	2.7	2.9	2.9	3.0
Margin of Victory %	10.5	18.2	25.9	22.0	19.6
Education %	20.8	19.6	23.7	22.5	24.7
Unemployment %	17.2	12.2	9.3	7.5	9.8
Income ¹	20,742	23,059	27,114	24,216	26,194
Incumbent ²	34	71	84	65	71

Notes:

¹ Income is reported in Canadian dollars.

² Percentage of available seats retained by incumbents.

Sources: *Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997 Official Voting Results Synopsis*, 1997. Ottawa: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada., Statistics Canada Website <www.statcan.ca>.

A closer look at Table 4.4 reveals that only the variables of education and unemployment maintain the same sign across all five regions. In each case, education shows a positive relationship, and unemployment is inversely related to voter turnout (both of which were the expected directions). The case of Quebec stands out in that five of the seven variables have statistically significant relationships with turnout, and of those five, only income did not show the expected sign. It is also interesting to note that in each of the five regions the R^2 values are significantly more robust than they were for the aggregated national model. The R^2 value for the Prairie Provinces (.625) is particularly significant.

A few more interesting results become apparent when Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 are compared against each other, particularly concerning the unemployment and income variables. As Table 4.4 shows, the unemployment variable is statistically significant in the Maritimes, Quebec and the Prairies. As shown in Table 4.5 the Maritimes and Quebec are the regions with the two highest unemployment rates, and the Prairies have the lowest unemployment. Another similar observation exists when examining the income variable. The Maritimes and Quebec are the only two regions in which income is a statistically significant predictor of turnout as Table 4.4 shows. At the same time, by looking at Tables 4.5 and 4.3, it can be seen that these two regions are also the only ones in which the average income is lower than the national average.

Table 4.5 displays some very interesting statistics. The Maritimes and Quebec register the highest voter turnout, yet contrary to the hypotheses, they have the lowest levels of education, highest unemployment and the lowest average income. In holding strongly with the hypothesis that lower margins of victory will produce increased turnout,

these two regions also have the lowest numbers for this variable. However, Table 4.4 shows that margin of victory is not statistically significant in the case of the Maritimes, and it also has a positive sign.

Conclusion

The most important findings of this chapter have to do with the impact of the number of competitive parties and the margin of victory on voter turnout levels. In both the longitudinal national analysis and the analysis of the 1997 election, the number of competitive parties was found to be inversely related to turnout and statistically significant. It is understandable that this result may seem counterintuitive. It seems logical that with more competitive parties participating, it is easier for a voter to find one that approximates their viewpoint therefore encouraging voter participation. However, the greater the number of competitive parties, the more work is required of the voter in order to make a strategic choice. If there are only two parties for voters to choose from, then they are not required to do much research, and therefore participation is relatively easy. The more parties that contest an election, the harder it is to keep abreast of all of their positions and their relative strength.

It should come as no surprise that voter turnout decreases as the margin of victory increases. If the race is not expected to be close, then there is less of an incentive for voters to participate and for parties to campaign. This also exposes a possible flaw with using voter turnout as a measure of citizen participation and involvement in the political arena. With large margins of victory, one would have to assume that the non-voters would be drastically disproportionate supporters of the second place candidate in order to think that increased voter turnout would impact outcomes. If there is no doubt in the

outcome, then there is little risk undertaken by supporters of the predicted victor if they choose to stay home, and there is also little incentive for supporters of predicted losers in this scenario to inconvenience themselves by voting.

As was anticipated, and strongly supported by the literature, education was positively associated with turnout at a statistically significant level. As this is an almost universally accepted generalization about political participation, I will not take up space discussing it here. Income is also widely talked about in the literature as being positively associated with participation, and this analysis does not bear that out. Even though the results were not statistically significant at the national level, they did indicate an inverse relationship. In the two regions in which it was a statistically significant predictor, the inverse relationship was also indicated.

