

THE CANADIAN ELECTION STUDIES

Assessing Four Decades of Influence

Edited by Mebs Kanji, Antoine Bilodeau,
and Thomas J. Scotto



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Then came all those who agreed that this was an important intellectual exercise and walked the talk by taking us up on our offer to participate, either in the workshop and/or by contributing a paper to this volume. Without the support of John Courtney, Mildred A. Schwartz, Allan Kornberg, Harold D. Clarke, William Cross, Barry Kay, Elisabeth Gidengil, Joanna Everitt, Kenneth Carty, Richard Johnston, Brenda O'Neill, André Blais, Gisèle Yasmeeen, Alain Pelletier, John Meisel, Lawrence LeDuc, Andrea M.L. Perrella, Richard Nadeau, Éric Bélanger, and Jon H. Pammett, this project would simply lack substance. We particularly express our deepest appreciation to our contributors for their outstanding co-operation and the incredible patience that they have exhibited from start to finish.

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Mebis Kanji,
Antoine Bilodeau, and
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THE CANADIAN ELECTION STUDIES

Introduction

Four Decades of Canadian Election Studies

MEBS KANJI, ANTOINE BILODEAU,
AND THOMAS J. SCOTTO

The Canadian Election Studies (CES) are an impressive body of survey data that have been gathered and analyzed for over four decades. The primary objective of this collection of surveys has been to investigate why Canadians vote the way they do. The CES are designed and administered by academics, and they have been paid for largely through public funding agencies such as the Canada Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. They are made freely available to the general public but are used most extensively by scholars and university students in the field of political science.

This volume brings together several researchers, most of whom have served as principal investigators on various CES research projects conducted over the past forty or so years to tackle three main objectives. The first is to document the evolution of these studies as there is much about the beginning, development, and current state of the CES that is not widely shared or understood. For example, how did the CES first come into being? Who were the key players? And what were the driving theoretical underpinnings? Also, how has the methodology of these studies advanced over time? Has the implementation of these surveys resulted in notable payoffs? And what are the most pressing challenges that lie ahead?

The second objective is to highlight some of the major findings and advances in thinking that have emerged from researching the CES. Forty years

is a considerable period of time in which to be repeatedly injecting significant amounts of public research dollars into a single set of projects without taking stock of how these investments have contributed to our understanding and the prospects for further study. What have we learned from the CES? Do we know any more about why Canadians vote the way they do than we did four decades ago? And do these surveys inspire new investigative opportunities?

The third objective of this volume is to project forward after taking a systematic and reflective look at the past. Here, our intentions are mainly twofold. The first is to attempt to synthesize what has been achieved as a result of conducting the CES over four decades. The second is to flag ways in which this research endeavour might be improved, based on what we have gathered from the various contributions to this book and the insights that we have developed along the way. Our hope is that this exercise can provide some added perspective to the ongoing debate about where to steer the CES in the years ahead.

The idea for this volume was conceived initially at a one-day workshop that was scheduled prior to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, held at the University of Saskatoon in June 2007. The workshop was entitled *Assessing the Canadian Election Studies' Contribution to Canadian Political Science*. The purpose of this workshop was to provide a formal occasion for dialogue between the principal investigators from the various CES research teams and others who were interested in examining and assessing the CES's contribution to Canadian political science.

The degree of interest and debate sparked by this workshop suggested that this project might be worth following up. As a result, we asked the principal investigators who attended, as well as others who were not able to attend, if they would be willing to participate as contributors to an edited volume on the subject. The reaction was very positive and encouraging. The road since has been long, but the end result of this collaborative undertaking is now complete and is laid out on the pages that follow.

What Are the Canadian Election Studies?

The place to begin is with a more elaborate description of the CES. These surveys have been randomly administered (mostly over the telephone) to eligible Canadian voters primarily during and/or after federal elections. As Table I.1 indicates, the studies were launched in the mid-1960s and have

TABLE I.1

Principal investigators of the Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2006

Year	Principal investigators	Specialization
1965	1. John Meisel (Queen's University) 2. Philip Converse (University of Michigan) 3. Maurice Pinard (McGill University) 4. Peter Regenstreif (University of Chicago) 5. Mildred Schwartz (University of Chicago)	Political Science Political Science/ Sociology Sociology Political Science Sociology
1968	1. John Meisel (Queen's University)	Political Science
1974, 1979, and 1980	1. Harold Clarke (University of Windsor) 2. Jane Jenson (Carleton University) 3. Lawrence LeDuc (University of Windsor) 4. Jon H. Pammett (Carleton University)	Political Science Political Science Political Science Political Science
1984	1. Ronald D. Lambert (University of Waterloo) 2. Steven D. Brown (Wilfrid Laurier University) 3. James E. Curtis (University of Waterloo) 4. Barry J. Kay (Wilfrid Laurier University) 5. John M. Wilson (University of Waterloo)	Sociology Political Science Sociology Political Science Political Science
1988	1. Richard Johnston (University of British Columbia) 2. André Blais (Université de Montréal) 3. Jean Crête (University of Laval) 4. Henry E. Brady (University of California, Berkeley)	Political Science Political Science Political Science Political Science
1992 and 1993	1. Richard Johnston (University of British Columbia) 2. André Blais (Université de Montréal) 3. Henry E. Brady (University of California, Berkeley) 4. Elisabeth Gidengil (McGill University) 5. Neil Nevitte (University of Toronto) 6. Joseph Fletcher-1992 only (University of Toronto)	Political Science Political Science Political Science Political Science Political Science Political Science
1997 and 2000	1. André Blais (Université de Montréal) 2. Elisabeth Gidengil (McGill University) 3. Richard Nadeau (Université de Montréal) 4. Neil Nevitte (University of Toronto)	Political Science Political Science Political Science Political Science



◀ TABLE I.1

Year	Principal investigators	Specialization
2004 and 2006	1. André Blais (Université de Montréal)	Political Science
	2. Elisabeth Gidengil (McGill University)	Political Science
	3. Neil Nevitte (University of Toronto)	Political Science
	4. Patrick Fournier (Université de Montréal)	Political Science
	5. Joanna Everitt (University of New Brunswick)	Political Science

Note: Some of these researchers have since relocated to other universities.

been conducted several times since over a span of more than forty years. During this period, the CES were steered and implemented by eight different teams of researchers, most of which were made up of four to six political scientists, from different universities in Canada and occasionally from the United States.

