The Political Party in Canada

Contents

1

Political Parties and Their Place in Canadian Democratic Life

Political parties are often characterized as a fundamental political institution, perhaps even *the* fundamental political institution that defines contemporary democratic politics. Minimalist definitions of parties focus on the fact that they nominate candidates for election, as this activity is what generally separates parties from other politically oriented organizations such as interest or advocacy groups. In reality, however, political parties do so much more than simply nominate candidates. Indeed, the list of functions that political parties perform is significant and includes the organization of government, the formation of policy, the aggregation and articulation of interests, the recruitment and selection of party personnel (candidates, leaders, etc.), the integration and mobilization of individuals into the political system, and the structuring of the vote during elections (King 1969). By engaging in these many functions, political parties have the ability to offer meaningful opportunities for citizens (and even non-citizen residents in some cases) to participate in formal, national level, democratic politics through activities such as candidate nomination, leadership selection, election campaign volunteering, and, to a lesser degree, the policy development process. In short, political parties make modern democracy possible and provide participatory opportunities for members and non-members alike. In the Canadian case, parties are often said to have additional functions, particularly brokerage and the fostering of national unity (see Meisel and Mendelsohn 2001). No small feat in a country that is as geographically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse as Canada.

Let's consider, for a moment, just how central political parties truly are to Canadian democratic life, with a few illustrative examples. A useful starting point regarding the primacy of political parties can be seen in who is ultimately elected to the House of Commons after each general election. In the first fifteen general elections since party labels were first listed on ballots, in 1972, only eleven independent candidates were successful in their electoral bids, just three of whom were non-incumbents (Marland 2020, 278). Stated differently, only 0.2 percent of the possible 4,474 seats have gone to non-party candidates over the course of the last five decades. During the 2019 general election, for instance, more than 94 percent of some 2,100 candidates who contested the election ran under a *party* banner (Small and Philpott 2020). While independents continue to contest elections and while it is true that some party candidates are nothing more than names on paper (Sayers 1999), voters continuously show a clear preference for party people when choosing a local representative. As a result, parties dominate elections, and it is their candidates who routinely capture the vast majority of votes and seats. Moreover, the empirical evidence suggests that even though voters are selecting from a range of individual candidates, party cues and party identification play a crucial role in their decision-making process (Blais et al. 2003; Johnston et al. 1992; Roy and Alcantara 2015; Stevens et al. 2019).

The primacy of parties is seen not only in the preferences of voters but is enshrined in Canadian law as well. A clear example can be seen in the election-financing regime. While those participating in election campaigns must adhere to strict financing regulations (Young 2015; Young and Jansen 2011), the limits are far more generous for *party* actors. According to Elections Canada, if an election were to have been held in November 2020, the average candidate would be legally permitted to spend $115,825.68 in a district, with registered parties being able to spend an additional $88,169.82 on average. Registered third parties (i.e., persons or groups other than candidates, registered political parties, or electoral district associations seeking to participate in elections), by contrast, would have been limited to just $4,473 in a district during the same election period (Elections Canada 2020).[1] The result is that parties and their candidates are highly visible during elections (able to purchase television advertising, mail campaign literature, etc.), while non-party actors are sidelined. This, of course,

is no accident. Lawlor and Crandall (2020, 3) note that the legislative intent of the financing regime is, indeed, to prioritize political parties over other political actors; "candidates and parties are the primary actors within campaigns, and other actors (specifically non-parties) ought to remain secondary."[2] Third-party spending limits are not only enshrined in legislation, but they have also been upheld by the courts on numerous occasions. In *Libman v. Quebec* (AG), [1997] 1 S.C.R. 569,[3] for example, the Supreme Court noted that

> while we recognize their right to participate in the electoral process, independent individuals and groups cannot be subject to the same financial rules as candidates or political parties and be allowed the same spending limits. Although what they have to say is important, it is the candidates and political parties that are running for election. Limits on independent spending must therefore be lower than those imposed on candidates and political parties.

