INSTITUTE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS WORKING PAPER
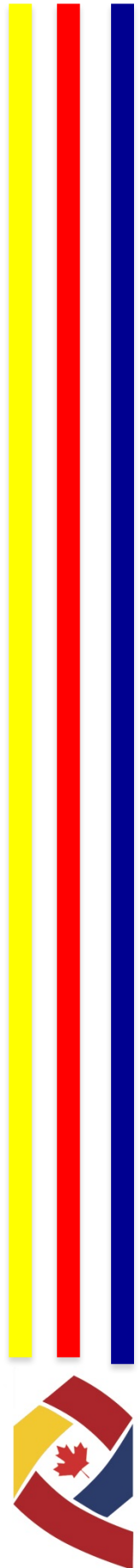
Party Politics and the French-English Cleavage in Canadian Federal Elections

Jacob Robbins-Kanter

j.robbbins-kanter@queensu.ca

Working Paper – Please Do Not Cite Without Permission

How does Canada's principal linguistic cleavage affect electoral politics? This paper argues that French-English dualism has produced four political outcomes for federal parties. These include boosting a party's cultural credentials, linguistic marginalization, linguistically-defined separate parties, and linguistic message dissonance. In this respect, parties navigate the demands imposed by linguistic difference with varying degrees of success. The political effects of linguistic duality are evidenced in the dynamics of party competition and vote choice.

The paper begins by examining two background conditions which shape party responses to linguistic diversity: the development of language as a political issue and the nature of linguistic diversity. Canada's English-French cleavage is then examined to illustrate these background conditions and contextualize the demands of language politics. Following this, the effects of linguistic duality for party politics are outlined in a fourfold typology (see Table 1). First, a party can boost its cultural credentials through sustained effective communication with its linguistically-defined audience, as accomplished by the Liberal Party. Second, by contrast, marginalization of parties within a linguistic community occurs when they fail to communicate credibly and effectively in the target language, as observed with the Conservative and New Democratic parties. Third, where the ethnolinguistic divide is sufficiently salient, linguistically-defined separate parties such as the Bloc Quebecois can arise within this cleavage. Finally, linguistic message dissonance may occur, whereby parties send different and even incompatible messages to separate linguistic groups. Inconsistent messaging may be enabled by low levels of bilingualism, and high levels of segregation and mutual inattention between linguistic groups.

Background Conditions

I. Politicization of language

The responses of political parties to linguistic differences are contingent on several factors, broadly encompassed by two background conditions: the activation of language as a political issue, and the nature of linguistic diversity. In terms of the politicization of language, John Joseph argues that language is inescapably political. It is surrounded by a host of political questions such as, what counts as a correct or official form of language?[1] Over time, certain modes of speaking can come to imply status, subordination, or defiance.[2] Similarly, Monica Heller explains that language use in multilingual societies is not neutral: it conveys positions about the interlocutor's ethnicity, political positions, open-mindedness, and politeness.[3] In this manner, the mechanics of language can also become politicized. Factors such as the order in which information is presented, the tone of a text, or the accent of the speaker can lead to entirely different interpretations.[4]

Although most countries are multilingual, the salience of linguistic issues is highly variable. Societies may be subjected to debates over controversies such as minority language rights, education policy,

---

[1] Joseph is particularly concerned with who has the power to make choices surrounding use of language and why their desires prevail. John Joseph. 2013. *Language and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

[2] For example, the expectations for second language proficiency in a society may be revealing of these norms.

[3] Monica Heller. 1982. "Negotiations of Language Choice in Montreal," in John J. Gumprez ed. *Language and Social Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 108-118, as cited in Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge. 2004. *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters), 12.

[4] Joseph, *Language and Politics*, 16.

availability of multilingual public services, and official language status. A portion of these struggles stem from the allocation of limited state resources, including the extent to which the financial burden of multilingual services is incurred.[5] The benefits of multilingual services consist of enfranchising linguistic minorities and fostering more inclusive democratic life. Conversely, absent such services, social isolation may increase, intergroup relations may worsen, and socioeconomic outcomes for linguistic minorities may suffer.[6]

Yet another crucial component of these struggles stems from the desire for self-expression and recognition. Indeed, the politicization of language is linked to its centrality to individual and group identities. Group-based differentiations are formed easily based on little objective differences.[7] As Pavlenko and Blackledge explain, language is a highly salient and easily accessible point of differentiation, as well as a crucial component of identity. They suggest that the negotiation of identities in a multilingual society is conditioned by situational differences in power, rights, and privileges between different linguistic groups.[8] The history of these struggles will condition linguistic groups' perceptions of their shared identities.

Moreover, Clément and Noels find that members of linguistic minority groups tend to identify either with the dominant linguistic community or with their own group, but rarely with both. Some groups feature high ethnolinguistic vitality, featuring strong in-group identification and boundaries. Such groups experience fear of assimilation and are less likely to be proficient in the dominant group language. Conversely, those with weak ethnolinguistic vitality feature more open boundaries, weaker in-group identification or identify more readily with other groups.[9] These groups are more likely to assimilate and learn the dominant language. Even bilinguals or multilinguals typically identify more closely with one particular group.[10]

II. Nature of Linguistic Diversity

As a background condition for party responses to linguistic differences, the politicization of language is deeply connected to the nature of linguistic diversity in a society. Moreover, political parties' navigation of linguistic diversity is intertwined with language's relationship to other forms of diversity.

---

[5] Christina Bratt Paulson. 1994. *Linguistic Minorities in Multilingual Settings: Implications for Language Policies* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins).

[6] Josh Fishman. 1995. "Good conferences in a wicked world: On some worrisome problems in the study of language maintenance and language shift," In William Fase, Koen Jaspaert, and Sjaak Kroon, eds., *The State of Minority Languages: International Perspectives on Survival and Decline* (New York: Routledge), 311-317.

[7] See for example, Donald Horowitz. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).

[8] Pavlenko and Blackledge, *Negotiation of Identities,* 4.

[9] Richard Clement and Kimberly A. Noels. 1992. "Towards a Situated Approach to Ethnolinguistic Identity: The Effects of Status on Individuals and Groups," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 11(4), 203-232; Richard Clément, Kimberly A. Noels, and Bernard Deneault. 2001. "Interethnic Contact, Identity, and Psychological Adjustment: The Mediating and Moderating Roles of Communication," *Journal of Social Issues* 57(3), 559-577.

[10] For multilingual citizens, the same person can express different political views depending on the language they are using. According to Perez, this is because the accessibility of certain concepts is tied more to certain languages, which prime different attitudes and reactions. Efren Perez. 2016. "Rolling off the Tongue into the Top-of-the-Head: Explaining Language Effects on Public Opinion" *Political Behavior* 38(3), 603-634.

