REGIONAL ALIENATION:
UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL CULTURE, REGIONALISM AND DISCONTENT IN
WESTERN CANADA

by

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Abstract

While western regional alienation has been the subject of much scholarly and public debate in Canada, we still know relatively little about the factors driving the phenomenon. Relying upon survey data collected in the 1997 Canadian Election Study (CES), this study attempts to substantively quantify western regional alienation and identify its correlates. Using the existing literature as a starting point, the study examines how western regionalism and political culture are typically conceptualized and identifies several factors commonly said to propel regional unrest and western 'distinctiveness.' Regression analysis is used to systematically test the accuracy of existing theories concerning western regional alienation. The study contends that while the four western provinces do not hold a monopoly on feelings of regional alienation, levels of unrest are indeed higher in the West than in other parts of the country. Regional alienation is also distinguished from more general understandings of political apathy or cynicism. Finally, with respect to the factors said to propel regional unrest, antipathy towards Quebec and Outgroups are shown to be the most important predictors or regional alienation – while attitudes concerning the economy, populism, social programs, law and order and continentalism have a weaker effect. However, even after controlling for these factors, significant regional differences remain. Thus, other factors – as-of-yet unaccounted for – must also play a role.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii 
Table of Contents iii 
List of Tables iv 
List of Figures v 
Acknowledgements vi 

Chapter One Introduction 1 

Chapter Two Regions, Political Culture and the West 4 
   Defining the Debate: Region, Regionalism and Political Culture 5 
   The West as a Political Actor: A Western Political Culture? 7 
   The Picture So Far: Is the West a Political Actor? 15 

Chapter Three Western Alienation: The Literature in Review 17 
   Western Alienation and Western Political Culture: 18 
      Understanding the Link 18 
   A Distinct Form of Political Culture? 19 
   Is Western Alienation Really Western? 20 
   What are the Roots of Western Alienation? 21 
   Western Alienation: Remaining Questions 27 

Chapter Four Data and Methodology 29 
   Research Objectives 29 
   Data 29 
   Methodology 30 

Chapter Five Anatomy of Alienation: Analyzing the Findings 36 
   A Regional Phenomenon? 36 
   A Unique Form of Political Alienation? 40 
   Policy and Attitudinal Effects: What drives Regional Alienation? 42 
   Putting the Results in Context: What does in Mean for the West? 53 

Chapter Six Conclusion 58 

Bibliography 62 

Appendix A Policy and Attitudinal Variables Tested for their Effects upon Regional Alienation 68
List of Tables

Table 4.1 Factor Analysis of Alienation Items 31
Table 4.2 Regional and Personal Alienation Indices 33
Table 5.1 Percentage of Respondents Saying Their Province is Treated Better, About the Same, or Worse than Other Parts of the Country 36
Table 5.2 Mean Scores on Issue and Policy Attitudes, by Region/Province 44
Table 5.3 Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation 46
Table 5.4 Quebec Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation 48
Table 5.5 Outgroups Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation 48
Table 5.6 Law and Order Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation 51
Table 5.7 Free Enterprise Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation 51
Table 5.8 Comparison of Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation 53
List of Figures

Figure 5.1  Levels of Regional Alienation in Canada, Controlling for Demographic Differences  38

Figure 5.2  Comparison of Levels of Regional Alienation and Personal Alienation, Controlling for Demographic Differences  42

Figure 5.3  Comparison of Levels of Regional Alienation, Controlling for Issue Categories and Levels of Regional Alienation without Issue Category Controls – both with Demographic Controls  56
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

For the sake of Canadian unity, it is time certain things were said frankly and without prejudice about the need to cope with increasing feelings of alienation in the West, and inequalities in the situation of the West.¹

Former Alberta Premier Harry Strom’s comments to the Federal-Provincial Constitutional Conference of 1969, noted above, mark one of the earliest articulations of what today is a common and seemingly inescapable part of the Canadian psyche – western alienation. While many of the attitudes and emotions that drive the phenomenon can be traced to the earliest days of Confederation, the term itself, western alienation, is a relatively recent invention that earned its place in popular Canadian discourse only within the last two or three decades.²

Of course, regional discontent has formed the core of numerous debates in Canada. Historically, however, these debates almost exclusively focused on Quebec.³ But more recently, the ‘Quebec problem’ has been forced to share attention with other emerging manifestations of regional discontent, most notably from western Canada. For example, a recent survey conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) found that 52 per cent of respondents from the four Western provinces felt their province was not treated with the respect it deserves in Canada. Based on its findings, the CRIC study observed that “many western Canadians currently think that federal institutions are insufficiently responsive to western values and concerns” (CRIC, 2001: 2).

In the years since Western alienation first captured the national imagination, numerous commentators have – from various perches in academia, newsrooms, Legislatures, and living-rooms – theorized as to why so many Westerners feel, in the words of MP David Kilgour, “largely overlooked and neglected, frustrated and impotent” (Kilgour, 1990:88). While theories on the subject certainly vary in both focus and findings, almost all revolve around the belief that the Western provinces are somehow different from other provinces or regions in Canada.

The western provinces are frequently said to possess a unique political culture that sets the region apart from the rest of Canada. Specifically, in comparison with other provinces and

² Commenting on the subject in the early 1980s, Daniel Wong observed that, despite a long history of regional unrest in the West, the study of western alienation, as a general phenomenon lying “somewhere between regional consciousness and aggregated protest,” was still in its infancy (Wong, 1982: 3). Also see Henry, 2002: 77.
³ The literature here is too large to summarize fully. Interested readers would do well to start their survey with Abbé Groulx, Michel Brunet, Ramsay Cook, or P.E. Trudeau. While this paper focuses exclusively upon the issue of western regional discontent, it should not be forgotten that the Canada-Quebec issue is far from resolved. This fact is evidenced by the continuing presence of the Bloc Québécois in the federal Parliament and the separatist-minded Parti Québécois regime in Quebec City.
regions, the West is typically characterized as more fiscally conservative, socially and morally traditional, apathetic towards Quebec, populist – and finally – generally more disenchanted with 'central Canada,' and in particular, the federal government.

While much debate exists over the extent to which many of these claims either accurately reflect ‘the West’ or are truly unique to the region, alienation is frequently pointed to as the most notable - and potentially, the most destructive4 – element of Western political culture. Indeed, many have suggested that Western alienation constitutes the very foundations for a homogenous regional political culture in the West (Gibbins, 1980: 167).

Considering the important role often assigned to it, it is surprising that so few studies of western regional alienation have attempted to substantively quantify the phenomenon or identify its correlates.5 What little work has been done to understand the components driving western alienation generally points to three key factors – economic inequality, political inequality, and antipathy towards Quebec. Oftentimes, added to these explanations is some mention also of the West’s unique political culture. Rarely, if ever, however, have attempts been made to understand the particular way that all of these elements relate to each other. For instance, how exactly does antipathy towards Quebec (or any of the other alleged elements of western political culture) drive alienation in the region?

This analysis hopes to remedy a number of these shortcomings, In particular, we aim to critically examine the factors typically said to drive western alienation and assess to extent to which they genuinely do propel feelings of regional discontent in the region.6 Along the way to better understanding the components driving regional unrest, we will also tackle the following fundamental conceptual questions: How strong is regional unrest in the West? How does it compare with levels of unrest in other parts of the country? Does it represent a particular form of political non-integration, or is it best understood as a more general type of political alienation?

To answer these questions, this paper relies upon survey data collected in the 1997 Canadian Election Study (CES). Our analysis will show that while the West does not hold a monopoly on feelings of regional alienation, levels are indeed higher in the four western provinces than elsewhere in the country. It will also be suggested that regional unrest does

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4 Over the years, numerous western-based separatist movements have sprung up across the region. While support for these movements has, for the most part, been restricted to “a cranky right-wing fringe,” they have certainly, at various times, managed to “unsettle a number of the existing parties and governments of the West” (Pratt and Stevenson, 1981: 9).
5 We are certainly not the first to notice this shortcoming; Henry recently made a similar observation (2002, 77).
6 For the purposes of our analysis, the terms ‘regional alienation,’ ‘regional discontent,’ and ‘regional unrest’ will be used synonymously.
represent a particular form of political discontent, separate from more general understandings of political apathy or cynicism. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, with respect to the factors driving regional unrest, it will be revealed that a variety of issues appear to affect regional alienation, among them attitudes concerning Quebec and minorities. However, we will also demonstrate that the factors examined here – drawn from the existing literature – only go so far in explaining regional alienation in the West; thus, other factors, as of yet unaccounted for, must also be at play.

The analysis that follows will be organized accordingly: Chapter 2 addresses the subject of western political culture generally, while Chapter 3 more specifically tackles the phenomenon of Western alienation. Taken together, these two chapters provide the conceptual framework upon which the study is based. Chapter 4 describes the data and methodology employed. The analysis itself in the focus of Chapter 5 and its implications are dealt with in Chapter 6, the Conclusion.
Chapter 2 - Region, Political Culture and the West

The impact of regionalism on politics in Canada is difficult to exaggerate. As numerous analysts have noted, Canadian politics is very much regional politics (Elkins and Simeon, 1974: 397; Blake 1972: 55; Meisel, 1964: 286). And yet as Richard Simeon has observed, despite their remarkable influence, the terms 'region' and 'regionalism' are far from universally understood (1977: 292). Garth Stevenson agrees, noting that too often the term 'region' "is commonly used in a number of different ways, most of which seem quite irrelevant to the phenomenon which Canadian scholars are attempting to explain when they invoke the concept of 'regionalism'" (1980: 16).

The inability to agree upon a generally acceptable definition for region or regionalism complicates attempts to effectively understand and analyze the phenomenon of western alienation. Quite obviously, how we define concepts such as region, regionalism, or political culture (another often-misunderstood but popular term in Canadian political discourse) has an impact upon how we conceptualize the West, and indeed, whether we think in terms of a western region at all. The problem is further exacerbated by the rather ambiguous way in which concepts such as regionalism and political culture interact and overlap with the phenomenon of western alienation. While some commentators, such as George Melnyk (1993), consider the terms western alienation and political culture synonymous, others, we shall soon see, have taken great care to draw important distinctions between them.

Taken together, this and the following chapter aim to better understand the concepts of region, political culture, and western alienation. Special attention will be paid to not only developing working definitions of these concepts, but also understanding the particular way that they connect and relate to one another. It will become clear that while 'regionalism,' 'political culture,' and 'western alienation' are certainly intimately related, scholars are ultimately better served to view such concepts (and the debates that surround them) as interconnected, but not identical. A second objective of this and the following chapter is to critically examine some of the factors that are commonly credited with drawing the western provinces together and setting them apart from the rest of Canada. Several key themes from the existing literature concerning western political culture and regionalism will be analyzed, and attempts will be made to understand the factors driving regional discontent in the West.
Defining the Debate: Region, Regionalism and Political Culture

At the very minimum, a region is an area that is internally homogenous according to some measure or measures (Eagles, 2002: 10). But which measure or measures? According to Mildred Schwartz, a region is made up of "adjacent areas, so that the entire region is distinguishable in character from others in society, and can be treated as a political actor" (1974: 5). Janine Brodie defines the term in a similar fashion, believing that a region is a spatial unit or territorial entity that shares some sense of natural or organic unity or common interests (1990: 6).

Not all scholars concur with Brodie and Schwartz. For instance, Philip Matthews argues that a region is defined not only by common territory, behaviour, social organization or culture, but also by some degree of self-consciousness or self-identification of such similarities (1983: 15-6). Rupert Vance concurs, arguing that "a sense of identity distinct from the rest of the country" is an essential part of what constitutes a region (as cited in Matthews, 1983: 5).

However, for Schwartz, the exclusion of self-identification was purposeful. As she explains it:

Self-identifications remain a strong link with the concept of regional cultures, but their expression cannot be taken as a *sine qua non* of regionalism.... A culture exists in the behavioural manifestations of common norms and values; it does not require that they be consciously articulated. (2002: x)

Like Schwartz, Harry Hiller also believes self-identifications are an unnecessary prerequisite in defining region. Echoing Schwartz, Hiller warns that if too much emphasis is placed upon regional self-identification, analysts risk rejecting the significance or very presence of regionalism and regional differences – just because they are not consciously articulated (2002: 35).

While Schwartz and Hiller insist that self-identification is not a pre-requisite to region, both acknowledge that consciousness plays an important role in defining regionalism. For Schwartz, regionalism is associated with "situations of politically relevant divisiveness and territorial cleavages, often accompanied by some consciousness on the part of residents that they have distinctive, regionally based interests" (1974: 5). Hiller agrees, using the term regionalism to refer to the politicalization of local, regional traits into a consciousness. For Hiller and others\(^7\) regionalism is an ideology, a way of seeing, or a perceptual apparatus that may change (rise or

\(^7\) Also see Vance (as cited in Schwartz, 1974: 4-5).
wane) over time depending on circumstances. Like other words ending in ‘ism,’ regionalism is an emotional concept, full of assumptions and claiming to have wide-ranging influence and effect (Hiller, 2002: 33-4).

As with the terms region and regionalism, definitional problems also plague attempts to understand and conceptualize political culture. In its simplest sense, political culture is the ‘common interests’ referred to by Brodie or the ‘distinguishable character’ that Schwartz mentions in her definition of region. To a large extent, the study of political culture was made popular through the efforts of Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, who defined the concept as “specifically political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system…. A set of orientations toward a special set of social objects and processes” (1963: 13). A number of analysts, Schwartz among them, have taken issue with Almond and Verba’s definition, in particular for the way in which they confine culture to orientations. In the context of our analysis, however, the interpretation employed by Harold Clarke et al. – which borrows heavily from Almond and Verba – is sufficient. According to Clarke et al., political culture is best conceived of as the attitudes, beliefs, and values that individuals hold about themselves and other political actors and institutions (2002: 44).

Following Almond and Verba’s lead, many studies of political culture in Canada have focused their analyses on three key measures or attitudes – efficacy, trust, and involvement (Schwartz, 1974; Elkins and Simeon, 1974 and 1980). Other analysts, realizing that such measures did not always offer a fully developed picture of political culture, broadened their analyses to consider the extent to which other attitudes and beliefs (or measures) – including ideology, moral traditionalism, or attitudes towards ethnic or cultural minorities – impact upon political life (Lipset, 1968; MacPherson, 1968; Nevitte et al., 1999; Clarke et al., 2002; Cooper, 2002). Regardless of which measures are emphasized, numerous studies have pointed to a series of factors that are alleged to draw the Western provinces together and set them apart from the rest of Canada. In other words, many of these studies have suggested that the West represents a

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8 The full details of this debate – which draws heavily from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, and of course, sociology – are unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. Suffice to say that Schwartz’s concerns generate from a belief that political culture is more than just political orientations. On this issue Schwartz sides with Kluckhohn, who warns of the need to explicitly recognize the union of normative and existential assumptions in defining culture – and by extension, political culture (see Schwartz, 1974: 170-3).
9 Political efficacy is typically taken to refer to a sense that one can be personally influential in politics, make their voice heard, or be effective (Elkins and Simeon, 1974: 404).
10 Trust in this context refers to the level of support and satisfaction that citizens feel for their particular political regime (Elkins and Simeon, 1974: 405).
11 Involvement refers to the extent to which citizens actively participate and follow political issues and events (Elkins and Simeon, 1974: 412).
genuine region in Canada, one united by a series of important political, social, economic, and cultural commonalities. It is to examining some of these alleged commonalities that we now turn our attention.

The West as a Political Actor: A Western Political Culture?

While few would argue that the West is a completely homogeneous entity, many commentators have insisted that the western provinces constitute a “distinct region, different in many ways from the rest of Canada” (Canada West Foundation, 2001: 4). What makes the West different? Generally speaking, the existing literature addressing western political culture suggests that five key factors cause the West, as a region, to stand out (or apart) from the rest of Canada. In comparison to their counterparts living in other regions, Westerners are often thought to be more fiscally conservative, socially traditional, populist, hostile to Quebec, and estranged from the federal government. The remainder of this chapter will examine the extent to which the first four of these claims truly reflect “the West.” The final claim, that Westerners are more alienated from the federal government, constitutes the sole focus of the following chapter.