The more exact breakdown reported in Table I.2 shows that a total of fourteen separate CES projects were administered between 1965 and 2006. Of these, twelve were conducted during federal elections and two during major referendums – the Quebec Referendum in 1980 and the Charlottetown Accord Referendum in 1992. Thus, the CES are not exclusive to covering just elections. With these data, it is possible to explore Canadians' survey responses across a variety of political and electoral contexts.

Note too that the total number of surveys conducted and available for study is even more extensive. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, the standard methodological approach for most CES research projects was to implement one cross-provincial post-election survey immediately after every federal electoral contest. The only exceptions to this rule came in 1972, the one federal election year during this period when no such election study was attempted,¹ and in 1980, when one additional provincial survey was administered more than three months after the 1980 federal election, during the time of the first Quebec Referendum. In total, there were seven surveys administered during this initial twenty-year period (see Table I.2).

Following the mid-1980s, however, the total number of surveys conducted almost quadrupled. The research team designated to study the 1988 federal election brought with it a more expansive research agenda, which included both the desire to study campaign dynamics and a variety of broader topics, not all of which dealt directly with voting and elections. In order to accommodate their research interests, the 1988 CES research team introduced a new three-wave survey methodology, which included a campaign

TABLE 1.2

Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2006 – events covered, survey types, and number of interviews completed

Event	Survey type	Canada (N)	Number of interviews completed													Gender			
			Provinces and territories													Male	Female		
			PEI	NS	NFLD	NB	QC	ON	MA	SA	AB	BC	YK	NWT					
1965 FE (8 November)	PES	2,118	24	73	24	108	643	723	130	94	171	128	-	-	-	-	-	1,036	1,082
1968 FE (25 June)	PES	2,767	17	116	-	99	754	970	139	139	235	250	-	-	-	-	-	1,388	1,379
1974 FE (8 July)	PES	2,562	97	180	102	134	702	702	113	101	179	252	-	-	-	-	-	1,191	1,371
1979 FE (22 May)	PES	2,761	108	191	113	148	734	741	127	113	196	273	-	-	-	-	-	1,312	1,431
1980 FE (18 February)	PES	1,748	82	133	73	78	446	488	89	67	110	182	-	-	-	-	-	846	902
1980 QR (20 May)	QRS	325	-	-	-	-	325	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	161	164
1984 FE (4 September)	PES	3,377	112	132	134	136	779	967	251	252	263	351	-	-	-	-	-	1,467	1,910
1988 FE (21 November)	CPS	3,609	127	109	113	213	835	968	179	193	446	426	-	-	-	-	-	1,792	1,817
	PES	2,922	109	90	90	172	637	783	145	162	379	355	-	-	-	-	-	1,481	1,441
	MBS	2,115	85	66	68	134	452	565	98	119	272	256	-	-	-	-	-	1,082	1,033
1992 CAR (26 October)	REFS	2,530	67	64	51	53	1,001	563	124	101	236	270	-	-	-	-	-	1,234	1,296
	PRS	2,223	60	57	47	43	858	491	110	93	220	244	-	-	-	-	-	1,102	1,121

▼ TABLE 1.2

Event		Number of interviews completed																Gender		
		Survey type	Canada (N)	Provinces and territories													Male			Female
				PEI	NS	NFLD	NB	QC	ON	MA	SA	AB	BC	YK	NWT					
1993 FE (25 October)	CPS	3,775	100	98	112	108	1,007	953	228	212	485	472	-	-	-	-	-	1,929	1,846	
	PES	3,340	97	90	101	96	864	843	210	185	440	414	-	-	-	-	-	1,721	1,619	
	MBS	2,209	57	64	75	61	563	555	132	132	300	270	-	-	-	-	-	1,156	1,053	
1997 FE (2 June)	CPS	3,949	101	101	99	108	1,034	951	203	211	481	473	90	97	80	1,539	1,631	1,856	2,093	
	PES	3,170	86	93	83	90	801	756	158	174	407	371	71	80	80	1,539	1,631	1,856	2,093	
	MBS	1,851	44	64	48	58	459	453	89	96	234	225	43	38	38	887	964	1,156	1,053	
2000 FE (27 November)	CPS	3,651	50	138	145	144	1,251	983	118	116	325	381	-	-	-	-	-	1,762	1,889	
	PES	2,860	41	113	106	111	941	774	97	101	273	303	-	-	-	-	-	1,432	1,428	
	MBS	1,517	23	67	68	65	457	417	52	59	154	155	-	-	-	-	-	739	778	
2004 FE (28 June)	CPS	4,323	115	112	120	116	1,048	1,318	217	214	437	626	-	-	-	-	-	1,981	2,342	
	PES	3,138	90	89	76	86	657	1,004	150	169	349	468	-	-	-	-	-	1,455	1,683	
	MBS	1,674	53	47	46	41	345	512	74	96	196	264	-	-	-	-	-	753	921	
2006 FE (23 January)	CPS	4,058	96	109	102	101	1,013	1,231	203	206	408	589	-	-	-	-	-	1,925	2,133	
	PES	3,250	76	95	85	82	818	984	159	166	322	463	-	-	-	-	-	1,550	1,700	
<i>Totals</i>		71,822 (34,553)	1,917	2,491	2,081	2,585	19,419	19,695	3,595	3,571	7,518	8,461	204	215	215	35,898	37,027			

Note: CAR = Charlottetown Accord Referendum; CPS = campaign period survey; FE = federal election; MBS = mail-back survey; PES = post-election survey; PRS = post-referendum survey; QR = Quebec Referendum; QRS = Quebec Referendum survey; REFS = referendum survey. Projects: 14; Elections: 12; Referendums: 2; Total surveys conducted: 26.

period survey (designed to be administered and capable of being analyzed during election campaigns), a post-election survey (that is administered, similar to earlier surveys, immediately after elections), and a mail-back survey (which is intended to probe a more diverse array of research topics and is sent through the mail not too long after an election has been contested).