Accordingly, the extent of societal divisions is an important departure point for the study of language politics. Indeed, scholars who examine the governance of divided societies note that linguistic difference is typically but one element of complex diversity.[11] These scholars suggest that in deeply divided societies with histories of violence, politics is a high stakes affair.[12] Struggles over the use of language will thus take on such a character. In many of these cases, parties are tied to an ethnolinguistic or religious core group.[13] Ethnic elites within these parties emphasize group differences to mobilize political support. Parties seeking votes outside of their core ethnolinguistic group must respond carefully to language issues. Given intergroup hostility and suspicion, they may be punished by mutually hostile groups if they are viewed as favouring one side.[14] Similarly, even if parties do not behave as ethnic parties, they may have longstanding connections to certain ethnolinguistic communities, and thus benefit from their partisan loyalty.

Conversely, ethnic parties are uncommon in societies that are not deeply divided. The stakes of political decision-making are less dire, and can instead take on characteristics of a game.[15] Along these lines, parties who take on different positions in the realm of language politics do so in the spirit of ordinary political competition. They have less reason to fear permanently consigning their party to perceived ethnolinguistic favouritism.

The navigation of linguistic politics also depends heavily on the demographic mix of ethnolinguistic groups. Parties must decide whether to dedicate resources to multilingual outreach during elections and beyond. From a tactical perspective, parties attempting to construct winning coalitions must consider the cohesiveness of target ethnolinguistic groups and their propensity to vote as "blocs", their proportion of

---

[11] Group-based distinctions based on claims of nationhood and the resultant nationalist sentiment are also powerful in structuring political life as different groups seek to assert control over political institutions. See for example, Rogers Brubaker. 1996. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[12] See for example, John McGarry, Brendan O'Leary and Richard Simeon. 2008. "Integration or Accommodation? The Enduring Debate in Conflict Regulation," in Sujit Choudhry, ed., *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 41-90; Benjamin Reilly. 2010. "Centripetalism," in Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff ed, *The Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict* (London: Routledge), 288-99.

[13] See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 291-332. Horowitz argues that ethnic parties should be dis-incentivized and excluded from governing. Others such as Lijphart suggest that ethnic identities are durable and cannot be wished away; inclusion of ethnic segments in a grand governing coalition will prevent conflict. Arend Lijphart. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press). Similarly, O'Leary and McGarry argue that ethnic parties should be given a stake in the success of the political and incentivized to moderate. See John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary. 2009. "Power-Shared after Death of Thousands," in Rupert Taylor ed., *Consociational Theory: McGarry-O'Leary and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (London: Routledge), 15-84. Additionally, scholars disagree on which institutional incentives facilitate the formation of ethnic parties. See Johanna Kristin Birnir. 2007. *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

[14] Jonathan Pool. 1992. "The Multilingual Election Problem," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4(1), 31-52.

[15] Arend Lijphart. 1968. "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21(2), 207-225, citing Gabriel Almond. 1956. "Comparative Political Systems," *Journal of Politics*, XVIII (August I956), 398-99.

the population, and how they are dispersed relative to the country's electoral system.[16] Beyond a linguistic group's numerical strength, parties may target them for symbolic or ideological reasons.[17]

Lastly, linguistic diversity is the product of the presence of both national minorities and immigrant communities. Parties are more likely to focus multilingual political messaging and outreach to national minorities. This is because these groups' political claims and grievances are typically more ingrained in a country's political history than immigrant communities. Governments typically grant immigrant communities fewer linguistic accommodations due to expectations of integration into the host society. Immigrant groups, are also more likely to integrate their multiple ethnolinguistic identities, living both simultaneously.[18] Conversely, national minorities are more likely to resist assimilation if they have not already succumb to it.[19] Moreover, national minorities may constitute majorities in certain subnational units and control their own political institutions, which places these issues more readily onto the national agenda. Conversely, immigrant groups from disparate places of origin often have fewer organizational forces. They must have a sufficiently large population, and thus political importance, in order to constitute a salient force in structuring the linguistic dimension of party behaviour.

The Canadian case

Politicization of language

Federal parties' vote shares are tied to their linkages with certain regions and ethno-cultural groups.[20] Yet language can also independently affect party behaviour and electoral strength. French-English dualism invites particular requirements: leaders must speak a language other than their native tongue, parties must produce campaign materials in another language, and they must adopt political positions on linguistic issues such as the availability of public services. With the exception of the Quebec-based Bloc Quebecois, all federal political parties operate primarily in English. Importantly, the primary demand for parties imposed by French-English dualism is to produce French-language political messaging. This requirement is far more complex and onerous than message translation.

Indeed, linguistic duality is an important starting point for Canadian electoral politics. Parties confront an enduring linguistic cleavage and campaign in the country's two official languages. Still, the standard

---

[16] On ethnic bloc voting, see Raymond Wolfinger. 1965. "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," *American Political Science Review* 59(4), 896-908; John Ishiyama, 2012. "Explaining ethnic bloc voting in Africa," *Democratization* 19(4), 761-788.

On the importance of institutional design see Alan Cairns. 1968. "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 1(1), 55-80; Pippa Norris. 2004. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[17] For example, outreach to an indigenous population in their native language can send the message of a party's support for the group.

[18] Pavlenko and Blackledge, *Negotiation of Identities* 5.

[19] Clement and Noels, "Towards a Situated Approach to Ethnolinguistic Identity."

[20] William Cross. 2002. "The Increasing Importance of Region to Canadian Election Campaigns," in Lisa Young and Keith Archer eds. *Regionalism and Party Politics in Canada* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press), 116-128.

of bilingualism for party leaders is highly flexible.[21] Canada's French-speaking population, concentrated in the province of Quebec, has at times feared assimilation within a largely English-speaking continent. Meanwhile, the English-speaking minority within Quebec has often reacted against the province's language laws and other restrictions on the use of English.

The politicization of language in Canada is evidenced when federal politicians commit a faux pas with unspoken linguistic norms. For example, as a Liberal candidate in Montreal, Justin Trudeau prompted anger in Quebec when he released a four-minute campaign video in 2008, during which he continually switched back and forth between English and French in midsentence, implying a norm of bilingualism in an officially French-speaking province.[22] As Prime Minister, Trudeau was later criticized in English Canada for answering a town hall question in French that was posed to him in English. The question pertained to English-language health services in Quebec's Eastern townships, and Trudeau replied solely in French because the question was asked in a French-language mileu.[23] Both instances supposedly exhibited a lack of respect for a linguistic group, based on the speaker's choice of language.

Along these lines, there is a longstanding link in Canada between political parties and ethnolinguistic identity. Canadian political parties are largely brokerage parties, meaning they obscure differences between groups and attempt to construct as wide a coalition of supporters as possible.[24] However, even brokerage parties can feature ties to certain ethnolinguistic groups. From Wilfrid Laurier, at least until the Pierre Trudeau years, the Liberal Party came to be identified as the party which best represented Quebec francophones. Indeed, Quebec voters gave the Liberals a large head start in forming numerous majority governments during the twentieth century.

Nature of linguistic diversity

Although Canada is not a deeply divided society, there are enduring hostilities between French and English Canada.[25] Despite other cultural similarities between English Canadians and Quebecers, linguistic

---

[21] In some cases, federal party leaders have elicited controversy for their limited second language skills. During the 2008 campaign, Liberal leader Stephane Dion was often derided for his English-language skills, and drew significant negative attention when he had to re-start a CTV interview after failing to understand the question. At other times, linguistic limitations have the opposite effect. Jean Chretien famously spoke a rough and disjointed English, and this seemed to endear him with voters. Jeffrey Brooke. 2010. *Divided Loyalties: The Liberal Party of Canada, 1984-2008* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 222.