Parties do not simply monopolize voter decision-making processes and election campaigns, they are also central to how our legislatures operate. Once the election is over, parties remain dominant actors in the House of Commons, which is almost completely organized around them: Members of Parliament (MPs) sit with their respective parties; government is formed and operated along party lines (single party government having been the norm in Canada); and resources (such as the ability to participate during Question Period and to serve on committees) are allocated and distributed based on party standings. Nowhere is the importance of parties in the House more obvious than in the voting behaviour of MPs. High levels of party cohesion are a defining characteristic of the Canadian Parliament (Godbout 2020; Kam 2009; Malloy 2003; Marland 2020), with elected members rarely casting dissenting ballots. As Malloy (2003, 116) writes, "The Canadian House of Commons has very disciplined parties even by Westminster standards." During the 42nd Parliament (2015–19), for example, the average MP voted with their party 99.7 percent of the time, and even the most "rebellious" MP did so 96.6 percent of the time (Thomas, Petit-Vouriot, and Morden 2020). While not as consistent, similar patterns can be found in the Senate as well: "independent" senators

appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau voted with the Liberal government 94.5 percent of the time in the years following the expulsion of Liberal senators from the party's caucus (Grenier 2017a).

While brief, these examples should highlight the centrality of parties to democratic politics. The idea that political parties are important is not particularly controversial,[4] nor is it new. The importance of political parties is captured in Schattschneider's (1942, 1) classic argument that "political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties." This importance has been recognized in the Canadian literature time and time again. Cross (2004, 1), for example, writes that "political parties are the central players in Canadian democracy." He goes on to suggest that "parties are so central to our democratic life that if they are not participatory our politics cannot be participatory, if they are not inclusive our politics cannot be inclusive, and if they are not responsive then our politics cannot be responsive." Likewise, Carty et al. (2000, 1) note that "making sense of Canada has always meant making sense of its party politics. That is inevitable in a country first put together, and then kept together, by party politicians." More recently, Wiseman (2020, xiv) has referred to parties as the "essential vehicles of Canada's parliamentary democracy."

Despite their clear centrality and importance, scholarship on Canadian parties is somewhat uneven. Indeed, the last truly comprehensive examinations of the inner workings of Canadian parties appear to be almost two decades old with the publication of Cross's *Political Parties,* in 2004; and Carty, Cross, and Young's *Rebuilding Canadian Party Politics,* in 2000. To be sure, much has been written about Canadian political parties since then, especially on specific topics such as party integration (Esselment 2010; Pruysers 2014; Thorlakson 2013), candidate nomination (Cheng and Tavits 2011; Cross and Young 2013; Pruysers and Cross 2016a; Thomas and Bodet 2013; Tolley 2019), leadership selection and tenure (Cross and Blais 2012a; Cross et al. 2016; O'Neill, Pruysers, and Stewart 2021; Thomas 2018), party membership (Cross 2015a; Cross and Young 2004, 2008), personalization (Bittner 2011; Cross et al. 2020; Cross and Young 2015; Pruysers and Cross 2016b), and election campaigning (Carty and Eagles 2005; Cross and Young 2011; Currie-Wood 2020; Sayers 1999). Furthermore, there have been a number of more recent book-length studies of

Canadian parties, including Flanagan's (2009) *Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes in the Conservative's Rise to Power,* Koop's (2011) *Grassroots Liberals: Organizing for Local and National Politics,* Carty's (2015) *Big Tent Politics: The Liberal Party's Long Mastery of Canada's Public Life,* Lewis and Everitt's (2017) *The Blueprint: Conservative Parties and Their Impact on Canadian Politics,* McGrane's (2019) *The New NDP: Moderation, Modernization, and Political Marketing,* Wiseman's (2020) *Partisan Odysseys: Canada's Political Parties,* and Jeffrey's (2021) *Road to Redemption: The Liberal Party of Canada, 2006–2019.*

While this scholarship is both impressive and important, it tends to have two limitations that we seek to address in this book. First, the books noted above generally only consider a single political party within the Canadian political landscape (Carty and Koop focus on the Liberal Party, Flanagan on the Conservative Party, McGrane on the New Democratic Party, etc.). This limitation has been a recurring theme in the literature on Canadian political parties for decades.[5] The exclusion of multiple parties in the literature obscures potential differences between the parties and limits the generalizability of the findings. Comparison, which is often missing, is therefore crucial. Second, the broader literature (which we have contributed to and are therefore guilty of perpetuating) tends to examine only a narrow slice of what parties do and, in doing so, cannot provide a detailed and comprehensive account of what Canadian parties are, the functions they perform, and how they perform them.

