# The Geography of Class and Religion in Canadian Elections Revisited*

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## Introduction

With the important exception of regional divisions, students of Canadian voting behaviour have traditionally emphasized the weakness of the relationships between the country's social cleavages and its patterns of party support (Clarke et al., 1979; LeDuc, 1984). Particularly anemic, when compared with the experience of many other advanced industrial countries, were the ties between class and party (Alford, 1963). This has been taken to reflect both the relative absence of class appeals on the part of political parties (Schwartz, 1974: 589; Brodie and Jenson, 1980) and the weakness of class consciousness among Canadians (Pammett, 1991). Somewhat surprisingly, after geography, religion has emerged from decades of research as the most powerful predictor of Canadian party preferences (Irvine, 1974; see also Lijphart, 1979, for some cross-national corroboration of the primacy of religion in voting behaviour).

This finding has occasioned some consternation among analysts since Canada is, by comparative standards and especially in relation to the US, a reasonably secular society. For example, according to a Pew Research poll released in December 2002, whereas 59 per cent of Americans felt

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that religion was "personally important," the comparable figure for Canada was 30 per cent (Pew Research Center, 2002). Church attendance rates have been in decline over time.[1] Moreover, as with the class cleavage, Canadian parties do not appear to stake out distinctive religious or theological appeals, although some have argued that the policies and rhetoric of successive Reform/Canadian Alliance/Conservative parties appeal to those whose values are grounded in religious, moral and social traditionalism. The long-standing tendency of Catholics to support Liberal candidates, however, remains to be adequately explained.

There have been attempts to offer an explanation for the Catholic-Liberal relationship. In his 2005 presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association, André Blais reviewed, and dismissed on empirical grounds, a number of these possible explanations. In summarizing the current state of understanding, Blais concluded: "First, the religious cleavage is very important in Canadian elections; it is as strong as the regional cleavage. Second, the strong support of Catholics is a key factor in Liberal success. Third, the religious cleavage has not significantly weakened over time. Fourth, we still do not know much about why Catholics vote Liberal" (2005: 830). To invigorate the search for a satisfactory explanation, Blais proposed creating a "special prize for the individual or team that solves the mystery" (2005: 830).

This article takes up this challenge by building upon a provocative analysis developed about 15 years ago by Richard Johnston (1991). Johnston argued that the politicization of religion in Canadian elections is sustained through institutional and social processes whenever Catholics are concentrated in the local environment. Specifically, he contended that the geography of the religious cleavage also influences the politicization of other cleavages, and that of class in particular. When Catholics are present in sufficient number, the axis of political conflict shifts to religious grounds and the association with Catholicism and Liberal support and non-Catholics with other parties intensifies. In these circumstances, other putative social cleavages, such as those associated with class, are muted. However, according to Johnston, where Catholics are locally weak, the association between class and voting will find expression. Once these subtleties are appreciated, contrary to conventional wisdom, the social bases of Canadian party support appear to be quite strong and efficacious: "The Canadian party system, far from lacking a social base, is profoundly rooted in tribal loyalties" (Johnston, 1991: 109).

Regretfully, Johnston's provocative interpretation has yet to receive much scholarly attention. In this article we revisit the question of religion and party preference by replicating Johnston's analysis using data from the 2000 Canadian National Election Survey (CNES).[2] We also extend his analysis by taking advantage of multilevel modelling techniques to simultaneously explore relationships between class, religion and

**Abstract.** Almost two decades ago, Richard Johnston advanced a provocatively counter-orthodox interpretation of the Canadian party system when he contended that "...far from lacking a social base, [it] is profoundly rooted in tribal loyalties." Specifically, he argued that where Catholics appeared in significant numbers, the party system tended to be socially grounded in the religious cleavage (Catholic/non-Catholic divisions in party choice), whereas class politics (union/non-union partisan divisions) prevailed in areas where Catholics constituted no more than a small minority. Johnston argued that religious cleavages took priority over material cleavages because of the tendency of voters to cast strategic ballots when their preferred party was rendered locally uncompetitive by the concentration of Liberal-voting Catholics. Our analysis extends that of Johnston by using multilevel methods to examine the impact of provincial and constituency-level densities of Catholics on the voting behaviour of individuals in the 2000 election. This approach enables us to simultaneously capture the interactive effects of class and religion across different levels of spatial aggregation. Our analyses suggest that religious affiliations continue to structure vote choice for all pan-Canadian parties except the NDP. We also find that these individual-level relationships are conditioned by the religious composition of the electoral district. We do not, however, uncover evidence to suggest that the religious and class cleavages interact over territory such that there are pockets where each cleavage dominates. As such, to the extent that tribal loyalties anchor the Canadian party system, they appear to be those of religious communities rather than those of class.

