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Ideological Evolution of the Federal NDP, as Seen through Its Election Campaign Manifestos

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Pundits and researchers have sometimes blamed the NDP's failure to win a plurality of the vote in national elections on the radical leftist policy proposals it has advocated in elections – too radical, in any case, to appeal to moderate voters who are positioned near or at the centre of the political spectrum (Richards, Cairns, and Pratt 1991). According to a related interpretation, the NDP's historic failure to win power federally finds its root in the ability of the Liberal Party to maintain a centrist “brokerage party” image that successfully attracted the support of moderate voters at the expense of the NDP (Clarke et al. 1991). In the 2011 election, the respective roles of the NDP and the Liberals were reversed: the NDP won a larger share of the popular vote than the Liberal Party for the first time in its history. In fact, the electoral breakthrough of 2011 represents the culmination of a gradual rise of the NDP at the polls in the new millennium, from its nadir at 8.5 percent in 2000 to 18.1 percent in 2008 and 30.6 percent in 2011. This gradual rise in the polls has coincided in time with an apparent movement towards the centre in NDP ideology. The similarity might just be a coincidence. But it is sufficiently striking to raise the question: Was the electoral success of the NDP attributable to changes in its left-right ideological positions?

This chapter sets out to answer this question by looking at the ideological positioning of the NDP from 1988 to 2011. Part 1 emphasizes the theoretical importance of the fact that parties take positions on issues, and

it explains the method used to position parties on said issues. Part 2 describes the changes in the positions that the NDP and the Liberal Party have taken on substantive issues over the past twenty years. Part 3 analyzes the ideological evolution over time of the NDP and the Liberal Party on a left-right composite scale built on the basis of the substantive issues examined in Part 2. I show that the Liberal Party has shifted position on the left-right axis in a haphazard fashion and that Liberal Party voters have been unsupportive of these ideological changes. By contrast, the change to the right in the position of the NDP has been deliberate, and NDP voters have supported it. In conclusion, I speculate as to whether this has helped the NDP achieve electoral gains.

Theory and Method

Party policy positions are estimated using the Comparative Manifesto Project method, using data from party election platforms from 1988 to the 2011 election. The method extracts party positions from the content of election manifestos by means of measuring the frequency of mentions of pre-established issue categories (see Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2011 for an overview and definitions of categories).¹ The CMP data are very attractive to researchers because they provide the only comparable means of estimating party left-right positions over the long run.

The coding of party manifestos is based on the assumption that each party “owns” particular policy issues. Issue-ownership theory (Budge and Farlie 1983) holds that parties try to mobilize voters by selectively emphasizing in their election manifestos issues on which they hold a reputation of competence (e.g., a “tough-on-crime” attitude for the Conservative Party) while devoting less manifesto space to other issues. Voters, in turn, support the parties that they perceive as owners of the issues. In other words, parties do not compete with each other during election campaigns by taking opposite sides on the same issues but, rather, by selectively emphasizing in their manifestos the issues that resonate well with their electorate. According to the “selective emphasis” approach, what counts is not so much the substance of party manifesto statements as the relative importance that is given by each party to the issues of the day. Parties only say positive things in their manifestos about the issues that are important to them, while ignoring the issues about which they would have to say negative things.

Why analyze the content of election manifestos rather than campaign speeches, media releases, or campaign advertisements? Election manifestos

are the only statements of their kind made on behalf of the whole party during an election campaign. Their content is subject to extensive prior debate and negotiation inside the party and they are uniquely representative of what the party stands for. Election manifestos are distinctively authoritative documents on which the main election campaign themes and media comments about campaign themes are based. Most important, focusing on election manifestos allows researchers to use easily identifiable, specifically dated sets of documents that can be reliably archived and formatted for content analyses.

Two frequent criticisms levelled at issue ownership and selective emphasis are (1) that party manifestos are read by very few voters and (2) that they are vacuous statements that do not correlate with subsequent government policies. However, the fact that voters are often not informed about the details of what parties propose in their election manifestos does not mean that they are not competent to determine the ideological position of parties. Recent research has uncovered the existence of information shortcuts that demonstrably help voters to assess where parties stand on issues and whether they keep the promises they make in their election manifestos (Thomson 2011; Pétry 2014). There is also strong evidence that parties elected to power fulfill most of their campaign pledges (Rallings 1987; Pétry and Collette 2009; Naurin 2011). It appears that the belief that parties do not keep their election promises is largely a myth.

The objective of this chapter is to position the NDP and other parties on the left-right political axis and to derive some implications therefrom. The importance of the left-right axis has been demonstrated for voters (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976), experts (Benoit and Laver 2008), and political parties (Bittner and Koop 2013). Left-right appears to be the dominant partisan cleavage in countries studied by the CMP (Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; see also *Electoral Studies* 2007). In Canada, the relevance of the left-right cleavage has been demonstrated in voting behaviour in federal elections (see Maria Zhakharova, Chapter 8, this volume; see also Gidengil et al. 2012 for a recent review) in expert surveys (Benoit and Laver 2008). Research also shows that ideological competition among federal parties is primarily based on a left-right cleavage (Irvine 1987; Pétry, Collette, and Klingemann 2012).