Recent election results certainly appear to confirm the hypothesis that the West constitutes a distinct regional community. In the last three federal elections (1993, 1997, and 2000), for instance, the Reform/Alliance Party\(^{12}\) — with its right-wing platform of tax-cuts, traditional family values, and referendums\(^{13}\) — has garnered overwhelming support in the four Western provinces. In the 1997 election, Reform won nearly 70 per cent of the seats in the West and none east of the Manitoba-Ontario boarder (Laycock, 2002: 129). The 2000 election produced similar results: the Canadian Alliance took 73 per cent of the seats in the West, and just

\(^{12}\) The Reform Party was officially dissolved in March of 2000, and a new party, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance – commonly referred to as the Canadian Alliance – took its place. The leaders of the movement to dissolve Reform in favour of the Canadian Alliance, chief among them, Reform leader Preston Manning and chief party strategist Rick Anderson, hoped to broaden the Party’s support base, particularly in Ontario. While Manning won in his bid to create a new party, he ultimately lost the subsequent leadership contest to former Alberta Treasurer Stockwell Day. For more on this, see Laycock (2002). For our purposes, the name ‘Reform’ will be used to refer to the party prior to 2000, while the name ‘Alliance’ will be used to refer to it in the period since 2000. ‘Reform/Alliance’ will be used occasionally when referring to the Party more generally.

\(^{13}\) More specifically, Reform/Alliance has strongly advocated for dramatic reductions in state intervention in the market, including severe cuts to social programs, and a fierce attack on Canada’s debt and deficit. The Party’s strong commitment to social and moral conservatism is also quite clear, and includes calls to recriminalize abortion, restore capital punishment, and a return to traditional family values. Support for populism has also figured prominently in Reform/Alliance policy, including calls for citizen’s initiatives and recall campaigns, and referenda (Laycock, 2002: 133-5).
two per cent in Ontario (Blais et al., 2000). Andre Blais et al. observe that even when one considers the popular vote (instead of seat counts), the regional cleavage is considerable. In 2000, for example, roughly half of voters in the West cast ballots for the Alliance, compared to just a quarter in Ontario (2000).

It should be said that support for Reform/Alliance has never been uniform across the West. In 1997, for example, Albertans proved most receptive to the Party’s agenda – with Reform winning 24 of 26 seats and over 50 per cent of the popular vote. In British Columbia, the Party won 25 of 34 seats and over 40 per cent of the vote, while in Saskatchewan it won 8 of 14 seats and just over 30 per cent of the vote. Support was lowest in Manitoba, the only Western province where the Party did not win a majority of seats: Reform collected only 3 of 14 seats, and just over 23 per cent of the popular vote (Laycock, 2002: 129). While such results clearly caution against viewing the West as a monolithic regional entity, it is important to note that even in Manitoba, Reform support was notably greater than in Ontario, where it failed to collect even 20 per cent of the vote and won no seats.

While the Reform/Alliance Party’s popularity in the West has led many to assume that it effectively encapsulates western political culture, David Laycock has warned that the relationship between Party and region may not be as obvious as it first appears. For instance, Laycock notes that while fiscal conservatism has certainly been a notable feature of Western politics – and a central fixture of a number of provincial regimes, its appeal has not been limited to the West alone. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to observe many significant differences between the fiscal policies of Alberta’s Klein government and those favoured by the ‘Common Sense’ Tories led by Mike Harris in Ontario (Laycock, 2002: 133-4).

The team of Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil and Nadeau make similar observations in their analyses of the 1997 and 2000 elections. Their research shows that while support for fiscally conservative policies is higher in the West, regional differences were not as dramatic as often assumed. With respect to the 2000 election, the researchers observed that:

Only 25 per cent of Ontarians believe the first priority in allocating the federal budget surplus should be cutting taxes, but the number (33 per cent) is not that much higher in the West. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who believe job creation is a matter for

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14 From the December 18, 2000 Election Series published in the Globe and Mail – to date the only analysis of the 2000 data that has been published.
15 Each of the four western provinces has, within relatively recent memory, elected premiers with strong commitments to the principles of fiscal conservatism. Consider, for instance, Gary Filmon in Manitoba, Grant Divine in Saskatchewan, Ralph Klein in Alberta, and Gordon Campbell in British Columbia.
the private sector rather than the public sector does not vary much from Ontario’s 38 per cent to the 45 per cent in the West. (Blais, 2000)

The point made by both Laycock and the Nevitte team is not so much that levels of fiscal conservatism have been overestimated in the West, but simply, that Westerners are far from alone in holding such opinions.  

Turing to the claim that the West is more socially conservative than other regions in Canada, the available literature reveals that many Westerners do indeed harbour traditional opinions on a variety of social and moral issues. For example, Blais et al. (2000) found that a majority of Westerners support the death penalty (59 per cent) and stiffer sentencing for young offenders (53 per cent), while a narrow majority continue to believe that a woman’s place is in the home (51 per cent).

Yet once again, it is necessary to note that while Western Canadians may very well hold conservative opinions on a range of social issues, so do many other Canadians. For example, Blais et al.’s research revealed that Ontarians were just as likely as Westerners to believe that Canada should admit fewer immigrants (37 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively). As well, Ontarians were equally supportive of tougher sentencing for young offenders (54 per cent) (Blais et al., 2000).

The existing literature concerning western political culture suggests that Westerners may hold more socially conservative views on two issues, however. While a majority of western Canadians disapproved of gun control (54 per cent), barely more than a third of Ontarians (35 per cent) expressed a similar opinion (Blais et al., 2000). Westerners also appear less tolerant of gays and lesbians. While Blais et al. found Westerners to be only slightly less supportive of same-sex marriages (45 per cent against in Ontario, versus 48 per cent against in the West), others have observed a more substantial divide. In a 1999 study, for instance, Joseph Fletcher and Paul Howe found below-average levels of support for gays and lesbians in the prairie provinces. Perhaps part of the explanation for the contradictory findings of Blais et al. and Fletcher and Howe can be found in how each defined ‘the West’: the former opted to include British Columbia while the latter researchers did not. On this particular issue, British Columbia

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16 Even a casual observer of western Canadian politics would likely question the extent to which fiscal conservatism can be said to blanket the West. Until very recently, NDP governments led three of the four western provinces. Even today, Manitoba and Saskatchewan remain under NDP control. Furthermore, the federal New Democrats have long relied upon voters in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia for significant proportions of its caucus.

17 Fletcher and Howe found support for provincial human rights legislation to protect the rights of homosexuals was supported by 65 per cent of prairie respondents, compared to 77 per cent of national respondents (as cited in Laycock, 2002: 131).
makes an important difference, for the province appears very progressive on the issue of homosexual rights. Friesen makes this very point in his study of contemporary western Canada, and points out that British Columbia was the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass legislation granting gay and lesbian couples many of the same privileges of heterosexual couples with respect to child support, custody and access (1999: 151-2).

The notion that populism represents a defining element of western political culture has found wide support in much of the existing literature. At its core, populism locates public virtue with the will of the people. Populism also suggests a certain degree of cohesiveness of the public will, where 'the people' are seen as one. Accordingly, the frequent divisions and conflicts of 'traditional politics' are seen not as genuine reflections of diversity, but rather, as artificial and manufactured consequences of (at least in the Canadian context) the first-past-the-post electoral system, the party system, and the principles of responsible government and representation-by-population.18

In his seminal study of Alberta political culture, C.B. MacPherson noted that the prairie provinces shared in a number of common traits, among them, a distaste for the traditional way of doing politics, an aversion to the traditional parties, and a preference for direct democracy (1968: 3-5, 230). Similarly, S.M. Lipset has observed an affinity for radical agrarian movements and frequent calls for parliamentary reform in both Alberta and Saskatchewan (1968: 153-6). And populism's appeal has by no means restricted to the prairies: Donald Blake has argued that it is also a central feature of British Columbia's political culture (1986: 179). In light of such evidence, it is of little surprise that some analysts, such as Barry Cooper, have gone so far as to declare populism the most distinctive feature of western Canadian political culture (2002: 93).

As suggested above, populism's appeal in the West stems from the particular nature of Canada's political system. For instance, the principle of representation-by-population, by its very nature, curtails the level of influence that the Western provinces are able to hold in Ottawa. As Laycock has explained, the majoritarian tilt of Canada's parliamentary system guarantees that central Canadian firepower will always win when regionally defined interests are in a shootout (2002: 132).19 The long-standing principles of cabinet secrecy and party discipline – frequently

18 This understanding of populism draws heavily upon that of Barry Cooper, and is relatively consistent with other interpretations (Cooper, 2002: 106-7). See also Richards, 1981.
19 Recent figures from Statistics Canada indicate that the four western provinces make up 30 per cent of Canada's overall population. British Columbia accounts for 13.2 per cent; Alberta for 9.8 per cent; Manitoba for 3.7 per cent; and Saskatchewan for 3.3 per cent. (Canada West Foundation, 2001: 3) Interestingly, despite Norman Spector's claim that Westerners are "sorely underrepresented" (Globe and Mail, February 28, 2001: A14) in both the House of Commons and Senate, the region's share of Commons seats closely mirrors current population levels. British Columbia elects 11 per cent of MPs (34 seats), Alberta eight per cent (26 seats), and Saskatchewan and Manitoba
camouflaging the often legitimate attempts of politicians from the West to stand up for regional interests – only serve to compound the problem. Western displeasure with the current rules of the parliamentary system has found expression in the creation of countless so-called ‘third-party’ or protest movements\textsuperscript{20}, as well as support for a variety of direct democracy measures, including referenda, recall, and citizen-initiatives. More recently, the realization by many of the inherent limitations to some of these movements and reforms\textsuperscript{21} has led to increased focus on contra-majoritarian reforms, most effectively embodied in calls for a Triple-E Senate.\textsuperscript{22}

It should be borne in mind, however, that support for populism and direct democracy is not universal in the West. For instance, Gibbins and Arrison point out that former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, while personifying many other elements of Western political culture, would rarely have been mistaken for a populist (1995: 69). More importantly, Laycock has recently drawn attention to the fact that, despite much rhetoric to the contrary, the West’s record with respect to direct democracy initiatives is shaky at best. Only occasionally have policy-makers in the region managed to transform talk into action.\textsuperscript{23} However, notwithstanding these qualifications, it remains the case that populism and direct-democracy have held (and certainly continue to hold) a great deal of influence in the West, and both appear to hold, at the very least, important symbolic value in the West.

Turning now to the issue of Western attitudes towards Quebec, the idea that western Canadians are more hostile to Quebec, and in particular less amenable to Quebec’s constitutional demands, pervades much of the literature on western politics. While historian Gerald Friesen has just under five percent each (14 seats each). In total, the West’s 88 members account for 29 per cent of total House of Commons seats.

\textsuperscript{20} The list of challengers to the traditional two-party system in the West is long: the United Farmers of Manitoba, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (later the New Democratic Party), the United Farmers of Alberta, Social Credit (in both Alberta and British Columbia), and federally, the Progressive Party (later to merge with the Conservatives), the Federal Social Credit Party, and more recently, the Reform/Canadian Alliance.

\textsuperscript{21} While referenda allow voters the opportunity to ‘speak for themselves,’ and not through the elected officials, they hold no promise that western concerns would be any more effectively heard on the national stage; referendum or not, the West would still lack necessary “firepower” to override central Canadian wishes.

\textsuperscript{22} R. MacGregor Dawson captured the tenor of debate over Senate reform best in his 1947 treatise on \textit{The Government of Canada}. Noted Dawson: “The Senate has been by no means a useless body; but there are certainly the gravest doubts whether its cost of operation yields anything like a commensurate return unless it is looked upon simply as a pension scheme for retired commoners.” (1947: 327) Advocates of Triple E Senate reform (Elected, Equal, and Effective) include Peter McCormick (1998a), Randall White (1990), and, perhaps most notably, Calgary’s Canada West Foundation (see, for instance, their October 2000 Report, \textit{Senate Reform: Expanding the Blueprint}).

\textsuperscript{23} In Alberta, Social Credit premier William Aberhart quickly repealed the province’s new recall legislation when his own constituents managed to collect enough signatures to force his recall. British Columbia’s experiences have been equally mixed. The outgoing Social Credit government included referenda questions on citizen initiatives and recall in the 1991 election. The New Democrats won the election, and were saddled with a large majority vote supporting direct democracy mechanisms. As a result, they introduced legislation in 1994, which was repeatedly used against them, without success, throughout their tenure in office (Laycock, 2002: 135).
argued that western political culture is fundamentally "anti-French, anti-Quebec" (1999: 197), others are more careful in their assessment of the West's relationship with Quebec. For most, the source of western antipathy is found not with the Quebec people per se, but rather, with the political clout the province carries. As former Canada West Foundation President Stanley C. Roberts once explained:

The new fury of the Westerner demonstrates itself when it strikes home that Quebec's six million plus citizens have turned the country on its collective ear and created an enormous attention to their problems... while the West's six million plus citizens (still) can't be heard over the rush and scramble to accommodate Quebec. Sometimes the West's frustration and rage is misconstrued as antiQuebec in nature. It is not. It is, in most cases, envy of Quebec's political prowess combined with fury at the West's own impotence on the national scene. (as cited in Gibbins, 1980: 178)

Roberts' suggestion that Western fury towards Quebec is a recent phenomenon is popular with a number of scholars, Gibbins and Arrison among them (1995: 116). However, Donald Smiley has rightly warned of the need to frame the issue in the proper historical context. According to Smiley:

From Confederation onward, the political elites of Ontario and Quebec have attempted to impose on the Prairies elements of cultural, linguistic and religious dualism which have on the whole been resisted by popular majorities and by governments in these provinces. (1987: 162)

While western antipathy towards Quebec is perhaps not new, there can be little doubt that the issue has taken on greater significance in recent decades. In the wake of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, and repeated efforts to address Quebec's constitutional concerns, western attitudes concerning Quebec certainly hardened. As many scholars have observed, western attitudes became especially polarized under former Prime Minister Trudeau's leadership. In his analysis of British Columbia-Federal relations, for instance, Blake found western discontent to be largely bound to attitudes on Trudeau, and in particular, his attempts to address Quebec's longstanding constitutional grievances while battling the separatists. Writing shortly after Trudeau retired from politics, Blake went so far as to predict that as memories of Trudeau inevitably faded, so too would western antipathy towards Quebec, and by extension, regional discontent in the region (1986: 170).

24 The details of these attempts are beyond the scope of our analysis. For more on this, see Smiley, 1987: 162-4.
The newly elected Prime Minister, Progressive Conservative Brian Mulroney, seemed to agree with Blake. Shortly after sweeping to victory – with considerable bases of support in both Quebec and the West – Mulroney confidently announced to Westerners: “you’ve got one-third of the Cabinet and half of the seats on the Priorities and Planning Committee. You’re the decision-making centre of Ottawa. Western alienation is dead” (as cited in Newman, 1995: 313). It was not long afterwards however, that Mulroney (much like Trudeau) came to be viewed, in MP David Kilgour’s words, as nothing more than an “auxiliary premier of Quebec” (1990: 71). Kilgour no doubt managed to echo the thoughts of many in the West with his lament that from “Sir John A. MacDonald to Brian Mulroney, Westerners have been treated mostly with polite indifference and subdued contempt by national governments” (1990: 70). That interest and debate over western alienation has only increased since Mulroney’s retirement suggests that many Westerners would be quick to add Kilgour’s boss, Jean Chretien, to the list of first ministers who have neglected western concerns.