The result being that while we know a lot about various specific functions of Canadian party organizations, we have a much less coherent picture of how the various components of the party interact with one another, who populates the party at various levels, and so on. This lacuna, of course, raises an important question: Who (or what) is the political party? For some authors, the political party might be the MPs (parliamentary party) who represent the party in elected office. For others, it might be the dues-paying party members who constitute the grassroots, although the introduction of party supporters may complicate this somewhat. For others still, the party might comprise the 338 electoral district associations (EDAs) that organize party life across the country and maintain the party during the inter-election period. Political parties are complex and multifaceted, and the answer to "who is the party" encompasses all the above and more.[6]

As Carty (1991, 227) suggested three decades ago, attempting to describe our political parties reminds one of the old fable about people trying to describe an elephant by using only their sense of touch: "after touching only the tail, the tusk, the trunk, the legs or the ears, no one was able to provide much of an account of the beast." In this sense, continuously writing about party members separate from the EDAs that recruit, retain, and engage with them is unsatisfactory, just as writing about parliamentary candidates separate from the party members who select them and the donors who financially support them is equally problematic. A comprehensive examination of Canadian parties – the central political institution in Canadian political life – is long overdue: to continue the elephant metaphor, we need to describe the tail, tusk, trunk, legs, and ears of our political parties simultaneously. We need to provide an anatomy of our parties, which is precisely the purpose of this book: to provide a rich, detailed, and comprehensive account of who our political parties are and what they do. In other words, we seek to fully understand the "beast."

ANIMATING THEMES

In providing a more fulsome account of who and what the political party is, this book is guided by a number of animating themes that run throughout the chapters. Discussed in more detail below, these themes include 1) stratarchy and the organizational complexity of Canadian parties; 2) representation, inclusiveness, and the makeup of Canadian parties; and 3) personalization within Canadian parties. Importantly, all these themes build on, and relate to, one another. If Canadian parties are complex and multifaceted due to the adoption of a form of stratarchical organizational design, as we argue, then we ought to be concerned with the makeup of the party at all levels, not just with the elected representatives at the centre of the party apparatus. Since power is not only allocated at the centre of parties, we should also be interested in who occupies positions throughout them at various levels (e.g., members, candidates, EDA executives, etc.). Our concern with representation, therefore, flows directly from our first theme of complexity and an understanding that parties have multiple sites of power and influence. Likewise, a focus on representation and the makeup of parties logically leads to a consideration of the influence of these individuals (personalization) and the question of whether it matters who

occupies these positions. In this sense, our third theme flows from the first and second ones. While these are the organizing themes of the book, it is important to note that the book is not overtly structured around them in the sense that each chapter has the same subheadings addressing these specific issues. Rather, these themes animate the content of each chapter where appropriate and often in different ways.

The Complexity of Canadian Political Parties

Canadian parties, while often portrayed as singular, coherent, and unitary actors, are really anything but. The first animating theme of this book, therefore, is that Canadian parties, like their counterparts in other parliamentary democracies around the world, are complex and multifaceted organizations. In order to fully understand our political parties, they must be disaggregated rather than treated as single monolithic actors. To be sure, this idea is not a new one. Katz and Mair (1993, 594) convincingly argue that political parties are not singular actors so much as they comprise three important, and often competing, components; "rather than analyzing parties according to a simple parliamentary versus extra-parliamentary dichotomy, or a simple leaders-versus-followers hierarchy (no matter how finely subdivided), it is more productive to consider parties as comprising a number of different elements, or faces, each of which potentially interacts with all of the others." The different "faces" of the party identified by Katz and Mair include the *party in public office* (e.g., those members in Parliament or government), the *party on the ground* (e.g., party members, activists, etc.), and the *party in central office* (e.g., national organizational leadership distinct from the party in public office).

The identification of these three faces of political parties is important as it challenges the longstanding view of parties as hierarchical and unified organizations. As Carty (2004, 6) explains, the traditional conception of a political party "as a single identifiable organization that some group can capture and command" may no longer accurately describe how parties actually organize. While parties were once organized in a hierarchical fashion (Michels 1915/2001),[7] stratarchy is a more apt description of how many modern parties organize. The defining features of a stratarchical design are multiple sources of power and a number of mutually autonomous organizational subunits with considerable independence within their

respective spheres of competency/authority. Perhaps one of the first to recognize the stratarchical nature of parties, Eldersveld (1964, 10) has written that

> contrary to the bureaucratic and authoritarian models of social organization, the party is not a precisely ordered system of authority and influence from the top down, though as a "paper" structure it may give this appearance. The organization does not function through the issuance of directives from the top which are obeyed without question. Rather, there is a tolerance of autonomy, local initiative, local inertia.