The team responsible for examining the 1993 federal election effectively took on the same three-wave survey methodology. The only distinction is that prior to the 1993 election, they also conducted two additional surveys before and after the 1992 Charlottetown Accord Referendum. Since 1993, other successive research teams have followed suit by opting not to deviate from using a multi-wave surveying approach. The net result during this second twenty-year period has been a gain of nineteen additional surveys. Moreover, during the time in which this volume was being compiled, two additional surveys were conducted, both before and after the 2008 federal election.

In individual terms, this collection of survey data amounts to nearly 72,000 completed interviews with various members of the Canadian electorate, and this total does not include the two most recent surveys conducted in 2008. Not all of these interviews constitute distinct cases because respondents in multi-wave projects are asked to participate in more than one survey, and many often comply. Still, over the course of four or so decades, the CES have accumulated a total sample size of nearly 35,000 respondents. This makes it possible to conduct fairly detailed and statistically sophisticated analyses of various types, including an examination of different subgroups within Canadian society, without instantly having to grapple with the limitations of insufficient sample sizes. For example, it is possible to mine the CES data by variables such as region or gender, just to name a couple. The downside, however, as is made clear in Table I.2, is that certain regions and provinces remain better represented than others. Moreover, to this point, the CES contain very few cases from the Northwest Territories or the Yukon and none from Nunavut since the latter's ascension to territorial status.

The CES also make it possible to probe a great many topics. As Table I.3 indicates, the 1965-2006 collection of CES encompasses nearly 6,700 variables. Questions dealing specifically with voting decisions and voting patterns, partisan attachments, political interest, political efficacy, perceptions of leaders and parties, issue and spending orientations, campaign activities, leadership debates, economic outlooks, media exposure, political knowledge, various socio-demographic characteristics, and the like are designed

TABLE 1.3

The scope of the Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2006

Event	Number of variables probed		Sample topics
1965 FE	350	Political performance	Networks
		Political efficacy	Issue orientations and priorities
1968 FE	575	Personal financial circumstances	Quebec sovereignty
		Respondent mobility	Charlottetown Accord
1974 FE	480	Group associations	Bilingualism
		Political leaders	Foreign investment
		Leadership attributes	Material satisfaction
1979 FE	538	Perceptions of politicians	Post-materialism
		Perceptions of party differences	Free trade
		Perceptions of parties	Senate reform
1980 FE	158	Political interest	Economic attitudes
		Political knowledge	Voter registration
1980 QR	43	Campaign activities	Volunteerism
		Demographics and personal data	Federalism
1984 FE	641	Life satisfaction	Deficit elimination
		Foreign affairs	Social class
		Religion and religiosity	Constitution and rights
1988 FE	547	Leadership debates	Sponsorship scandal
		Integration with the United States	Media exposure
		Election financing	Government influence and authority
1992 CAR	244	Past and present party attachments	Political discussion
		Voting decision and voting patterns	Orientations toward Canada and other sub-national units
1993 FE	627	Group orientations	Referendum voting patterns
		Orientations toward political institutions	Orientations toward founding peoples
1997 FE	625	Inflation	Confidence in the voting process
		Majority and minority governments	Death penalty
2000 FE	784	Parental party attachments	Waiting lists (health care system)
		Party contact	Women in politics
2004 FE	641	Spending orientations	Meech Lake Accord
		Ideology	Abortion
2006 FE	398	Perceived electoral outcomes	Gay marriage
		Group influence	Privatization
<i>Total</i>	6,651	Protest	Voting age
			Immigrants

Note: CAR = Charlottetown Accord Referendum; FE = federal election; QR = Quebec Referendum

primarily for examining the determinants of voting. However, there are various other topics that can be explored. For example, the CES include questions on group associations, integration with the United States, orientations toward government institutions, Quebec sovereignty, the Charlottetown Accord, foreign investment, post-materialism, federalism, social class, the death penalty, human rights, health care, women in politics, and much more. Furthermore, since the implementation of computer-assisted telephone-interviewing technology in 1988, the CES have also become fertile ground for conducting various methodological experiments relating to question wording, question ordering, and the randomization of survey responses. The combination of these features makes the CES a potentially useful data source for accommodating a fairly broad array of research interests.

In addition, the CES incorporate a number of distinct study designs that contribute even further to the analytical possibilities provided by this data source. The inventory reported in Table I.4 suggests that there are at least forty-three separate study designs embedded within the 1965-2006 collection of CES, the vast majority of which were introduced after 1984. For example, twenty-six cross-sectional samples provide multiple data points for conducting various historical and cross-time analyses. Of course, it must be kept in mind that some of these studies are much smaller in size (and more parochial in focus) than others, and some have been collected in more abbreviated time frames than others. Still, in terms of overall duration, these data points cover nearly half a century, which is a considerable stretch of time to satisfy a variety of different curiosities. Moreover, the CES contain a variety of standardized variables, which means that it is also possible to explore changes and consistencies in Canadians' survey responses, especially from the late 1980s on, when larger multi-wave surveys became the norm and teams of researchers began to place a greater emphasis on cross-time comparability and continuity when contending with questionnaire design.