[22] Patrick Lagacé. 2008. "Justin Trudeau, really parfait bilingue," *La Presse*, September 8, 2008. Accessed March 28, 2017. http://blogues.lapresse.ca/lagace/2008/09/08/justin-trudeau-really-parfait-bilingue/

[23] Nancy Wood. 2017. "Justin Trudeau's language 'misstep' in Sherbrooke could have political fallout," *CBC News*, January 18, 2017. Accessed April 1, 2017. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/trudeau-language-fallout-1.3941934

[24] Kenneth Carty and William Cross. 2011. "Political Parties and the Practice of Brokerage Politics," in John Courtney and David Smith eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press), 191-207: 193.

[25] For example, Arend Lijphart's pioneering work on ethnic power-sharing arrangements in divided societies views Canada as "semi-consociaitonal." See Arend Lijphart, 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 119. Similarly, Richard Simeon finds Lijphart's model highly relevant to Canada due to the French-English segmental divide and overarching elite cooperation. See Richard Simeon. 2006 (1972). *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 290. Yet McRae notes that the French-English divide is significantly less segmented than the classic consociational examples in Europe such as The Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium. See Kenneth McRae (ed). 1974. *Consociational*

difference remains a striking point of differentiation and barrier to intergroup dialogue and common identity. As Heller argues, language portends "seemingly insurmountable obstacles which keep Canada's two major linguistic groups apart. And not just apart; alone, isolated form one another, unable to share the other's experience, and hence incapable of understanding the other's point of view."[26] In a context where Pierre Trudeau's bilingual Canada never materialized, the "two solitudes," continue to be separated by language.

Given their weak identification with outside groups and fear of assimilation, Quebec francophones have a high degree of ethnolinguistic vitality.[27] The preservation and importance of Quebecer's ethnolinguistic identity is undoubtedly bolstered by the territorial concentration of the group within a federal state. Since the 1960s, the provincial government has taken significant measures to elevate the status and utility of the French language. Nonetheless, despite these gains for the French language, Quebecers still attribute a greater sense of power and prestige to the English language. According to Kircher, this is a result of the utility English holds as a dominant global language.[28] The continued relevance of language as a political issue in Quebec features both a strong collective desire to preserve Quebec's *visage linguistique* and the acknowledgment of the power and importance of English.

Obstacles and Opportunities: A Typology of Multilingual Party Politics

This section relies on an historical analysis of party behaviour in Canada surrounding the French-English cleavage to explain four separate effects of linguistic diversity. The parties analysed include the Liberal Party, Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, and Bloc Quebecois.

I. Boosting cultural credentials: *Liberal Party of Canada*

Successful navigation of linguistic difference has boosted the Liberal Party's cultural credentials in French Canada. Indeed, the Liberals have historically benefited from Canada's linguistic cleavage. Early in the party's history, the Liberals secured an image as defender of French-Canadian interests, and dominated this voting bloc for roughly a century. Importantly, linguistic difference presented the opportunity for the Liberals to present themselves as linguistic insiders, and boost their cultural credentials within a distinct political community with an occasionally antagonistic relationship to the rest of the country.

Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart). Moreover, Cannon argues that for much of Canada's history, English-French relations featured a control relationship, with the "superordinate Anglo subculture dominant over the French segment." Gordon E. Cannon. 1982. Consociationalism vs. Control: Canada as a Casestudy. *The Western Political Quarterly* 31(1), 50-64.

[26] See Monica Heller. 1999. "Heated language in a cold climate," in Jan Blommaert ed. *Language ideological debates* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter), 143–170: 143.

[27] For in-group solidarity see, Ruth Kircher. 2014. "Thirty Years After Bill 101: A Contemporary Perspective on Attitudes Towards English and French in Montreal," *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 17(1), 20-50. On fear of assimilation, see André Bernard. 2008. "Les répercussions sociales et politiques de la Loi 101," in Pierre Georgeault and Michel Plourde, eds. *Le français au Québec: 400 ans d'histoire et de vie* (Montreal: Fides), 360-368.

[28] Kircher, "Thirty Years After Bill 101."

Table 1: Linguistic cleavages and electoral politics: the Canadian case features four outcomes[29]

Political outcome	*1. Boost cultural credentials*	*2. Linguistic marginalization*	*3. Linguistically-defined separate party*	*4. Linguistic message dissonance*
Electoral base	Relies on target ethnolinguistic group	In tension with/distant from target ethnolinguistic group	Relies solely on target ethnolinguistic group	Antagonistic, Segmented
Party leader language fluency	Bilingual	Unilingual (other language)	Unilingual (in-group language)	Bilingual, Division of labour
Inclusion of ethnolinguistic group in party	Involved, Participants	Excluded, Outsiders	Founders, Architects	Variable
Communications apparatus	Embedded, Significant resources	Fledgling, Non-existent	Homegrown	Bifurcated
Political communications	Sustained, Fluent	Sporadic, Variable	Sustained, Fluent	Variable
Sample party (party characteristics)	Liberal Party (brokerage)	Conservative Party, NDP, Green Party (ideology, issue-based)	Bloc Quebecois (ethnolinguistic grievance, identity-based)	TBD

Linguistic difference is inexorably linked to ethnocultural differences such as Quebec's Catholic tradition and shared group history. In explaining Liberal dominance in French Canada, Carty suggests an element of path dependency: "The Liberals established themselves as the genuine representative voice of Quebec in national politics in 1896 and then solidified their position during the conscription debates of 1917."[30] This connection was advanced through decades of francophone influence and involvement. Under the Liberals, francophones have occupied all senior political offices, set leading priorities for the federal government, and Quebec party caucuses have been vocal and effective. The Liberals have alternated between francophone and anglophone leaders. On average, one third of the cabinet positions in Liberal governments have been allocated to francophone Quebecers, and the (Liberal) Quebec majority party leader "has played the role of lieutenant to the (Liberal) Anglophone Prime Minister."[31]

---

[29] For the Canadian case, francophones are the relevant target linguistic group.

[30] Kenneth Carty. 2015. *Big Tent Politics: The Liberal Party's Long Mastery of Canada's Public Life* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 53.

[31] Gordon Cannon. 1982. Consociationalism vs. Control: Canada as a Casestudy. *The Western Political Quarterly* 31(1), 50-64: 50. Moreover, as Carty notes, "when the leader was an English-speaker, much was made of the role of

As Eric Belanger argues, the public gradually develops stable images of issue-handling and issue-ownership abilities of political parties. These images are based on performance and reputation.[32] Under the leadership of Laurier, King, Pearson, and Trudeau, the Liberal Party thus cultivated their francophone-centric party image, with a disproportionate amount of francophone staffers and advisors, prominent political figures, and strong organizational presence in Quebec.