The role Quebec has played in helping to shape western political culture is difficult to exaggerate. According to Laycock, antipathy towards Quebec is one of few almost exclusively western concerns (2002: 132). Gibbins and Arrison concur, adding that the West, as a region, is very much a byproduct of Quebec’s continuing attempts to rework (or do away with) Canadian federalism. The political climate created by the ‘Quebec problem’ makes it easier for western Canadians (indeed, all Canadians) to view the West as a coherent entity – counterpoised against Quebec. In this sense, western antipathy represents a ‘glue,’ binding the region together, and uniting it behind a common banner (1995: 114).

The extent of western antipathy towards Quebec is clearly conveyed by the findings of a long list of empirical studies of the subject. Perhaps one of the first, conducted by Roger Gibbins in 1977, found negative opinions toward Quebec to be well developed, strongly held, and

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25 In the last few years, and since the 2000 federal election in particular, politicians, academics, and journalists have shown a renewed interest in the topic. Consider, for instance, the appointment of the Prime Minister’s Caucus Task Force on the Four Western Provinces (which reported in February 2000, and is discussed elsewhere in this paper). Academic interest in the topic is evidenced by the publication of a number of insightful examinations of Western political culture, including Gerald Friesen’s The West (1999) and Lisa Young and Keith Archer’s Regionalism and Party Politics in Canada (2002) – both cited extensively throughout this paper. In addition, Western alienation has featured prominently in numerous news articles in both the regional and national media – in the Vancouver Sun alone, BC or western discontent constituted the focus of at least 6 lead editorials between September 1999 and March 2001 (“Is the West alienated? Let us count the ways,” 16 September, 1999; “If we appear a bit blasé [about the passing of Pierre Trudeau] it’s because we are,” 3 October, 2000; “Ottawa can, if it cares, get us out of this mess,” January 23, 2001; “Western alienation is smouldering,” 29 January, 2001; “It’s time to elect a senator from BC,” 22 February, 2001; “Wish we may, wish we might, be heard in Ottawa,” 7 March, 2001).

26 It is important to note that Gibbins’ data was collected only in Calgary, Alberta. Despite this, he frequently generalized the results to the rest of the western region (1977: 342). While a number of analysts, including Wong (1982) and Henry (2002), have warned of the potential dangers of such a tendency, the fact remains that Gibbins’
coherently ordered in the West (1977: 357-8). More recent studies have observed a similar, if
only slightly more complex relationship between western political culture and antipathy toward
Quebec. For example, the Nevitte team's analysis of the 1997 vote revealed that western
Canadians were only slightly less accommodating of Quebec. But, their research revealed an
important regional difference in terms of how important the Quebec issue was for western voters.
Quebec proved to be a far more important issue to Westerners, and negative attitudes concerning
Quebec were far more likely to factor into the voting choices of western Canadians than their
counterparts in other regions (Nevitte et al., 1999: 97; Gidengil et al., 1999: 260). Thus the
regional differences were not just in terms of composition, but also in terms of effect.

It is clear at this point that the foundations of many of the 'pillars' of western political
culture need to be approached cautiously. While the West is often characterized as a region
bound together and set apart by a series of common outlooks – on the economy, social issues,
populism, and Quebec – much evidence exists to question this image. As well, it is necessary to
recognize that many of the ideas and attitudes often thought to be unique to the West also find
popular expression in other regions of the country. For instance, while support for many right-
wing positions may be higher in the West, what is perhaps more striking is just how common
such positions are across the country.

Such observations have led many to question the extent to which it is fair or accurate to
speak of a 'western region' or coherent regional political culture at all. Clarke et al., for instance,
have suggested that regional differences in political culture have largely been overstated, and
believe that the traditional emphasis upon regional variation in Canada is largely unwarranted
(2002: 66, 69-70). Of course, Clarke et al. were not the first to challenge the view of the West as
a more or less homogenous regional entity. Indeed, some of the earliest studies of political
culture in Canada pointed to important differences dividing the western provinces. Elkins and
Simeon, for instance, classified British Columbia and Manitoba as "citizen societies" - societies

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27 Gidengil et al. explain the differences between these two types of influences accordingly: Regional differences in
political culture or voting behaviour may reflect differences in the distribution of various explanatory factors
(compositional differences), or they may result from the differential impact or influence of the various explanatory
factors (effectual differences) (See Gidengil et al., 1999: 251-2). It is worth noting that a similar result has been
observed with respect to social and fiscal conservatism. In their preliminary analysis of the 2000 election, the
Nevitte team noted that while levels of social and economic conservatism did not differ dramatically between the
West and Ontario, there remained an important difference in terms of the effect that such positions had on voters in
each region. For example, over half of Westerners who thought cutting taxes was important voted for the Alliance,
while in Ontario, those who thought the same were more likely to vote for the Liberals (Blais et al., 2000).
defined by relatively high levels of both trust and efficacy.\textsuperscript{28} By contrast, Saskatchewan and Alberta were classified as occupying a place roughly halfway between citizen societies and "disaffected societies."\textsuperscript{29}

Additional evidence suggesting that more divides the western provinces than unites them is not difficult to find. For instance, many analysts have taken issue with the suggestion that Saskatchewan and Alberta have much, if anything in common. Certainly, the very different ideological preferences of each province are obvious. As but one example, one needs only to consider Saskatchewan's particular receptiveness towards the CCF-NDP, compared to Albertans affinity for right-wing Social Credit and Conservative regimes (Wiseman, 1981: 298). Others have chosen instead to focus their attention on the question of whether British Columbia properly deserves to be considered part of 'the West.' According to many – including Resnick (2000: 112, 118), Blake (1986: 181), and Black (1970: 114), because of the combined effects of particular historical, economic, and cultural forces, British Columbia represents a region of its own, separate from that of the prairie provinces. Still others have insisted that it is Manitoba – not British Columbia – which represents the 'odd province out.' Nelson Wiseman, for instance, has put forth a convincing argument suggesting that Manitoba has more in common with Ontario than it does any of its western cousins\textsuperscript{30} (1981: 298, 303-4). Perhaps Will and Ian Ferguson, in their satirical, yet biting, treatise on Canadian political culture, managed to define Manitoba's place in the federation best when remarking that the province was "not quite the West, but not the East either" (2002: 49).

The Picture So Far: Is the West a Political Actor?

Does 'the West,' as a regional entity, exist? Do the four western provinces share a common or relatively coherent set of attitudes, beliefs and values that set them apart from other provinces or regions in the country? Is the West, in Schwartz's words, "a political actor"?

\textsuperscript{28} According to the authors, only in these societies do "supporters" outnumber "disaffected" citizens. As well, in citizen societies, even those individuals who distrust the government are confident of their ability to do something about it – to influence the political process and have their voice heard. Ontario and English Quebec also qualify as citizen societies (1980: 51).

\textsuperscript{29} Large proportions of citizens who feel they can neither trust their government nor influence it in any effective way define disaffected societies. Elkins and Simeon classify all of the Atlantic provinces under this heading, as well as French Canada. Saskatchewan and Alberta are said to lie half-way between the two groups (1980: 51).

\textsuperscript{30} Wiseman's analysis focuses on the effects of ideology, ethnicity, and immigration patterns on intra-regional differences in the West. More than any other western province, Manitoba was shaped by large waves of settlers from Ontario (1981: 298, 303-4).
Our analysis thus far has shown that these relatively straightforward questions often generate rather complex answers. Certainly, it is popular to view western Canada as a coherent and loosely integrated regional community. Most often, this community is characterized as right-wing, morally traditional, populist, hostile towards Quebec, and alienated from the federal government. Our examination of the first four of these claims suggests that while each contains some element of truth, many also require important qualification.

Support for social and economic conservatism is higher in the West, but only slightly. Recent studies have suggested that, save just a handful of social issues (such as gun control, and possibly same-sex unions), the ideological divide between Ontario and the West is much smaller than often believed. And, while populism and direct democracy reforms are clearly popular with many Westerners, the region has only very rarely transformed such support into action, and then, with only mediocre results. Of the four claims examined thus far, hostility towards Quebec appears to be the one that most accurately reflects a central feature of western political culture. But even here, an important qualification is necessary: Westerners are not so much anti-Quebec as they are envious of its ability to monopolize Ottawa's attention, at the apparent expense of the Western interests.

The questions that thus far have been raised regarding the extent to which Westerners can be thought to represent a distinct political actor are important not only to debates surrounding political culture in Canada, but also to the debate surrounding western regional alienation. As the following chapter will demonstrate, the claim that the West constitutes a unique regional entity factors heavily into much of the literature concerning western alienation.
Chapter 3 - Western Alienation: The Literature in Review

Ontario, Main Industries: Power, banking, pissing off the West, deciding national elections, patting oneself on the back...\(^{31}\)

In an interview with the *National Post* in early 2001, Preston Manning, founder of the Reform and Alliance parties, warned western alienation “is serious and it is growing more serious” (January 26, 2001: A6). A number of recent studies lend support to Manning’s claim. For instance, a survey conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) in March 2001 found that only 40 per cent of western Canadians believed their province was treated with the respect it deserved in Canada – an increase of nearly 10 percentage points over 1998.\(^{32}\) Blais et al. have observed a similar trend. According to their recent research, the proportion of Westerners feeling alienated from the federal government jumped by 17 percentage points between 1997 and 2001 (2000). Even the federal government appears to recognize that western frustrations are growing: In January 1999, Prime Minister Chretien appointed a Caucus Task Force to report on the issue.\(^{33}\)

Despite the apparent upsurge of discontent in the West, as a phenomenon western alienation has yet to truly benefit from consistent or substantive study. Writing on the subject two decades ago, Daniel Wong noted that the study of western alienation was still in its infancy and the concept had yet to “secure a theoretically tenable framework of analysis” (1982: 3). According to many recent commentators, Wong’s criticisms continue to ring true even today.\(^{34}\) Most analysis of the subject has stumbled over a number of conceptual problems. First among these problems is how the phenomenon is typically conceptualized, and more particularly, how it is related to other concepts, most notably political culture. A second problem concerns the fact that relatively few attempts have been made to systematically quantify western alienation and identify its components or correlates. Thirdly, while many commentators have observed that western alienation differs from other forms of political non-integration, until very recently, none

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\(^{31}\) From Ferguson and Ferguson’s *How to be a Canadian (Even if you already are one)* (2001).

\(^{32}\) According to the CRIC study, in 1998, 49 per cent of Westerners felt that their province was treated with the respect it deserved. 41 per cent felt so in 1999 and 46 per cent in 2000. The 2001 study was CRIC’s most comprehensive, with a sample size in excess of 2,400. In each of the previous years, CRIC surveyed just over 500 western Canadians (CRIC, 2001: 2).

\(^{33}\) The *Prime Minister’s Task Force on the Four Western Provinces* was established “to meet with, to listen to, and to reassure Canadians living in British Columbia and the Prairie provinces that their national government is aware of their sense of distance and that it wants to work with them to increase their participation and influence in national decision-making” (Canada, 2000: 2).

\(^{34}\) As will be discussed in greater detail below, Shawn Henry’s recent criticisms of the existing body of literature largely echo those of Wong (2002: 77).
have attempted to understand the phenomenon in anything but a western context. Each of these theoretical problems will be examined below.

**Western Alienation and Western Political Culture: Understanding the Link**

Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau once remarked that “there is a different culture in the West than in central Canada... it’s not a different civilization but it’s certainly a different form of culture than exists elsewhere” (as cited in Smith, 1977: 166). According to many commentators, western discontent represents perhaps the most significant element of this ‘different form of culture.’ Roger Gibbins effectively communicates the role that regional alienation plays in shaping western political culture in *Prairie Politics and Society*. While he was primarily concerned only with the prairies, Gibbins’ argument and logic is easily applied to all four western provinces. According to Gibbins, relatively little in terms of political organization or electoral behaviour unites the western provinces. However, an important regional perspective does come into focus when attention is shifted from behaviour to political beliefs, values, and perceptions (1980: 167). As Gibbins explains it, western alienation provides the “distinguishing core” of an otherwise often weak and incoherent western political culture:

> Western alienation constitutes a form of attitudinal regionalism that cuts across and integrates the rather disparate political histories of the Prairie provinces... [and] engenders a western regional identification that transcends the narrower provincial arenas within which political behavior (sic) takes place. (1980: 167)

The notion that western alienation from the central government represents the most important feature of western political culture is popular with other commentators as well. For instance, in their recent volume on regionalism and party politics in Canada, Young and Archer suggest that alienation is a defining element of ‘the West’ (2002: 42). Blais et al., in their analysis of the 2000 federal election, arrived at a similar conclusion. As noted in the previous chapter, Blais et al. found relatively little evidence to support the claim that Westerners were any more right-wing or socially conservative than Canadians living in other parts of the country. However, the authors did find a significant regional divide on one issue – people’s perceptions about how their province was treated by the federal government:

> In the West, 53 per cent of respondents told us that their particular province is treated worse than other provinces. In Ontario, only 12 per cent felt their province was treated
worse. The sense of provincial grievance is greater in the West than in Atlantic Canada, where 45 per cent say their province is treated worse than others, and in Quebec, where 37 per cent feel this way. (2000)

Clearly, alienation from the federal government constitutes an important element of western political culture. Yet despite this fact, relatively few attempts have been made to systematically quantify the phenomenon and identify its correlates (Henry, 2002: 77). As a consequence of these shortcomings, the available literature concerning western alienation has struggled to respond to a number of fundamental theoretical questions. The most important of these questions include: How is western alienation distinguished from other forms of political non-integration? How do we know that it is a genuinely western phenomenon? What are its roots and what factors drive western discontent today? The remainder of this chapter will explore each of these of these questions in turn.

A Distinct Form of Political Alienation?

Gibbins has convincingly argued that western discontent “is not simply a specific form of a more generic phenomenon afflicting modern societies” (1980: 168). As he understands it, western alienation is a particular brand of alienation, distinct from more general notions of political apathy or powerlessness. To fully appreciate the distinction that Gibbins draws, it is helpful to understand how alienation is frequently conceptualized. The orthodox view of alienation is perhaps best articulated by Ada Finifter, who defines the term as occupying one end of a continuum whose opposite extreme is defined by concepts of support or integration (1970: 389).35

By contrast, western alienation has little to do with “the usual clientele of alienation – the dispossessed, the poor, the economically and socially marginal” (Gibbins, 1980: 167). Rather than disengagement or withdrawal, western discontent has spawned calls for greater political participation, and has been the motivating force behind the many protest and third-party movements discussed elsewhere in this paper. Also of note, western alienation is often linked with a healthy dose of regional self-confidence and optimism.36 Additionally, Gibbins argues that

35 Finifter’s analysis of political alienation in the United States revealed a strong correlation between feelings of political powerlessness (alienation) and those who suffer from social and economic marginalization in the U.S. – Blacks, women, the poor, and the under-educated (1970: 389-90, 399).
36 Gibbins cites Morton approvingly on this point: many in the West are guided by “a belief that their region was one with a great potential future if the hand of the outside exploiter could only be removed” (as cited in Gibbins, 1980: 168).
while many in the West may be alienated from the federal government and central Canada, they are not necessarily withdrawn from provincial politics (Gibbins, 1980: 167-8).

Shawn Henry’s recent analysis of regional alienation provides qualified support to the claims of Gibbins and others. According to Henry, alienated Westerners were more likely to believe that their provincial governments did a better job of representing their interests. As well, Henry found little evidence to suggest that the alienated were not actively engaged in the political process: a substantial majority of those who fell within the very alienated category had voted in recent provincial and federal elections. However, Henry was quick to warn that his results did not necessarily mean that those who are alienated were any more interested in politics than those who were less alienated. Similarly, he noted that many in the West – indeed, many across Canada – felt that their provincial government did a better job than the federal government of reflecting their interests (2002: 85-9).

Is Western Alienation Really Western?