Developing the stratarchy argument further and linking it back to the work of Katz and Mair, Carty (2002; 2004) and Carty and Cross (2006) suggest that stratarchy is an organizational bargain that is made between the competing faces of the party. Applying it to the Canadian context, this bargain occurs between the party on the ground and the party in public office as Canadian parties have never had a particularly strong party in central office. The party on the ground has long been an important player in Canadian party politics. The country's single-member plurality electoral system divides the country into 338 distinct electoral districts (sometimes referred to as constituencies or ridings). Given that electoral victory is achieved by winning individual districts and not necessarily the most votes, Canadian parties have long had an incentive to create active and strong local grassroots party organizations (Carty 1991; Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Carty and Eagles 2005; Cross 2016; Currie-Wood 2020; Pruysers 2015a; Sayers 1999).

The stratarchical bargain that manifests in Canada has also been referred to as the "franchise" model of party organization (Carty 2002): local constituency organizations (EDAs) act as franchisees where the central organization establishes the brand, manages the marketing campaign, provides leadership, and determines policy. Despite central party oversight, the local franchise retains autonomy over local affairs and exercises local decision-making authority. In the Canadian case, the stratarchical bargain is said to provide the party on the ground (specifically local constituency associations) with a significant degree of autonomy and independence over the management and direction of local party affairs, including the selection

of the party's local candidate for the general election. This bargain, therefore, allows the local party apparatus to organize and conduct their business with minimal interference from the central party. In exchange for this near autonomy, the party in public office is provided disciplined support and the freedom to develop policy and manage the party's brand (Carty and Cross 2006, 97; Marland 2016). More recently, however, Cross (2018) has argued that mutual interdependence, rather than mutual autonomy, is a more accurate description of how stratarchy is actually practised. He argues that there is "little evidence of the commonly presented model of stratarchy as mutual autonomy for each level within discrete areas of competency" and that "both the party on the ground and in the centre share authority ... resulting in a pattern of mutual interdependence rather than mutual autonomy" (205). The concept of shared authority, rather than discrete and autonomous authority, is therefore a better way of understanding the relationships, interactions, and interconnectedness of Canadian party organizations.

Take, for example, the nature of candidate selection. This essential party function is almost always portrayed as being an inherently local task. After all, EDAs recruit candidates, and it is local party members who vote in candidate nominations. While this portrayal is true, a variety of other party actors are also actively involved in the process (see Pruysers and Cross 2016a, Rahat and Cross 2018). Party leaders are required to "sign-off" on all candidates and even have the ability to veto local candidates. Central party officials recruit candidates, set the timing of nominations, and rigorously vet potential candidates before their names can appear on the ballot. Candidate selection is by no means unique. Other party functions such as developing policy, selecting party leaders, and waging election campaigns are all characterized by shared authority and are much more complex and multilayered than they are generally portrayed to be.

Stratarchy, and shared authority more generally, means that we cannot simply focus our attention on the "centre" of the party but must, therefore, adopt a more expansive approach to the study of parties. The stratarchical bargain that defines Canadian party organizations also means that there is considerable variation not only between political parties but also within them. The freedom enjoyed by the party on the ground, although not absolute, means that different local party organizations within the same

political party (of which there are hundreds) will vary in any number of ways, including in their capacity (e.g., electoral strength, membership, vibrancy, etc.), their relationship to the centre, their ability to implement and follow standardized rules set by the national party, the nature of the strategies they implement during elections, and so on.

The complexity of Canadian parties is further complicated by the federal nature of the country (Cross 2015b). Each of the three principal parties has adopted a different formal organizational approach to address the issue of multilevel politics, with the New Democrats typically described as the most "integrated," the Liberals as "semi-integrated," and the Conservatives as "truncated" (see Pruysers 2014). While Canadian parties, especially the Liberals and Conservatives, have removed many of the formal organizational connections that once unified federal and provincial parties (Dyck 1991; Esselment 2010; Koop 2011), many informal, or behavioural, linkages remain (Pruysers 2014; 2015a; 2016). Throughout the chapters we pay attention not only to how the various faces of the party interact with one another, but how various elements of the party may also interact with their provincial counterparts. These connections include, for example, multilevel party membership, campaign support, and career paths of elected representatives.