Moreover, voters rely on sociodemographic characteristics as heuristic cues for vote choice.[33] The longstanding visibility of prominent francophone cabinet ministers and Prime Ministers solidifies a pro-francophone party image. Ethnolinguistic identity can be determined through a candidate's appearance or last name, providing a heuristic cue that they share a voter's identity and interests.[34] The Liberals have recruited prominent community figures at the local level, which is easier to accomplish when a chosen candidate is likely to win.[35]

Liberal dominance was especially pronounced during the Trudeau era, as the party held roughly 83 per cent of Quebec seats between 1965 and 1980.[36] Following the 1982 constitutional drama and departure of Trudeau, the Liberals had difficulty returning to their former glory in Quebec. The party's next leader, John Turner, made significant communications errors in Quebec:

> Confident in his Paris-learned French…(Turner) accepted the challenge to a French-language debate with the colloquially bilingual Brian Mulroney. Where Turner was stiff, Mulroney was fluent. When Turner spoke in generalities; Mulroney spoke with well-rehearsed sincerity and concern for Quebec's specific political problems. Mulroney affirmed his affinity with Quebec; Turner communicated his distance in both time and space.[37]

a French lieutenant, and figures like Ernest Lapointe and Louis St-Laurent were accorded disproportionate influence in party councils and government decision-making." Carty, *Big Tent Politics*, 120.

[32] Eric Belanger. 2003. "Issue Ownership by Canadian Political Parties, 1953-2001," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36(3), 539-558.

[33] Fred Cutler. 2002. The Simplest Shortcut of All: Sociodemographic Characteristics and Electoral Choice. *The Journal of Politics* 64(2) 466-490. For an explanation of the more general use of information shortcuts in vote choice, see Arthur Lupia, Matthew McCubbins, and Samuel Popkin eds., *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[34] Mueller finds that ethnic name identification can have a similar effect, allowing voters to "conclude that the best method for electing candidates congenial to their point of view would be to vote for those with names from their own ethnic group." John E. Mueller, 1970. "Choosing Among 133 Candidates," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 33(4), 395-402: 398.

[35] See William Cross and Lisa Young. "Candidate Recruitment in Canada," in Amanda Bittner and Royce Koop eds., *Parties, Elections, and the Future of Canadian Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 24-45.
Based on their party image and past electoral success, Liberal candidates are more likely to be well-known in their ridings, providing further advantage in name recognition. See Cindy D. Kam and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2013. "Name Recognition and Candidate Support," *American Journal of Political Science* 57(4) 971-986: 985.

[36] Éric Bélanger and Richard Nadeau. 2012. "Quebec versus the Rest of Canada," in Mebs Kanji, Antoine Bilodeau and Thomas J. Scotto eds., *The Canadian Election Studies: Assessing Four Decades of Influence* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 136-153: 139.

[37] Clarkson emphasizes the political consequences of this event, since "Polls taken immediately after the French debate showed a swing of 10 to 12 percent from the Liberals to the Conservatives in Quebec." Clarkson, 124-5. The result being that Turner managed "to deepen doubts about his commitment to the defence of the French language

Relatedly, the 1980s witnessed an end to the solidly Liberal Quebec. Indeed, party images are not impervious to change. Trudeau's 1982 constitutional patriation efforts without Quebec's consent were an affront many Quebecers' conceptions of the Canadian political community and deeply-held facets of identity. Gerard Bergeron writes: "How could some Quebecers not be inclined to take this exclusion personally when matters of such importance could be decided in the absence of their representatives?"[38] Kenneth McRoberts' argues that the Liberal Party's subsequent electoral decline in Quebec stemmed from resentment with Trudeau, and francophones' perturbation with the treatment of Quebec's national interests.[39]

The Liberals' longstanding connection to Quebec was substantially weakened, though not entirely broken. Even with Jean Chretien, a fixture of Quebec politics as their leader, the Liberals won their 1993 "majority government without the support of Quebec."[40] Instead, the Bloc Quebecois dominated Quebec federal politics at the Liberals' expense through the next six elections. Nonetheless, the Liberals' party image continues to provide a head start in candidate recruitment in Quebec. The party's strong Quebec performance in 2015 suggests that the Liberals continue to be the default federalist option in the province.

II. Linguistic marginalization

Linguistic difference can also present an obstacle which parties struggle to overcome. For many decades, the Conservative and New Democratic parties had difficulty accommodating this diversity, with negligible francophone support.

a. *The Conservative Party*

The Conservatives and their surrogates failed to effectively communicate with Quebecers in their language, arguably until the 1980s. The Conservatives' struggle to gain a foothold in Quebec can be traced to several related issues, which include the party's anglo-Protestant core of support, their related affinity for the British empire, and insensitivity towards francophones.[41] In this respect, La Terreur emphasizes the failure of the Conservative Party's English-speaking leadership to develop a strategy to appeal to francophones for much of the twentieth century. Instead of acknowledging Canada's cultural

and culture…he showed how badly he'd misunderstood the significance to Quebeckers of the referendum's defeat…and their humiliating exclusion from the federal-provincial constitutional accord in 1981 by declaring he would not negotiate a deal with the separatist government of Rene Levesque." Stephen Clarkson. 2005. *The Big Red Machine: How the Liberal Party Dominates Canadian Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 124.

[38] Gérard Bergeron. 1983. "Quebec in Isolation," in *And No One Cheered: Federalism, Democracy, and the Constitution Act*, Keith Banting and Richard Simeon eds. (Toronto: Methuen Publications). As cited in McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 182.

[39] McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 179.

[40] Ibid, 239.
Chretien faced the challenge of navigating the country through a second referendum on Quebec sovereignty. However, the "No" side demanded that federal politicians stay on the sidelines and leave the campaign to be managed by federalists within Quebec. Ibid, 276.

[41] Carty, *Big Tent Politics*, 122.
Catholic voters across Canada have always been more likely to support the Liberal Party, an enduring puzzle for scholars of Canadian voting behaviour. Historically, this trend was especially problematic for Conservatives in the overwhelmingly Catholic province of Quebec. André Blais. 2005. "Accounting for the Success of the Liberal Party of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 38(4): 821-40.

and linguistic duality, party rhetoric embraced anglophone big business and loyalty to the empire. All important positions in the party were filled by English-speakers, justified with references to merit. Francophone voices within the party were marginalized.[42] This led to Quebec electoral strategy being developed by English-speakers, as well as difficulty recruiting qualified francophone candidates and staff to the party fold.

Although Quebec society between the 1960s and 1980s was "more religious, more conservative, and less interested in international issues and politics more generally than the ROC…(with) autonomist sentiment…tempered,"[43] these trends did not suffice to erase the party's apparent foreignness to Quebec voters. At last, the constitutional aftershock of 1982 presented an opening for the Conservatives. This opportunity was seized by Brian Mulroney, who skillfully leveraged his Quebec roots and colloquial bilingualism. During the 1984 French-language television leaders' debate, Mulroney showcased his affinity with Quebecers, speaking with "well-rehearsed sincerity and concern for Quebec's specific political problems."[44] He drove home the constitutional issue, promising to gain Quebec's signature with honour and enthusiasm.[45] This approach was effective in siphoning Liberal support in Quebec. The Liberals' vote share in Quebec fell from 68 percent in 1980 to 35 percent in 1984, to the benefit of the Conservatives.[46]

While Quebec's constitutional dissatisfactions were an important harbinger of the Tories' increased standing, Mulroney's French-language skills should not be overlooked. Virtually every previous Conservative leader had struggled to speak coherent French. In contrast to the Liberals, they could not convincingly address Quebecers in their own language to ask for their votes. This enabled the Liberals to continually paint the Tories as hostile to Quebec's interests.[47]

---

[42] Marc La Terreur. 1973. *Les tribulations des conservateurs au Québec: De Bennett à Diefenbaker* (Quebec City: Les Presses de l'Université Laval).