The CES also contain both short- and long-term panel data, so it is possible to track the same people over both abbreviated and more extended periods of time. In all, there are more than two times as many short-term panels as there are long-term ones. Still, the CES contain no less than three different longitudinal panels that vary in terms of the time frames and events that they cover. The longest extends approximately six years, beginning after the 1974 federal election and stretching past the 1980 Quebec Referendum. The second covers a more recent but much shorter period of time that spans from the 1992 Charlottetown Accord Referendum to after the 1993 elec-

TABLE I.4

The variety of study designs contained within the Canadian Election Studies, 1965-2006

Year	Number of cross-sectional samples	Longitudinal panels	Short-term panels	Rolling cross-sectional samples	Total variety
1965	1	–	–	–	1
1968	1	–	–	–	1
1974	1	–	–	–	1
1979	1	–	–	–	1
1980	2	1974 FE – 1980 QR panel	–	–	3
1984	1	–	–	–	1
1988	3	–	1988 CPS-PES-MBS panel	1988 election campaign, rolling cross-section	5
1992	2	–	1992 REFS-PRS panel	1992 referendum, rolling cross-section	4
1993	3	1992 REFS – 1993 MBS panel	1993 CPS-PES-MBS panel	1993 election campaign, rolling cross-section	6
1997	3	–	1997 CPS-PES-MBS panel	1997 election campaign, rolling cross-section	5
2000	3	–	2000 CPS-PES-MBS panel	2000 election campaign, rolling cross-section	5
2004	3	–	2004 CPS-PES-MBS panel	2004 election campaign, rolling cross-section	5
2006	2	2004 CPS – 2006 PES panel	2006 CPS-PES panel	2006 election campaign, rolling cross-section	5
Total	26	3	7	7	43

Note: The sample sizes for these surveys have been presented in Table I.2. CAR = Charlottetown Accord Referendum; CPS = campaign period survey; FE = federal election; MBS = mail-back survey; PES = post-election survey; PRS = post-referendum survey; QR = Quebec Referendum; QRS = Quebec Referendum survey; REFS = referendum survey.

tion. And the third covers a period of about two years and incorporates both the 2004 and 2006 federal elections.²

In terms of short-term panels, there are seven in total that are distributed over a period that extends from 1988 to 2006. These short-term panels are particularly useful for examining how people's survey responses can change before and after major democratic events, such as elections and referendums. Similarly, the CES contain seven rolling cross-sectional samples that have also been collected for nearly twenty years now. These data are ideal for examining campaign dynamics and changing trends during election and referendum campaigns.

Given the immense richness of this data source, it is not difficult to see why the CES are considered by many to constitute a major research endeavour in Canadian political science. For over four decades, public research funds have contributed to developing a substantial and continuously expanding body of data that is used extensively by several researchers and students. This is precisely the reason why we think it is relevant to document the history and evolution of these studies and assess how they have contributed to our understanding of voting in Canada. Moreover, just as we feel it is important to take stock of what has been achieved, we also believe that it is equally germane to reflect on how these studies might be improved in the future.

A Brief Preview of What Is to Come

The remainder of this volume is organized into three parts. Part 1 houses the basic narrative. This discussion begins with John Meisel's brief introductory chapter, which provides his personal recollections of how the CES began. It was Meisel who effectively jump-started these surveys, and in his chapter he revisits this experience. He portrays the social and academic contexts of the time and describes how the initial funding for the 1965 study was derived. He introduces the major players who were involved and details some of the preliminary decisions that were made and the difficulties that were encountered.

In Chapter 2, Mildred Schwartz reviews the extent to which theory influenced the first study conducted in 1965. Her focus is primarily on the players involved and their theoretical motivations. Her recollections suggest that the theoretical underpinnings of the first study were neither overt nor well articulated but that all of the team members came to the table with different ideas and hypotheses in mind. Ultimately, Schwartz claims that the

final questionnaire in 1965 was based on a compromise of the competing preferences of the five team members. Schwartz's chapter also briefly discusses some of theoretical motivations behind later studies and concludes that future studies should stay alert to the theoretical developments that lie beyond the boundaries of political science in order to continue advancing and deepening our understanding of the Canadian electorate.

In Chapter 3, Lawrence LeDuc further expands our appreciation of the theoretical influences on the development of the CES. More specifically, he discusses the development of survey-based electoral studies in a comparative context. By the time the first Canadian study was administered, the field had already become highly internationalized, and it was not simply the Americans who had provided theoretical inspirations but also the Western Europeans. The key point of this chapter is to remind us that both the CES and our analyses of these data have also been fuelled by broader interests in other comparative contexts through publications, collaborative efforts, and other forms of exchange.

In Chapter 4, Thomas Scott, Mebs Kanji, and Antoine Bilodeau provide an overview of how the methodology of the CES has evolved over the last forty years. This chapter systematically highlights major design innovations and charts how the CES went from being a post-election cross-sectional survey, administered through face-to-face interviews, to adopting a multi-wave short-term panel design and other improvements. This chapter also highlights major changes in content and in sample design, and it describes how the methodological evolution of the CES has helped to expand our understanding of the Canadian voter. The chapter concludes by discussing the need for future advances in the CES methodological design and, more particularly, the pros and cons of Internet surveys.

In Chapter 5, Richard Johnston and André Blais remind us of the general contribution and relevance of the CES. They refer to these studies as a pivotal project with an extensive history, but one whose future may be in jeopardy. The main problem, ironically, is not that different from a major obstacle encountered initially by Meisel during the mid-1960s. The key distinction, however, is that the stakes are now much higher. Coming up with a consistent and reliable source of funding to sustain these studies over the long-term is an immediate, real, and pressing concern, and Johnston and Blais provide some suggestions on how we might proceed, based on how such matters are handled in other countries.