Henry is one of the few analysts to systematically attempt to address the question of whether western alienation is, in fact, a uniquely western phenomenon. Considering that the vast majority of the research on western alienation has focused exclusively on the West, and for the most part, Alberta, many of the most basic assumptions underpinning the phenomenon are open to serious question. Henry’s recent research raises important doubts about the existing literature concerning western alienation, for it suggests that high levels of regional discontent were not peculiar to the western provinces. Not only did Henry find that levels of regional alienation were high in Atlantic Canada, but he also found levels of discontent to be inconsistently distributed across the West – in Manitoba, for instance, levels of alienation were significantly lower than in the other western provinces.37

While Henry’s results certainly challenge much of the conventional wisdom concerning western alienation, they require some degree of qualification. The regional alienation index employed in Henry’s analysis, in addition to tapping respondents feelings with respect to the federal government, also spanned a variety of other themes and issues – including attitudes on Quebec, Liberal performance, and levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works in Canada. Henry includes these additional measures because they tap themes outlined by the

37 According to Henry’s analysis, three of the Atlantic provinces and both Territories had a higher proportion of respondents who were very alienated than did Manitoba (2002: 84-5).
western alienation literature (2002: 82), but in doing so he failed to test the extent to which these associations are correct or accurate. Nonetheless, his analysis manages to reveal an important shortcoming within the existing literature: attempts to properly understand western discontent must, by necessity, strive to place the phenomenon in some sort of broader, Canada-wide context.

What are the Roots of Western Alienation?

As noted above, discussions regarding the root causes or driving factors behind western alienation generally focus on three key issues: economic inequality, political inequality, and antipathy towards Quebec. Common to each of these issues is an ingrained belief that the region’s interests have rarely been adequately considered by decision-makers in Ottawa. Peter C. Newman captures the thrust of this complaint when he writes:

The West’s revolutionary mood evolved not because of ... [central Canada’s] ignorance (most Westerners took it for granted) but because their discontents multiplied without ever being debated, much less resolved. Isolated from the national (which is to say, Toronto) media, Western advocates were ignored except for the occasional caricatures similar to those accorded witch-doctors in Africa. The central Canadian elite could never accept the notion that Westerners were anything more than bubbas in the boondocks... (1990: 309)

However blunt, Newman’s assessment effectively captures the extent of western frustrations. Indeed, Gibbins explains the phenomenon is very similar language, noting that Westerners subscribe to an “almost conspiratorial view of national politics.” He adds: “In the eyes of the alienated Westerner, systematic and predictable political patterns are clearly discernible; and the West consistently gets shortchanged, exploited, and ripped off” (1980: 168).

Considerable and impressive efforts have already been made towards cataloging the long list of events and occasions that have ignited and fueled Westerner’s sense of having been ‘shortchanged, exploited, and ripped off.’ While a comprehensive review of this literature is clearly beyond the scope of this study, to fully appreciate the extent and nature of western frustrations, it is worthwhile to briefly examine at least a few of these instances. In doing so, it

38 The likelihood that these themes contribute to western alienation is high, and will be further explored in the following section. The problem, however, is that Henry’s analysis fails to test these links, to determine whether some are more significant than others. The analysis presented in the following chapters attempts to remedy this shortcoming.
will be shown that much of the literature concerning ‘western grievances,’ while extensive and historically comprehensive, has generally struggled to understand the particular way in which such grievances, or the broader forces behind them, drive regional discontent in the West today.

**Economic Inequality**

Claims that the West has suffered the ill effects of a long line of federal economic policies and positions represent a central theme in the existing literature. Certainly, at or near the top of almost any list is the National Policy, introduced in 1879, which aimed to promote the industrialization of Canada through, among other things, the construction of a tariff wall between Canada and the United States.\(^{39}\) The National Policy aimed to convince American firms to jump the tariff wall and establish Canadian-based branch plants. Numerous firms did just this, but frequently set up operations in eastern Canada rather than in the West. As a consequence, the tariff was seen as a disadvantage in the West, for while the region had to pay the cost of higher goods, it received few industrialization benefits in exchange (Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 20).\(^{40}\)

Considerable friction between the western provinces and the federal government also arose over transportation. Particularly, freight rates (historically determined by the federal government) were seen as discriminatory by many Westerners. Because of the competitive transportation network in central Canada, combined with the absence of viable alternatives to rail transport in the West, rates were relatively low in eastern Canada and high in western Canada. Many westerners were also frequently forced to contend with bottlenecks and (prior to the creation of the Canadian Wheat Board) expensive middlemen in the grain trade (Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 21).\(^{41}\)

A more recent instance of economic conflict concerns the National Energy Program (NEP), introduced in 1980 as a response to dramatic increases in the world price of oil.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{39}\) It should be noted that Donald Smiley begins his list prior to National Policy. According to him, the first conflict arose when the Dominion first acquired the western territories. The Governor of the Territory, appointed by the Dominion power, exercised considerable influence over the region until responsible government was established on the prairies in 1897. The federal government did not relinquish control over natural resources to the prairie provinces until 1931. For more on this period of western Canadian history, see Smiley, 1987: 158-9.

\(^{40}\) The tariff placed western agricultural producers at particular disadvantage in competing with their American counterparts on world markets. Western Canadian farmers were faced with higher input costs as a result of the tariff, yet were paid the same international price for their product that American farmers earned (Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 20).

\(^{41}\) It is worth noting that issues concerning transportation were of less concern to British Columbia, as it had access to relatively inexpensive water transportation, and there was no need to move grain over large land distances (Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 21).
According to Donald Smiley, western – in particular, prairie – resentment of central Canada was never more profound than in the struggles with Ottawa related to energy development in the mid-1970s and early 1980s (1987: 161-2). Perhaps more than any other single event in recent memory, the NEP issue helped to convince many in the West that central Canadian interests will inevitably take (and will always take) precedence over western interests. Speaking to the Canadian Club in 1977, Saskatchewan premier Allan Blakeney effectively spoke for many in the West when he lamented that “...we in the West find in passing strange that the national interest emerges only when we are talking about Western resources or Eastern benefits” (as cited in Gibbins, 1980: 173).

A final example of economic mistreatment of the West comes in the form of inequitable federal spending patterns. Gibbins and Arrison have found considerable empirical evidence to suggest that federal spending on such things as research and development, supplies and services, and cultural activities is systematically biased to the advantage of Central Canada (1995: 22-3). Henry too, has noted that federal spending patterns have been a source of conflict between Ottawa and the western provinces (2002: 78).

Despite the claim that many of these grievances have, despite the passage of time, “demonstrated a remarkable continuity” (Gibbins, 1980: 173), relatively little quantitative evidence exists to suggest to what extent these, and other, issues actually drive regional discontent in the West. According to the Prime Minister's Task Force on the Four Western Provinces, these economic grievances and other economic issues are of continuing importance to many Westerners (Canada, 2000, 12). But questions concerning just how important such issues are, and how they effect feelings of discontent in the region, remain largely unanswered. The need for further analysis of these issues – and proof that they are indeed more complex then they may at first appear – is confirmed by a further observation of the Task Force. According to their final report:

The Western provinces have seen strong economic growth and low unemployment over the last number of years. They have tended to outperform many other provinces, despite such factors as the impact the Asian economic crisis has had on British Columbia, and the

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42 The NEP aimed to promote the 'Canadianization' of the oil industry and protect Canadian consumers. As part of this goal, the NEP imposed a limit on the price of oil. The Alberta government has estimated that such limits cost the province $50 billion in lost revenue (Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 22).

43 Gibbins, for his part, found in a 1974 survey conducted in Calgary that the most commonly mentioned grievance with the federal government was that of discriminatory freight rates. Gibbins suggested that the continued centrality of the issue was likely more a consequence of the particular symbolism of the issue, rather than any firm grasp on the modern freight rate issue (1980: 173).
prolonged bad weather conditions that have hampered agricultural production in some parts of the Prairies. (Canada, 2000: 12)

In light of the above findings, the image of the West as an economic colony of central Canada suffers somewhat. As a consequence, many of the assumptions inherent in much of the current literature concerning regional alienation and economic discontent in the West warrant further scrutiny.

Political Inequality

The literature concerning western regionalism is rife with claims that the particular structure of Canada's parliamentary system is a root cause of regional discontent in the West (Henry, 2002: 78). Once again, the notion that the West's interests are frequently sacrificed for whatever happens to be in the 'national' interest is front-and-centre. As Gibbins and Arrison understand the issue, Westerners are held captive by a political system that does not allow for effective representation of regional interests, in large measure because Members of Parliament are bound by party discipline, and party interests are often reduced to central Canadian interests (1995: 31). Certainly, however, the problem is also one of simple arithmetic, as outlined in the previous chapter. According to the rules of representation-by-population, a region that makes up roughly 30 per cent of the national population will lose to larger, more powerful regions, such as Ontario.

Politically-oriented frustrations in the West are typically said to manifest themselves in two key ways: the prevalence and popularity of third-party and protest movements in the West; and, the region's repeated calls for greater provincial autonomy. The region's affinity for non-traditional parties has been discussed elsewhere in this paper and therefore requires minimal elaboration here. Suffice to say, the belief that the Liberals and Conservatives, and more-recently, the New Democrats, are the parties of central Canada has led to the creation of a number of non-traditional parties that have aimed to represent western interests to Ottawa. The Reform Party, with its early slogan, 'The West Wants In,' represents only the latest in a long line of similar-minded earlier movements. 44

44 Reform was born out of events that, to many Westerners, clearly revealed the region's inequitable political clout within the federation. In 1986, Montreal's Canadiar was awarded a federal contract to maintain the Canadian Armed Forces CF-18 jet fighters, over Winnipeg's Bristol Aerospace. By almost all accounts, the Winnipeg bid was both technically superior and cheaper. However, according to the federal government, Montreal was awarded the contract on the basis of the "national interest." Preston Manning launched the Reform Party shortly after the CF-18 decision,
The West’s repeated demands for increased provincial autonomy are often said to reflect the belief that the region’s interests are not effectively represented in Ottawa. In this context, calls for the transfer of powers from the federal government to the provincial governments – seen, quite obviously, as being closer, and therefore more responsive, to Westerners – of the region make sense. Gibbins offers a further explanation for the popularity of the provincial rights movement in the West. According to him, provincial politicians have frequently exploited the electoral opportunities inherent in federal-provincial conflict. However, Gibbins is quick to caution that numerous, if not all, provincial politicians have used federal-provincial conflict to their advantage (1980: 181-3).

That western alienation is influenced by a variety of political issues is obvious. Yet, the extent of such influence is somewhat less clear. Also less than obvious is the issue of whether certain political issues (party discipline, or trust in political leaders) contribute more to western alienation than do others.

Antipathy towards Quebec

Of the three factors most commonly said to drive western alienation, antipathy towards Quebec has perhaps received the most attention. To a considerable extent, the issue of western hostility towards Quebec has already been discussed elsewhere in this paper; the previous chapter suggested that of the several alleged pillars of western political culture, antipathy towards Quebec was one of the few to survive serious scrutiny. Considering the nature of the relationship between Quebec and the West outlined earlier, it is perhaps unsurprising that the ‘Quebec issue’ also represents a central component of western alienation.

As with other components of western discontent, antipathy towards Quebec has a long history. Smiley has observed that central Canadian attempts to impose elements of a cultural, linguistic, and religious dualism on the prairies date to Confederation (1987: 162-4). As suggested in the previous chapter, western hostility towards Quebec is more accurately conceived as a distaste for Quebec’s repeated constitutional demands, and the attention Ottawa has awarded such demands, than against the Quebec people per se. 46

and western Canadian anger over the issue did much to fuel Reform’s early growth (Friesen, 1999: 44; Melnyk, 1993: 58).


46 Recall, for instance, Stanley Roberts’ assertion that western frustration is more accurately understood as envy, rather than prejudice.
Of the factors commonly said to contribute to western discontent, only antipathy towards Quebec has received any detailed quantitative examination. For instance, Gibbins' 1977 study, while based only on data collected in Calgary, Alberta, revealed a strong correlation between western alienation and antipathy towards Quebec. According to Gibbins' analysis, orientations toward French Canada proved to be the pivotal determinant of western discontent (1977: 358-63). Interestingly, Gibbins also tested the extent to which feelings of western alienation were bound up to attitudes concerning the United States. While a relatively weak relationship between anti-Americanism and western alienation was observed, Gibbins ultimately concluded that attitudes on Quebec played a far more significant role. According to the author, his findings:

Cast doubt on any suspicion that Western alienation in Calgary is at heart a thinly veiled pro-Americanism, inspired and promoted at least in part by the American-dominated oil industry in Southern Alberta. Rather it seems that antipathy toward Quebec forms the attitudinal complement to Western alienation. (1977: 360)

While Gibbins' data is now nearly a quarter-century old, more recent empirical research seems to support many of his original findings. For instance, data collected at the time of the 1992 Charlottetown Accord revealed Westerners were far more likely than other Canadians to identify proposed concessions to Quebec as the major source of their dislike of the Accord. An Angus Reid survey of Canadian opinion on the Accord found that nearly half of western Canadians (49 per cent) objected to the concessions offered to Quebec. By comparison, just 35 per cent of Atlantic respondents and 40 per cent of Ontario respondents mentioned such concessions. Another recent Angus Reid survey, conducted in 1994, probing opinions on official bilingualism, exposed a similar trend. The survey revealed that while 30 per cent of Canadians strongly supported bilingualism, support dropped dramatically in the West: to below 10 per cent in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and roughly 15 per cent in Alberta and British Columbia.

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47 Among other things, the Accord proposed that Quebec be guaranteed 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons and recognition of Quebec's distinct status (see Johnston et al., 1996).
48 The regional breakdown was as follows: in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, 47 per cent identified concessions to Quebec as the part of the Accord package which they most disliked, compared to 54 per cent in Alberta, and 45 percent in Manitoba. The Canadian average was 34 per cent. The survey, involving over 3,500 respondents across Canada, was conducted shortly before the 1992 vote (as cited in Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 136).
49 Overall, 51 per cent of Westerners said they moderately or strongly opposed official bilingualism, compared to just 35 per cent of Canadians overall (as cited in Gibbins and Arrison, 1995: 125).
Certainly, antipathy towards Quebec is an important component of western alienation, and the list of commentators who have drawn strong parallels between the two phenomena is long.\textsuperscript{50} However, only a select few have attempted to systematically examine the particular way in which attitudes concerning Quebec influence western discontent. Added to this is the fact that many of this ‘select few’ have tended to extrapolate results specific to a particular part of the West (Alberta) for the entire region. To some extent, Henry’s recent contributions to the topic acknowledge these shortcomings (through exploring the possibility of varying levels of regional discontent across the West and throughout the county, for instance). However, with respect to the role that Quebec plays in driving regional discontent, Henry’s analysis comes up short. Like so many other analysts, Henry acknowledges that antipathy towards Quebec’s constitutional demands represents a key theme outlined in the existing literature (2002: 82). But, rather than test the extent to which attitudes concerning Quebec influence regional discontent, Henry simply includes a series of Quebec items from the 1997 Election Study into his regional alienation measure.\textsuperscript{51} As a consequence, the precise relationship between attitudes on Quebec and regional discontent is left unexplored.

**Western Alienation: Remaining Questions**

A number of important conceptual questions remain unanswered by the existing literature concerning western regional alienation. As we have seen, a central theme in much of the traditional literature is the notion that western alienation represents a ‘distinguishing core’ of western political culture. From this belief generally follow several key assumptions. Firstly, levels of regional alienation in the West are generally thought to be consistent throughout the West. Secondly, regional discontent is typically believed to be an inherently western phenomenon – unique to the region and nowhere else. Thirdly, western alienation is frequently viewed as a distinct form of political discontent, separate and distinct from more generalized forms of political non-integration.

Despite the prevalence of the above themes, relatively few of these assumptions have been substantively evaluated. What little work that has been done to test the accuracy these hypotheses – by Henry, for instance – is far from comprehensive. Additionally, many questions

\textsuperscript{50} See, for instance, Gibbins, 1977 and 1980; Smiley, 1987; Gibbins and Arrison, 1995; and Henry, 2002.