[43] Nadeau and Belanger, "Quebec versus the Rest of Canada," 139.

[44] Clarkson, *The Big Red Machine*, 124.

[45] Mulroney recognized the significance of nationalist sentiments, reaching out to Premier Réné Lévesque, who was receptive to Mulroney's efforts and the acknowledgement that Quebec's needs were not met under the existing constitutional framework.Alain G. Gagnon. 1994. "Québec-Canada: cironvolutions constitutionnelles," in Alain G. Gagnon, ed. *Quebec: État et Société*, Tome 1 (Québec: Québec/Amérique), 112-142. Lévesque endorsed the *beau risque*, claiming "All this gives us hope that we can finally find government leaders in Ottawa who will discuss Quebec's demands seriously and work with us for the greater good of Quebecers." Gerard Boismenu. 1985. "Backing down or compromising the future: Quebec's constitutional proposals," in Peter Leslie ed. *Canada: State of the Federation 1985*, (Queen's University*: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations*), 47-60: 48.

[46] McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 179.
Canada-wide, the Liberal Party share of the popular vote fell from 44 percent in 1980 to 28 percent in 1984. See "Electoral Results by Party." 2016. Parliament of Canada: *Library of Parliament.* http://www.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/Compilations/ElectionsAndRidings/ResultsParty.aspx?Season=0&Parliament=4ae94 798-0b56-4f9c-b48e-d2fb6c7aede6

[47] To this day, lingering perceptions of the Tories' remoteness from francophones is linked to failures to communicate in ways which transcend the linguistic cleavage. For example, when prominent businessman, reality TV star, and unilingual anglophone Kevin O'Leary recently quit the Conservative Party leadership race in April 2017, he cited his failure to communicate with and win the support of Quebecers as the reason for his departure.

Despite Mulroney's ascendancy, Conservative strength in Quebec was fleeting, as their national support drew from an especially incoherent coalition of "francophones and francophobes."[48] The precarious union collapsed on both sides of this spectrum. Many Quebecers turned towards sovereignty after the failure of two constitutional accords stoked resentment of English Canada's continual rejections of their constitutional aspirations.

Thereafter, the Conservatives were relegated to the political wilderness until the merger of the right-leaning Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives in 2003. The rebranded Conservative Party's first leader was Stephen Harper, who approached the challenge of rebuilding Conservative support in Quebec with fervour. Harper worked tirelessly on improving his French, dedicated substantial party resources to Quebec, courted star candidates, and developed party policies to appeal to Quebec nationalists that emphasized decentralization and greater provincial autonomy.[49] Paré and Berger suggest that Conservative growth in Quebec from "giving greater precedence to the Québec electorate's concerns and by working toward improving Harper's French-language skills."[50] Importantly, prior to the 2006 election, the Conservatives developed a sophisticated tailored messaging apparatus for the Quebec market.[51] As Conservative strategist Ian Brodie explains, this entailed made-in-Quebec content which spoke to the province's linguistic and cultural tropes, idiosyncrasies, and sense of humour. These efforts proved effective, as the Conservative vote share in Quebec increased from 8.8 percent in 2004 to 24.6 percent in 2006.[52]

While the Conservatives retained respectable support in Quebec through three subsequent elections, the electoral system produced a disproportionately small number of Quebec seats including just five seats when the Conservatives formed a majority government in 2011.[53] These results left Harper with a modest roster from which to choose Quebec cabinet ministers. Despite nearly ten years in power, few prominent Conservative francophone ministers endured on the federal scene, compared to previous Liberal governments. Nonetheless, recruiting prominent francophone candidates to the party entailed increased integration with right-leaning provincial politicians in Quebec, thus combatting the federal party's image as a far-right, anglo-centric coalition based in Western Canada. Accordingly, the Harper track record in Quebec is one of mixed success. Although the party substantially improved its performance relative to the 1990s, support seemed to plateau in the low 20 percent range.

---

[48] Richard Johnston, Andre Blais, Henry Brady, and Jean Crête. 1992. *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press), 73. Nadeau and Belanger argue that "Quebec's support for the PC party during the 1980s was in large part attributable to a rejection of the Liberal party's constitutional positions." Belanger and Nadeau, "Quebec versus the Rest of Canada," 140.

[49] Chantal Hebert. 2008. *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date with Quebec* (Toronto: Vintage Canada).

[50] Daniel Paré and Flavia Berger. 2008. "Political Marketing Canadian Style? The Conservative Party and the 2006 Federal Election," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 33(1), 39-63: 51. During the 2006 campaign, the Conservatives' polling numbers in Quebec rose considerably following a Quebec City speech where Harper endorsed 'open federalism,' and greater provincial autonomy, as well as addressing the fiscal imbalance and permitting a greater provincial role on the international stage. Ibid.

[51] Jennifer Lees-Marshment. 2012. The Impact of Market Research on Political Decisions and Leadership: Practitioners' Perspectives," in Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson, and Jennifer Lees-Marshment eds., *Political Marketing in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 91-106: 100-1.

[52] "Official Voting Results, 39th General Election." 2006. *Elections Canada*.
http://www.elections.ca/scripts/OVR2006/default.html
"Official Voting Results, 40th General Election." 2008. *Elections Canada*
http://www.elections.ca/scripts/OVR2008/default.html

[53] Their share of the popular vote varied from 16 to 22 percent between 2008 and 2015.

   b.   *New Democratic Party*

While facing a different set of challenges in the French-language political marketplace, the NDP has also failed to communicate effectively with francophones. Here, part of the NDP's struggles stem from the lack of pan-Canadian union affiliations. In English Canada, formal and informal linkages to unions form an important core of NDP support. However, from the time of its founding in 1961, the party was weakened in Quebec by the failure to form union affiliations. Importantly, language plays a major role in the separation of Quebec and English-Canadian unions. The union movement is stronger in Quebec than in any other Canadian province, yet Quebecers have always aligned themselves with provincially-based unions.[54] Conversely, many Canadian unions maintain a feeble presence in Quebec. This challenge can be traced to the time of the NDP's founding during the 1960s. At this time, some Quebec unions on the federal scene, such as the Conféderation Catholique des Travailleurs du Canada, supported the Liberal Party. Other unions were left out of the process of building the NDP in Quebec, and still others chose to remain at arms length.[55] The early leadership of the NDP was wary of the nationalism of Quebec unions, as they sought to emphasize the role of the NDP in building a united Canada.[56]

Lamoureux also highlights the NDP's failure to establish organizational roots in the province. Indeed, Quebec is the only province where there is no provincial NDP.[57] During the 1976 election, the NDP attempted to establish an electoral presence in Quebec provincial politics. The party joined with the Regroupement des militants syndicaux (RMS) to field candidates 21 candidates. This incursion was a failure, with the 21 candidates combined receiving only 3,101 votes. Meanwhile, the victorious Parti Quebecois was endorsed by the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), and the Centrale des syndicats du Québec.[58] Thus, unlike for the deeply-entrenched Liberal Party, "le peuple québécois, dans une forte majorité, n'a jamais reconnu

---

[54] Deena White. 2012. "Interest Representation and Organization in Civil Society: Quebec and Ontario Compared", *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 25(2), 199-229.