The complexity of our parties, however, is more than just a result of stratarchy and federalism. Another key part of what makes our parties complex is the fact that they are not static organizations. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is said to have once remarked that you cannot step in the same river twice; the river is in a constant state of flux, ever-changing as the water ebbs and flows. Our political parties, like the river, are in a constant state of change. Party leaders come and go, often bringing with them an entirely new entourage and staff (Noel 2007). MPs experience exceptionally high levels of electoral turnover such that the composition of the House changes considerably after each and every election (Docherty 1997). Party membership declines in non-election years and swells in the lead up to general elections and personnel selection contests as new members are mobilized into the party (Carty 1991; Pruysers and Cross 2016a). Grassroots activism, including life within EDAs, becomes somewhat more dormant in the inter-election period and springs to life during election season as candidates are nominated and local campaigns are waged (Cross

2016). Lastly, the number of national party staff (including professional campaign operatives) balloons as the election nears in an effort to conduct a coordinated and sophisticated national campaign (Marland and Giasson 2020). All this is to say that the nature and composition of political parties is far from static: the party of the inter-election period is not the same as the party of the election period, and the party of 2019 is not the party it was in 2015.[8]

Disaggregating Canadian parties, therefore, is more than just a party-on-the-ground versus party-in-the-centre dichotomy, and it requires further consideration beyond how parties operate during election season. Indeed, as the chapters in this book demonstrate, the three faces of the party identified by Katz and Mair (1993) are themselves complex, and can and should be disaggregated further. This is why, for example, this book does not feature a single chapter about the party on the ground but instead considers financial donors, party members, activists, and EDAs separately. Likewise, we disaggregate the party in public office to explore candidates who run for election, those who ultimately serve in Parliament, and those party professionals who support these individuals behind the scenes. Doing so provides a much more complete picture of how Canadian parties truly appear. Some of the questions we address along the theme of stratarchy/complexity include: Who does what within the party? How (and how well) do they fulfil their functions? How does the nature and composition of party actors change as we move from the inter-election to election period and vice versa? How do the various faces of the party apparatus work together and how much tension is there between them?

Representation within Canadian Political Parties

Many conceptions of political parties, according to Katz and Mair (1995, 7), portray parties as "the (not an) essential linkage between citizens and the state." Chandler and Siaroff (1991, 192), for instance, have written that "parties operate as the crucial intermediaries linking rulers and ruled. The most basic party function is that of representation involving the translation of public opinion to political leaders." Likewise, Cross (2019, 15) writes that "as political parties play a key role in structuring and executing election campaigns, in organizing our legislatures and governments and in playing a gatekeeping role to political office, it is important to consider

who constitutes the political party and whether they are inclusive of the various segments that together form civil society." In linking civil society to the state, political parties have the ability to provide both descriptive and substantive representation – incorporating marginalized voices not only in the political party but in the policy process more broadly. Crotty (1968, 260), for example, explains the importance of candidate selection in relation to representation in the following way:

> The party in recruiting candidates determines the personnel and, more symbolically, the groups to be represented among the decision-making elite. Through recruitment, the party indirectly influences the types of policy decisions to be enacted and the interests most likely to be heard. Candidate recruitment then represents one of the key linkages between the electorate and the policy-making process.

If we can accept that parties fulfil important democratic functions (organizing government, structuring the vote, etc.) and make important democratic decisions (selection of party leaders, creation of platforms, etc.), as we have already argued in this chapter, then how parties are constituted and who makes these decisions also matters. The second animating theme of the book, therefore, focuses on representation within our political parties.

Much of the empirical research regarding the representativeness of political parties has focused on the party in public office. That is, most studies have been concerned with the makeup of members of the elected legislature (for example, Caul 1999; Paxton 1997; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Reynolds 1999; Tremblay 2007). Diverse parliamentary party groups, and by extension diverse parliaments, are important and have many benefits like challenging stereotypes (Bashevkin 2009), enhancing civility (Young 2009), and increasing substantive (in addition to descriptive) representation (Tremblay 1998). In the previous section, however, we made the case that political parties are not hierarchical and singular actors. Instead, they are complex organizations with multiple sites of power and authority. Given the stratarchical nature of Canadian parties, we cannot be satisfied with simply documenting who makes up the "top" positions (i.e., MPs) within the party organization. If power is distributed throughout the party, then

it becomes crucial to understand who makes up the various faces throughout the party.