\textsuperscript{51} Henry’s study tests for what he calls ‘Peripheral Region Alienation’ – in recognition of the fact that what many refer to western alienation could also be present in other parts of the country, particularly in other peripheral regions,
also remain about the factors said to drive regional discontent in the West. The available literature suggests that western regional alienation has several ingredients – including attitudes concerning Quebec, the political process, and the economy – but relatively little work has been done to quantify the extent to which such issues influence regional discontent. As well, hardly any attempts have been made to understand what role other alleged elements of western political culture – such as social traditionalism or fiscal conservatism – play in driving western alienation. As a result of these shortcomings within the existing literature, important questions about regional unrest in the West remain largely unanswered. It is towards answering these questions that we now turn our attention.

such as Atlantic Canada and the North. This issue is an important one, and will be explored in greater detail in following chapters.
Chapter 4 - Data and Methodology

Research Objectives

While the aim of this chapter is to outline the quantitative methodologies employed in our analysis, it is worthwhile to preface this discussion with a brief summary of our overall research objectives. Ultimately, our goal is to better understand the phenomenon of 'western alienation.' In doing so, we aim to develop a clearer, more precise appreciation of how – or if – levels of regional alienation are distributed across the western provinces, and indeed, across the country. We also hope to better understand some of the factors that drive regional discontent. With respect to the first objective, if existing theories regarding western alienation are correct, we can expect that levels of regional alienation will in fact be highest in the western provinces, and also, that it will differ notably from other, more general types of political apathy. With respect to our second objective, our aim is to evaluate the extent to which attitudes on a variety of issues – including the economy, social issues, Quebec and populism – relate to regional alienation. As the previous chapters illustrated, many analyses of western regionalism and political culture have characterized the region as generally more fiscally conservative, morally and socially traditional, hostile towards Quebec, and sympathetic to populist reform. Many commentators have come to understand regional unrest as the core manifestation of the region’s particular system of beliefs, values and perceptions. Our goal is to test the strength of this hypothesis, by examining the extent to which attitudes on issues and policies connected to the existing literature on western political culture and regionalism help to explain feelings of regional discontent.

Data

The data used in this study is drawn from the 1997 Canadian Election Study (CES). The survey was administered under the direction of the Institute for Social Research at York University and consisted of three components. The first, a telephone campaign-period survey, involved 3,949 interviews spanning the entire election campaign, from April 27 to June 1, 1997. The second component, a telephone post-election survey, was conducted in the eight-week period after the election. 80 per cent of the campaign-survey respondents, 3,170 in total, were re-interviewed. The final component of the Study consisted of a mail-back questionnaire. Post-election survey respondents were asked to provide their address so that the questionnaire could
be sent to them; over 2,600 did so, and 1,857 people completed it. While the concerns raised by some authors regarding the use and possible abuse of survey data need to be borne in mind, it remains the case that the benefits of the CES far outweigh the potential pitfalls. With its substantial sample size and comprehensive coverage of a multitude of issues, attitudes and perspectives, the CES represents an invaluable, and rare, tool for those interested in developing clearer understandings of political and behavioural phenomena in Canada.

**Methodology**

The quantitative component of our analysis began by identifying variables from the 1997 CES that were thought to potentially tap feelings of general political apathy or discontent. In all, 16 variables were identified. Factor analysis was then used to determine the extent to which these variables correlated to one another, the results of which are displayed in Table 4.1. The factor analysis revealed four distinct clusters of alienation items. Based on the variables in each index, we can image that each cluster might tap distinct emotions and beliefs about politics and political process in Canada. The five items that make up the first component strongly suggest a more traditional view of political alienation or apathy. Consisting of items related to the nature and scope of democracy in Canada and feelings toward elected officials, this component closely resembles many of the efficacy and cynicism measures employed in earlier analyses of Canadian political behaviour. The four items comprising the second component, which consists of items tapping whether respondents trust federal officials and waste tax monies, also contains variables that might be considered as measures of levels of cynicism. However, this cluster of items is probably best understood as a measurement of political trust. Jumping, for a moment, to the forth component, the three items that make up this cluster are likely best understood as measure of populism. In one sense or another, each of the three items comprising this component measure the extent to which respondents are inclined to locate decision-making with 'ordinary' Canadians, as opposed to federal officials and politicians.

Finally, the items comprising the third component most clearly and specifically tap how citizens relate to their federal government. Whether taken individually or collectively, these

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52 For further details on the 1997 Canadian Election Study, see Appendix A in Nevitte et al. (1999).
53 Detailed discussion of this debate is unfortunately beyond the scope of our analysis. See Wiseman (1986) and Gidengil (1992).
54 The items that make up this component strongly overlap with Nevitte et al.’s “cynicism” scale. See Nevitte et al., 1999. See also Simeon and Elkins (1974 and 1980).
Table 4.1: Factor Analysis of Alienation Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
<th>Component 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (cpsb10a)</td>
<td>0.489</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>-0.268</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People like me don’t have any say about what government does: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (cpsb10b)</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t understand what’s going on: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (cpsb10c)</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think government cares much about what people like me think: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (cpsb10c)</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
<td>0.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians are ready to lie to get elected: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (cpsb10e)</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>-0.205</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it or don’t waste very much of it? (mbsb6)</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that quite a few, not very many or hardly any of the people running the government are a little crooked? (mbse9)</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a great deal, quite a lot or not very much confidence in the federal government? (mbsf8)</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.712</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>-0.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, are you satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way that democracy works in Canada? (mbsl1)</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>-0.653</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>-0.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the policies of the federal government made you better off, worse off or haven’t they made much of a difference? (cpsc3)</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, does the federal government treat your province better, worse, or about the same as other provinces? (cpsj12)</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the policies of the federal government made your province’s economy better, worse or haven’t they made a difference? (cpsg2ab)*</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.637</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d rather put my trust in the down-to-earth thinking of ordinary people rather than experts: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (pese21)</td>
<td>0.256</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people have enough sense to tell whether the government is doing a good job: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? (mbsh2)</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>-0.435</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that referendums on important questions should be held regularly, occasionally, or never? (mbsh5)</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principle Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations. Items that did not load on any of the above components are not displayed in the Table.

* Variable cpsg2ab created by merging cpsg2a (federal policies made your province’s economy better) and cpsg2b (federal policies made your province’s economy worse).

A number of the items comprising this component were used by Clarke et al. in the construction of their political
items suggest a notably different form or dimension of political discontent. Specifically, these items ascertain how respondents feel about the way that the federal government treats them and their province. This component, more so than any of the others identified in Table 4.1, represents the best and most accurate measure of regional alienation. As a result, items comprising the third component formed the foundation our regional alienation index. Ideally, we would have constructed a measure comprising all three items identified by the factor analysis. However, because one of the items, cpsg2ab, was filtered by another item, and thus, asked of roughly only a third of all respondents, it was excluded from our measure. As a result, and in order to foster a closer link with previous research on the subject conducted by Nevitte et al., our index was constructed using only a single item – cpsj12 (see Table 4.2). Our regional alienation index was recoded, or scored, on a 0–1 scale, where 0 equaled low levels of federal alienation and 1 equaled high levels of federal alienation.

In addition to the regional alienation measure, a scale was also constructed based on the items that comprised the first component in our factor analysis. Unlike with the regional alienation measure, where only one of the three items was used to build the scale, all five items from the first component were used (see Table 4.2). While the regional alienation measure very clearly constitutes the primary focus of our analysis, this second index was created to help test the extent to which regional alienation truly differs from other, more general forms of political discontent. Like the regional alienation measure, this index, labeled personal alienation, was scored on a 0–1 scale, with 0 equaling low levels of personal alienation and 1 equaling high levels of personal alienation.

To test whether levels of regional alienation are higher in the West than elsewhere in Canada, regression analysis was employed. Regression analysis allows for the simultaneous trust measure (2002: 55-8).

56 Respondents were first asked item cpsg2, “Would you say that over the past year [your province’s] economy has gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?” Only respondents who said that their provincial economy had either ‘gotten better’ or ‘gotten worse’ were then asked a follow-up question about whether the policies of the federal government played a role. Approximately 1,200 respondents said that their provincial economy had “stayed the same,” and thus, were not asked about the impact of federal policies.

57 In their analysis of the 1997 vote, Nevitte et al. constructed a regional alienation measure using the same item (see Appendix C, Nevitte et al., 1999).

58 While the remaining portion of this chapter details the analysis conducted using the regional alienation index described above, similar analyses were also conducted using the personal alienation index. The results of these analyses will be reported were appropriate in the following chapter. In should be noted that indices were not constructed based on the items contained in the second (political trust) and third (populism) components. With respect to the latter, it should be recalled that populism has been identified as a potential feature of western political culture; as a consequence, its effects upon regional alienation will be examined separately. The items comprising this cluster influence populism-related policy and attitudinal variables used elsewhere in our analysis (see below). Unfortunately, examination of those items specifically identified in the second cluster fall outside of the scope of our analysis.
analysis of a variety of predictors (or independent variables) upon a dependent variable, along with the inclusion of additional ‘control’ variables. Accordingly, this statistical method represents the most effective means by which to test not only whether levels of alienation vary across the country, but also, whether a variety of policy or attitudinal variables (the independent variables) have an effect upon regional alienation (the dependent variable).

Variances in levels of regional alienation were measured through the use of regional dummy variables – which allow for across-the-broad comparisons of alienation against a standard reference point – in this case Ontario.\(^59\) We will be able to declare that levels of alienation are higher or lower (compared to our reference point) in a given province or region if a

Table 4.2: Regional and Personal Alienation Indices:

**REGIONAL ALIENATION:**

In general, does the federal government treat your province better, worse, or about the same as other provinces? (cpsj12)

**PERSONAL ALIENATION:**

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: those elected to parliament soon lose touch with the people? (cpsb10a)

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: people like me don’t have any say about what government does? (cpsb10b)

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on? (cpsb10c)

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: I don’t think government cares much about what people like me think? (cpsb10d)

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: Politicians are ready to lie to get elected? (cpsb10e)

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\(^59\) Regional dummy variables were created for British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and the North. Small sample sizes in both the Atlantic provinces and the Territories complicated the creation of useful and accurate dummy variables for each individual Atlantic province and Territory. Additionally, it should be noted that regressions did not include the North regional dummy variable. As both regions - the Territories and Atlantic Canada - fall outside the immediate scope of our study, the consequences of these decisions have little impact upon either our findings or analysis.
statistically significant relationship is revealed between our dependent variable, regional alienation, and any of the provincial dummy variables. The magnitude of such differences can be calculated by examination of the regression coefficient (B) of a given regional dummy variable in comparison to that of our constant (Ontario). The direction of the regression coefficient (either negative or positive) is also important to our analysis, for it indicates the nature of the relationship; a positive coefficient reveals that levels of regional alienation were, on average, higher in a given province, while a negative coefficient indicates that levels of regional alienation were (on average) lower in a given province. In order to defend against the impact of inevitable differences in the demographic composition of the provinces, additional control variables were constructed to control for the effects of a variety of socio-economic or demographic factors. Control variables were constructed for gender, age, education, income, ethnicity, and religion – permitting us to control for their effect upon our regional alienation measure.

In order to determine the impact of policy and attitudinal preferences on regional alienation, separate regressions were run with a variety of policy and attitudinal items from the 1997 CES. The items chosen for inclusion in our analysis tap a variety of the themes outlined in the existing literature concerning western political culture and regional alienation. For instance, in light of the role that antipathy towards Quebec allegedly plays in both shaping western political culture and driving regional discontent in the West, several items tapping opinions on Quebec were included in our analysis. A number of items tapping support for populism were also included, considering the centrality of this theme within the existing literature. Additionally, because so many have claimed that Westerners are more socially and fiscally conservative than Canadians living in other regions, a series of items were included to test the extent to which attitudes and opinions on the economy, social programs, minorities, and crime influence feelings of regional discontent. Finally, items tapping opinions on the United States were also included, in light of Gibbins’ previous research linking, however weakly, anti-Americanism with western alienation.

In total, 39 separate policy and attitudinal items were included in our analysis. Items were classified according to seven broad ‘issue categories,’ as outlined above. The categories were: Quebec, Free Enterprise, Social Programs, Outgroups, Populism (consisting of items tapping support for grassroots reform to Canada’s current parliamentary system, referenda, and local-
versus-elite decision-making), Ties to the United States (tapping opinion on continental orientations), and Law and Order (tapping opinions on police, crime and military issues).

Appendix A displays all 39 items, divided by issue category. Each of the 39 items was directionally recoded within each issue category. In most instances, variables were coded in such a way that a low score (0) on each measure indicates a strong opposition to, or negative attitudes on, each issue category. Thus, low scores equate to anti-Quebec, anti-Free Enterprise, anti-Social Programs, anti-Populism, anti-Outgroups, or anti-Continentalism. High scores (1) indicate the opposite extreme; strong support for Quebec, Free Enterprise, Social Programs, Populism, Outgroups, or closer ties to the United States. The Law and Order variables were coded slightly differently, so that a low score (0) indicates a strong concern for law and order issues and a high score (1) indicates a lack of concern for law and order issues.

While items were classified according to the seven different issue categories, it should be stressed that our analysis examined the effects of each item separately and independently – even from items in the same field. In this way, our analysis differs from many previous studies of political culture and regionalism, which typically have made use of ideological or other scales to test for potential differences in attitudes or beliefs from region to region. These scales are essentially indices of similar policy or opinion items, tapping common ideological bents, such as capitalism, moral traditionalism, or attitudes towards out-groups. Our analysis eschewed the use of pre-constructed indices (and instead ran separate regressions on each item independently) in order to allow us to test for the possibility of important subtleties with respect to policy or attitudinal effects – subtleties that might otherwise be masked by the use of traditional ideological scales.

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61 To test the relative explanatory power of each policy and attitudinal variable separately, regressions were run with only one variable at a time. This method allows us to make comparisons of adjusted $R^2$ figures for each policy and attitudinal variable. More will be said on this in the following chapter.

61 See Johnston et al., 1996, and Nevitte et al., 1999.
Chapter 5 – Anatomy of Alienation: Analyzing the Findings

A Regional Phenomenon?

Table 5.1 offers a preliminary glimpse at levels of regional discontent across Canada. Displaying a simple percentage breakdown of responses on our alienation measure (without controls for individual level characteristics), Table 5.1 reveals that the majority of Canadians (59 per cent) felt their province or region was treated ‘about the same’ as other parts of the country. However, nearly one third, 30 per cent, believed their province was treated ‘worse.’ Table 5.1 suggests opinion on this issue differed notably by region. According to our measure, British Columbians were the most alienated – with 45 per cent believing their province was treated worse than other parts of the country. In fact, only in British Columbia did the percentage of respondents who said their province was treated worse come close to matching the percentage believing it was treated about the same (48 per cent). But levels of regional unrest were also high in the other western provinces, where 34 per cent of respondents in each province said their particular province was treated worse than other parts of the country. Interestingly, levels of discontent were also very high in the Atlantic provinces; in fact, according to Table 5.1, respondents from the Atlantic provinces were more alienated than even those from the prairie provinces – 36 per cent said their province was treated worse than other parts of the country.

Table 5.1: Percentage of Respondents Saying Their Province is Treated Better, About the Same, or Worse than Other Parts of the Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Region</th>
<th>ATL</th>
<th>QUE</th>
<th>ONT</th>
<th>MAN</th>
<th>SAS</th>
<th>ALB</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>CDA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘Don’t know’s’ and refusals are excluded. Percentages for the northern Territories are not displayed, however, they are factored into the ‘Canada’ calculations. Figures may not add to 100 because of rounding. N: 3666.