On the national level, the results indicate that neither of these models are very robust predictors of voter turnout. I have mentioned two possible explanations for this above. First of all, it is certainly possible that both of the models are far too simple and do not take into account enough variables. This is clearly the case in the longitudinal model as it includes no socioeconomic measures whatsoever. A second problem that is clearly seen with the analysis of the 1997 election is the effect that aggregation has on the model. When the data was disaggregated into five separate regions, the models were noticeably more robust. The strongest indication that aggregation has created a problem in this instance is that there is clearly variance in both the sign and significance levels of the independent variables across the regions. This indicates that there are probably other variables that must be controlled for before attempting to analyze voter turnout across a widely diverse population.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

Introduction

This thesis has covered three important topics in the field of political science and has analyzed them using primarily an institutional approach. This work has served to strengthen the contention that electoral system design has a profound effect on party system development and both party and voter behavior. This concluding chapter will highlight the findings of the previous chapters, some of the problems and weaknesses with this research and suggest areas for future research.

Election Timing

The analysis of the impact of the timing of elections on the party in government that was presented in Chapter 2 had three hypotheses, one relating to each of the three reasons for calling an election. The first hypothesis stated that if the government waits the maximum time allowable before calling an election the government party will lose seats or at best maintain their seat share. My preliminary findings indicated that this hypothesis has merit. After a re-operationalization of the cut-off for determining if an election was called early or went the full term the government party lost seats in eight of the ten instances in which it used the maximum time allowable.

The second hypothesis involved early elections called by the government and stated that in this scenario the government party would increase its seat share. Based on my preliminary findings, this hypothesis also seemed to be correct, but the findings demonstrated how susceptible this analysis is to the operationalization of the variables.

Shifting the time limit on early elections from nine months to a full year had a substantial effect on the outcome. Before the reclassification, five out of ten cases that were identified as early election calls saw the government party gain seats. After the reclassification, the government party gained seats in four out of six elections. I will deal with these operationalization and methodological issues in greater detail later in this chapter.

Finally, the third hypothesis stated that if an election is forced by a no-confidence vote in the parliament, then the government party will lose seats. There were only three cases in which this occurred so it is impossible to come to any significant conclusions regarding this hypothesis. This is a problem that exists with all three hypotheses. A larger sample size would be necessary in order to make conclusions regarding Canada or any larger generalizations to parliamentary regimes as a whole. The issues of sample size and susceptibility to operationalization limit the explanatory power of the analysis in this chapter. While these results show that future research in this area is warranted, these problems must be addressed in order to enhance these initial findings.

The primary contribution of Chapter 2 was to demonstrate that the timing of elections is an important area of study in parliamentary regimes. This is in contrast to the majority of literature on the timing of elections which focuses on presidential regimes. This analysis shows that there are some similarities between the two regime types when it comes to the timing of elections and that since parliamentary governments have some control over this feature, they have a unique way in which they can influence outcomes that is not present in presidential regimes.

Canadian Exceptionalism to Duverger's Law

The hypothesis in Chapter 3 stated that multipartism is evident at both the national and riding level in Canadian elections. This hypothesis is tested using the same LT index method as Gaines (1999). Using this method, the results for the 1997 and the 2000 election confirm the pattern established by Gaines for the elections from 1935 through 1993. While this analysis shows that Canada is an exception to Duverger's law, and is not characterized by two-party competition at either the riding or national level, a small change in the method presents a drastically different picture.

By using seat shares instead of vote shares in the LT index, I find that Canadian elections at the riding level are more appropriately characterized as two-party or even one-party competition. This finding, which is the most significant contribution of this chapter, concurs with Duverger's (1964) hypothesis that Canadian exceptionalism at the national level is the result of different regional parties competing with national parties in different regions of the country. As with the problem regarding the time limit for declaring an election an early call in Chapter 2, this points out the sensitivity of many of these variables to their operationalization.

Voter Turnout

The analysis of voter turnout presented in Chapter 4 used a combination of behavioral and institutional approaches. The longitudinal analysis, which focused solely on institutional variables, explored the hypothesis that both the number of competitive parties (determined using vote shares in the LT index) and the time between elections would be inversely related to voter turnout. Only the number of competitive parties was

found to be a statistically significant determinant of voter turnout and that relationship was in the expected direction.