Part 2 of this volume takes stock of how the CES have contributed to our understanding of voting behaviour as well as the prospects for further

research. More specifically, Chapters 6 to 11 provide some key examples of the types of insights that we have gained from our various investigations of the long- and short-term determinants of voting and, more recently, the decline in voter turnout. In many instances, these chapters also illustrate how working with the CES continuously inspires new research curiosities. For example, in Chapter 6, Elisabeth Gidengil provides a broad overview of what we have learned about the long-term sociological determinants of the vote. A major finding thus far has been that socio-demographic variables do not seem to carry all that much weight; however, there remain variables that have yet to be properly explored. Moreover, Gidengil believes that we now need to move beyond solely examining associations between socio-demographic indicators and how individuals vote and conduct additional research that investigates individuals as social beings within their networks of social interaction to see if that tells us more about why individuals vote the way they do. This advance, she suggests, may help us to explain vote choice and not simply predict it.

In Chapter 7, Barry Kay and Andrea Perrella look in more detail at social class, which they argue is one socio-demographic factor that many Canadian researchers, similar to researchers working with election studies in other parts of the world, have often turned to when examining voting behaviour. The findings, however, have not been all that robust, which seems to suggest that class may not be a very relevant factor when it comes to explaining electoral choice in Canada. In their analysis, Kay and Perrella look systematically at the link between two different objective measures of class and party preference using data from ten CES. They also compare class effects with the influences of other socio-demographic variables. Their findings lend further support to the claim that different objective measures of class have weak and inconsistent effects on vote. However, while the influence of these variables may not be as strong as the effects of other socio-demographic determinants such as region and religion, there is evidence to suggest that the impact of class might be comparable to that of gender and age. In their conclusion, Kay and Perrella provide us with additional suggestions for further research, and they remind us that the way we operationalize variables affects our results and that our current interpretations of the evidence may vary if we had more precise measures.

In Chapter 8, Richard Nadeau and Éric Bélanger turn to consider a major regional divide that many have used the CES to learn more about. The approach in this chapter is to unpack the development of the Quebec/rest of Canada (ROC) cleavage in three distinct periods so as to better contextualize

how research and results have evolved over time. Nadeau and Bélanger cover over four decades worth of studies published by various CES research teams and others who have grappled with these data. Their investigation centres on the similarities and differences in the outlooks of these two communities and the motivations behind their voting patterns. The analysis in this chapter re-emphasizes that long-term influences such as region are relevant. The evidence suggests that the nature of the similarities and differences between Quebec and the ROC has shifted over time. Moreover, in terms of the determinants of voting behaviour, there are a number of important differences that emerge, but one of the most striking distinctions is the relevance of the sovereignty issue in Quebec.

In Chapter 9, Richard Johnston further expands the scope of our assessment by providing a comparative perspective on what the CES have taught us about the long-term structural determinants of party preference. His analysis shows that when data from the CES are stacked up against evidence from election studies in other Anglo-American democracies, the power of societal cleavages to explain variation in party preferences differs remarkably little from one country to the other. Canadian parties appear as structurally rooted as parties in other societies, and these structural bases have significant electoral consequences. What is unique, however, is that Canada's cleavage structure is dominated by cultural forces, which when combined with the long-term significance of the Quebec/ROC divide produce a political system that has been dominated by a party at the centre. The Liberals, Johnston argues, have historically been the dominant party of the centre in Canada because outside of Quebec they are the party of the Catholics, French Canadians, and ethnic and religious minorities, whereas inside Quebec they are the party of non-francophones and those on the right of the political spectrum.

In Chapter 10, Harold Clarke and Allan Kornberg put forward an alternative argument that suggests that voting in Canada is driven more by short-term forces than by long-term sociological factors. Since parties in Canada generally avoid real policy debate during election campaigns and focus instead on brokering deals with different elites in an attempt to ensure electoral support, voters in turn behave accordingly. For instance, data from the CES and other surveys suggest that Canadians have flexible partisan attachments to parties. The issues that they see as being relevant during elections are typically broad and one-sided, otherwise known as valence issues. And Canadian voters, it seems, rely heavily on leader images for making electoral decisions. Much of the data, Clarke and Kornberg argue, point to

short-term forces such as these as being the key determinants of voting. Regardless of which party's electoral support they examine, the same three factors – flexible partisanship, valence (or one-sided) issues, and party leader images – explain much of the variance in voting patterns.

In Chapter 11, Jon Pammett examines the ways in which the CES may be more or less useful for examining the problem of declining voter turnout. He makes the case that the CES are not particularly well suited to conducting detailed investigations of why people do not vote. However, because these studies are administered across the entire country and they ask certain questions about provincial voting behaviour, they may be more useful for examining non-voting at different levels of the federal political system. To this point, there has not been much research on differential abstention, but Pammett's preliminary investigation in this volume suggests that Canadians may be becoming more consistent in their voting habits by not voting at both the provincial and federal levels. Moreover, this chapter shows that voting patterns across multiple levels are related to similar socio-demographic and attitudinal factors as well as to other types of political participation.

In Part 3 of this volume, Antoine Bilodeau, Thomas Scotto, and Mebs Kanji (Chapter 12) summarize what they feel the CES have helped to achieve over the last forty years, and they assess the publication record that has been established (see Appendix). Their synthesis suggests that we have learned a great deal from the CES about why voters vote the way they do and that the effects of this productivity have been far reaching. They are not of the view, however, that this research endeavour has been entirely problem-free, and they provide a few suggestions on how the CES might be improved in the future.

NOTES

- 1 See John Meisel's chapter in this volume for an explanation as to why no survey was attempted at this time.
- 2 Recently, the 2004-06 panel has also been expanded to include data collected during the 2008 federal election.