**Résumé.** Il y a presque deux décennies, Richard Johnston a lancé un pavé dans la mare de l'orthodoxie en proposant une interprétation inattendue du système partisan canadien lorsqu'il a affirmé que «... [celui-ci], loin d'être dénué d'une base sociale, est profondément enraciné dans des fidélités tribales.» Il avançait, plus précisément, que lorsque le nombre de catholiques est assez élevé, le système de partis a tendance à reposer sur des clivages sociaux fondés sur la religion (la division catholique-non catholique détermine le choix du parti), alors que la classe (syndiqué/non-syndiqué) est le facteur déterminant dans les régions où les catholiques ne constituent qu'une petite minorité. Johnston affirmait que les clivages religieux l'emportaient sur les clivages économiques parce que les électeurs ont tendance à voter stratégiquement lorsque leur parti préféré n'est pas compétitif au niveau local en raison d'une forte concentration de catholiques libéraux. Notre analyse prolonge celle de Johnston en utilisant une méthode multi-variée pour examiner l'impact de la densité de population catholique, au niveau des provinces et des comtés, sur le comportement électoral individuel lors de l'élection de l'an 2000. Cette approche nous permet de capturer simultanément les effets d'interaction entre classe et religion à divers niveaux d'agrégation spatiale. Notre analyse suggère que les affiliations religieuses continuent de structurer le vote pour tous les partis pancanadiens, à l'exception du NPD. Nous constatons aussi que la composition religieuse de la circonscription électorale influe sur la relation entre vote et religion au niveau individuel. Nous n'avons cependant pas découvert d'interaction territoriale classe-religion qui créerait des enclaves où l'un ou l'autre clivage prédomine. Ainsi, s'il existe des loyautés tribales à la base du système partisan canadien, celles-ci se situent au niveau de l'affiliation religieuse plutôt que de l'appartenance de classe.

the vote associated with individual attributes and local (riding-level) and provincial religious concentrations (for excellent general discussions and applications of these methods, see Jones et al., 1992; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). We begin in the next section with a more detailed discussion of Johnston's analysis, followed by a brief discussion of the intervening changes in Canadian society and politics since the 1979 federal election analyzed by Johnston, and in the third section we discuss our analysis and findings. We uncover much support for Johnston's argument in the contemporary context (2000), yet we are able to offer some

significant refinements. While falling short of a full explanation for the mystery of the religious foundations of Canadian party support, our findings underscore the importance of local social contexts in sustaining the religious cleavage in Canada.

## Geographic Contexts and the Religious Cleavage— Johnston's Argument

Johnston published two analyses of religion and voting, both of which emphasize the importance of geographic and social context for explaining the persistence of the religious cleavage in Canadian party politics (Johnston, 1985, 1991). In both pieces he contended that religious affiliations should be understood as signifying something more than the attributes of individual voters. Rather, such affiliations represent group memberships that involve individuals in networks of association, tradition and affiliation. In his critique of Irvine's (1974) earlier analysis, Johnston argued that the intergenerational reproduction of the religious cleavage in Canadian voting depended not simply on the intra-family processes of socialization (as Irvine had contended), but the efficacy of these processes was itself contingent on the larger context in which families were situated:

> A Catholic Liberal father is more likely than a non-Catholic Liberal father to pass along his Liberal loyalty because his influence on his offspring is more likely to be reinforced by influence outside the home in the larger Catholic community. Conversely, a Catholic Conservative is less likely than a non-Catholic Conservative to pass his loyalty along, because his influence within the home is relatively unlikely to find extra-family reinforcement.... [E]xploring the religious basis of Canadian party choice begs for contextual variables and analyses. (1985: 108, 112)

Taking up Johnston's suggestion, Jon Pammett (1991) looked at the impact of the religious composition of Federal Electoral Districts (FEDs) on the propensity of Catholics to vote Liberal. Specifically, he found that increases in the density of Catholics across FEDs strengthened the relationship between Catholicism and Liberal support. In addition, concentrations of Catholics in an FED contributed to overall levels of partisan instability by drawing non-Liberals to the party (Pammett, 1991: 410). Pammett's findings are suggestive of a contextual effect in which Catholics in non-Catholic environments are less likely to vote Liberal than are their counterparts in heavily Catholic FEDs. Moreover, in heavily Catholic environments individuals, regardless of their personal, political or religious affiliations, are drawn to conformity with a locally predominant Liberal/Catholic political ethos (on this type of explanation more

generally, see Blake, 1978; Eagles, 1995). We will return to this type of explanation in the interpretation of our empirical results.