[55] André Lamoureux. 1985. *Le NPD et le Québec* (Montréal: Éditions du Parc), 83.
Additionally, the union movement in Quebec was increasingly tied to Quebec's national aspirations. Lamoureux highlights the NDP's failure to address these aspirations in a manner acceptable to Quebecers. He argues that, "le probleme fundamental qui rencontre le NPD depuis sa foundation reside dans sa position sur le Québec. L'incapacité manifestée par le parti à se construire au Quebec…(renvoie) aux positions développées par la direction fédérale à l'égard des aspirations nationales du peuple québécois." Ibid, 202.

[56] Ibid, 152. Divisions between the Quebec and federal party wings persisted, and in the late 1980s the Quebec NDP formally disassociated itself, over policy disagreements surrounding Quebec's language policy, the Free Trade Agreement, and the Meech Lake Accord. Lexier highlights the role of the Waffle movement, the NDP's short-lived radical wing, which "advocated for the formation of an alliance between socialists in English Canada and Quebec…(and) ardently supported the right of Quebeckers to decide for themselves whether or not to remain as part of a united country." Lexier notes that the NDP establishment was concerned about making any statement that could be interpreted as encouraging separatism. The movement was effectively purged from the party by the early 1980s. Roberta Lexier. 2017. "Two nations in Canada: the New Democratic Party, the Waffle movement and nationalism in Quebec/Deux nations au Canada: le Nouveau Parti Démocrate, le 'Waffle' et le nationalisme au Québec," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 30(1), 1-22: 17.

[57] While there is also no Conservative party in Quebec provincial politics, there are greater linkages between the federal Conservatives and the Quebec Liberals as well as the right-leaning Coalition Avenir Quebec and their predecessor, Action Democratique du Quebec. For example, former Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest once led the federal Conservative Party.

[58] Lamoureux, *Le NPD et le Quebec*, 161-2.

ce parti comme le sien."[59] Instead, the NDP was historically viewed as a party of outsiders that embraces anglo-Canadian nationalism and a centralizing view of federalism.[60]

Like other provinces, Quebec has sometimes shown an appetite for anti-establishment politics. Yet when Quebec voters have turned away from the Liberals and Conservatives, the NDP has not typically benefitted from this search for alternatives. Historically, voters in Quebec drawn to economic populism found a voice through the Créditistes. As explained by Meisel, "in a sense, the class role performed by the NDP elsewhere in Canada is assumed in Quebec by the rallying of the Créditistes."[61] In more recent decades, the sovereignist Bloc Quebecois has benefited from more general dissatisfaction with the federal system.

Despite these setbacks, the NDP's fortunes in Quebec improved dramatically in 2011. Lamoureux argues that this developmoent had little to do with party policies towards Quebec: "la plate-forme électorale du NPD ne contient rien sur le Québec et qu'elle demeure largement inconnue du public; alors même que le parti persiste dans ses prises de position et conceptions centralisatrices de la fédération canadienne."[62] Instead, Lamoureux argues that the NDP's rise can be attributed to overriding distaste for the Harper government, and the popularity of NDP leader Jack Layton relative to Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff. Fournier et al. argue that NDP success in Quebec was largely due to the personal popularity of Layton, and the proximity between the NDP's issue positions and Quebecers' values.[63] Importantly, both accounts underline the importance of Layton's French-language outreach. As with the Conservatives, NDP growth in Quebec has been limited by successive party leaders' lack of fluency in French, which changed under Layton. As an anglophone Quebecer who left for Ontario in his twenties, Layton worked to improve his French when he secured the NDP leadership.[64] Lysiane Gagnon explains that Layton's down-to-earth unpolished accent and syntax gained favour with Quebecers, "(his) French is colloquial, and his syntax often faulty. His working-class accent sounds familiar, but it is very different from the mainstream accent that is considered the norm…by the news anchors of Société Radio-Canada."[65]

Furthermore, under Layton, the NDP attempted to recruit prominent French-speaking candidates and to develop a made-in-Quebec advertising strategy.[66] Fournier et al. trace the turning point in the NDP's Quebec surge to Layton's appearance on the popular French-language talk show *Tout le monde en parle*,

---

[59] Lamoureux, *Le NPD et le Quebec*, 203.

[60] André Lamoureux. 2012. "Impasse historique, vague orange et nouvelle ère Mulcair : le Nouveau Parti démocratique et l'épreuve du Québec," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 211, 207–253: 213.

[61] John Meisel. 1975. *Working Papers on Canadian Politics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 7 as cited in Nadeau and Belanger, "Quebec versus the Rest of Canada," 140.

[62] Lamoureux, "Impasse historique," 213.

[63] Patrick Fournier, Fred Cutler, Stuart Soroka, Dietlind Stolle, and Eric Belanger. 2013. "Riding the Orange Wave: Leadership, Values, Issues, and the 2011 Canadian Election," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 46(4), 863-897.

[64] Lamoureux, "Impasse historique."

[65] Lysiane Gagnon. 2011. "Three Leaders, Three Accents," *Globe and Mail,* April 18, 2011. Accessed April 2, 2017. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/three-leaders-three-accents/article624116/

[66] Layton's quest for an NDP breakthrough in Quebec also included recruiting prominent candidates like former Liberal politicians Francoise Boivin and Thomas Mulcair, and journalist Anne Lagacé Dowson. See Brad Lavigne. 2012. "Anatomy of the Orange Crush: Ten Years in the Making," *Policy Options,* June-July 2012, 93-101: 98.

where he charmed Quebecers with his colloquial French and cultivated a public image as *le bon Jack*.[67] Layton was also viewed as performing well in the French language debate. Following his death in August 2011, the NDP selected bilingual Quebecer Thomas Mulcair as their new leader.

The NDP's linguistic and cultural outreach continued after 2011, with the party endorsing the extension of Bill 101 to federal workplaces, offering Quebec the right to opt out with compensation from federal programs, and railing against unilingualism in the Harper government appointments.[68] Although the Liberals carried the majority of Quebec ridings in the 2015 election, the NDP obtained 25 percent of votes in the province.[69] This feat remains impressive for a party that regularly failed to obtain over 5 percent of the Quebec vote since its founding and did not win a single general election seat in the province until 2008.[70] Quebec now forms a crucial part of the NDP's political base and a large proportion of their party caucus. The party has taken steps to dislodge the Liberal lock on Quebec, and shake off its longstanding linguistic marginalization.