PART 1

THE NARRATIVE



Point of Departure, 1965

JOHN MEISEL

It is eminently appropriate that a volume surveying four decades of election studies should begin with a historical document. What follows is an extract of a piece that grew out of an after-dinner speech I gave at a 1990 conference at York University on “Analyzing Democracy in Canada: The Limits and Possibilities of Election Studies.” I subsequently beefed up and embroidered the piece for publication in the proposed proceedings under the title “Clio, Psephos and Calculi: Some Historical and Analytical Perspectives on Election Studies in Canada.” For some reason, the volume never saw the light of day, and my pearls, as well as those of the other participants, were never enshrined in a volume emanating from the conference. I intended to recycle most of it for publication elsewhere but somehow never got around to it. When Mebs Kanji, Antoine Bilodeau, and Thomas J. Scotto invited me to contribute a chapter to the present volume, I realized that the perfect venue had miraculously emerged. What follows is about half of the original paper, dwelling on how the first Canadian Election Study came into being and portraying the social and academic context. Although I did some light manicuring and editing, no attempt was made to update, or otherwise enrich, the piece – it is left more or less in its pristine form of a genuine archaeological artifact. Anyone driven by irresistible curiosity to unearth the removed parts can obtain them from me at meiselj@queensu.ca.

Why, you may ask, did Canada's first academic survey-based election study take place in 1965? Why did it not happen in 1962 or 1968? Columbia University had started in the 1940s, and the University of Michigan in the 1950s (see, for example, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). Plumbing the electorate's mind was in the air. We would have had an election survey about that time in any case, but the fact that 1965 was the precise year is bound up with my own activities and my own intellectual development, as well as my tastes, as you will see.

When I went to the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in 1950 to do a Ph.D., I had intended to undertake a comparative study of the Canadian and British party systems, the hypothesis being that the Canadian party system was "better" than the British system. I was totally wrong, but then I was young and all too ready to pass judgment. I believed that the Canadian party system mediated more effectively between the major contending interests than the British system because it cut across the basic cleavage lines, with the major parties trying to appeal to both French and English voters, whereas the British party system was less effective because it followed the main cleavages in society, which were, of course, class based. The British parties exacerbated class cleavages, whereas our system accommodated the needs of the French and English populations.¹

To undertake the study, I had to look at surveys and polls and perhaps to conduct some of my own. It turned out that H.R.G. Greaves, my supervisor, whose interests were in political ideas and public administration, did not believe in this kind of research. I would have to change my topic if I were to work with him. I was too timid to ask for a different supervisor. Instead, I decided to return to Canada for a year, from where I could apply for scholarships to American graduate schools. Queen's University offered me a job, and once I was there, under the influence of J.A. Corry, I eventually undertook to study parties and political behaviour in Canada.² I was launched on a process that, in the context of election surveys, included a number of steps.

As a first step in 1953 and again in 1955, I conducted constituency studies in Kingston, out of which grew my "Religious Affiliation and Electoral Behaviour: A Case Study" (1956). This piece utilized not only survey data but also a variety of other kinds of observations. In re-reading it recently, I was struck by the considerable rewards accruing from the combination of a number of research techniques – a form of eclecticism that has all but disappeared.

I had twelve assistants – most but not all were students, and none was paid a red sou. My budget was risible, covered by a small grant from Queen's University. Together, we conducted about 450 face-to-face interviews during the 1953 federal election in the Kingston constituency and a slightly larger number after the subsequent provincial vote, held in 1955. Census tracts were used to map demographic and other characteristics and to identify strongly Catholic and Protestant areas. The voting records were then related to the identified characteristics. This work followed the methodology pioneered by André Siegfried (1913). My students and I also attended virtually all political gatherings and generally became non-partisan participant observers. Every evening in my house, and with the help of my wife and Bokar coffee (decaf was unknown then), we discussed the day's interviews, interpretations of our questionnaire, respondents' quirks, and the significance of what we had learned. There was an immediacy of the data to us, and to me – who finally wrote something about it – that one misses under present conditions. Today's marvellous technological assistance creates, I believe, serious barriers between the researcher and his or her field of study. It might be wise to consider how something like the early primitive research practices might be fused with the sophisticated gimmickry now available to us. This might be a particularly worthwhile exercise if, as Scotto, Kanji, and Bilodeau note in their chapter in this volume, we turn to the Internet for delivery of future iterations of the Canadian Election Studies.

An interesting wrinkle, which I have marvelled about ever since, emerged during the construction of this initial questionnaire. I included a question through which I was trying to test the knowledge of the respondents of various provincial and federal political figures. Among the names of the politicians listed, which the respondents were asked to identify, I included a fictitious name. I forget the made-up person's initials, but it was something like "J. Small." When I started recording the answers, I found that about half a dozen people responded by saying, yes, they knew who Small was and then, when asked to identify him, said that he had disappeared or that he had left. It turned out that in inventing a non-person I had unwittingly used the surname of someone who had vanished: Ambrose Small. He was a well-known individual in Ontario who had disappeared some years previously without a trace but to the accompaniment of much media attention. My having used his name provides a nice footnote to the vagaries of scientific inquiry. Survey researchers often question the degree to which respondents display non-rational or irrational behaviour without pausing to reflect that

they themselves may sometimes bring less than Cartesian rigour to the tasks at hand and that they too are subject to mental quirks. My subconscious had played a trick on me.