In the analyses below, political parties are positioned on the left-right cleavage based on the RILE (right-left) scale used by CMP researchers. The RILE scale is constructed by simple addition and subtraction of percentages of mentions of a fixed number of “left” and “right” issue categories in

the electoral manifestos of parties. The scale includes twenty-six CMP issue categories – thirteen categories being classified on the left side, and thirteen being classified on the right side of the scale – that are listed and defined in the appendix at the end of this chapter. The identity of the left and right categories was fixed in the 1980s using exploratory factor analyses of data from individual countries (Laver and Budge 1992). The categories retained in the RILE scale were those that correlated highly with either the left or the right axis emerging from within-country factor analyses (mostly in the United Kingdom).²

The simplicity of the RILE method explains its popularity among researchers in numerous countries. A second advantage is that the method allows researchers to produce data that are comparable in time. Experts' surveys, which are an alternative way of positioning parties on an ideological scale, do not allow for this. Another advantage is that the results obtained in one country can be easily compared with those of other countries by consulting the CMP website.

In theory, the RILE scale ranges from -100 (extreme left) to +100 (extreme right). For example, a party manifesto whose content would only be coded in the issue category "law and order," classified on the right side of the scale, would be attributed a score of +100, while a manifesto whose content would only be coded in the issue category "welfare state expansion," classified as on the left side of the scale, would score -100. In practice, the range of RILE scale scores is much lower.

One issue raised by the use of this method is whether the mentions of CMP categories in party manifestos should be interpreted as representing the true ideological position of a party. The official stand of the CMP is that the contents of party manifestos truly reflect party ideology. However, there are reasons that a literal interpretation of mentions in party manifestos should be avoided. First, there are risks associated with a literal interpretation: statistical risks but also human coding biases (Benoit, Laver, and Mikhaylov 2009). Second, parties vary their mentions of substantial issue categories in their manifestos from one election to the next for political or tactical motives that have more to do with strategy than with ideology (Pelizzo 2003). For these reasons, it is preferable to interpret changes in the content of party manifestos as an indication of direction rather than as a literal reflection of changes in party ideology. As well, in order to take into account that changes in party manifestos may reflect short-term considerations in addition to ideological commitments, in this analysis, the scores used to measure party position on substantive issues and on the

RILE scale are averaged by adding the scores at times t and $t-1$ and by dividing the sum by two.³

Party Positions on Substantive Issues

Table 6.1 displays the evolution of the RILE issue categories that were mentioned more than 1 percent of the time on average in NDP manifestos between 1988-93 and 2008-11. The table allows us to see how the NDP has changed its stances on substantive policy issues and to understand more clearly which issue categories have been pulling NDP positions towards the right on the RILE scale and which have been pulling them towards the left. There are eleven issue categories, eight from the left and three from the right. They are ranked by decreasing order of average frequency of mention. “Welfare state expansion” clearly stands out among left categories at 14.2 percent of NDP manifesto space on average, distantly followed by “market regulation” (4.2 percent) and “education expansion” (4.2 percent). The table also reports the scores for “labour groups” (3.6 percent), “democracy” (3.5 percent), “peace” (3.3 percent), “internationalism positive” (2.7 percent), and “protectionism positive” (1.4 percent). Five remaining left RILE issue categories (not reported in the table) are mentioned 4 percent of the time on average over the period of analysis.

The table displays three right categories: “law and order” (3.8 percent), “freedom and human rights” (3.6 percent), and “incentives” (3.1 percent). Together, the nine remaining right RILE issue categories (not reported) are mentioned 5.5 percent of the time on average over the period of analysis. The percentage of mentions of the left RILE categories (41.2 percent) is almost three times larger than the percentage of mentions of the right RILE categories (16 percent) on average over the period of analysis.

The next seven columns of numbers in Table 6.1 give the percentage frequency of mention of individual issue categories in each successive period. To obtain a bird’s-eye view of the trend affecting each issue category over time, the percentages in the three periods after 2000-04 are added together, and the sum is subtracted from the sum of the percentages for the same issue category in the three periods before 2000-04 (the 2000-04 period is omitted). The result of the subtraction is then divided by the sum for the first three periods. The results are reported as percentage increases or decreases over time in the last column of Table 6.1 labelled “change.” The data indicate an increase in the mentions by NDP manifestos of three left RILE issue categories: “internationalism positive” (+900 percent), “market regulation” (+254 percent), and “peace” (+21 percent). And they also indicate an

TABLE 6.1
Evolution of the most frequently mentioned RILE issue categories in NDP manifestos, 1988-93 to 2008/2011 (%)

Categories	Average	1988-93	1993-97	1997-2000	2000-04	2004-06	2006-08	2008-11	Change (%)
<i>Left categories</i>									
504 Welfare state expansion	14.2	8.6	10.9	20.9	18.3	13.0	13.6	14.2	+1
403 Market regulation	4.2	3.0	2.7	1.2	4.7	5.6	3.8	8.1	+254
506 Education expansion	4.2	3.1	4.0	5.5	4.5	3.5	4.8	4.1	-2
701 Labour groups	3.6	4.5	5.8	7.3	4.5	3.0	0.2	0.0	-82
202 Democracy	3.5	4.0	4.4	2.1	3.0	4.7	3.1	3.2	+5
106 Peace	3.3	2.9	3.5	3.2	2.1	1.5	4.3	5.8	+21
107 Internationalism positive	2.7	0.9	0.7	0.0	1.7	3.8	5.8	6.3	+900
406 Protectionism positive	1.4	2.2	2.5	1.9	1.3	0.5	0.4	0.8	-74
Remaining left categories ^a	4.0	6.2	4.8	3.1	3.5	3.6	3.2	2.8	-36
<i>Total left</i>	41.2	35.4	39.3	45.2	43.6	39.2	39.2	45.3	+3
<i>Right categories</i>									
605 Law and order	3.8	0.4	1.2	6.0	2.1	6.3	6.5	4.1	+123
201 Freedom and human rights	3.6	5.2	3.5	0.6	5.3	4.0	2.3	4.1	+14
402 Incentives	3.1	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.3	2.5	4.5	8.1	+250
Remaining right categories ^b	5.5	2.0	8.4	5.4	4.3	1.9	7.4	8.5	+11
<i>Total right</i>	16.0	9.9	14.9	13.5	13.0	14.7	20.7	24.8	+55
RILE score (total right minus total left)	25.2	-25.5	-24.4	-31.7	-30.6	-24.5	-18.5	-20.5	