III. Linguistically-defined separate parties: *The Bloc Quebecois*

The Bloc Quebecois are a centre-left coalition of disaffected Quebec nationalists. The Bloc campaigns solely in French and does not run candidates outside of Quebec. While the party endorses Quebec independence, it has attracted the support of many "soft nationalists" who view it as the best vehicle for the advancement of Quebec's interests. Moreover, its emergence is directly tied to skepticism and a loss of affinity towards the Liberals and Conservatives. Indeed, the Bloc was founded in 1991 by former Liberal and Conservative MPs from Quebec.[71] According to Tremblay, the Bloc's creation and initial success resulted from the failure of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown constitutional accords.[72]

---

[67] Fournier et al., "Riding the Orange Wave," 10.

[68] Ibid, 124. Belanger and Nadeau (2016) explain that as Official Opposition, "many of the NDP's proposed bills and various policy positions…directly involved the protection of the French language in various spheres. These included attempts to require the understanding of French as a criterion in the selection of Supreme Court justices, opposition to the appointment of Michael Ferguson (a unilingual Anglophone) as Auditor General, a proposal to subject all Quebec-based federal offices to a number of French language norms, and another, to make bilingualism mandatory for senior public officer positions." Éric Bélanger and Richard Nadeau. 2016. "The Bloc Québécois in a Rainbow-Coloured Quebec," in Jon Pammett and Christopher Dornan eds., *The Canadian Federal Election of 2015* (Toronto: Dundurn Press), 117-140: 119.

Mulcair also explains his party's objectives for the defense of the French language in: Alec Castonguay 2015. "Entrevue: La longue route de Thomas Mulcair," *L'Actualité,* July 17, 2015. http://lactualite.com/politique/2015/07/17/entrevue-la-longue-route-de-thomas-mulcair/

For the NDP's position on Quebec's right to opt out with compensation and no conditions, see Joan Bryden 2015. "NDP offers Quebec right to opt out of federally-funded programs," Globe and Mail, October 2, 2015. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ndp-offers-quebec-right-to-opt-out-of-federally-funded-programs/article26637085/

[69] "General Election, October 19, 2015" *Elections Canada*, Accessed March 1, 2017. http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&document=index&dir=pas/42ge&lang=e

[70] Lamoureux, "Impasse historique," 225.

[71] Martine Tremblay. 2015. *La rébellion tranquille : Une histoire du Bloc québécois (1990-2011)* (Montréal: Québec Amérique), 118.

[72] Ibid, 154.

The Bloc contested their first federal election in 1993, winning roughly 50 percent of the vote in Quebec and two thirds of the province's parliamentary seats.[73] Blais et al. find that the Bloc's support came primarily from sovereignists, but also from non-sovereignist nationalists, young voters dissatisfied with the major parties, and voters whose economic situation had deteriorated.[74]

The results of subsequent elections indicated that the Bloc's rise did not result from a short-lived protest vote. Indeed, the party's enduring popularity indicated Quebecers' continued dissatisfaction with federal politics, and Quebecers search for a party they could identify with amongst a dearth of options in the federalist parties. The Bloc's success also stemmed from the popularity of party leaders Lucien Bouchard and Gilles Duceppe.[75] The party intended to dismantle their political formation following a successful "Yes" vote on Quebec sovereignty.[76]

If the Bloc was never intended to last beyond the 1995 referendum and voters grew increasingly tired of constitutional debates, why would francophone Quebecers continue to massively support the party? Seemingly, the Bloc successfully put forth the notion that they were directly tied to Quebecers' linguistic and cultural identities, as the only authentic option for the advancement of Quebec's interests. This strategy is evidenced in slogans such as "Présent pour le Québec," "Parlons Québec," "Un parti propre au Québec," and "Hereusement ici c'est le Bloc."[77] Thus Duceppe maintained the relevance of the Bloc in an era where many Quebecers grew tired of constitutional debates.[78] This strategy also included emphasizing issues surrounding the defense of French in Montreal and the cultural space between Quebec and English Canada. For example, in the 2004 federal leaders' debate, Duceppe famously said that Quebecers are not inferior, not superior, but just different than Canadians.[79] Under his leadership, the Bloc continued to perform well in the five federal elections held between 1997 and 2008 elections.

---

[73] André Blais, Neil Nevitte, Elisabeth Gidengil, Henry Brady, and Richard Johnston. 1995. "L'élection fédérale de 1993: le comportement électoral des Québécois," *Revue québécoise de science politique* 27 (Spring 1995), 15–49.

[74] Ibid, 46.

[75] Tremblay, *La rébellion tranquille*, 586.

Bouchard led the Bloc through the 1995 sovereignty referendum. He was widely viewed as a greater asset to the "Yes" campaign than Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau.
Mario Cardinal. 2005. *Point de Rupture: Quebec/Canada: Le référendum de 1995* (Montreal: Bayard).

[76] Tremblay, *La rébellion tranquille*, 118. After the victory of the "No" side in the 1995 referendum, Jacques Parizeau resigned as Premier of Quebec, and Lucien Bouchard was appointed in his place. This left Duceppe to lead a party meant to cease its existence.

[77] In explaining one such slogan, the Bloc claimed 'that "'Présent! pour le Québec' - est lié au rôle du Bloc et à sa détermination à faire reconnaître la nation québécoise par des gestes concrets touchant la langue, la culture et l'identité." "Dévoilement du nouveau slogan du Bloc Québécois. " *Bloc Quebecois*. April 14, 2008. Accessed March 20, 2017. http://www.blocquebecois.org/2008/04/devoilement-du-nouveau-slogan-du-bloc-quebecois/

[78] As Nadeau and Bastien recount, "with the conservative ascension in 2006, the bloc had to re-tool from being the defender of Quebec's powers to a bulwark against Harper's conservative agenda and emphasized the distance from Harper's values and Quebecers." Richard Nadeau and Frédérick Bastien. 2017. "Political Campaigning," in Alain G. Gagnon and Brian Tanguay eds. *Canadian Parties in Transition*, 4th edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 364-387: 370.

[79] Gilles Duceppe. "2004 Canadian Federal Election Debate." *Youtube*. Accessed March 20, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xC7svVM2d9U

However, support for the Bloc declined significantly during the 2011 campaign. Belanger and Nadeau argue that campaign dynamics in Quebec favoured an insurgent party who could replace the unpopular Harper Conservatives. The Conservatives had offended Quebecers with unpopular cuts to cultural programs, foreign policy decisions, the axing of the federal gun registry, and the appointment of unilingual senior public servants.[80] Yet the Bloc cannot replace the Conservatives since they do not run candidates outside of Quebec.[81]

In attempting to forestall the unexpected NDP surge, the Bloc shifted their strategy to emphasize the sovereignty issue.[82] This sovereignty focus constituted a serious misreading of the Quebec electorate, given the "nationalist debate not being salient at all in the 2011 election."[83] This was especially true as the NDP benefited from a likeable fluently French-speaking leader, who integrated many of the province's traditional concerns into their party platform. As a result, the Bloc was reduced to 23.4 percent of the Quebec vote and just four seats.[84]

Thus, the Bloc's existence and persistence is tied to francophone alienation relative to linguistic and cultural insecurity: ebbs and flows the party's electoral fortunes are tied to both the salience of these issues and the ability of other parties to assuage these grievances. The Conservatives and NDP drastically increased their willingness and ability to do this in the late 2000s, and the Liberals have re-emerged as a viable option in Quebec, especially when traditional left-right political issues displace the national question. Moreover, while it emerged as a linguistically-defined separate party, the Bloc faces a more difficult path to success in an era where all four federal parties have viable support bases in Quebec, as well as party leadership attuned to the francophone electoral marketplace.