Johnston's argument in "The Geography of Class and Religion in Canadian Elections" (1991) departs from this type of social influence contextual mechanism. Instead, he explains the apparent effects of religious context on individual political behaviour as the result of strategic or tactical voting. Since we are testing and extending his analysis in this piece, it is worth summarizing his argument and his empirical analysis in some detail here. Party support in English Canada can be depicted as a function of two oppositions, namely those of religion and class. The former is operationalized simply as Catholics *versus* non-Catholics and the latter as union members *versus* non-union members. Where Catholics are locally strong, their well-known support for the Liberals assures the party of local victory. This in turn discourages non-Catholics from voting sincerely (on the basis of their class interests, for example). The result is that where Catholics are present in substantial numbers, other prospective cleavages are not activated and overall relationships between class and party support are attenuated. Conversely, where Catholics are locally sparse, voters (including Catholics) will be more likely to vote on the basis of their class position rather than their religious affiliation. Johnston offers the following analysis:

> Part of the geographic story is that Catholics, much more than union families, are distributed unevenly over the landscape. This allows them to control the electoral agenda, so to speak, where their numbers are relatively large. Where Catholics are numerous, class, or union/non-union, differences are suppressed. But where Catholics are few, class differences, at least in NDP voting, can flourish. (1991: 128)

Johnston's test of this model came from the 1979 federal election (excluding Quebec, since its party system dynamics were obviously different and, as overwhelmingly Catholic, it constitutes a "massive outlier"; see Johnston, 1991: 114–15), and several provincial elections. Provincial elections were included since at the time of his study Catholics constituted 45 per cent of the 1979 National Election sample and he was concerned that this near-majority would impart a *national*-level strategic calculus for voters, along the lines suggested above, that would discourage non-Liberal supporters from voting sincerely. By 2000 this is no longer a concern, in large part because Quebec, long the pivot of Catholic-related Liberal governments, now gives most of its support to the Bloc Québécois. We have chosen to avoid the complexities of incorporating voting at the provincial level into our analysis (for an exploration of the complex and spatially variable relationships between provincial and federal voting, see Bélanger, 2002).

Parliamentary constituencies are the primary unit of political competition in Canadian politics—governments are built one seat at a time. Federal ridings therefore represent the most plausible site to look for evidence of the kind of tactical voting that Johnston's model posits. However, Johnston (1991: 119) chose to operationalize the contextual presence of Catholics at the *provincial* level, claiming that "[m]edia reporting of poll and other information is commonly for the province-wide or metropolitan-area wide results." According to this logic, non-Liberal voters develop perceptions of the hegemony of the Catholics or the Liberals at the provincial level and cast their tactical votes accordingly. He notes that voters may have difficulty finding constituency-specific information to assist them in their strategic calculus.

We are not convinced. We believe that the province is simply too large, too heterogeneous, too remote and inadequately relevant for federal elections to impress a strategic voting logic upon would-be tactical voters. By contrast, the federal electoral district is a much more meaningful and accessible environment to support the development of perceptual and strategic cues (Carty and Eagles, 2005). Recent research by Blais and Turgeon (2003: 455–61) found that fully half of voters in the 1988 election could identify the party which would finish third in their constituency, suggesting that local information is not as difficult to come by as might generally be believed. Similarly, in their analysis of the 1997 election, Blais et al. (2001: 343–52) present evidence that the local constituency race, but not the national-level question of government-formation, influenced the vote, but they estimated the proportion of strategic voters at only 3 per cent. This low level certainly casts doubt on the plausibility of Johnston's claim that strategic voting is the causal mechanism responsible for the observed geography of party support, while simultaneously opening the possibility that his original argument (1985), that broader social influence mechanisms that vary across local contexts are indeed at work. In our empirical analysis, we report evidence that is consistent with the latter interpretation.

Notwithstanding these issues, Johnston's position is that, even armed with sufficient local information, we should not simply rule out the possibility that voters might respond strategically to higher levels of political competition such as the province. He concluded: "If, as I hypothesize, the province is a valid unit for voters' strategic calculations, then the constituency percentage Catholic should not be analysed other than with the province percentage controlled" (1991: 120). Fortunately, we are able to take up this recommendation. Employing multilevel modelling, we are able to simultaneously estimate the impact of varying Catholic presence at the riding and the provincial level on the behaviour of individual voters.