a The remaining left categories in the RILE scale applied to Canada are "military negative," "anti-imperialism," "nationalization," "economic planning," and "controlled economy." Each of these categories is mentioned in NDP manifestos less than 1 percent of the time on average.

b The remaining right categories in the RILE scale are "military positive," "constitutionalism positive," "free enterprise," "protectionism negative," "economic orthodoxy," "political authority," "welfare state limitation," "national way of life positive," "traditional morality positive," and "social harmony." Each of these categories is mentioned in NDP manifestos less than 1 percent of the time on average.

increase in all the right RILE categories: “law and order” (+123 percent), “freedom” (+14 percent), “incentives” (+250 percent), and “remaining right categories” (+11 percent). There is a decrease in the mentions of “labour groups” (–96 percent), of “protectionism positive” (–74 percent), and of “remaining categories” (–36 percent) on the left, and of “incentives” (–63 percent) on the right. Changes between +10 percent and –10 percent are assumed to reflect stability over time; and, by this assumption, the mentions of “welfare state expansion” (+1 percent), “education expansion” (–2 percent), and “democracy” (+5 percent) have remained stable over the period. Overall, it appears that the ideological shift to the right in NDP manifestos is due primarily to an increase over time in the frequency of mentions of right issue categories (+55 percent) rather than to a decrease in the frequency of mentions of left issue categories (there is, in fact, an increase of 3 percent overall). The large increase in the mentions of “internationalism positive” and “peace” over time in NDP manifestos reveals a readiness to appear more mainstream even if the tone remains critical of established policies in this issue domain.⁴ The increase over time in the mentions of all the issue categories on the right side of the RILE scale, especially “incentives” and “law and order,” is also noteworthy, as is the decrease in the mentions of “protectionism positive” and “labour groups,” two issue categories on the left of the RILE scale that have been traditionally associated with the NDP.

Another development in recent NDP manifestos is the shift towards a vocabulary that is more friendly towards business and trade liberalization. For example, the 2011 NDP manifesto entitled *Giving Your Family a Break: Practical First Steps* contains a section on “Practical First Steps to Reward the Jobs Creators” with pledges to cut taxes for business and to always maintain the Canadian tax rate below the United States federal corporate tax rate.⁵ The change towards a more pro-business ideology is revealed in the very substantial increase in the mention of “incentives” over the period of analysis (+250 percent).

Table 6.2 presents a summary of the changes in the Liberal Party position on substantive issues over the period of analysis. The first column reports the percentage of mentions of RILE issue categories by the Liberals Party between 1988-93 and 2008-11. We see that Liberal Party manifestos have mentioned left RILE issue categories less often than the NDP (29.4 percent of the time against 35.4 percent). As expected, Liberal Party manifestos mention many left categories less frequently overall than do NDP manifestos (e.g., “welfare state expansion” and “market regulation”). Note

TABLE 6.2
Evolution of the most frequently mentioned RILE issue categories in Liberal Party manifestos, 1988-93 to 2008-11

Categories	Average (%)	Change (%)
<i>Left categories</i>		
504 Welfare state expansion	10.5	+78
506 Education expansion	5.1	+3
107 Internationalism positive	4.6	+37
202 Democracy	3.6	-263
106 Peace	1.6	-22
403 Market regulation	1.1	-87
Remaining left categories ^a	2.9	+29
<i>Total left</i>	29.4	+15
<i>Right categories</i>		
402 Incentives	6.2	+12
605 Law and order	2.8	-39
414 Economic orthodoxy	2.8	+125
203 Constitutionalism positive	1.3	-75
201 Freedom and human rights	1.3	-69
401 Free enterprise	1.2	-72
407 Protectionism negative	1.1	-60
Remaining right categories ^b	5.3	-25
<i>Total right</i>	22.0	-27
Average RILE score	-7.0	

a The remaining left categories are "military negative," "anti-imperialism," "nationalization," "economic planning," "controlled economy," "labour groups positive," and "protectionism positive." Each of these categories is mentioned in Liberal Party manifestos less than 1 percent of the time on average.

b The remaining right categories are "political authority," "national way of life positive," "traditional morality positive," "military positive," and "social harmony." Each of these categories is mentioned in Liberal Party manifestos less than 1 percent of the time on average.

that "labour groups positive" and "protectionism positive," which are featured in Table 6.1 for the NDP, no longer appear in Table 6.2 because they were mentioned less than 1 percent of the time overall in Liberal Party manifestos. At the same time, Liberal Party manifestos mention the right RILE categories more often than do NDP manifestos (22.0 percent against 16.0 percent).