A desire to understand the composition of other faces of the party is already underway in the party literature. Indeed, there is a growing literature on the representativeness of party members (Cross 2015a; Cross and Young 2004; Gauja 2013; van Haute and Gauja 2015; see also Heidar and Wauters 2019), general election candidates (Black and Erickson 2006; Erickson 1991; Pruysers and Cross 2016a; Thomas and Bodet 2013), political aspirants (Cross 2016; Cross and Pruysers 2019a; Pruysers and Blais 2019; Tolley 2019), and party leaders (Bashevkin 2010; Cross 2014; Cross and Blais 2012a; Cross and Pilet 2015; O'Brien et al. 2015; O'Neill, Pruysers, and Stewart 2021; Wauters and Pilet 2015). While this is an important first step, this literature rarely speaks to one another.[9] Studies of members are typically kept separate from studies on candidates, studies of candidates separate from party leaders, and so on. The result is that no clear picture on the representativeness of the party as a whole can be found.

This siloing is problematic, especially in light of emerging research which documents that representativeness at one level of the party is connected to representativeness at other levels (Cross 2016; Pruysers et al. 2017). Cross and Pruysers (2019a) and Tolley (2019) explore nomination contestants rather than general election candidates. In doing so, and building on the work of Cheng and Tavits (2011), these authors have found compelling evidence that who enters the race (i.e., the representativeness of nomination contestants) is itself influenced by the representativeness of the local party organization (see also Tremblay and Pelletier 2001). Cross and Pruysers (2019a), for example, find that an EDA is considerably more likely to have a woman contestant for the nomination when the association president is also a woman. Likewise, Tolley (2019) finds that racialized party gatekeepers play a crucial role in the emergence of visible minority candidates. These recent findings highlight the importance of understanding the makeup of the party at all levels, not just within the central ranks. As such, we carefully document who belongs to and holds positions of authority within multiple levels of the party organization.

The party literature also reveals what areas we know comparatively little about. For example, one area of the party that is often overlooked is the party in central office, that is, the individuals who orbit around the

party leader, often working in leadership campaigns, national party offices, and parliamentary offices (such as the Prime Minister's Office), and orchestrating national election campaigns. While there has been recent attention devoted to campaign professionals, such as pollsters and media and communications specialists (for example, Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Marland 2016; Marland and Giasson 2020; Marland, Giasson, and Lawlor 2018), far less attention has been paid to what we call the leader's entourage. Similarly, the existing literature pays almost no attention to the parties' Funds, which have authority over their financing and have recently used this to exert influence over leadership in both the Conservative and Green parties. We make an important contribution in this book by paying attention to these understudied party officials and by comparing them to other, better documented, layers of the party apparatus.

Personalization and Canadian Party Politics

As democratic political institutions, political parties clearly matter. So too, however, do individual party actors. As Pruysers, Cross, and Katz (2018, 1) write, "Despite the centrality of political parties as organizations ... individual political actors have been, and will always be, crucially important to democratic politics." Whether it is the leader and their entourage, the MPs in Parliament, the candidates running in general elections, the donors funding campaigns through their financial contributions, or the dedicated stalwarts meeting locally month after month to keep the party alive between elections, people are at the core of what a political party is.[10] To be sure, organizational rules and structures are essential, but people are crucial to the way parties actually function. Thus, part of understanding the complexity of Canadian parties, part of disaggregating the various faces of the broader organization, is understanding who the individuals that populate our parties are, what they do, and how they interact with other actors in the party.

Trends over the last number of decades toward more candidate/leader-centred politics (Cross and Blais 2012a; McAllister 2015; Pruysers and Cross 2016b; Wattenberg 1991; Zittel 2015), increasingly individualized campaigns (Cross and Young 2015; De Winter and Baudewyns 2015; Zittel and Gschwend 2008), and the growing authority of party leaders and chief executives (Malloy 2018; Poguntke and Webb 2005; Savoie 1999a)

are all part of a broader phenomenon that has been labelled the personalization of politics. Rahat and Sheafer (2007, 65) define personalization as a *process* in which the "political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (i.e., political party) declines." Likewise, Karvonen (2010, 4) explains personalization as "the notion that individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities. The central concept denotes a process of change over time: at *t* politics was less personalised than at *t*+1." While these definitions accurately capture the concept of personalization, Pruysers, Cross, and Katz (2018) warn against placing too much emphasis on the "change over time" element, and suggest that by focusing longitudinally, we often lose sight of how important party actors are at any given time.[11] Instead, they argue we should not discount the more static form of personalized politics (or "personalism"). We adopt this latter theoretical approach when examining questions related to our third animating theme of the book, the personalized nature of Canadian party politics.

