Responsibility and Voting in a Federal Context: Does the Blame-Game Work?

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Intergovernmental Policy and Electoral Accountability: Responsibility and Voting in a Federal Context

Voters wishing to hold their governments accountable and induce those governments to serve the public interest must decide how responsible was each level of government for a given policy outcome. Since multiple governments are involved in most Canadian policy-making, assigning responsibility can be extremely challenging. Rational politicians will only add to the confusion with their attempts to shift blame and steal credit from the other levels of government—playing the "blame-game" (Hood 2002). To assess the quality of democratic accountability in Canada, therefore, we must understand how well voters are coping with this additional burden of federal citizenship.

The success of politicians blame-avoidance and blame-pinning strategies hinges on voters' ability to assess responsibility for policy outputs and the resulting real-world conditions. At one extreme, voters might be motivated to assess responsibility, capable of doing so, and have good information enabling them to make such judgments. At the other extreme, however, voters might not go to the trouble of assessing responsibility, might not be capable of dealing with the inherent complexity, or might not have any decent information on which to base their responsibility judgments. If voters will not, or can not, come up with well-grounded responsibility judgments, they may engage in a number of alternative strategies for making voting decisions that have serious implications for electoral accountability.

The effects of confusion about responsibility and the consequences of an intergovernmental blame-game are likely to be found in high relief in Canada. Canada is the most decentralized federation in the world, the tax field is shared and administered jointly, the most significant social services are delivered by provinces but with significant block grant funding from the federal government, and there is a very complex revenue equalization formula. For a half-century, most Canadian policy has been worked out in negotiations between the executive branches at the two levels of government, and these negotiations garner significant media attention.[1] Since the federal compartments are anything but "watertight" in Canada, politicians have an open field on which to play the blame game. And they do. Governments in Canada go so far as to mount advertising campaigns to discredit the other level of government. A recent example is the Premiers' Council on Canadian Health Awareness, which told citizens that the federal government was not contributing enough money to provincial health care budgets.[2] Not surprisingly, then, a number of surveys in varying contexts show that three-quarters of Canadians believe that "it is often difficult to figure out which government is responsible for what"(Cutler and Mendelsohn, 2004) .

Theoretical attention to the tension between divided power and clear lines of accountability has not been lacking (e.g. Weaver 1986; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Hood 2002) and empirical work demonstrates the importance of responsibility as a mediating variable (Fiorina 1981; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Leyden and Borelli 1995; Lowry, Alt, and Feree 1998; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau; Bennett and Bennett 1993; Anderson 1995a, 1995b; Lewis-Beck 1988; Powell and Whitten 1993;

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[1] For example, see the CBC website for coverage of the 2004 First Ministers' Meeting on Health Care: http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/healthcare/firstminconf.html

[2] Advertisements, including a television ad, can be viewed at www.premiersforhealth.ca/communicate.php

Anderson 2000; Nadeau and Lewis-Beck, 2001; Niemi, Stanley, and Vogel 1995; Partin 1995; Peltzman 1987; Kenney 1983; Howell and Vanderleeuw 1990; Atkeson and Partin 1995; Anderson 2004; Feldman 1982; Lau and Sears 1981; McGraw 1991; Peffley 1984; Peffley and Williams 1985; Simon 1989; Tyler 1982). Scholars have recently taken up this line of inquiry with respect to federalism (Arceneaux 2003 nd; Cutler 2004; Rudolph 2003a, b, c). All suggest, and most find, to varying degrees, that voters' electoral response to prevailing conditions is stronger as the institutional context promotes clarity of responsibility and as the voter's own judgments about the lines of responsibility are clearer.

Previous research has been relatively sanguine about voters' ability to make and use responsibility judgments. Rudolph shows that attributions of responsibility are heavily coloured by partisanship, but also sensitive to variations in the institutional context such as divided government and the relative power of the executive and legislative branches (see also Feldman 1982). Separate experimental research confirms this conclusion (Rudolph 2003c). Arseneaux shows that American voters do differentiate among the functional responsibilities of the three levels of government. This work falls roughly in line with exploratory findings on responsibility in Canada's federal system (Cutler and Mendelsohn, 2004). In the aggregate, responsibility judgments are not random, non-attitudes, but reflect, to some extent, a reasoned response to available information.