The data-processing method we used is also worth a comment. We are, you will recall, in the mid-1950s. I was then a member of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Kingston Branch, where I came to know an actuary employed by the Empire Life Insurance Company, the head office of which was in Kingston at the time. I told him what I was doing and that I had a formidable task of coping with the enormous quantities of collected data – they seemed enormous at the time. He informed me that a device at his office might help and was not used at night. He referred to a counter sorter, a contrivance of which I had heard nothing until then. He made it available to me, as well as his help. All of my data were formatted into the notorious eighty-column cards, and in the evenings and at night we did all of the tabulations in his office building. While, according to present-day standards, it took a very long time and I certainly would not recommend it to anyone now, there is an insight one gets from working in a literally hands-on relationship with the data. We could *see* and *feel* our responses. We did not have recourse to a statistical software package that we could just “plug in.” Much thought had to be given to the analytical routines we applied. Again, one cannot and should not go back to these primitive forms, but I wonder whether there are not some ancient means of work that, even now, can be grafted onto the contemporary methodology to the benefit of more subtle insight. Immersion in the real thing, as language students know, can be most salutary.

The second step came a little later when I decided that I needed a Ph.D. I never made it to an American graduate school as planned, and just did a lot of research armed only with a master’s degree. C.A. Curtis, the head of my department, called me in one day and asked when I was going to get my doctorate. I had started publishing a bit by then and said: “Never. I don’t need a Ph.D.” He accepted this as my choice but added that he would not recommend a salary increase or promotion for me until I was properly hooded. Sometime before this delicate encounter, I decided to undertake a country-wide election study and had already begun the fieldwork. I returned to LSE to write my projected book and, prodded by the Curtis ultimatum, also submitted it as my thesis. The result was *The Canadian General Election of 1957* (1962). It was modelled after the early Nuffield studies and, other than Gallup polls, used no survey data (McCallum, Buchanan, and Readman 1947; Butler 1952, 1969; Butler and Rose 1960).

So, deeply aware of this lacuna, I decided to put together *Papers on the 1962 Election* (1964), which would incorporate a variety of methodological approaches, including survey material.³ This collection, which was the third step on the road to a proper countrywide survey, mobilized a group of scholars who together had a much broader perspective than is now found in election studies. Among those asked to write papers was Bob Alford, who, in fact, published the first election study based on Canadian public opinion surveys. His chapter reanalyzed data from the Canadian Institute for Public Opinion. Morris Davis was another contributor. He was doing fascinating work on the Halifax double-member constituencies and getting a lot of mileage out of that information. Léon Dion, Bill Irvine, Vincent Lemieux, George Perlin, Terry Qualter, Peter Regenstreif, Howard Scarrow, Mildred Schwartz, Dennis Smith, Norman Ward, Walter Young, and I were other authors – something of a smorgasbord. Nevertheless, it was a very interesting collection in terms of the variety of disciplines and approaches, including virtually every type of analysis anyone might have wanted to undertake at that time. But it lacked focus and strength, because it ignored some currently interesting theoretical issues of political behaviour. In that sense, it fell a little below the level of the other studies then coming out of the United States.

It was this recognition that convinced me that we really needed to conduct a countrywide survey, and this is what finally led to the 1965 initiative. It was essential, I believed, that the Canadian survey be done in a manner echoing some of the paths blazed by Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes at the University of Michigan – then the platinum standard in electoral surveys – and that our work should provide material comparative with that generated by Ann Arbor and the various European studies following its general approach.⁴ This led to the utilization of what were then the conventional methods of sample design and of interviewing.

At about this time, Peter Regenstreif was doing a good deal of electoral work, mostly on behalf of some newspapers and later for politicians. His approach, while highly imaginative, was considerably looser than that of the major American social scientists. He was inspired by Samuel Lubell's (1952) methods, as reported in *The Future of American Politics*. Peter had interviewed what I considered to have been rather idiosyncratically selected samples in the 1958, 1962, and 1963 elections. His analyses attracted a lot of attention in the popular press as well as on radio and television and led to the publication of *The Diefenbaker Interlude: Parties and Voting in Canada: An Interpretation* (1965). Much as I admired Peter's skill, intelligence, and

articulateness, I did not think that his Lubell-inspired approach was suitable for a flagship Canadian electoral study. He was interested in undertaking one, and I thought that it might be better all around if his considerable skill was shared with a more or less conventional group of scholars. In the end, I decided to do what I could to bring together such a group – with his full and enthusiastic support.

Like most people, I am given to procrastination, sometimes gracing this Hamlet-like approach with the words “mature reflection.” Had it not been for the perceived necessity of mounting a pre-emptive strike, so to speak, I might well have delayed applying for the needed funds in time for the 1965 election, and we might have had an entirely different kind of history of electoral research in Canada.

In assembling a research team, I was guided primarily by intellectual considerations, but the other usual criteria were not absent because, I believed, they often do affect the intellectual content of what one does. Although we had no formal ties of any sort to Michigan, it seemed to me essential that its experience and high standards should, if possible, be built into our efforts, without merely creating a Canadian clone. I had been involved with the Consortium for Political Research and knew all of the Michigan scholars very well. Phil Converse, who had done electoral research in France (with Georges Dupeux), seemed the ideal “Michigan partner.” A Quebecer was essential, and Maurice Pinard was the obvious choice. Mildred Schwartz from Calgary gave us a Western dimension and a strongly focused interest in regional aspects of voting. The fact that she was a woman was, in those days, not of central importance, but it was a welcome enhancement. And Peter Regenstreif brought a lot of experience, enormous energy, and a link to an American university (Rochester) *other* than Michigan. However, as I mentioned, the most important factor around which we cohered was an intellectual compatibility. It was an intellectual, and not a political, imperative that brought us together.

The question of funding posed a major challenge. I applied to the Canada Council for \$25,000, but it had never provided a grant as large as that before. I figured my survey would require approximately \$50,000 or \$60,000, even if it was executed with draconian parsimony. This sum was at the time astronomical in social science research. Although the present costs of surveys dwarf what we needed, the sum I sought then was close to unthinkable. My request for \$25,000 caused a near crisis and much serious discussion in the council. Happily, my boss, J.A. Corry, was on the Canada Council, so I

had some inkling of what was going on, despite his great discretion. It at first rejected the request, not only because of the money but also because opinion surveying was not seen by some members as a respectable academic activity. The entire Canada Council apparently had a couple of long debates in which this issue was discussed. Finally, by a narrow margin, they decided that it was appropriate to support surveys, and they gave us \$25,000, which was, I believe, the largest single grant the council had made until then.