While the personalization and related literatures have tended to focus on party leaders and prime ministers (Bittner 2011; Lobo and Curtice 2015; Poguntke and Webb 2005; Stewart 2018), personalization can, and does, occur at multiple levels within the party. Many party scholars have demonstrated that personalization is common at the candidate level, something labelled "decentralized personalization" (Balmas et al. 2014; Cross and Young 2015; Cross, Currie-Wood, and Pruysers 2020; Pruysers and Cross 2018; Zittel and Gschwend 2008). More recently, others have argued that personalization occurs not only in a dichotomous centralized (leaders) versus decentralized (candidates) fashion. Indeed, Gauja (2018) demonstrates how even party membership is also becoming increasingly personalized. In this sense, and consistent with our argument regarding the need to disaggregate parties, personalization occurs throughout party organizations at a variety of different levels.

While a seemingly abstract concept, personalization has a number of important democratic implications. Ongoing demands for relaxed party discipline and more frequent free votes (Loat and MacMillan 2014), for example, can be seen as an example of personalization inside the legislature: an effort to shift the balance of power and provide more authority

and autonomy to individual party actors as opposed to the party itself. Members of Parliament, even when toeing the party line, often express their individuality through the questions they ask in the House of Commons or the private members' legislation they introduce for debate, subtly raising their own profile or highlighting their own district (Loewen et al. 2014; Chiru 2018). As the final theme of the book, we consider questions related to personalization, explore the degree to which various levels of the party are personalized, and consider the implications of such personalism on our democratic politics.

A NOTE ON DATA

To establish a deeper understanding of our parties, who they are, and what they do, this book utilizes a mixed-methods approach that draws on both quantitative (i.e., surveys) and qualitative (i.e., interviews, party documents) data.[12] In doing so, we have assembled a truly impressive body of original data that spans a wide number of sources and methodological approaches. Triangulating data in this manner allows us to tell a rich and comprehensive story about Canadian political parties and to be more confident in our findings. By no means an exhaustive list, data for the book include original surveys across two recent election cycles (party members, donors, candidates, and electoral district associations), an original dataset on the career trajectories of central party staff, interviews with party officials, analyses of party documents, coding of party websites/social media usage, financial and nomination reports made available by Elections Canada, candidate biographies, and other biographical information on members of Parliament made available by the Parliament of Canada. While we focus our attention primarily on the three principal parties – the Liberals, Conservatives, and New Democrats[13] – we occasionally leverage our data to provide details about other parties including the Greens and Bloc Québécois. In terms of temporal scope, we focus our analysis on the contemporary period over two election cycles (2015–19), which allows us to capture changes in the party organization during and between elections. With that said, we do cover major party changes that predate this period, such as the Liberal Party's movement toward institutionalizing party "supporters" as a replacement for traditional dues-paying members. Finally, while our primary focus is on the federal level, a recurring theme

throughout the chapters is the informal multilevel nature of Canadian parties and their relationship to provincial counterparts (Pruysers 2015a; Stephenson et al. 2019), whether it is in terms of membership, activism, or general cooperation.

While data are documented throughout the various chapters, we highlight some of their basic details here (launch dates, response rates, etc.) together with our other data sources:

- *2015 Candidate Survey.* In cooperation with the federal parties, the 2015 candidate survey was conducted online between November 2015 and January 2016. The dataset includes 440 candidates who contested the election across five political parties: Conservative (138), Liberal (78), New Democratic (113), Green (100), and Bloc Québécois (11).
- *2016 EDA Survey.* The 2016 Electoral District Association survey was conducted online during February of 2016. The dataset includes 256 respondents across five political parties: Conservative (39), Liberal (91), New Democratic (81), Green (44), and Bloc Québécois (1).
- *2016 Members Survey.* The members survey was conducted online between February and April of 2016. The dataset includes 932 party members.[14] The breakdown of survey respondents is as follows: Liberal (345), Conservative (330), New Democratic (156), Green (41), Bloc Québécois (45), and 6 respondents reported belonging to a minor party. Nine respondents failed to provide their party.
- *2019 Candidate Survey.* In cooperation with the federal parties, the 2019 candidate survey was conducted online between November 2019 and January 2020. The dataset includes 255 candidates who contested the election across three parties: Conservative (81), Liberal (67), and New Democratic (107).
- *2019 EDA Survey.* The 2019 Electoral District Association survey was conducted online between June and July of 2019. The dataset incudes 367 respondents from four political parties: Conservative (83), Liberal (93), New Democratic (98), and Green (77), and 16 who declined to identify their party.
- *2020 Donor Survey.* The 2020 Donor Survey was conducted online in November 2020. The dataset includes 256 respondents who previously reported donating to a Canadian political party, candidate, or EDA

between 2015 and 2019.[15] We supplement this with 2019 Canadian Election Study data from party donors.