The second column of Table 6.2 reports the change in the mention of each issue category calculated in the same manner as the change for the NDP was calculated in Table 6.1. We see an important increase in the mentions of

“welfare state expansion” (+78 percent), the most frequently mentioned category (as it is for the NDP). This is compensated by a decrease in the mention of several left RILE categories (“democracy,” “market regulation”). Overall, even though the Liberal shift to the left is due in part to increased emphasis on left categories (+15 percent), the bulk of this shift is due to a decrease over time in the overall mention of right categories (–27 percent).

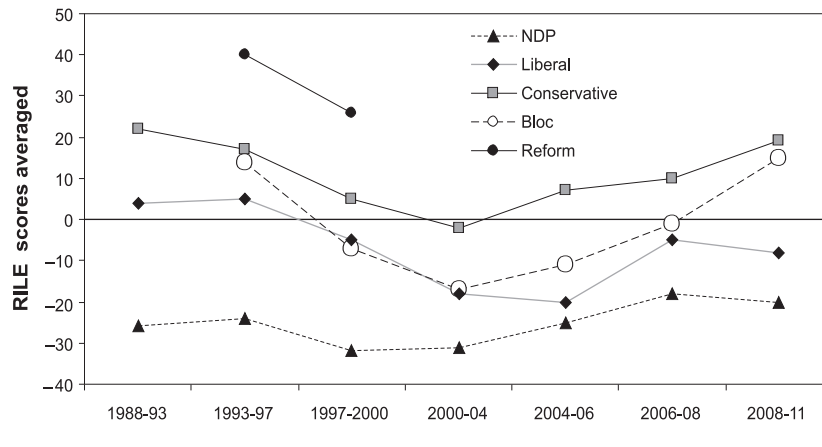
Here are the main results we can draw from a comparison of the evolution of NDP and Liberal Party mentions of substantive RILE issue categories. The most remarkable result is the rapprochement over time between the NDP and the Liberal Party ideologies. This ideological rapprochement is attributed to changes in party emphases on a few substantial issues: NDP manifestos have seen an increase in the frequency of mentions of right issue categories, especially “incentives” and “law-and-order” issues. At the same time, the frequency of mentions of the same issue categories has decreased or remained stable in Liberal Party manifestos. NDP manifestos have also decreased their emphasis on “traditional” left issues categories, including “labour groups” and “protectionism positive,” which, to begin with, the Liberal Party accentuated very little.

Liberal Party manifestos have also seen an increase in the frequency of mentions of “welfare state expansion,” to the point at which they appear indistinguishable from NDP manifestos on this issue category. However, the fact that the frequency of mentions of left issues such as “market regulation” or “peace” has increased over time in NDP manifestos while it has decreased over time in Liberal Party manifestos reminds us that the NDP and the Liberal Party are still ideologically apart on several important substantive issues.

Party Positions on the Left-Right Scale

Figure 6.1 plots the RILE scores of the NDP that are found in the bottom row of Table 6.1. The figure also plots the scores of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party between 1988-93 and 2008-11, of the Bloc Québécois between 1993-97 and 2008-11, and of the Reform/Alliance Party in 1993-97 and 1997-2000. Remember that the party score at each election is calculated by subtracting the total percentage of manifesto mentions of issue categories associated with the left from the percentages of right-associated issue categories. The RILE scores for each party at each election are reported below the diagram. The positions of the NDP are at the bottom of the scale (negative scores on the RILE scale throughout the period). The positions of the Reform/Alliance Party are at the top of the scale (highly

FIGURE 6.1
Left-right ideological placement of parties over time



positive scores) and the positions of the Conservatives and the Liberals are found in the middle, with the Liberals distinctly to the left of the Conservatives (Conservative manifestos have positive scores most of the time, whereas Liberal manifestos have negative scores most of the time). At first glance, the left-right ordering of the parties is consistent with scholarly interpretations. It is also important to note that the parties distinguish themselves sufficiently to provide a clear basis for policy choice by the voters. In particular, there are no instances of leap-frogging whereby parties exchange left-right positions in successive periods.

To calculate a trend over time in the left-right scores of each party, I have averaged the RILE scores for the last three periods and subtracted the result from the average RILE score in the first three periods (the score for the middle period omitted). This method yields a net change of 6 points to the right over time in NDP manifestos, from -27 points on average between 1988-93 and 1997-2000 to -21 points on average between 2004-06 and 2008-11. By the same calculation method, there has been a net change of 12 points to the left over time for the Liberal Party (from +1 point on average before 2000-04 to -11 points on average after 2000-04). There has been a net change of 3 points to the left for the Conservative Party (from +15 points on average before 2000-04 to +12 points on average after 2000-04). This change being too small to rule out chance, it appears that the position of the Conservative Party has remained stable over the period of analysis.⁶