IV. Linguistic Message Dissonance

The potential for linguistic message inconsistency constitutes the final effect of multilingualism for party politics. What types of variation exist between campaign messages in different languages?

---

[80] These items were often decried in the pages of Quebec's largest newspapers such as Le Devoir and La Presse, see for example, Vincent Marissal. 2013. "Le Canada, un pas pire 'deal'" *La Presse*, Accessed March 1, 2017. http://www.lapresse.ca/debats/chroniques/vincent-marissal/201301/22/01-4613667-le-canada-un-pas-pire-deal.php

[81] Duceppe often repeated that only the Bloc stood between Stephen Harper and a majority government. Belanger and Nadeau describe the Bloc's 2011 party platform: "Right at the beginning of the document, on page 10, there is a blank page with a single sentence in the middle, 'Au Québec, le seul parti capable de barrer la route aux Conservateurs, c'est le Bloc Québecois.'" See Belanger and Nadeau, "Capsized by the Orange Wave," 119. Yet, the "central question that gradually came to face voters in Quebec was not simply which party could prevent a Conservative majority, but which one could prevent a Conservative government at all. Contrary to the limited possibility for the Bloc, the NDP could actually aspire to replace…this right-wing government that was so decried by Gilles Duceppe and his team." Ibid, 111.

[82] The Bloc never viewed the NDP as a true competitor, omitting the party from its entire platform while focusing attacks on the Liberals and Conservatives. Belanger and Nadeau, "Capsized by the Orange Wave," 119. When the NDP surged in mid-campaign polling, the Bloc shifted strategies by reminding Quebecers that the NDP is a federalist party. Duceppe claimed the election would be followed by a Parti Quebecois victory in 2012 and a third sovereignty referendum. This strategy resulted in "an explosion in sovereignty coverage." Fournier et al., "Riding the Orange Wave," 872. As Fournier et al. explain, "the Bloc message might have been effective among diehard sovereigntists in getting out the party's core vote, but it may well also have backfired among the more numerous soft nationalists who often support the Bloc in order to defend the interests of Quebec on the federal scene." Ibid.

[83] Belanger and Nadeau, "Capsized by the Orange Wave," 111.

[84] Ibid, 127. Duceppe returned to federal politics as leader of the Bloc to contest the 2015 election, again losing his former seat to the NDP's Hélène Laverdière.

Surprisingly little attention has been paid to linguistic message dissonance, initially mentioned by Jonathan Pool as a possible byproduct of multilingual campaigning. Pool does not label such an effect as "message dissonance," yet he explains that with a language barrier, political parties may tell different groups of voters what they perceive they want to hear, without fear of being overheard by other groups.[85] Pool's context for linguistic message dissonance conceives of deeply divided societies, with high levels of suspicion between mutually antagonistic groups, and strong language barriers. Pool suggests that multilingual campaigns can empower bilingual intermediaries to distort and manipulate political messages.[86] His model conceives of different ethnolinguistic groups as having mutually exclusive interests and does not consider the potential for cross-cutting cleavages between groups.

Such a model is less applicable to countries such as Canada, which are characterized by peaceful intergroup relations, as well as disinterest and separation between the major linguistic groups.[87] Yet the Canadian case is significant in suggesting that linguistic message variation may be more widespread and consequential than has been acknowledged. Conservative strategist Ian Brodie states that "'the uniqueness of the Quebec political situation compared to the rest of the country is an issue you have to keep in mind continuously.' (It) encouraged different demands, and thus necessitated different responses but without being contradictory because 'people will call you, to your detriment, on saying different things on different sides of the Ottawa river.'"[88] Yet it is not known when and how often message differences are exposed. Accordingly, more research is also needed on the kind of variation which exists and whether these differences are publicized.

Canadian election campaigns are highly regionalized, with the Quebec campaign being 'most distinct' of all.[89] There are strong incentives to tailor political messages, and all English-language messages must be reconfigured in order to translate for the francophone marketplace. Additionally, there are low levels of attention, and high levels of mutual disinterest between Quebec and English Canada. Occasionally, a federal party leader is criticized for saying different things in French and English. For example, during the 2015 federal campaign, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair was accused of adopting different positions on the Energy East pipeline when speaking to English and French audiences.[90] Importantly, while party leaders may receive media scrutiny for their statements, Canadian federal elections also feature 338 constituency-level races which receive far less scrutiny. This structural reality is a function of Canada's vast geography, regionalism, and single-member-plurality electoral system. The existence and potential for linguistic message dissonance in Canada suggests this concept may be more significant than previously understood.

---

[85] Pool, "The Multilingual Election Problem," 32.

[86] Ibid.

[87] See Heller, "Heated language in a cold climate"; Rachelle Vessey. 2016. *Language and Canadian Media: Representations, Ideologies, Policies* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan).

[88] Ibid, 95.

[89] Many scholars have emphasized the regionalized nature of Canadian election campaigns. See for example William Cross. 2002. "The Increasing Importance of Region to Canadian Election Campaigns," in Lisa Young and Keith Archer eds. *Regionalism and Party Politics in Canada* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press), 116-128; Elisabeth Gidengil. 2012. "The Diversity of the Canadian Political Marketplace," in Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson, and Jennifer Lees-Marshment eds., *Political Marketing in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 39-58.

[90] Michel Auger. "Le double discours de Thomas Mulcair" *Radio Canada*. 12 August, 2015. Accessed March 8, 2017.

Indeed, variation in message framing or content may signal an accountability problem if citizens are unaware of claims underpinning campaigns across the country. Moroever, multilingual politics can imbue rhetoric with a different and potentially more divisive character than is possible when campaigning in only one language. Unilingual voters may encounter messages in another language when a statement attracts significant media attention, yet most campaign messages remain untranslated and unheard by the other linguistic group. In this context, politicians may be less likely to avoid divisive or alienating items which may be overheard by a secondary audience. Therefore, the electoral dynamics of language politics can affect intergroup relations, the inclusion of ethnolinguistic minorities, political accountability, and broader quality of democratic life.

Conclusion

This paper has explained the demands that linguistic difference imposes for political parties. These requirements are shaped by background conditions including the politicization of language and the nature of linguistic diversity. There is significant variation in parties' abilities to respond effectively to linguistic diversity. Based on evidence from Canadian federal elections, the paper has presented a typology with four potential effects of multilingual party politics. These effects include the boosting of parties' cultural credentials, linguistic marginalization, the emergence of linguistically-defined parties, and linguistic message dissonance. Further research is required to determine the scope of dissonant messaging in multilingual countries, as well as its effects on the political process.