Using probit analyses to estimate the relationships between Catholicism (individual and in the provincial context), union membership and

party support, Johnston confirmed his expectations for the patterns of voting for both the Liberals and the NDP. The relationship between Catholicism and Liberal voting was strongest in provinces where Catholics predominated, reflecting the political salience of the religious cleavage. In provinces with few Catholics, however, the Liberals were less dominant. As such, the class cleavage appeared to grow in salience and the NDP was able to attract the support of union members. However, Johnston predicted that in these areas, middle-class (non-union) voters would be more inclined to support their "natural" class party, the Progressive Conservatives. However, his results contradict this hypothesis, since this party's support appears to become more (rather than less) strongly structured by class as the provincial density of Catholics increases. For this party Johnston admitted that "the story makes little sense" (1991: 126).[3] He concluded that "... until we can lay it aside, our geographic picture although impressively powerful, is still not entirely coherent" (1991: 127). Is the picture any clearer in the 2000 election?

To explore the plausibility of Johnston's argument as an account of voting in the 2000 election, we employed the post-election wave of the CNES 2000 survey (N = 2860). Following Johnston, we kept only non-Quebec respondents who voted in the election (N = 1596). Table 1 explores the representativeness of our working sample. Liberal voting is underrepresented in our sample, as is Alliance support. Some of this discrepancy is the result of non-response to the vote question, since 13.5 per cent (N = 215) of respondents refused to disclose their vote choice. Assuming that the non-response is roughly evenly distributed between Liberal and Alliance supporters (the discrepancy is about the same for either party, and sums approximately to the non-response level), we have decided against compensatory weighting. In our working data file, then,

TABLE 1

Representativeness of Working Sample

|  | Working sample | Actual non-Quebec level* |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Liberal | 33.8% (N = 540) | 39.6% |
| Canadian Alliance | 27.3% (N = 436) | 32.6% |
| Progressive Conservative | 13.2% (N = 211) | 14.6% |
| NDP | 10.3% (N = 165) | 11.0% |
| Catholic | 26% | 31.08%** |
| Union membership | 31% | 25.8%*** |

*Taken from Elections Canada data, as reported in Blais et al., 2002: Table 4.1, p. 66.
**Taken from Statistics Canada. Census 2001.
***Refers to the rate of unionization in the civilian workforce in 2000 *for Canada as a whole*, as reported by Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. See http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/wid/ pdf/16UnionMembership2004.pdf (April 8, 2005).

are 31 per cent union members, as against a general civilian unionization rate for the country as a whole of approximately 26 per cent. Similarly, Catholics comprise 26 per cent of our sample, whereas outside of Quebec, the 2001 census reveals that Catholics comprise about 31 per cent of the non-Quebec population. These minor discrepancies may introduce some sampling error into our analysis of the foundations of party support outside Quebec in the 2000 election, but they are unlikely to significantly undermine our test of Johnston's argument.

To the individual-level survey data we have appended census data (from Statistics Canada) on the concentrations of Catholics in respondents' FEDs and their province of residence.

## Religion and Party Politics in the Fourth Party System

Obviously, Canadian society and politics have been transformed in many ways in the more than twenty years that have elapsed since the 1979 election. Writing in the 1980s, Johnston (1985: 92) noted that there had been a decline in the strength of the religious cleavage in Canadian voting over the 1965–1979 period. Most obviously, this long-term secularization of the population has had a further two decades to proceed since Johnston's study. Moreover, the religious landscape of Canada has become more complicated as a result of the substantial waves of immigration that have occurred in the last several decades. However, according to the 2001 Canadian census, three-quarters of Canadians are still Catholics or Protestants (and a further 16% declined to profess any religious faith; see Bibby, 2000).

Even more dramatic have been the changes to the country's party system (see Carty et al., 2000). The Conservative landslide of 1984 was based in large measure on Brian Mulroney's appeal to Catholics in Quebec. The collapse of the Mulroney coalition in the 1993 election ushered in an entirely new party system characterized by strong Reform/Canadian Alliance roots in Western Canada and the Bloc Québécois dominance in Quebec. Have these social and political developments finally eroded the religious foundation of party support?

The simple answer to this question is no. A 1996 survey analysis inquiring into the religious, social and political (including partisan) orientations of a sample of 3,000 Canadians, for example, concluded that "... religious variables are still among the most useful in differentiating party adherents (Guth and Fraser, 2001: 61.) Similarly, according to the principal investigators of the Canadian National Election Survey (CNES), outside Quebec, in the 2000 election 54 per cent of Catholics voted Liberal—other things being equal, a Catholic was 14 per cent more likely to vote Liberal than a non-Catholic (Blais et al., 2002: 93). As such, the

religious cleavage remains centrally important in explaining election outcomes. "It would be impossible to understand the Liberals' victory in the 2000 election without recognizing the extent to which their strength outside Quebec hinges on the support of Catholics and Canadians of non-European origin. These two groups constitute the core of Liberal support outside Quebec" (Blais et al., 2002: 96). Clearly, in regards to Canadian voting behaviour, religion remains "... the strikingly peculiar houseguest who has overstayed his welcome"(Irvine, 1974: 560).