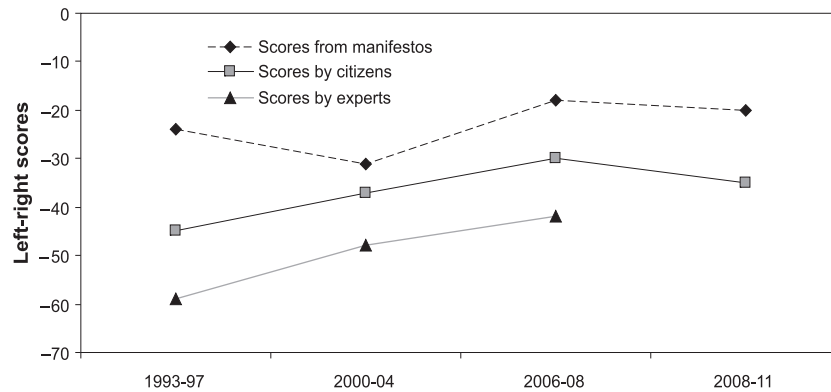
Several results stand out from the data in Figure 6.1. The overall ideological range of the Canadian party system (the distance that separates the NDP and the Conservative Party) has decreased over time substantially: from 42 points on average between 1988-93 and 1997-2000 to 33 points on average between 2004-06 and 2008-11. When the Reform/Alliance Party is included in the calculation, the total ideological range is much larger in 1993-97 (64 points) and in 1997-2000 (58 points) than at any subsequent time. With the disappearance of the Reform/Alliance Party after the 2000 election, the sudden widening of the ideological space that occurred between the parties in 1993 (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000) vanishes.

The average RILE score for the NDP over the entire period is -25.2 (see Table 6.1). By comparison, RILE scores for parties in the Socialist or Social Democratic family from the CMP website are as follows: PS (France 2008) -21.3 ; SPD (Germany 2009) -18.3 ; Labour (Great Britain) -1.5 ; Socialist (Netherlands 2010) -13.1 ; SAP (Sweden 2010) -32.3 . This suggests that NDP manifestos are positioned left-of-centre – both on the Canadian partisan landscape and internationally – and not at the extreme left.

The diagram clearly delineates the rapprochement over time between the NDP and the Liberal Party that emerged from a comparison of Tables 6.1 and 6.2. This rapprochement was most pronounced in 2004-06. The gap between the ideological positions of the Liberal Party and the NDP has increased since. As well, after initial moves towards the left, the manifestos of the NDP, the Liberal Party, and the Conservative Party have all subsequently shifted to the right of the political spectrum. The shift to the right has been more pronounced for the manifestos of the Conservative Party after 2000-04 and for the NDP after 1997-2000. The shift to the right in the manifestos of the Liberal Party after 2004-06 occurred later and was less pronounced.

How credible is the evolution of the ideological positioning of the NDP and other parties depicted in Figure 6.1? Let us first examine whether the RILE data are free from error or biases (internal validity standard). Taking into account that the RILE scale is a “one-size-fits-all” arbitrary scale not specifically designed to coincide with Canadian party ideology, the following question arises: To what extent do the issue categories in the RILE scale correspond to the actual content of NDP manifestos? A strong percentage would reassure us of the face validity of the RILE scale when applied to the NDP. Adding the percentages of mentions of issues categories included in the RILE scale, we find that the left categories account for 35.4 percent and that the categories on the right side of the RILE scale account for

FIGURE 6.2
Left-right ideological placement of NDP by citizens and by experts



25.5 percent of NDP manifesto content overall. Thus the RILE scale accounts for $35.4 + 25.5 = 60.9$ percent on average of the NDP manifesto content over the period of analysis. Put another way, the RILE scale fails to account for 39 percent of the content of NDP manifestos. This is not bad, considering that the issue categories in the RILE scale represent only half the total CMP issue categories. The RILE issue categories account for 51.4 percent of the content of Liberal Party manifestos.⁷ The scale does a better job at capturing the content of NDP than Liberal Party manifestos.

To what extent are the RILE data consistent with results from surveys that ask experts or citizens to position parties on the left-right axis (external validity standard)? Both expert and mass surveys suffer important limitations that prevent their use in research concerned with party ideological evolution over time. The surveys that have been administered in Canada so far have been too infrequent and they have used methodologies that are too different to provide reliable time-series data on the evolution of party left-right positions. But their results can be used to validate the results obtained from a content analysis of party manifestos. How do the RILE data compare with data from expert surveys? Recent expert surveys position the NDP at -59 points in 1993-97 (Laver and Hunt 2000), at -48 points in 2000-04 (Benoit and Laver 2008), and at -42 points in 2008 (Pétry, Collette, and Klingemann 2012) on a standardized scale from -100 (extreme left) to +100 (extreme right) (see Figure 6.2.).

Another point of comparison for the RILE data are the judgments of the electorate as measured in election surveys. Based on data from Canadian Election Study surveys, it is calculated that Canadians placed the NDP at -45 in 2000, -35 in 2004, -30 in 2008, and -35 in 2011, respectively, on a standardized scale from -100 (extreme left) to +100 (extreme right). The data are reported in Figure 6.2.

The correlations between the RILE scale and both the expert and mass survey results are quite strong ($R = .76$ for citizens' scores; $R = .70$ for experts scores), although experts and citizens consistently position the NDP farther to the left than does the RILE scale.⁸ That left party positions derived from expert and mass surveys are further to the left than the positions derived from manifestos is a general feature pointed out by Klingemann et al. (2007) in their comparative study of left-right party positions in Western and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, party positions derived from expert judgments and from mass opinion are not directly comparable with party positions derived from manifesto contents. We do not know precisely on what criteria experts and laypeople base their judgments, but it is safe to assume that these criteria are different from the ones that define the RILE method. One particular difference is that, unlike party positions derived from manifesto contents that reflect today's party ideology, party positions derived from surveys are based in part on judgments about past party ideology. If, as this chapter demonstrates, NDP ideology was more to the left in the past than it is today, then we should expect that the NDP position derived from expert and mass surveys would be farther to the left than the position derived from manifesto data.⁹ Far from being an anomaly, the fact that surveys position the NDP farther to the left than the manifesto data may reinforce the validity of using the RILE method to position the NDP on the left-right policy dimension.