- *Elite Interviews.* Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom with six current and former senior party officials in early 2021. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information on the party in central office and to confirm data collected through our online and media research.
- *Party Constitutions and Organizational Documents.* Official party documents were accessed and reviewed to reveal the parties' "formal" organizational details including their composition and the relationship between different strata of the parties.
- *Elections Canada.* Financial reports of parties, general election candidates, leadership contestants, and electoral district associations were accessed and reviewed to analyze income, expenditures, and contribution sources.
- *Online searches.* Candidates' campaign biographies, parliamentarians' profiles, career and demographic information of central political operatives, and candidate and electoral district association web presence were all documented through online searches of sources such as LinkedIn, the Parliament of Canada, party web pages and media sources.

In total, then, the book draws on original survey responses from 695 candidates, 623 EDAs, and more than 1,100 party members/donors. When combined with the other data we have collected – such as interviews, candidate biographies, profiles of party professionals, social media presence, party rules and statutes, Elections Canada reports, and much more – we are able to provide a rich and detailed account of Canadian parties with a specific focus on *who they are* and *what they do* at multiple levels.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In the remainder of the book we provide one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the makeup and activities of Canadian political parties ever conducted. Parties, we argue, are more than the sum of their parts. As such, it is important to examine various components of the party organization/apparatus simultaneously in order to establish a meaningful understanding of one of our most important democratic institutions. We start from the

grassroots and move toward the centre of the party ranks. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of party members and committed party activists. Still exploring the party on the ground, Chapter 3 provides an account of electoral district associations (EDAs) both in terms of makeup and activity. Chapter 4, on candidates, and Chapter 5, on financial donors, bridge the party on the ground and the other faces of the party. Chapter 6 moves to a particularly underresearched component of the party: the party officers and central party staff who work behind the scenes supporting campaigns, crafting policy platforms, and managing party affairs. Chapter 7 explicitly focuses on the parliamentary party, and here we are primarily interested in the House of Commons and its members. Finally, in Chapter 8, we are able to draw out some important comparisons across the various faces of the party.

Careful observers will note that there is no single chapter devoted to leaders. Party leaders are remarkably important in contemporary democratic politics, and this is indeed the case in Canada as well (Cross and Blais 2012a; Cross et al. 2016; Cross, Katz, and Pruysers 2018; O'Neill, Pruysers, and Stewart 2021). The decision not to include a separate chapter on leaders is not a rebuke of their importance. Instead of a standalone chapter on party leaders (of which there are so few federally), party leadership is addressed throughout the book. In the EDA chapter, for instance, we discuss the role of local associations in leadership selection, and in the chapter on party members we consider the reasons members join parties, including factors like the ability to participate in a leadership contest. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of how central party committees shape the rules surrounding leadership selection. Finally, in the chapter on the party in public office, we consider questions of party discipline (imposed by the party leader), the importance of caucus endorsements in leadership selection, the profile of party leaders since 1965, and a variety of other themes that directly touch on party leaders. In this sense, party leaders are integrated into many chapters, an approach that highlights the interdependence of the various faces of the party.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: The political party in Canada /
by William P. Cross, Scott Pruysers, and Rob Currie-Wood.

Names: Cross, William P. (William Paul), author. |
Pruysers, Scott, author. | Currie-Wood, Rob, author.

Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20220275181 | Canadiana (ebook) 20220275203 |
ISBN 9780774868235 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780774868259 (PDF) |
ISBN 9780774868266 (EPUB)

Subjects: LCSH: Political parties – Canada.

Classification: LCC JL195 .C762 2022 | DDC 324.271 – dc23

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens
Set in Zurich Condensed, Sero, and Minion by Artegraphica Design Co.
Copy editor: Robyn So
Proofreader: Sophie Pouyanne
Indexer: Elena Gwynne

UBC Press
The University of British Columbia
2029 West Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2
www.ubcpress.ca