A second empirical underpinning of Johnston's argument concerns the uneven spatial distribution of Catholics. Is there evidence that Catholics are now more evenly distributed over the Canadian landscape? While definitive comparisons with the 1970s are not possible with the data at hand, it is clear that wide geographic variations in the concentration of Catholics in Canada's federal electoral districts persist into the new millennium. Outside Quebec, the 2001 census reveals that the percentage of Catholics in federal ridings ranges from about 10 per cent to over 90 per cent. The standard deviation of 14 per cent for the proportion of Catholics is almost half of the mean (32%) for that variable, confirming the general spatial variability of Catholicism. Clearly, the intervention of more than two decades has done little to diminish the *potential* relevance of Johnston's interpretation. The raw materials upon which his interpretation is premised seem to be firmly in place in 2000. With this, then, we are now in a position to introduce our test to see if the explanatory potential is realized.

## Multilevel Models of Religion, Union Membership and the Vote in 2000

Our analyses begin at the individual level, with the familiar logistic regression (logit) model in which the relationships between union membership, Catholicism and vote choice are evaluated. The dependent variables for these—and all other models—are the odds of voting for each of the four major political parties campaigning outside Quebec. We then take account of the nesting of individuals within both riding and provincial contexts. As a second step, we estimate two-level models in which the individual-level relationships are conditioned by the concentration of Catholics in their FEDs.[4] As noted above, we think this is the most logical place to look for contextual effects on individual-level voting choices. However, following Johnston's admonition, we also wish to control for provincial concentrations of Catholics when looking for riding-level effects. Therefore, we also estimate three-level models in which the individual-level relationships are conditioned by BOTH the concentration of Catholics in their FED and province. The general form of these models is as follows:

Level-1 model (individual level)

$$Prob(Y = 1|B) = P$$

$$\log[P/(1 - P)] = P0 + P1 * (UNION\ individual)$$
$$+ P2 * (CATHOLIC\ individual)$$

Level-2 model (riding level)

$$P0 = B00 + R0$$

$$P1 = B10 + B11*(\%\ CATH\ riding)$$

$$P2 = B20 + B21*(\%\ CATH\ riding)$$

Level-3 model (provincial level)

$$B00 = G000 + U00$$

$$B10 = G100 + G101\ (\%\ CATH\ prov)$$

$$B11 = G110$$

$$B20 = G200 + G201\ (\%\ CATH\ prov)$$

$$B21 = G210$$

Since there are no ridings or provinces in which the proportion of Catholics is zero, we choose to centre the riding and provincial measures of Catholicism around their respective means. Though we are primarily interested in the random variables measuring the slopes of Catholicism and union membership and voting behaviour—given the contextual effects associated with Catholic density—centring the contextual measures renders the intercepts readily interpretable as the odds of a non-Catholic, non-union member supporting the party in a district and a province of average Catholicism.

To summarize our hypotheses, we expect that, at the individual level, Catholics will be more likely to support Liberals than non-Catholics, and the reverse should be true for Catholic-Alliance and Catholic-Progressive Conservative relationships. We have no particular individual-level expectation regarding Catholicism and NDP voting, but we do expect that union members should be more likely than non-members to support candidates from this party. Our primary interest is in the contextual effects associated with concentrations of Catholics at the FED and the provincial levels, though we expect that these relationships will primarily be associated, in terms of their magnitude or strength, with the local (FED) as opposed to the provincial level of aggregation. As the density of Catholics increases in the local and provincial contexts, we expect that the propensity of Catholics to vote Liberal will be enhanced. As the religious cleavage intensifies with the increased proportion of Catholics in the context, we expect

that those who might otherwise be drawn on the basis of their class position to the Conservatives, the Alliance or the NDP, would be more likely to vote for the Liberal party. Specifically, the lower individual-level odds of a union member supporting the Conservatives or the Alliance should be further attenuated as the proportion of Catholics in the environment increases, but non-union members would also be more likely to support Liberals under these conditions. As such, we might well expect that the effects associated with union membership on party support for the CA, PC and NDP parties will diminish in magnitude and statistical significance in relation to the increased environmental presence of Catholics. Finally, we expect that the individual-level relationship between union membership and NDP support should be depressed as the environmental presence of Catholics increases.