While the RILE scores may better reflect the contemporary position of a party on the left-right spectrum, the question remains whether the RILE scores of the NDP and the Liberal Party reflect their supporters' left-right preferences. Figures 6.3 and 6.4 provide the answer by comparing the evolution of the left-right placement of the NDP and the Liberal Party and their supporters over time.¹⁰ These figures demonstrate that there is a fairly good match between NDP voters and NDP manifestos positions over time ($R = .42$), although we should note that NDP supporters take up more extreme positions than the ones held by the party they support.¹¹ Unlike the NDP, the correlation between the Liberal Party and its supporters is negative and not statistically significant ($R = -.13$). This suggests that the NDP

FIGURE 6.3
Left-right ideological placement of the NDP and its supporters

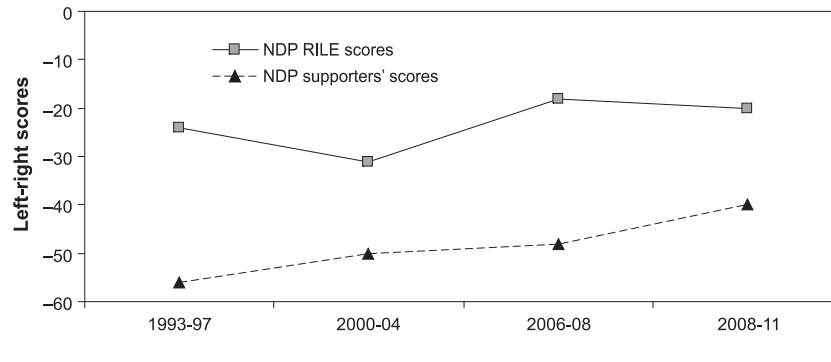
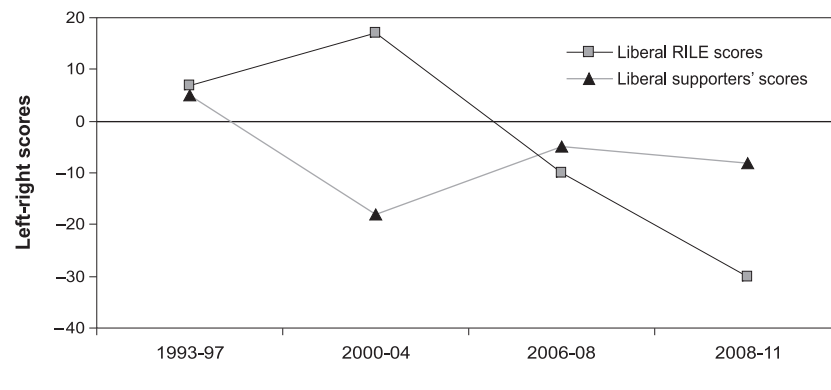


FIGURE 6.4
Left-right ideological placement of the Liberal Party and its supporter



has represented the left-right preferences of its supporters more closely than the Liberal Party.¹² This may be due to the fact that the NDP has been more adept at responding to movements of opinion among its supporters than the Liberal Party has been at responding to its own supporters. Alternatively, it is possible that NDP voters are better able than Liberal Party voters to influence the left-right direction of the party they support.

Conclusion and Discussion

Three main points emerge from the analysis of the evolution over time of the ideological position of the NDP and of the Liberal Party. First, there is a

gradual and fairly regular shift to the right in the manifestos of the NDP over time. Second, the NDP shift to the right is a factor in the narrowing ideological distance between the NDP and the Liberal Party. But the most important factor in this narrowing is the shift to the left in the manifestos of the Liberal Party over time. The net shift to the right in NDP manifestos is smaller than the net shift to the left in Liberal Party manifestos, even when the recent Liberal move back to the right is taken into account. This last point should serve to emphasize that the NDP achieved mainstream status without abandoning its social democratic ideological principles. Rebranding the NDP as a substitute Liberal Party may not be the only path towards electoral victory.

The finding that the manifestos of the NDP and the Liberal Party have been converging over time has important theoretical implications related to selective emphasis and issue ownership. As noted above, issue ownership theory holds that parties selectively emphasize issues to mobilize voters. At first glance, judging by the differences in average frequency of mentions, the data support the theory. The NDP and the Liberal Party appear to take distinct positions on most issue categories. However, to fully qualify as being selectively emphasized, issues must not only be distinctly emphasized but also follow diverging paths in NDP and Liberal Party manifestos. Remarkably, a comparison of the data in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 shows that most issues on which the NDP and the Liberal party take distinct positions are not diverging but, rather, converging over time. In fact, there are only five issues that are both distinct and diverging over time: “peace,” “freedom and human rights,” “market regulation,” “economic orthodoxy,” and “law and order.” Those are the issue categories that truly qualify as cases of selective emphasis. The remaining issue categories are “converging” in the sense that, with time, the space given to them in NDP and Liberal Party manifestos has become more alike. A practical implication of the ideological rapprochement between the NDP and the Liberal Party is that, by making the ideological distance between them much shorter than the distance from the Conservative Party, it renders the prospect of a possible coalition more theoretically plausible (but see Jean-François Godbout, Éric Bélanger, and Frédéric Mérand, Chapter 11, this volume.).