While the percentage of respondents in each of the three prairie provinces who believed their province was treated worse was identical, Table 5.1 reveals that there was some variance in the proportion believing their province was treated better than other parts of the country. ‘Better’ responses ranged from a relative high in Alberta of seven per cent, to five per cent in Manitoba, and just two per cent in Saskatchewan.
Table 5.1 clearly suggests a significant and sharp divide between Canada's central and peripheral regions. In stark contrast to the relatively high, and generally consistent, levels of alienation observed across the West and in Atlantic Canada, Ontario was the only province where the percentage of 'better' responses exceeded 'worse' responses (23 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively). And even in Quebec, levels of regional unrest were comparatively low, with 29 per cent of respondents believing their province was treated worse than other regions. Table 5.1 confirms that regional unrest is a serious phenomenon, but considering the high levels of alienation observed in the Atlantic provinces, is also raises important questions concerning the extent to which such unrest can be said to be unique to the West.

However, as useful as the data presented in Table 5.1 is, in order to fully appreciate how levels of regional alienation are distributed across Canada, it is necessary to control for the inevitable effects of socio-demographic differences across the regions and provinces. Using regression analysis to factor in such controls, Figure 5.1 presents the distribution of mean regional alienation scores across the provinces and regions.\(^{63}\) As discussed in the previous chapter, the regional alienation index (constructed using the same item used in Table 5.1) was scored on a 0 - 1 scale, where 0 equaled low levels of federal alienation and 1 equaled high levels of federal alienation. The results of our regression analysis confirm the dramatic regional divisions observed in Table 5.1, but present a slightly different perspective of how levels of alienation are distributed across the country.

For instance, Figure 5.1 indicates that levels of regional alienation were indeed highest in western Canada. With a mean regional alienation score of 0.75, respondents from British Columbia were (once again) the most alienated, followed by Saskatchewan, with a score of 0.71, Manitoba at 0.70, and Alberta at 0.69. That respondents from the four western provinces earned the highest scores on our regional alienation measure suggests that 'western alienation' is real and genuine – not something salient only to political elites, academics, or the media. However, as the results for the remaining provinces and regions confirm, regional discontent is far from a strictly western phenomenon. Even after controlling for individual level characteristics, with a score of 0.68, levels of regional discontent in Atlantic Canada remained very close to those observed in the western provinces. Levels of alienation were also relatively high in Quebec, with

\(^{63}\) The means in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 were constructed by using the constant term as the mean for Ontario and adding or subtracting coefficients for other provinces and regions. Of course, the constant term also measures the effect of the omitted categories for the demographic characteristics that were measured using dummy variables. However, this does not affect the relative positions of the provinces or regions which is what the figures are intended to illustrate.
a mean regional alienation score of 0.63. As was the case in our simple frequency analysis, Ontario, with a mean alienation score of 0.53, once again recorded the lowest levels of alienation.

One of our main research objectives was to determine whether levels of regional alienation were evenly distributed across the western provinces. After controlling for socio-demographic differences, the data reveal that – notwithstanding the high British Columbia score – levels of regional discontent were relatively evenly distributed across the western provinces. Our results contradict Henry’s (2002) finding that levels of regional discontent were unevenly distributed across the western provinces. According to Henry’s analysis, levels of discontent were “uniquely high” in Alberta, followed by British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Manitoba trailed far behind its western neighbours, so much so that Henry argued his results raise doubts about “the uniformity of ‘Western’ alienation within the four Western provinces…. [and] call into question whether Manitoba can be included in the ‘Region of the Mind’ referred to by Gibbins and Arrison” (2002: 84-5).

Figure 5.1: Levels of Regional Alienation in Canada, Controlling for Demographic Differences

Note: No t-value is provided for Ontario because it is the reference category, or constant, and the coefficient includes socio-demographic controls. N: 3666.
Certainly, at first glance, there appears to be little that is especially surprising in Henry’s findings. In particular, his claim that levels of discontent were uniquely high in Alberta would seem to mesh with many popular notions about the Wild Rose province. For instance, Alberta’s affinity for many issues frequently associated with regional discontent – including Senate reform, fringe separatist parties, and the Reform/Alliance Party – have been well documented. Indeed, the image of Alberta as the ‘poster child’ of western alienation is a popular one; for instance, a recent *National Post* headline declared the province “Alienation’s New Hotbed.” Henry’s findings confirmed this status, leading the author to warn of the tendency (inherent in much of the existing literature) towards generalizing about regional unrest in the West from data collected in just one province, usually Alberta (2002: 79). According to Henry, generalizing the results found in Alberta leads researchers to assume that levels of discontent are universally high across the West; a conclusion that his work did not substantiate.

But our results – showing levels of regional discontent to be relatively consistent across the western provinces – contradict Henry’s findings, and in the process, lend support to Gibbins and Arrison’s ‘Region of the Mind’ thesis. Our findings also support another claim popularized by Gibbins, namely that regional alienation represents something of a “distinguishing core” of a distinct western political culture (1980: 167). How is it that our results differ so dramatically from those of Henry? While Henry used the same survey data relied upon here, his measure of regional alienation differed significantly from ours. Henry’s measure – dubbed the “Peripheral Region Alienation” index – was built around nine separate items from the 1997 Election Survey. While our measure consists of only a single item (does the federal government treat your province better or worse than other provinces?), his included items that also tapped attitudes concerning Quebec, political cynicism, and the economy. As Henry explained, his index

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65 The Alberta Independence Party (AIP) held its founding convention in Red Deer Alberta in early 2001. Cory Morgan, leader of the AIP, explained that the aim of his party was “independence, not necessarily from Canada, but from the federal government.” (“What does Alberta really want?” *The Globe and Mail*, 3 February 2001: A7). Despite the efforts of the AIP, it is important to note that support for separatism is quite low in the West. For instance, according to a recent COMPASS Inc. poll, just 7 per cent of Albertans favour separation (“Alienation’s New Hotbed: Alberta” *National Post*, 29 January 2001: A1). For more on the western separatist movement see Larry Pratt and Garth Stevenson’s *Western Separatism: Myths, Realities and Dangers* (1981).

66 It should be noted that the COMPASS Inc. poll behind the story was conducted only in Alberta and Quebec – a fact that certainly calls into question the accuracy of the headline (*National Post*, 29 January 2001: A1).

67 Some of the items making up Henry’s index included the following: On the whole, are you satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada? Do you agree that those elected to Parliament quickly lose touch with the people? How do you think the Liberal government has done in (a) reducing the deficit? (b) creating jobs? How much should be done for Quebec? For a full listing of the items comprising the Peripheral Region Index see Henry (2002: 82-4).
comprised items tapping the key themes of the literature on western alienation: political inequality, economic inequality, and antipathy towards Quebec (2002: 82). While Henry rightly identifies the central themes in the existing literature, our objective is to better understand the precise influence that these (and other) themes have on regional discontent. In order to avoid presupposing which factors are connected to regional alienation, the items included in Henry’s index were necessarily excluded from ours. Moreover, the results of the factor analysis reported in Table 4.1 suggest that regional alienation and personal alienation are separate dimensions. Conflating them (and perhaps other dimensions as well) can be challenged on methodological grounds.

Like Henry, our research also questions whether Alberta should carry the banner for western Canada, but obviously, for very different reasons. According to our measure, far from being the ‘hotbed’ of regional alienation, Alberta was the least alienated western province, although it does not differ much from Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Our results suggest that western regional discontent may have a new ‘hotbed’ – British Columbia. It is worth noting that this is not the first study to find low levels of regional discontent in Alberta. The recent Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) study on the western provinces found levels of regional discontent were distributed in a pattern generally consistent with that observed here. As with our study, CRIC measured regional alienation by asking respondents whether they felt their province was treated with the respect it deserved in Canada. According to the CRIC study, 52 per cent of westerners felt their province was not treated with the respect it deserved; however, only 43 per cent of Albertans felt this way.

A Unique Form of Political Discontent?

As the previous chapter described, much has been made of the fact that regional alienation in the West is a unique form of political discontent, distinct from more general types of political apathy. To test whether our regional alienation measure also taps a ‘unique form of political discontent,’ we tested it against another index, described in the previous chapter, which closely resembles the cynicism and apathy indices used in previous analyses of political culture in Canada (see Nevitte et al., 1999). Certainly, in light of our finding that levels of regional

68 Admittedly, however, while levels of regional discontent were certainly higher in British Columbia than elsewhere, the range in scores observed by our study was not substantial.
69 By comparison, 48 per cent of Manitobans, 56 per cent of British Columbians and 68 per cent of Saskatchewanians felt that their province was not treated with the respect that it deserved. The study was conducted
discontent were relatively high not only in the West, but throughout Canada, is it possible that our regional alienation index may be better understood as a measure of general political apathy or cynicism. Figure 5.2 presents our attempts to address this issue; it compares the regional distribution of regional alienation scores (as displayed in Figure 5.1) with those of our second measure, 'personal alienation.' By comparing the findings from each index, we are able to observe the degree to which regional alienation ‘overlaps’ with the more generalized political apathy or cynicism measure. If we find that the regional alienation measure, in terms of both levels of intensity and regional distribution, is indistinguishable from the personal alienation measure, the argument (popularized by Gibbins (1980)) that regional alienation (at least in the context of western Canada) represents a unique form of political non-integration will be weakened.

The evidence presented in Figure 5.2 suggests that regional alienation is indeed discernible from more generic forms of political alienation. The two measures are not mere reflections of one another. While respondents from British Columbia recorded the highest regional alienation scores, they were not the most personally alienated; instead, this honour fell to Saskatchewan (with a score of 0.72). Atlantic Canada followed closely (0.71), then Manitoba (0.70), British Columbia (0.69), Alberta and Ontario (both with scores of 0.67), and finally, Quebec (0.64).

Our findings with respect to the two alienation measures are significant because they help to confirm that regional alienation, at least according to our measure, is a distinct form of political non-integration, separate and discernable from political apathy. As high as levels of regional alienation were, scores on the personal alienation index were frequently even higher, especially in Ontario. Indeed, in only two provinces – British Columbia and Alberta – were levels of regional alienation higher than levels of personal alienation. Considering that the greatest variance in levels of regional discontent among the western provinces was observed between British Columbia and Alberta, these results are particularly interesting.

by Prairie Research Associates on behalf of CRIC and surveyed over 2,400 westerners in March 2001 (CRIC, 2001: 1-3).

70 The bivariate correlation between the two alienation measures was 0.117 (Pearson correlation), and the correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
Policy and Attitudinal Effects: What drives Regional Alienation?

We now turn our attention to understanding the factors potentially driving regional alienation. To begin, Table 5.2 presents the regional breakdown of mean scores for several of issue and policy items examined, allowing us to examine the extent to which respondents from across Canada differ on each of the items displayed. For the sake of clarity, Table 5.2 displays only a single item from each of the seven issue categories (in each case, the item with the most significant statistical effect upon the regional alienation measure is displayed). The results indicate that a distinct and coherent ‘East/West’ divide exists on only a single issue: Quebec. Respondents from all four western provinces were clearly more anti-Quebec (or, at least, anti-bilingual) than those living in other parts of the country. Based on our measure, respondents

Figure 5.2: Comparison of Levels of Regional Alienation and Personal Alienation, Controlling for Demographic Differences

![Graph showing comparison of mean alienation scores across provinces and regions.]

Regional Alienation N: 3666; Personal Alienation N: 3585

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71 It should be noted that the national averages (CDA column) were calculated including data from the Territories as well as that from the provinces and regions displayed. Because the North falls outside the scope of our analysis, results for the Territories are not displayed.

72 The results of the regression analyses are displayed in Tables 5.3 through to 5.7.
from Saskatchewan appeared to be the least willing to accommodate Quebec (with a score of just 0.24), followed closely by Alberta (0.25). Respondents in British Columbia and Manitoba (scoring 0.31 and 0.32, respectively) appeared only slightly more accommodating, and still scored well below the national average.73

While the Quebec variable was the only one on which opinion in the West was united (and distinguishable from that of the rest of Canada), qualified unanimity can be seen on two other issue categories: Outgroups and Continentalism. On each of these variables, three of the four western provinces – British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan – stood together and apart from the rest of Canada. While the three western-most provinces recorded scores that were decidedly more anti-outgroup than the rest of Canada, Manitobans proved notably more receptive to minorities. A similar trend can be seen on the Continentalism variable. While British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan all scored below the national average on the Continentalism measure (0.57, 0.59, and 0.58, respectively), Manitoba scored remarkably high. Indeed, at 0.67, Manitoba proved to be the province that was most responsive to closer Canada-United States integration. This finding is consistent with earlier research by Gibbins, noted earlier in this paper, which found feelings of regional alienation (at least in Alberta) to be weakly correlated to opposition to the American presence in Canada (1977: 59-60).74

On each of the remaining issues – Free Enterprise, Social Programs, Populism, and Law and Order – few, if any, significant regional differences were observed. To the extent that the Free Enterprise measure constitutes an effective barometer of fiscal conservatism, the results suggest that westerners are not more conservative than their eastern counterparts. These results seem to fly in the face of much of the conventional wisdom concerning social conservatism and the West: Albertans scored the lowest on the Free Enterprise measure (0.58), while Atlantic Canadians scored the highest (0.72). These results are all the more surprising when one examines the specific variable considered: how important are tax cuts in this election?75 Considering Albertans’ much-renowned status as the least taxed jurisdiction in Canada,76 it is quite remarkable that this particular issue did not resonate more strongly in Alberta.

73 The national average score of 0.39 includes respondents from the province of Quebec, who, expectedly, scored high on the Quebec variable (at 0.61, the Quebec score was more than 0.20 higher than the national average). Notwithstanding this, western scores were lower than those from both Ontario and Atlantic Canada (0.35 and 0.40, respectively).
74 This linkage will be discussed in further detail in the following section.
75 See Appendix A for exact variable wording.
76 Albertans have long enjoyed the lowest tax regime in Canada, including no provincial sales tax and personal income tax rates significantly below those in other jurisdictions (Friesen, 1999, 91).
Table 5.2: Mean Scores on Issue and Policy Attitudes, by Region/Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/Policy Category</th>
<th>Issue/Policy Variable</th>
<th>Province/Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ATL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>Do you believe we have gone too far pushing bilingualism?</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Entrps.</td>
<td>How important are tax cuts to you in this election?</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Prgs.</td>
<td>If you had to make cuts, would you cut UI?</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populism</td>
<td>Do you think the best way to solve national problems is through consulting with the grassroots?</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroups</td>
<td>Do you believe political parties spend too much time catering to minorities?</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties to U.S.</td>
<td>How do you feel about the United States?</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>Do you think that crime has increased in recent years?</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only the most significant item from each issue/policy category was used (see Tables 5.3 - 5.7). While scores for the northern Territories are not displayed, they are factored into the 'Canada' calculations. Method: Comparison of Means. N values for these and all other statistically significant items are reported in Tables 5.3 - 5.7.

Alberta scored more predictably on the Social Programs item (Unemployment Insurance), scoring well below average (anti-social programs). However, the rest of the West recorded scores tightly clustered around the Canadian average. Scores were also very average in the West on the Populism item. Interestingly, it was Atlantic Canada that scored highest on the Populism measure (0.67), while British Columbia – the province that has perhaps gone the
furthest towards implementing a number of populist reforms\textsuperscript{77} – scored the lowest (0.59). Finally, on the Law and Order item, scores ranged dramatically; respondents from Manitoba and Saskatchewan recorded ‘very concerned’ scores (0.13 and 0.16, respectively), while Alberta and British Columbia, while also more concerned than the Canadian average, were notably less concerned than their western neighbours (0.22 and 0.20, respectively).

The results presented in Table 5.2 bring useful insight to our discussion of western political culture and regional discontent. Our analysis indicates that, despite frequent claims that the West constitutes a “distinct region, different in many ways from the rest of Canada” (Canada West Foundation, 2001: 4), the only substantive policy issue on which opinion in the region is truly united and distinct from the rest of Canada is Quebec. Attitudes on the economy and social programs did not differ dramatically from West to East. Many westerners did appear to hold slightly more conservative views with respect to Outgroups – an important signal that the West may be more socially conservative and morally traditional. But, opinions regarding Outgroups do not appear to be consistently shared across the West. Indeed, it is important to stress that scores on the Outgroups measure ranged ten points in the West, from a high of 0.48 in Manitoba to a low of 0.38 in Alberta.