Tables 2 through 5 present the results of these three levels of analysis for voting for each of the main parties in the 2000 election. Beginning with the Liberals in Table 2, the first model identifies the expected strongly positive relationship between Liberal voting and membership in the Catholic Church. Other things being equal, Catholics outside Quebec are almost twice (odds ratio = 1.95) as likely to support Liberal candi-

TABLE 2

Multilevel Models of Class, Religion and Liberal Voting, 2000

|  | Level 1 individual effects (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 2 individual and riding (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 3 individual, riding, prov (odds ratio/ signif) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | **.418** | **0.417** | **0.368** |
|  | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) |
| **Individual effect** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | **1.950** | **1.854** | **1.844** |
|  | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) |
| Union member | 1.039 | 1.040 | 1.013 |
|  | (.738) | (.727) | (.835) |
| **Effect of riding % Catholic** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | — | **1.011** | **1.010** |
|  |  | (.033) | (.012) |
| Union member | — | 0.995 | 0.993 |
|  |  | (.442) | (.310) |
| **Effect of provincial % Catholic** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | — | — | 0.993 |
|  |  |  | (.520) |
| Union member | — | — | 0.984 |
|  |  |  | (.143) |
| **-2 Log-likelihood/deviance** | 2009.952 | 2006.464 | 2275.79 |

dates than are non-Catholics. Membership of an individual in a trade union, on the other hand, does not exert any significant effect on the likelihood of an individual's voting Liberal. Are these individual-level relationships conditioned by the density of Catholicism at higher levels of aggregation? According to Johnston's hypotheses, only the slope of the Catholic-Liberal relationship should vary as a function of the contextual presence of Catholics (Johnston, 1991: 121). And as our variant of Johnston's argument leads us to expect, the contextual influence of Catholicism is evident in models 2 and 3, but it is riding-level Catholicism that intensifies the individual-level relationship between Catholicism and Liberal support. Once the riding-level effect is accounted for, the provincial density of Catholics exerts no additional significant effect on the individual-level relationships. This suggests that the possibility, recognized by Johnston, that provincial-level effects might appear as the result of model misspecification, spuriously capturing the operation of sub-provincial contextual influences (Johnston, 1991: 120), was in fact correct, at least in the 2000 election. There is no evidence, however, to support Johnston's contention that increasing the density of Catholics at either the riding or provincial level leads union members to be more likely to vote Liberal.

With the emergence of the Canadian Alliance as a major contender in the fourth party system and prior to their merger with the Progressive Conservatives in 2003, it is necessary to look at the support for both parties of the Canadian political right in the 2000 election. Table 3 presents parallel models to those for the Liberals for the Canadian Alliance (CA) in 2000. The individual-level relationship between Catholicism and CA voting is strongly negative—all things being equal, Catholics were almost half as likely as non-Catholics to vote for an Alliance candidate. This finding lends support to the view that the Christian fundamentalists who support the Alliance diminish the attractiveness of the party to Catholics. Individual union members also appear to be less likely than non-members to support the Alliance, but this expected relationship is not statistically significant. Interestingly, model 2 suggests that this relationship is conditioned by the riding-level concentration of Catholics such that increases in the latter further reduce the odds of a Catholic voting for the Alliance. In neither of the first- or the second-level models does union membership exert a significant effect on the odds of Alliance voting. To this point, the results are generally consistent with the logic of Johnston's argument.

However, the picture becomes more complex when the provincial concentration of Catholics is included in the estimation (level 3). In the three-level model, both individual-level Catholicism and union membership diminish the odds of Alliance support. Increases in the proportion of Catholics in FEDs intensifies this negative relationship. Interestingly,

TABLE 3

Multilevel Models of Class, Religion and Canadian Alliance Voting, 2000

|  | Level 1 individual effects (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 2 individual and riding (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 3 individual, riding, prov (odds ratio/ signif) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant** | **.460** | **0.457** | **0.360** |
|  | (.000) | (.000) | (.010) |
| **Individual** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | **.554** | **.609** | **.632** |
|  | (.000) | (.001) | (.000) |
| Union member | .814 | .811 | **.917** |
|  | (.098) | (.10) | (.000) |
| **Effect of riding % Catholic** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | — | **.962** | **.981** |
|  |  | (.000) | (.014) |
| Union member | — | .986 | 1.002 |
|  |  | (.103) | (.757) |
| **Effect of provincial % Catholic** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | — | — | 1.002 |
|  |  |  | (.845) |
| Union member | — | — | **1.012** |
|  |  |  | (.000) |
| **-2 Log-likelihood/deviance** | 1848.994 | 1822.901 | 2262.9 |

increasing provincial concentrations of Catholics do not significantly influence the individual-level religious relationship with the CA vote, but this factor does slightly (and significantly) attenuate the negative propensity of union members to support Alliance candidates. As such, this positive odds ratio from the provincial level serves to cancel out some of the disposition of individual-level union members to avoid this party (all things being equal, the conditioned probability of an individual union member voting CA increases slightly, to .917 (see the level 3 model in Table 3), indicating that the relation is still negative when provincial religious composition is controlled, but less so than when based on the individual attributes alone). In this outwardly puzzling finding, we have some evidence of the putative weakening of the class cleavage in the more heavily Catholic provinces.