NDP popular support has gradually grown under the leadership of Jack Layton, from 8.5 percent of the electorate in 2000 to 18.1 percent in 2008 to 30.6 percent in 2011. During the same period, the Liberal Party share of

the popular vote has declined, from 41 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2011. To what extent are the electoral success of the NDP and the electoral decline of the Liberal Party attributable to changes in their left-right ideological positions?

The data presented in this chapter strongly suggest that the electoral success of the NDP is linked to changes in its ideological position. The NDP has moved to the right at the same time as its supporters, and Canadians in general, have been moving to the right. The behaviour of the NDP followed the first rule of issue voting theory, which holds that, in order to be successful at the polls, a party must shift its ideological positions in response to shifts in the electorate (Adams et al. 2004).

However, it does not seem that the Liberal Party followed the first rule of issue voting theory. It changed ideological direction several times during the period of analysis, and, as Figure 6.2 suggests, these changes have not been in response to changes in the ideological preferences of the Canadian public or Liberal Party supporters. Its position between the NDP on the left and the Conservative Party on the right presented it with a dilemma. Before 2000-04, when the right was divided, the Liberal Party moved to the left to stop the NDP from making electoral gains at its expense. After the unification of the right, the Liberal Party was no longer free to maintain a left ideological position to compete with the NDP on issues as, by doing so, it would have opened space for the unified Conservative Party to capture some Liberal support. The Liberal Party chose the option of moving back to the right to better compete with the Conservatives, which they correctly perceived as the most immediate danger after the merger of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Alliance Party. But this opened the field for the NDP to recapture support from centre-left voters, which it has apparently done.

One last point needs to be emphasized. Without underestimating the success of the NDP, this success resulted, in part, from the recent failure of the Liberal Party to efficiently adjust its ideological position to party competition in the post-2004 party system. The failure of the Liberal Party has been first and foremost to the advantage of the Conservative Party and, to a lesser extent, to the advantage of the NDP. Evidence of this comes from CES survey data on Canadians' perceptions of party competence at solving policy issues. In 1997-2000, the Liberal Party was the most successful at channelling support based on popular perceptions of issue ownership. The Liberal Party was perceived as best at "creating jobs" and "managing

the economy,” “fighting crime,” and “improving health care.” The NDP was perceived as best at solving only one issue (social programs), and the Conservatives did not score at all (see Bélanger and Meguid 2007).

In 2008-11, the situation had almost completely reversed. The Liberal Party had lost the issue ownership advantage it enjoyed ten or fifteen years ago. But this has happened to the benefit of the Conservative Party, considered by 2008 to be best at “creating jobs,” “managing the economy,” and “fighting crime.” Meanwhile, the NDP has managed to gain issue ownership advantage only in “improving health care.”

Obviously, the NDP’s ability either to remain as Official Opposition or to push through to government power requires it to expand its issue ownership at the expense of the Liberal Party since it is unlikely to capture economic management or law-and-order issue ownership from the Conservatives. Whether it can do this while remaining relatively close to the Liberals ideologically and counteracting Justin Trudeau’s appeal is a question that only the 2015 election can answer.

APPENDIX

Definition of Issue Categories in the RILE Scale (with their CMP codes)

103 *Anti-imperialism*

Negative references to exerting strong influence (political, military or commercial) over other states; negative references to controlling other countries as if they were part of an empire; favourable mentions of decolonization; favourable references to greater self-government and independence for colonies; negative references to the imperial behaviour of the manifesto and/or other countries.

104 *Military: positive*

Need to maintain or increase military expenditure; modernizing armed forces and improvement in military strength; rearmament and self-defence; need to keep military treaty obligations; need to secure adequate personnel in the military.

105 *Military: negative*

Favourable mentions of decreasing military expenditures; disarmament; “evils of war”; promises to reduce conscription, otherwise as 104, but negative.

106 *Peace*

Peace as a general goal; declarations of belief in peace and peaceful means of solving crises; desirability of countries joining in negotiations with hostile countries.

107 Internationalism: positive

Need for international cooperation; cooperation with specific countries other than those coded in *101 Special foreign relationship*; need for aid to developing countries; need for world planning of resources; need for international courts; support for any international goal or world state; support for UN.

201 Freedom and human rights

Favourable mentions of importance of personal freedom and civil rights; freedom from bureaucratic control; freedom of speech; freedom from coercion in the political and economic spheres; individualism in the manifesto country and in other countries.

202 Democracy

Favourable mentions of democracy as a method or goal in national and other organizations; involvement of all citizens in decision making as well as generalized support for the manifesto country's democracy.

203 Constitutionalism: positive

Support for specific aspects of the Constitution; use of constitutionalism as an argument for policy as well as general approval of the constitutional way of doing things.

305 Political authority

Favourable mentions of strong government, including government stability; manifesto party's competence to govern and/or other party's lack of such competence.