Nearly all of the empirical work on this topic, however, concerns economic voting.[3] This has meant a rather straightforward conceptualization of responsibility and its role as a mediator of judgments of performance. Citizens and governments are assumed to want maximum economic growth, employment, and stability. And for both citizens and governments, the economy is in general the most important policy domain. Most other policy domains present a more complicated situation, for four reasons. First, policy positions intersect with performance in more complicated ways; few policy areas present benchmarks as clear as the economy. Second, information relevant to voters' assessments of responsibility, particularly "expert opinion," is less exact, detailed, and objective. Third, and perhaps as a result of this information deficit, politicians' blame-avoidance strategies might be more convincing in other policy areas. Fourth, the salience of other policy areas shows more variation, both across individuals and over time. So, for example, many voters will see the government as responsible for the safety of drinking water, but attention to this issue will be highly punctuated and linked to poor performance.

A second limitation of existing attempts to understand the role of responsibility judgments in voting behaviour is crude measurement of responsibility. The few surveys that have asked explicit responsibility questions—including this author's previous studies—ask which *one* institution is responsible or more responsible than the others. But responsibility judgments are likely not black-and-white, especially when policy is the result of conflict between, and cooperation among, centres of power. More fundamentally, existing questions have assumed that respondents recognize that responsibility is logically zero-sum. As this paper will show, voters may attribute maximum responsibility to all relevant institutions if they believe that all were *necessary* causes of conditions that came about. Voters may even resort to this "they're all to blame" response in the face of blatant blame-shifting strategies that make voters uncertain about responsibility.

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[3] Rudolph's work, however, (2003a 2003b) involves fiscal policy: more specifically the budgetary process in the US. And Arceneaux (nd) examines a number of policy domains.

Considerations of the role of responsibility judgments have also by-and-large neglected the fact that these judgments have two components: the level of responsibility *and* the certainty of that attribution. These two components may interact in complicated ways as a result of the political context, including blame-avoidance by politicians. For instance, a voter who hears conflicting accounts of responsibility might well not change the level of responsibility she attributes to political actors but rather she may become more or less certain that her attributions are accurate. If voters react to uncertainty by hedging their bets and maximally blaming all potentially responsible actors, then blame-avoidance strategies will backfire.

Responsibility and Multi-Level Governance

The context for the present study is responsibility judgments within a federal system (though many of the arguments and methodological strategies apply to any situation of divided power). Federalism without jurisdictions separable in voters' minds may be economically or administratively efficient, but that efficiency amounts to nothing if voters cannot force each level of government to hew, *separately*, to voters' preferences. Scholars of federalism have argued that this is not an easy task. They have been concerned that as policy-making becomes increasingly intergovernmental, accountability may suffer (Downs 1999; Richards 1998; Smiley 1987; Cutler 2001; MacKinnon and Nechyba 1997).

The prevailing model of responsibility in the social psychology literature can be applied to identify the sources of confusion for voters. This "triangle model" (Schlenker et al. 1994) emphasizes the linkages among "prescriptions", "events", and the "identity" of the actors whose responsibility is being judged. In the current context, prescriptions are expectations of government; events are policy outcomes; and identity is the role of a given governnment with respect to the policy domain.

> "People are held responsible to the extent that a clear, well-defined set of prescriptions is applicable to the event (prescription-event link), the actor is perceived to be bound by the prescriptions by virtue of his or her identity (prescription-identity link); and the actor seems to have (or to have had) personal control over the event, such as by intentionally producing the consequences (identity-event link)" (Schlenker et al. 1994, 649).