Looking at the second party of the Canadian political right, Progressive Conservative support in 2000 was less structured than that of the Alliance by either religion or class. Model 1, incorporating individual-level effects only, suggests that neither cleavage is related to the likelihood of Tory voting. Once the contextual presence of Catholics at the

TABLE 4

Multilevel Models of Class, Religion and Progressive Conservative Voting, 2000

| | Level 1 individual effects (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 2 individual and riding (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 3 individual, riding, prov (odds ratio/ signif) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant** | **.174** | **0.175** | **.228** |
| | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) |
| **Individual** | | | |
| Catholic | .709 | **0.683** | **.678** |
| | (.056) | (.045) | (.026) |
| Union member | .845 | 0.831 | .798 |
| | (.307) | (.245) | (.144) |
| **Effect of riding % Catholic** | | | |
| Catholic | — | 1.001 | .991 |
| | | (.886) | (.386) |
| Union member | — | 1.011 | .997 |
| | (.339) | (.750) | |
| **Effect of provincial % Catholic** | | | |
| Catholic | — | — | .983 |
| | | | (.398) |
| Union member | — | — | .979 |
| | | | (.250) |
| **-2 Log-likelihood** | 1241.522 | 1240.019 | 2120.46 |

riding level is accounted for, however, individual Catholics become significantly less likely than non-Catholics to support Tory candidates. No other individual or contextual effects from either the riding or provincial level are significant.

Recalling that Johnston's own findings for the Progressive Conservatives were puzzling to him and out of line with his expectations, we are tempted to suggest that the unexpected patterns on the right of the Canadian political spectrum continue to defy interpretation using this framework. There simply is no evidence for either the Alliance or the Tories to suggest that union members are less likely to support right-wing parties when Catholics are locally weak (and the class cleavage is therefore free to dominate political choice).

Table 5 presents the parallel analyses for NDP voting in 2000. The estimations suggest only the weakest of social structuring for NDP support, perhaps reflecting the diminished state of the party in the 2000 election generally. Though union members are more likely than non-members to vote NDP, none of these individual-level relationships is statistically significant at conventional levels (though they come close). Inexplica-

TABLE 5

Multilevel Models of Class, Religion and NDP Voting, 2000

|  | Level 1 individual effects (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 2 individual and riding (odds ratio/ signif) | Level 3 individual, riding, prov (odds ratio/ signif) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant** | **.105** | **.106** | **.130** |
|  | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) |
| **Individual** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | .995 | .959 | .995 |
|  | (.980) | (.844) | (.968) |
| Union member | 1.326 | 1.311 | **1.254** |
|  | (.100) | (.098) | (.002) |
| **Effect of riding % Catholic** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | — | 1.003 | 1.004 |
|  |  | (.729) | (.469) |
| Union member | — | 1.006 | 1.008 |
|  |  | (.538) | (.247) |
| **Effect of provincial % Catholic** |  |  |  |
| Catholic | — | — | 1.013 |
|  |  |  | (.264) |
| Union member | — | — | 1.005 |
|  |  |  | (.593) |
| **-2 Log-likelihood** | 1058.540 | 1057.837 | 2098.09 |

bly, the expected positive individual-level relationship only reaches statistical significance when the concentration of Catholics at the provincial (but not the riding) level is controlled.

## Conclusion

We set out to replicate, update and extend Johnston's arguments about the interaction across geography of class and religion in structuring vote choice in Canada. We extend his original analysis by employing multi-level modelling techniques that allow for the simultaneous assessment of contextual influences from a variety of levels on individual behaviour. And we update the empirical test by looking at the state of these relationships in the current (fourth) party system.