401 Free enterprise

Favourable mentions of free enterprise capitalism; superiority of individual enterprise over state and control systems; favourable mentions of private property rights, personal enterprise, and initiative; need for unhampered individual enterprises.

402 Incentives

Need for wage and tax policies to induce enterprise; encouragement to start enterprises; need for financial and other incentives such as subsidies.

403 Market regulation

Need for regulations designed to make private enterprises work better; actions against monopolies and trusts, and in defence of consumer and small business; encouraging economic competition; social market economy.

404 Economic planning

Favourable mentions of long-standing economic planning of a consultative or indicative nature, need for government to create such a plan.

406 Protectionism: positive

Favourable mentions of extension or maintenance of tariffs to protect internal markets; other domestic economic protectionism such as quota restrictions.

407 Protectionism: negative

Support for the concept of free trade; otherwise as *406*, but negative.

412 Controlled economy

General need for direct government control of economy; control over prices, wages, rents, etc.; state intervention into the economic system.

413 Nationalization

Favourable mentions of government ownership, partial or complete, including government ownership of land.

414 Economic orthodoxy

Need for traditional economic orthodoxy (e.g., reduction of budget deficits, retrenchment in crisis, thrift and savings); support for traditional economic institutions such as stock market and banking system; support for strong currency.

504 Welfare state expansion

Favourable mentions of need to introduce, maintain, or expand any social service or social security scheme; support for social services such as health service or social housing. Note: This category excludes education.

505 Welfare state limitation

Limiting expenditure on social services or social security; otherwise as *504*, but negative.

506 Education expansion

Need to expand and/or improve educational provision at all levels. This excludes technical training which is coded under *411 Technology and infrastructure*.

601 National way of life: positive

Appeals to patriotism and/or nationalism; suspension of some freedoms in order to protect the state against subversion; support for established national ideas.

603 Traditional morality: positive

Favourable mentions of traditional moral values; prohibition, censorship, and suppression of immorality and unseemly behaviour; maintenance and stability of family; religion.

605 Law and order

Enforcement of all laws; actions against crime; support and resources for police; tougher attitudes in courts.

606 Social harmony

Appeal for national effort and solidarity; need for society to see itself as united; appeal for public spiritedness; decrying anti-social attitudes in times of crisis; support for the public interest.

701 Labour groups

Favourable references to labour groups, working class, unemployed; support for trade unions; good treatment of manual and other employees.

Notes

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- 1 Canadian manifestos are collected and coded by the Poltext project team in collaboration with the CMP. The scores of Canadian parties on each CMP issue category over time are posted on the project's website at www.capp.poltext.org. Each manifesto is coded separately by two trained researchers. A coding handbook explains the identification of coding units (quasi-sentences), the choice of categories, and how to cope with difficult coding decisions. At the end, the researchers compare their respective coding and reach agreement when they disagree. When agreement cannot be reached, a referee is called to settle the issue. The inter-coder agreement – that is, the percentage of agreement between the coders when they first compare their results – is usually well above 90 percent.
- 2 The scores of Canadian parties on the RILE scale over time are posted on the CMP website at <https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/>.
- 3 Averaging scores in two successive elections implies that the score of a party at $t-1$ affects in equal proportion its score at t . Alternative forms of averaging could give smaller weights to more distant time points and/or take into account the duration of each legislative term in the smoothing formula.
- 4 There has been a significant increase in the frequency of mentions of “military negative” in NDP manifestos between 1988 and 2011, although the average frequency of mentions remains largely under 1 percent for that category over the period.
- 5 This is in contrast with promises to increase corporate taxes in earlier NDP manifestos. For example, the 1988 NDP manifesto *A Fair Deal for Canada* contains a pledge to introduce tax increases for profitable corporations.
- 6 The Conservative scores are based on the manifestos of the Progressive Conservative Party before 2004. Starting with 2004, the scores are based on the manifestos of the Conservative Party, resulting from a merger between the Reform/Alliance Party and the Progressive Conservative Party.
- 7 By comparison, the RILE scale accounts for 57 percent of Conservative Party manifesto content and 39 percent of Bloc manifesto content.
- 8 Franzmann and Kaiser (2006) propose an alternative method for analyzing CMP data – one which produces NDP scores that are closer to expert survey results than

the scores on the RILE scale. Their method focuses exclusively on “positional” issue categories, on which the parties take opposite views (e.g., “for” or “against” tougher crime measures or “for” or “against” an increase in military expenditures) while ignoring “valence” issue categories, on which parties take the same view (e.g., all parties stand for democracy or peace). When applied to Canadian party ideology, the method positions the NDP farther to the left than the RILE method and produces an NDP trajectory that moves less towards the centre of the ideological space over time than the trajectory produced by the RILE method. The Liberal Party trajectory produced by the Franzmann and Kaiser method is very similar to the trajectory produced by the RILE method.

- 9 Recent expert surveys position the Liberal Party closer to what its position was on the RILE scale twenty years ago than to its current position on the scale.
- 10 Self-placement data from CES surveys are used to locate party supporters. The CES surveys ask respondents to place themselves on a 1-to-10 left-right scale. For comparison purpose, the CES data have been transformed linearly into the -100 to +100 RILE metric and averaged over two elections.
- 11 Klingemann et al. (2007) also find that parties of the left in Europe are further to the left, whereas supporters of centrist parties are more moderate.
- 12 Note that the convergence of views is strongest between the Conservative Party and its supporters ($R = .85$)

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