However, I still needed to raise another \$25,000 or \$35,000. Fortunately, the Barbeau Committee on Election Expenses had recently been created, with Khayyam Paltiel as its research director.⁵ I went to Khayyam and said: "How would you like to know what people really think about these things? If you give me \$10,000, I'll attach up to twelve questions to my national sample for you," and that is how we got another \$10,000.⁶ Luckily, our interests converged very nicely. I then approached a number of foundations and finally managed to obtain \$5,000 from the Laidlaw Foundation. Again, Alec Corry was most helpful here. Phil Converse closed the gap when he produced \$5,000 from the University of Michigan. By this time, we had \$45,000, and Queen's University put up the rest in one form or another. To raise the needed funds from that many sources was a very time-consuming activity, since the successful sorties for money were also accompanied by many failed ones, of course. I suppose that things are easier now in some respects, except, as Richard Johnston and André Blais highlight in their chapter in this volume, there are significant challenges that still persist in securing resources for election studies, and you have to be much more rigorous in putting together an application. In the earlier days, there was probably less paperwork, less red tape, and certainly fewer deans and research administrators involved. The idea that one would have to meet certain ethical criteria in research, and satisfy the "watchdogs" enforcing them, had not occurred to a soul.

As for communicating with each other, the five of us were scattered all over the map. There were no fax machines or e-mail, of course, but we were able to make conference calls, and we met once or twice at a motel near what was then called Malton Airport in Toronto. We also used a quaint method of communicating called the mail. It worked perfectly well and promptly. Although we relied on the phone a good deal, it was possible and even easy to communicate by letter.

One of the questions you may have asked yourself, and one that I have certainly contemplated, is why it is that with all these surveys I have been

involved in I have never really produced the all-embracing, definitive book? My feckless character and excessively Catholic interests no doubt best explain this lapse. I was interested in too many things and am something of an intellectual dilettante. I published papers, some of them unrelated to elections, gave them at conferences, and collected some of them in my *Working Papers on Canadian Politics* (1972, 1973, 1975). One major study – Mildred Schwartz’s *Politics and Territory* (1974) – did come out of our survey, but Pinard did not do a book either on the areas in which he was most interested. Also, Phil Converse and I presented a methodological paper to a seminar at the University of Michigan, comparing French, Canadian, and American data. However, this was really Phil’s piece, to which I contributed little.

Our little band of sleuths perhaps let the discipline down by not producing the kind of magisterial study for which we certainly had the necessary data. Our coming together was somewhat fortuitous and resulted in our lacking a strongly articulated, lean theoretical focus. As Mildred Schwartz details in the next chapter, we had several foci. In some respects, we were engaging in something of a fishing expedition, at least some of us were. Many fish were, of course, standard variables illuminating voting behaviour. It is well known, and attested to by the impressive list of references in Ronald Lambert’s bibliography (1990), that there is a lot of very rich material in both the 1965 and my subsequent 1968 Canadian election survey. What does not leap at once to the eye is the central question, or core of questions, that animated them. The data we gathered and immediately made available to scholars everywhere via the Michigan and York data banks, the National Library, and other data banks provided fodder for a massive volume of secondary work and provided a baseline for innumerable future studies.⁷ So although some important books and papers have been written on the basis of our data, it is on the whole fair to say that we have built a lot of cottages but not a cathedral.

Overall, I have no deep feelings of regret about the absence of a major book, but one consequence was most unfortunate. I suspect that the failure to obtain funding for a survey during the important 1972 election was in part caused by what was seen by some as an inadequate follow-up on the earlier fieldwork. Someday, I may say more about this part of our history, which is quite suggestive about Canadian academic politics and our sociology of knowledge, but for now I will leave sleeping dogs lie ...⁸

NOTES

- 1 The events of the Quiet Revolution during the 1960s and the subsequent rise of Quebec nationalist parties shortly thereafter exposed the limitations of the established parties to deal with linguistic and societal divides between anglophone and francophone Canada. The consequences are discussed at greater length in this volume in the chapters provided by Richard Nadeau and Éric Bélanger and Richard Johnston.
- 2 The cleavage conundrum kept occupying me, and in the early 1970s I published a short monograph on the topic. Although it dealt primarily with Canada, I first gave it at a meeting of the International Sociological Association in Bulgaria (see Meisel 1974).
- 3 This book had a cottage industry, informal air about it. To save costs, I had the pages typed in Kingston according to specifications supplied by the press. These pages were then photographed and reproduced in the book – a procedure that, at that time, was exceedingly rare. The cover – cutout silhouettes of the four party leaders – was designed and executed by my wife, Murie.
- 4 For a deeper understanding of this comparative literature, see the chapters provided by Mildred Schwartz and Lawrence LeDuc in this volume.
- 5 This committee was set up after the 1964 Speech from the Throne to examine the financing of federal elections in Canada. The committee's recommendations were largely incorporated into the 1974 *Election Expenses Act*, SC 1973-74, c 51, which heavily regulates the financing of elections.
- 6 See, for example, Meisel and van Loon (1966). Richard van Loon, then a doctoral student at Queen's University, was the principal research assistant and co-ordinator of the 1965 survey. His intellectual rigour and managerial skills contributed enormously to our efforts. He is an unsung hero of the early Canadian academic election surveys.
- 7 See, for instance, the reference list provided in the appendix of this volume.
- 8 A fuller, introspective note about the absence of a full-scale book is available in my memoirs, *A Life of Learning and Other Pleasures* (Stirling, ON: Wintergreen Studios Press, forthcoming 2012).

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