Our results are, like Johnston's, somewhat mixed. On the one hand, we find that there is a clear riding-level contextual effect intensifying the individual-level association between Catholicism and Liberalism to be found in 2000. This suggests that the politicization of religion in Canada does indeed spring from social, rather than simply individual-level,

processes—a finding that is somewhat comforting, given the general sec-
ularization of Canadian society and the absence of explicitly religious
issues and platforms at election time. In addition, we are able to resolve
an issue that Johnston could not. By estimating a multilevel model incor-
porating measures of the density of Catholics at both the riding and the
provincial level, we demonstrate that voters are responding to the local
and (generally) not the provincial-level influences. This is an important
finding, since it reinforces a variety of other research that suggests that
the local riding is an important source of political stimuli for voters (Blake,
1978; Cutler, 2002; Carty and Eagles, 2005). Like most research that
uncovers evidence of contextual effects, we cannot identify the precise
causal mechanisms responsible for producing such contextual effects on
religion and the vote. However, we at least have sharpened the geo-
graphic focus by identifying the riding as being closer in size than the
province to the actual scale at which these contextual influence forces
operate.

  Also in keeping with our expectations based on Johnston's argu-
ment is our finding that the odds of Catholics or union members voting
for CA candidates diminishes further as the density of Catholics at the
riding level increases. However, as provinces become more Catholic, the
probability of a union member voting CA was enhanced, thereby weak-
ening the negative individual-level relationship slightly and diminishing
the strength of the class cleavage.

  On the other hand, however, we find that Progressive Conservative
support is unresponsive to the density of Catholics at either the local or
the provincial level. Individual Catholics are less likely to vote PC than
others, but this relationship is invariant across variations in contextual
Catholicism. Similarly, NDP support appears to be associated with an
individual's union membership, although this effect only reaches statisti-
cal significance when the religious composition of both the FED and the
province are controlled.

  On the strength of this mixed evidence, we conclude (with others
such as Blais, 2005) that religion remains as a significant determinant of
the vote choices of Canadians in 2000. That is, there appears to be a
relatively strong individual-level grounding of religion and party choice
that operates for three of the four major pan-Canadian parties (not the
NDP). Admittedly, our empirical model is highly stylized and simplistic.
In doing this we attempted to replicate Johnston's original analysis as
faithfully as possible. As suggested by Johnston, these individual-level
relationships are strongly conditioned in important ways by the religious
composition of riding environments (though not that of the province).

  For its part, the NDP vote in 2000 was not at all structured by reli-
gion and only in the weakest of terms was its vote related to union mem-
bership. There is relatively little evidence suggesting that the politicization

of class is conditioned by the local or provincial density of Catholics, and as such, little evidence for an interaction of these cleavages in determining the level of strategic and sincere voting. We are therefore unable to confirm this aspect of Johnston's (1991) argument. Rather, our findings are suggestive of a conventional "contextual effect" stemming from the religious cleavage, in that individual Catholics are more likely to vote Liberal when surrounded by other, like-minded Catholics (Pammett, 1991). The fourth party system may remain profoundly rooted in tribal loyalties, but religion appears to trump class as a determinant of vote choice, regardless of the religious composition of the voter's context.

## Notes

1   According to a CBC report on Catholicism, "a survey of 3,500 Canadians conducted in 2000 shows that outside Quebec, 32 per cent go to church regularly, compared to 75 per cent in the 1950s. In Quebec, which accounts for about 24 per cent of Canada's population, the weekly attendance has dropped to 20 per cent, from 88 per cent." [author of report? name of program? when was it posted/aired?] http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/catholicism/churchattendance.html (April 24, 2006). While Protestant denominations also experienced decades of secular decline in church attendance, some evidence suggests that this trend has been slowed or even reversed in recent years (Bibby, 2000).

2   For a general discussion of the importance of, and challenges arising from, replication in political science, see King, 1995, and the ensuing discussant commentaries in a special symposium issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28 (3) (September): 443–499.

3   Later in the chapter, Johnston (1991: 127, 135) concedes that he is not sure that he believes this result, and in a footnote mentions that when the analyses are run using party identification rather than the vote, the results for the Conservatives parallel those found when the dependent variable was voting for the NDP.

4   Multilevel modelling permits investigators to treat all lower-level coefficients as random variables, with values conditioned by the influence of factors included in higher-level models. Random, in this case, does not mean "haphazard" or unstructured; rather, it means that the parameter values can vary according to the characteristics of higher-level group environments. If this fully random option is taken up, even relatively parsimonious three-level models such as those estimated here can become very complex and difficult to interpret. Since we see no theoretical reason to expect the interaction between provincial and riding-level Catholicism to jointly influence individual relationships, and following what we believe to be the logic of Johnston's original argument, we have chosen to allow only the slopes between individual-level Catholicism and Union membership to vary according to the nesting of individuals in different ridings and provinces. All other parameters are fixed.

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