The analysis thus far suggests that differences in regional political opinion may not be as substantial as has frequently been assumed. However, we have yet to examine the extent to which attitudes on these issues relate to, and effect, feelings of regional alienation. As explained in the previous chapter, regression analysis – which permits testing of the precise effects of the policy items while also controlling for individual (demographic) level differences – was used to evaluate regional alienation’s correlates. In total, of the 39 separate regressions run, 14 items, spanning all seven issue categories, revealed a statistically significant effect on the regional alienation measure. Table 5.3 presents a summary of the results of our regression analysis, and like Table 5.2, it displays only the most significant policy or attitudinal variable from each of the seven issue categories, allowing us to compare the relative explanatory power of each category.\textsuperscript{78} In addition to presenting Regression Coefficient (B), Significance, and Adjusted R\textsuperscript{2} values, as a

\textsuperscript{77} As outlined in Chapter 2, British Columbia is currently the only province with recall legislation on the books (Laycock, 2002).

\textsuperscript{78} As will be discussed below, in some instances, only a single item from a particular issue category had an effect upon the regional alienation measure. In cases where more than one item had an effect, these additional items are displayed in separate issue category-specific Tables (Tables 5.4 through 5.7).
means of offering a further point of comparison, Table 5.3 also contains a column that reports the Adjusted R² of each variable minus that of the baseline regression (0.68).⁷⁹

Table 5.3 reveals that three issue categories in particular had a strong effect upon our regional alienation measure: Quebec, Outgroups, and Populism. All three variables representing these issues were significant at the p<.001 level, and, relative to the other variables, each went notably further towards explaining regional alienation (as witnessed by the Adjusted R² minus Baseline Adjusted R² column). The results indicate that the Law and Order item had the next-greatest effect on regional alienation; the variable representing this issue field was significant at the p<.01 level. The remaining issue categories – Free Enterprise, Social Programs, and Continentalism – also had an effect upon regional alienation, although each was significant only at the p<.05 level.

Table 5.3: Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation and this is to test the width

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/Policy Category</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Adj. R² less Baseline Adj. R² (.068)</th>
<th>N value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0=anti 1=pro</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>1706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Enterprise</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.021*</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>3591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc. Programs</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.023*</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>2916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populism</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>1630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroups</td>
<td>-.140</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>1639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties to U.S.</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.029*</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>2930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0=concern 1=no concern</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>3576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Federal Bias against Province (0 = no bias; 1 = strong bias)

⁷⁹ The baseline regression contained the provincial/regional dummy variables and all of the socio-demographic controls, but no policy or attitudinal variables, allowing us to observe the effects that these variables alone have
Table 5.3 reveals not only which issues affected regional alienation, but also *how* they affected it. Policy and attitudinal variables were directionally recoded within each issue field. Because all of the items were recoded (so that low scores (0) equate to anti-Quebec, anti-Free Enterprise, anti-Social Programs, anti-Populism, anti-Outgroups, anti-Continentalism, and highly concerned about crime\(^8\) positions, and high scores (1) the opposite), Regression Coefficient (B) figures presented in Table 5.3 indicate the nature of the regression slope, and whether the relationship is positive or negative. Thus, in the case of the Quebec variable presented in Table 5.3, the negative B value indicates that a statistically significant relationship exists between antipathy towards Quebec (anti-Quebec sentiments) and feelings of strong regional alienation.

Turning our attention to Table 5.4, which displays all of the items from the Quebec issue category that revealed an effect upon the dependent variable, it is clear that antipathy towards Quebec was an important predictor of regional alienation. The results indicate that respondents opposed to recognizing Quebec as a distinct society, and those who believed national unity to be an unimportant issue, were more likely to feel regionally alienated. Furthermore, each of the three Quebec items had similarly high levels of influence – all were statistically significant at the p<.001 level. While the results clearly indicate that antipathy towards Quebec play a role in driving regional discontent, an important caveat must be recognized. Our results (on these or any other items) should not be read as confirmation that attitudes concerning Quebec necessarily propel *western alienation*. The alienation scale used here is a measure of respondents’ discontent with the federal government, regardless of their home province.\(^8\) As a result, the ramifications of our results extend beyond the West: Respondents, regardless of where they live, who harboured anti-Quebec opinions were more likely to feel that the federal government did not treat their province with the respect that it deserved. With this in mind, we are still able to explore the extent to which attitudes on this (Quebec) and other issue categories drive regional discontent specifically in the West by examining the extent to which controlling for these policy variables helps to reduce regional differences on the regional alienation measure. We discuss this in greater detail below, after examining the effects of each of the issue categories on regional alienation.

\(^8\)It should be remembered that some of the Law and Order variables defied accurate classification on this type of scale. The variable concerning gun control, for instance, was recoded so that a low score indicates strong opposition to gun control and a high score indicates strong support for gun control.

\(^8\)Because one of our objectives included testing levels of regional alienation across the country (and comparing these levels with those observed in the West), our dependent variable necessarily measured levels of discontent across Canada.
Table 5.4: Quebec Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Question</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Adj. R² less Baseline</th>
<th>N Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = anti-Quebec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = pro-Quebec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe we have gone too far pushing bilingualism?</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>1706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should Quebec be recognized as a distinct society?</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>2553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is preserving national unity important to you?</td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>3561</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Federal Bias against Province - 0=no bias, 1=strong bias.
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

Table 5.5: Outgroups Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Question</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Adj. R² less Baseline</th>
<th>N Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = anti-Outgroups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1= pro-Outgroups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe political parties spend too much time catering to minorities?</td>
<td>-.140</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>1639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe we have gone too far pushing equal rights?</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>.002**</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>1638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think Canada should admit more immigrants?</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>3543</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Federal Bias against Province - 0=no bias, 1=strong bias.
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

Table 5.3 indicates that the Outgroups item was just as significantly correlated to regional alienation as the Quebec item. Table 5.5, presenting the full range of Outgroup items affecting regional alienation, shows that (as with the Quebec issue category) three separate variables had a clear, strong impact upon our dependent variable. In particular, respondents who felt that
political parties spent too much time catering to minorities, those that felt the 'equal rights' agenda had too much influence in Canada, and those who believing Canada should admit few immigrants were most likely to score high on the regional alienation measure.

The results suggest that attitudes concerning Outgroups also played a role in explaining regional alienation as attitudes concerning Quebec. However, it is worth noting an important non-finding with respect to this issue category. No significant effect was observed with either of the Outgroup items that specifically identified minority communities – First Nations' and gays and lesbians. This suggests that those who are regionally alienated were not frustrated with a particular 'Outgroup' (or at least, Aboriginals or homosexuals), but instead, with Outgroups in general.\(^2\) That the homosexual item (how do you feel about gays and lesbians?), in particular, did not have a statistically significant effect upon the regional alienation measure is of interest. This item was included in our analysis based because of the claim made by some commentators (for instance, Fletcher and Howe, as cited in Laycock, 2002) that westerners were less tolerant of gay and lesbians. Our findings suggest that to the extent that this may be the case, attitudes concerning homosexuals had no bearing on regional alienation.

Table 5.3 indicates that the Law and Order item also had an impact upon the regional alienation measure. Table 5.6 displays the two (of a possible four) Law and Order items with an effect on our dependent variable. In interpreting the data presented in Table 5.6, it is important to recall that the Law and Order items were coded differently from the others: Variables were recoded so that low scores (0) equated to great concern, and high scores (1) equated to little concern for law and order issues. With respect to the gun control variable, a low score equated to an anti-gun control position and a high score equated to a pro-gun control position.

Respondents who believed that crime had recently increased were more regionally alienated than those who felt that crime levels had either not increased or gone down in recent years. Additionally, those who opposed the suggestion that only the police and military should carry guns were more likely to score high on the regional alienation measure. As was the case with the homosexual item, the gun control item was included because of previous research suggesting that westerners are less supportive of legislation regulating or restricting access to firearms (Blais et al., 2000). Our finding that opposition to gun control correlates to regional discontent is notable, but it is once again important to bear in mind that our measure of alienation is not specific to the West; as such, respondents who opposed gun control – regardless of home

\(^2\) Having said this, it is conceivable that 'immigrants' could constitute a specific outgroup. However, considering the diversity of their origins, it is more accurate to view them – and this item – in more general terms.
province - were more likely to score high on the regional alienation measure. While on this subject, it is also worth heeding Blais et al.’s warning that despite initial appearances to the contrary, differences on the gun control issue may have less to do with region than with urban/rural differences (2000). Because our study was not able to specifically control for urban/rural differences, we are unable to verify with any certainty Blais et al.’s claims.

The issue category with the next-most significant impact upon regional alienation was Populism. Because only a single Populism item recorded a statistically significant effect upon our dependent variable, no separate table was constructed. In total, regressions were run on six separate populism items. Most, like the ‘grass roots’ item displayed in Table 5.2, tapped respondents’ perceptions of the willingness of political decision-makers to listen to ‘ordinary Canadians.’ One item, in particular, tapped support for referendums as a policy-making tool. It is somewhat surprising that so few of these issues revealed an effect upon the regional alienation measure. By its very nature, the regional alienation measure taps the extent to which Canadians felt their province was fairly treated by Ottawa. Understood in this context, it seems logical that those believing their province or region was not treated with an appropriate level of respect would be more likely to feel that federal officials quickly ‘loose touch.’ However surprising it may be that only a single Populism item correlated with the regional alienation measure, it should be noted that its effect was just as statistically significant as both the Quebec and Outgroup variables.

According to Table 5.3, attitudes concerning the economy (Free Enterprise) also had an effect upon regional alienation; Table 5.7 displays the three items that correlated with the dependent variable. Close examination of the data (in particular, the direction of the Regression Coefficients) reveals that the nature of this effect is ambiguous. Unlike attitudes concerning Quebec and Outgroups, for example, attitudes on the Free Enterprise items do not have a clear or consistent effect upon regional alienation. Of the eight Free Enterprise questions included in our analysis (see Appendix A), only three correlated with the dependent variable. But more important is the confusing nature of this relationship. For example, Table 5.6 shows that respondents who felt tax cuts were important were more likely to feel regionally alienated. However, the nature of the influence of the remaining two items suggest a different sort of relationship: that those who are regionally alienated hold opinions that are ‘anti-Free Enterprise.’ Specifically, the variables reveal that respondents who believed a lack of success is the fault of the system (people who don’t get ahead should blame themselves, not the system), and those not

---

83 The 1997 CES did not question respondents on the size or nature of their locality.
opposed to the level of influence held by unions (Do you think unions should have less power) scored high on the regional alienation measure.

With respect to the ‘don’t get ahead’ variable, one might question the extent to which it genuinely taps opinions regarding free enterprise or the economy. ‘System’ was not clearly defined in the question, and while here it is taken to refer to the economic system, it is possible

Table 5.6: Law and Order Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Question</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Adj. R² less Baseline</th>
<th>N Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = concerned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = unconcerned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think crime has gone up in recent years?</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>3576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe only police and military should carry guns?</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>.006**</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>2945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Federal Bias against Province – 0=no bias, 1=strong bias.
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

Table 5.7: Free Enterprise Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Question</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Adj. R² less Baseline</th>
<th>N Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = anti-F.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = pro-F.E.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is cutting taxes important to you in this election?</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.021*</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>3591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe that people who don’t get ahead should blame themselves, not the system?</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.030*</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>2853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that Unions should have less power?</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.046*</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>2916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Federal Bias against Province – 0=no bias, 1=strong bias
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.
that respondents could have interpreted it differently. Whatever ambiguity may have surrounded this particular item, few could argue that the 'union' question was unclear. And yet, it revealed a similar anti-Free Enterprise effect upon regional alienation: those who were regionally alienated were more likely to believe that unions should have more – not less – influence. Possible confusion over the 'don't get ahead' item aside, the data suggests that regional alienation, as measured here, is not a right-wing, pro-free enterprise phenomenon.

The Social Programs issue category also produced some surprising results, in large part because only a single item (of seven) recorded a statistically significant effect on the regional alienation measure. Items tapping support for health care, education, job creation, welfare policy, and pensions all failed to correlate with regional alienation. The single item with an effect tapped opinions concerning Unemployment Insurance. Also surprising was the nature of this relationship: respondents who felt cuts should not be made to Unemployment Insurance were more likely to feel that the federal government was biased against their province. It should be noted, however, that maintaining current levels of Unemployment Insurance was the preference of a plurality of respondents in the 1997 CES. Over 48 per cent wanted no cuts at all, while roughly 45 per cent favoured “some cuts” and less than seven per cent wished for “a lot” of cuts.

Our findings with respect to the Social Program items suggest that attitudes on this issue category had little to do with regional alienation. Notwithstanding that the UI item managed a statistically significant effect, it seems that for the most part, social policy issues with an otherwise high profile in contemporary Canadian public policy debates – health care, first among them – do not play a role in driving regional discontent in Canada.

Finally, turning to the last issue category, only one of a possible three Continentalism (ties to the United States) items had an effect on the regional alienation measure. Two of the three variables specifically tapped opinion on whether Canada and the United States should become more closely integrated, while the third measured opinions (like or dislike) of the United States more generally. It was this last item (How do you feel about the United States?) that impacted the regional alienation measure: Respondents with negative feelings towards the

---

84 One could imagine, for instance, that some respondents may have taken “system” to refer to the “federal system” or the “political system.”

85 This result may be tapping the impact of the Unemployment Insurance issue in Atlantic Canada. Prior to the 1997 election, the Liberal government changed eligibility requirements, making it more difficult for seasonal workers – such as fishers – to qualify for benefits. The substantial Liberal seat loss in the region in 1997 has been attributed to this policy change. For more on this, see Gidengil et al., 1999.

86 These figures represent the percentage breakdown of “valid” responses – and exclude “do not know” and “refused” responses. Combined, excluded responses equaled roughly 2.5 per cent.
United States were more alienated. Recall that this issue category was included because of earlier research linking regional alienation in the West with “relatively weak” opposition to the United States (Gibbins 1977: 359). Our findings appear to confirm and build upon Gibbins’ earlier work, revealing that a modest degree of anti-Americanism continues to drive regional unrest— not just in the West, but across the country.

Putting the Results in Context: What does it Mean for the West?

Our analysis suggests that a number of factors drive regional alienation. Of the 39 variables analyzed, 14 showed a statistically significant effect on our regional alienation measure. Of these 14, the majority tapped opinions and attitudes on three broad issues—Quebec, minorities (or ‘Outgroups’), and the economy (‘Free Enterprise’). While the data presented thus far offers some insight into the relative explanatory power of each of these items, in order to more accurately

Table 5.8: Comparison of Policy and Attitudinal Effects on Regional Alienation

Adjusted R Square = .102

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(se)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGIONAL DUMMY VARIABLES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario (Constant)</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Canada</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.009**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLICY AND ATTITUDBINAL VARAIBLES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec (0=anti 1=pro)</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Enterprise (0=pro 1=anti)</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Programs (0=anti 1=pro)</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populism (0=anti 1=pro)</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroups (0=anti 1=pro)</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties to U.S. (0=anti 1=pro)</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Order (0=concerned 1=unconcerned)</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Controlling for demographic differences. Only the most significant variables from each issue category are displayed.
Dependent Variable: Federal Bias against Province – 0=no bias, 1=strong bias.
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05. N: 1403.
compare the impact of each item upon the regional alienation measure, a final regression was run that included the most significant item from each of the seven issue categories. By including the leading items from each issue category in a single regression, we are able to easily compare the relative explanatory power of each to determine which go the furthest towards explaining regional alienation. Our final regression offers another important benefit as well. Comparing the regional mean scores generated by the final regression with those of the baseline regression (Figure 5.1) allows us to examine the extent to which controlling for the various issue categories helps to reduce regional differences on the regional alienation measure. If regional differences are reduced on the regional alienation measure after controlling for the issue categories, we can safely conclude that we have successfully identified the key factors propelling regional discontent in the West. If, however, significant regional differences remain on the regional alienation measure, we will be forced to conclude that other factors, as yet unaccounted for, drive regional unrest in the West. The results of our final regression are presented in Table 5.8; the upper portion presents the regional mean scores for each province and region, while the lower portion compares the scores for the seven issue categories. The results on the issue categories will be discussed first.