The analysis of voter turnout in the 1997 election involved seven independent variables. The institutional variables of the number of electors, the number of competitive parties, margin of victory and re-election of the incumbent as well as the socioeconomic variable of unemployment were all hypothesized to have an inverse relationship with voter turnout. The socioeconomic variables of education and income were hypothesized to have a positive relationship with the dependent variable. At the national level, the independent variables of the number of competitive parties, margin of victory and education were all significant at the .01 level and had the anticipated signs. The number of electors was significant at the .05 level, but the relationship was not in the hypothesized direction. Unemployment, income and re-election of the incumbent were all inversely related to turnout (which was unexpected in the case of income); however, none of the three were statistically significant. The R^2 value of .101 was not very robust which indicated that these variables do not do a very good job of predicting voter turnout.

Chapter 4 also presented a regional analysis of the 1997 election which generated some very different results. Not only were the R^2 values much more robust than in the aggregate analysis, but there was also substantial fluctuation between regions as to which independent variables were significant. In fact, unemployment and education were the only independent variables that maintained the same sign across all five regions. This drastic difference between the regional and aggregate analysis is the major contribution of this chapter.

Suggestions for Further Research

Now that these conclusions have been reached the question is where do we go from here? The most obvious expansion of this research would involve an increase in the sample sizes. In the case of the election timing analysis from Chapter 2, this would most likely involve the implementation of a cross-national study. There are several other parliamentary regimes that could be included in order to extend the preliminary findings that are presented here.

The analysis of Canadian exceptionalism to Duverger's law would benefit from an extension of the seat share data to include all of the elections that were part of the vote share analysis done in Chapter 3. The addition of this longitudinal data would either enhance my findings or demonstrate that the 1997 and 2000 elections are exhibiting a new trend with the presence of the CAP in the west and the BQ in Quebec bringing an increased regional nature to Canadian elections. The additional seat share data would show whether or not there have been regionally based parties contributing to Canada's multipartism throughout the entire 1935 to 2000 period or that this is a new feature found only with the recent emergence of the CAP and BQ. This data would also help to determine whether seat shares or vote shares should be used in the LT index calculation by significantly increasing the sample size.

The voter turnout analysis in Chapter 4 would also benefit from a larger sample size and greater longitudinal data. Unfortunately, the census does not always correspond with an election year which makes accurate socioeconomic data difficult to come by. The demonstration that there is a drastic divergence between the regional and the aggregate analysis leads to many possibilities for future research. This finding certainly

calls into question the accuracy of any aggregate analysis in which there are substantial differences between the regions. By narrowing the scope of the analysis, the number of intervening variables that need to be controlled for decreases.

Conclusion

This thesis has shown that institutional variables play a critical role in party system development and government formation as well as impacting voting behavior. It has also demonstrated that some of these variables are highly sensitive to operationalization and that a consensus needs to be reached in order to avoid problems of measurement. This is especially true in areas such as the timing of elections in parliamentary regimes because there is so little literature that focuses on this topic. Since there is no literature on the impact that the timing of elections has on the seat share of the party in government in parliamentary regimes, there was nothing to guide me in the operationalization of the variables relating to that analysis. As more longitudinal and cross-national studies are done in these areas, there will be a process of standardization in the operationalization of these variables which will help to develop some consistency and allow for broader generalizations to be made.

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Appendix

An Explanation of the LT Index with an Example

LT Index

Laakso and Taagepera (1979) developed a method for measuring the number of effective parties in elections (or assemblies) that is based on their relative size rather than a strict counting of those receiving votes (or seats) or developing a threshold point (i.e., receiving greater than 10%). The LT index is: $N = (\sum p_i^2)^{-1}$:

N = the number of competitive parties.

p_i = the vote share (or seat share) of the i^{th} party.

Example of the Calgary East Riding in the 1997 Election

Five parties received votes in this riding. The RP received 45%, the PC 24.6%, the LP 22.8%, the NDP 6.5% and the Natural Law Party received 1.1%. The first step in the LT index calculation is to turn these percentages into decimals so they can be used in the equation. We now have .45, .246, .228, .065 and .011 as the vote share values for p_1 through p_5 respectively. N equals one divided by the sum of the squares of these values:

$$N = 1 / ((p_1)^2 + (p_2)^2 + (p_3)^2 + (p_4)^2 + (p_5)^2)$$

$$N = 1 / ((.45)^2 + (.246)^2 + (.228)^2 + (.065)^2 + (.011)^2)$$

$$N = 1 / (.2025 + .060516 + .051984 + .004225 + .000121)$$

$$N = 1 / .319346$$

$$N = 3.13$$