Table 5.8 reveals that the Outgroups item had the most powerful effect on regional alienation. Indeed, it was the only variable to record a significance level of $p<.001$. The Quebec variable was the next most significant – with a significance level of $p<.05$. Populism had the third-most significant effect, also at the $p<.05$ level. Each of the remaining variables, tapping attitudes on the economy, law and order, and continentalism, failed to reveal a statistically significant effect upon regional alienation when forced to compete with the Outgroups, Quebec, and Populism measures. The data presented in Table 5.8 helps to put our previous analysis in perspective. While numerous items, from each of the seven issue categories, revealed an effect on the regional alienation measure, a select few clearly had more influence than others.

Indeed, that attitudes concerning minorities proved to be the strongest determinate of regional unrest is especially interesting in light of much of the existing literature concerning regional unrest, particularly in the West. At least as far as the West is concerned, outgroups have not factored prominently in the literature on (western) regional alienation. Certainly, some analysts have identified Westerners as less hospitable to some minority groups, but few have

87 This regression included the same seven items displayed in Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

88 A number of commentators have noted Westerners' historic animosity for federal multiculturalism policies. See, for instance, Gibbins and Arrison (1995).
directly or specifically linked such attitudes to regional discontent in the region. Our research certainly suggests the need for further examination of the precise interplay between western alienation and attitudes regarding minorities. But, once again, it is necessary to bear in mind that the ramifications of our findings extend beyond the West. Regardless of region, respondents who scored high on the regional alienation measure believed that Canada should admit fewer immigrants, that we have gone too far pushing equal rights, and that even political parties spend too much time catering to the needs of minorities. Considered in this light, the need for more research on this component of regional discontent becomes clear.

Having identified the policy variables with the greatest effect upon regional alienation, it is now time to examine the extent to which controlling for such variables helps to reduce regional differences on the regional alienation measure. In many respects, this is the most important aspect of our analysis, where our findings with respect to our regional alienation measure are finally connected with the existing literature concerning western political culture and regionalism. In other words, it is at this point that we test the accuracy of the existing literature: after controlling for those factors said to drive western regionalism (the issue categories), are differences on the regional alienation measure eliminated or, at the least, reduced? If regional differences are significantly reduced, then we can conclude that the issues examined do indeed go far in explaining regional discontent in the West. However, if controlling for the policy and attitudinal variables examined fails to substantially reduce regional differences on the regional alienation measure, then we will be forced to concede that there is more to the issue than suggested in the current literature – that other factors, not yet accounted for, must also play a role in driving regional discontent in Canada.

The results presented in the upper half of Table 5.8 suggest that even after controlling for the supposed policy bases of western regional discontent, levels of regional alienation remain somewhat higher in the western provinces. Figure 5.3, comparing regional scores on the alienation measure with and without the policy issue controls, confirms this finding. Despite our best attempts to control for the factors typically said to drive western regional discontent, significant regional differences on the regional alienation measure remain. As was the case prior to controlling for the policy issues (in the baseline regression), the four western provinces earned the four highest scores in Figure 5.3. British Columbia, once again, scored notably higher than its western neighbours, with a score of 0.82, and Saskatchewan, at 0.76, again scored second highest. Interestingly, Manitoba and Alberta traded places; the former scored 0.74, and placed slightly behind Alberta, with a score of 0.75. This suggests that the policy controls introduced go
slightly further towards explaining regional discontent in Manitoba than elsewhere in the West. Despite this, of course, it is important to note that levels of discontent in Manitoba remained high relative to the rest of the country.

Our research reveals that levels of regional alienation are indeed higher in western Canada. While levels of alienation are relatively consistent throughout the West; British Columbians stand out as the most alienated. This, combined with the fact levels of alienation are somewhat lower in Alberta compared to the other western provinces, contradicts many popular assumptions concerning western alienation. Our research also offers important insight into regional unrest outside the West. While levels of discontent were highest in the western provinces, the region does not hold a monopoly on regional discontent – other regions, in particular Atlantic Canada, also feel alienated from the federal government.

With respect to the factors driving regional discontent, our research tested the degree to which a variety of issue or policy variables influenced feelings of regional discontent. We found
that while a range of items correlated strongly with our regional alienation measure, attitudes concerning law and order, populism, Quebec and Outgroups had the greatest effect. The later, in particular, appeared to have a strong influence on feelings of regional alienation. However, while the effect of these policy issues was certainly significant, controlling for these variables ultimately failed to substantially reduce regional differences on our regional alienation measure. Thus, even after accounting for the factors typically said to drive regional discontent in the West, levels of alienation remained high in the region. This suggests that there is more to the subject. Other factors, as-of-yet unaccounted for, must also drive regional discontent.

Ultimately, our research offers much to support to Gibbins' understanding of western regional alienation, as a "distinguishing core" of western political culture (1980: 167). However, our analysis also reveals that much remains to be said concerning the factors driving such unrest. Current conceptualizations of western regional alienation fail to fully account for the factors driving this unique, and formidable, phenomenon.
Chapter 6 – Conclusion

The centrality of region and regionalism to Canadian social, economic, cultural, and political life has been acknowledged by countless interested observers (Young et al., 2002). Yet somehow, the observations of Simeon – made a quarter-century ago, and noted earlier in this paper – continue to ring true: While region and regionalism are concepts with remarkable purchase in Canada, their meanings (and complete implications) have rarely been fully appreciated (1977: 292). Focusing particular attention on how issues of region and regionalism relate to the West, this analysis has attempted to bring new understanding to the phenomenon of regional alienation.

For the most part, much of the existing literature on western alienation has focused on describing the phenomenon, at the expense of explaining it. We know, for instance, that the roots of regional unrest in the West run deep, and that the phenomenon is intimately connected to issues of economic and political inequality, and attitudes concerning Quebec. Unfortunately, we know little about the relative influence of these factors, or how current-day policies related to Quebec, the economy or political equality relate to alienation today. Surprisingly few attempts have been made to substantively quantify regional unrest in western Canada or identify its correlates. Fundamental questions – concerning how levels of alienation are distributed across the West (and the rest of Canada), or how the phenomenon relates to other forms of political non-integration – have thus far failed to garner significant attention.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that, to this point, few have attempted to genuinely link the existing literature on western alienation with other relevant political discussions – most notably those surrounding political culture. That political culture plays a role in western regional alienation is clear; less clear from the existing literature however, is the particular nature of this relationship. The West is frequently said to possess a distinctive political culture, one characterized as, among other things, more right-wing, socially conservative, populist, and hostile to Quebec. While a number of recent studies (Clarke et al., 2002; Laycock, 2002; Blais et al., 2000; Gidengil, 1999) have raised serious questions concerning the extent to which the West can accurately be viewed as a unique region, few have substantively examined the extent to which these elements influence feelings of regional unrest in the West.

With the above concerns in mind, this analysis has responded to many of the conceptual gaps that currently plague the existing literature. According to our measure, levels of alienation were indeed highest in the West. However, high levels of alienation were also observed in
Atlantic Canada, suggesting that the West does not hold a monopoly on feelings of regional discontent. Our data also revealed that levels of alienation were relatively consistent across the western provinces — although British Columbia did stand out as slightly more alienated than its neighbours. We also uncovered convincing evidence to suggest that regional unrest was unique from other forms of political non-integration.

Our findings hold important implications for the study of regionalism, federalism, and the West, and suggests several directions for future research. Firstly, that levels of regional unrest were highest in British Columbia (and not Alberta) was somewhat surprising. Popular wisdom has typically identified Alberta as the ‘hotbed’ of regional unrest; our research paints a very different picture. Our data was collected at a time when British Columbia was led by a premier, Glen Clark, who frequently attempted to exploit federal-provincial tensions to his own benefit. It is certainly possible that more recent data, collected since Clark’s departure and the installation of a new provincial regime, could reveal that British Columbia’s temper has cooled. However, it is also clear that a number of current contentious issues — among them, softwood lumber and Native treaty rights — will continue to place a heavy strain on British Columbia-Ottawa relations. What role these issues — and Ottawa’s handling of them — will play in driving regional unrest in British Columbia deserves the attention of future researchers.

It is worth briefly noting that our findings with respect to Atlantic Canada also point to the need for further analysis. While Westerners were the most alienated Canadians, Easterners ran a very close second, and according to our measure were even more frustrated than Quebecers. While this is certainly not the first study to note high levels of alienation in Atlantic Canada, more work is required to understand the nature and extent of discontent in the East. As is the case with our results regarding British Columbia, it is possible that the high levels of regional unrest captured by our study were particular to the time in which our data was collected. As has already been noted, the 1997 Election was an especially difficult one for the federal

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89 Under Glen Clark’s leadership, the New Democratic government rarely turned away from opportunities to use regional alienation as a weapon to bolster its own popularity. For instance, Clark frequently squabbled publicly with Ottawa over salmon fishing, and support for BC’s fishing communities. Clark was also at the centre of a bitter fight with Ottawa over control of the Nanoose Bay torpedo testing range, which the federal government ultimately expropriated from the province in the fall of 2000. In March, 2002, the Federal Court of Canada recently overruled Ottawa’s actions, and awarded control of the range back to British Columbia (Globe and Mail, 7 March 2002: A12).

90 See, for instance, Matthews (1983) and Henry (2002).
Liberals in Atlantic Canada. While the 2000 Election saw the Liberals regain some of these losses, it appears that regional frustrations continue to smolder in the East.\textsuperscript{91}

Our analysis clearly demonstrated that regional unrest, as a phenomenon, is real and genuine. Our attempts to better understand the factors said to propel regional alienation also hold important implications, and offer key lessons, for future research. Firstly, we confirmed that antipathy towards Quebec continues to play a role in driving regional discontent. Those that are regionally alienated do indeed feel that Quebec unfairly dominates the federal agenda. While it is once again necessary to view our data in the necessary political and historical content,\textsuperscript{92} there can be little doubt that these two issues are inextricably linked. The implications of this are difficult to fully appreciate, but at the very least it seems that a paradoxical dilemma faces policy-makers. The ‘regional alienation problem’ appears to be with us for at least as long as we face the ‘Quebec problem’; and yet, any attempts to solve the latter seem destined to further exacerbate the former.

Our analysis also suggests that more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between regional unrest and attitudes concerning minorities. Our data suggests that those who were regionally alienated were so in part because they perceived the federal government to be either too accommodating of immigrants or too preoccupied with the so-called ‘equal rights agenda.’ Such a finding raises serious and difficult questions about Canada’s oft-touted affinity for multiculturalism. Many Canadians, particularly those in the peripheral regions, seem to feel that their opinions on these issues are not being heard in Ottawa. Certainly, more attention needs to be focused on the particular way in which attitudes concerning minorities affect regional alienation.

Perhaps not surprisingly, our research also revealed a statistically significant relationship between populism and regional alienation. Those who were dissatisfied with the federal government wish to play a more active role in decision-making in Canada. However, considering the central role frequently ascribed to it, it is worth noting that the relationship between populism and regional alienation was not as strong as it could have been. Of several populist items included in our analysis, only one managed to correlate with our regional alienation measure in any significant way. Our research suggests that while the regionally alienated may indeed

\textsuperscript{91} As noted elsewhere, in their preliminary analysis of the 2000 CES, Blais et al. found that 45 per cent of Atlantic respondents believed their particular province was treated worse than other others (2000). This actually represents an increase of 9 percentage points over the data presented here from the 1997 CES.

\textsuperscript{92} It should be recalled that our data was collected just two years after the near-fateful 1995 Quebec Referendum.
welcome populist reforms, this issue was less important than attitudes concerning Quebec and Outgroups.

Our analysis revealed that a number of additional factors also played a role in driving regional discontent. The data suggested that attitudes concerning free enterprise, social programs, law and order, and continentalism also influenced feelings of regional alienation. However, considering the central role attributed to such factors in much of the existing literature concerning western regionalism and political culture, it was surprising that these factors did not play a greater role in driving regional alienation. Inevitably, this leads to the most important implications to emerge from this analysis. In the end, we cannot help but be struck by the fact that, even after controlling for the factors typically alleged to propel regional unrest or western 'distinctiveness,' we found that substantial regional differences on our regional alienation measure remained. As a result, we were forced to conclude that other factors, still unaccounted for, must also drive regional discontent in the West. Thus, while we have come a long way towards understanding regional alienation in the West, perhaps the most important insight offered by this paper is the desperate need for still more analysis.
Bibliography


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“Wish We May, Wish We Might, be Heard in Ottawa.” Editorial. *The Province* 7 March 2001: A32.


Appendix A: Policy and Attitudinal Variables Tested for their Effects upon Regional Alienation

Quebec

- How much do you think should be done for Quebec for Quebec: More, less, or about the same? (cpse3a)
- Should Quebec be recognized as a distinct society: Yes or no? (cpsj3)
- To you personally, in this election, is preserving national unity very important, somewhat important, or not very important? (cpsa2a)
- We have gone too far pushing bilingualism in Canada: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mdsd7)

Free Enterprise

- People have a right to work in the region where they were born: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mbsg9)
- The government should leave it entirely to the private sector to create jobs: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (cpsf6)
- How much should be done for business: Much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less or much less? (pese2)
- How much power do you think unions should have: Much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less or much less? (pese3)
- How do you feel about big business, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesfl)
- To you personally, in this election, is reducing the deficit very important, somewhat important, or not very important? (cpsa2b)
- To you personally, in this election, is creating jobs very important, somewhat important, or not very important? (cpsa2c)
- To you personally, in this election, are tax cuts very important, somewhat important, or not very important? (cpsa2d)

Social Programs

- To you personally, in this election, is protecting social programs very important, somewhat important, or not very important? (cpsa2f)
- How do you feel about people on welfare, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesf5)
- If you had to make cuts, would you cut welfare spending a lot, some, or not at all? (pese6b)
- If you had to make cuts, would you cut pensions and old age security spending a lot, some, or not at all? (pese6c)
- If you had to make cuts, would you cut health care spending a lot, some, or not at all? (pese6d)
- If you had to make cuts, would you cut Unemployment Insurance a lot, some, or not at all? (pese6e)
- If you had to make cuts, would you cut education spending a lot, some, or not at all? (pese6f)

Populism

- We could probably solve most of our big national problems if decisions could be brought back to the people at the grass roots: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mbsd3)
- Do you think referendums on important questions should be held regularly, occasionally, rarely, or never? (mbsh5)
I'd rather put my trust in the down-to-earth thinking of ordinary people than in experts: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (pese21)

The government should pay most attention to those citizens who are well informed: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mbsd4)

Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (cpsb10a)

Most people have enough sense to tell whether the government is doing a good job: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mbsd2)

Outgroups

Political parties spend too much time catering to minorities: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mbsd6)

Do you think Canada should admit more immigrants, fewer immigrants, or about the same as now? (cpsj18)

We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (mbsa1)

How do you feel about racial minorities, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesf8)

How do you feel about gays and lesbians, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesf10)

How do you feel about Aboriginal Peoples, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesf10)

Ties to the United States

Do you think Canada and the United States should be much closer, somewhat closer, about the same, more distant, or much more distant? (pese4)

It would be a good thing for the United States and Canada to become one country: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (pese25)

How do you feel about the United States, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesf13)

Law and Order

How do you feel about the police, on a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 equals really dislike and 100 equals really like? (pesf7)

Do you think crime in Canada has gone up, gone down or stayed the same in the last few years? (cpsj20)

To you personally, in this election, how important is fighting crime: Very important, somewhat important, or not very important? (cpsa2g)

Which is the best way to deal with young offenders who commit violent crime: give them tougher sentences or spend more on rehabilitation? (cpsj21)

Only police officers and the military should be allowed to carry guns: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (pese12)