To illustrate, consider health care in Canada, the most important issue for voters over the last decade (Cutler 2004). The event in question is the state of the health care system; relevant information includes personal experiences, reports on waiting lists and health outcomes, and statements from government and opposition at both levels of government about both the state of the world and responsibility for it. The identity-event linkage is summarized in the question: How much did the government in question contribute to the event? But prior to this a voter must evaluate the identity-prescription linkage: What is the appropriate role for each government in health care? Contention over both of these questions dominates federal-provincial relations on this issue. Voters must make responsibility judgments in the context of *de jure* provincial jurisdiction and *de facto* operation of the health system but consider also the federal government's ongoing role in raising taxes, transferring funds to the provinces, and promulgating and enforcing national standards. Taken together, these linkages present voters with a real challenge in forming judgments of responsibility even if governments were never to mention responsibility. But since we know that they try to shift

blame for poor results and steal credit for good ones, the barriers to reliable responsibility judgments would seem almost insurmountable.

Voter Strategies and their Consequences

What, then, will the famously under-informed, sporadically attentive voting public do? (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1995; Popkin 1991; Fournier 2001) Or, to provide a framework for analysis: When and how will their judgments of responsibility deviate from those of a fully rational, fully informed expert in federalism and public policy? There are three distinct possibilities for a given voter and a given policy domain.

1. ***Issue Bias.*** The mediating effect of responsibility judgments may create an "issue bias". Voters would evaluate government on the basis of outcomes in policy domains where responsibility is clearest. Domains where divided or shared power clouds responsibility would be downweighted in the vote decision. Some of the slack might be taken up by non-issue factors: partisanship, leader evaluations, and prospective issue orientations. Ultimately, governments would be less accountable in policy domains where voters have trouble assigning responsibility.
2. ***A Pox (Blessing) on Both Your Houses.*** A second distortion, and perhaps a response to the perversity of the first, is for voters to treat both governments as necessary contributors and weight an issue equally in evaluations of both governments. Logically, these weights should be exactly one-half for each of two governments. But voters may not hew to that logic, and instead attribute the full governmental responsibility to both governments. One implication would be exaggerated accountability which could lead to an overreaction to negative conditions by governments considered as a whole. This seems plausible in the Canadian experience at least (Harrison 1995, 1996), but findings from the realm of health care specifically (Cutler 2002; Blais et al. 2001), caution against assuming this approach is widespread.
3.
    a. ***Refus Spécifique.*** A third distortion would be voters directly punishing those that induce uncertainty about responsibility. The policy voting literature that incorporates uncertainty shows that as voters' uncertainty about candidates' and parties' policy positions increases, the voters' evaluations get more negative (Bartels 1986, Alvarez 1997; Cutler 2002b). Voters appear to be risk-averse in the realm of government policy. This could apply to attribution uncertainty as well: voters punishing governments that cause them to be uncertain about responsibility.
    b. ***Refus Global.*** More disturbing would be the possibility that clouded responsibility, perhaps a result of a rampant blame-game, would turn voters off politics in general. They might throw up their hands, saying: "why bother voting in this election when I can't tell whether this government is responsible for any of the things I care about". Or, more formally, if their uncertainty diminished the overall policy distance between the competing alternatives, they would have reduced incentives to vote (see Downs 1957, Aldrich 1993, Sanders 2001). This paper will not, however, address this last strategy.

Each of these possibilities has distinct implications for the success or failure of the blame-game and for electoral accountability in federations more generally. This paper will begin its empirical analysis by describing the qualities of citizens' attributions of responsibility to federal and provincial governments. Then, it will assess the degree to which these judgments mediate the impact of evaluations of government performance on voting decisions.

Data

The raw material for this investigation is survey data collected during the provincial election campaigns in Ontario and Saskatchewan in the fall of 2003 and then reinterviews of the same voters during and after the federal election campaign in June, 2004.[4] I will refer to these as the provincial study or "wave", and the federal study or "wave" of this panel survey. The surveys were effectively scaled-down versions of national election studies.

In Ontario, specific responsibility questions were asked in five areas: the state of health care, changes to health care, the economy, electricity, and taxes. In Saskatchewan, we asked about the economy, health care, and the farm crisis. The wording the provincial election studies was:

> Now we would like to ask you some questions about how much responsibility the federal government and the Ontario [Saskatchewan] government have for some of the things going on in Ontario [Saskatchewan] at the moment. On all of these questions we will use a scale from zero to ten where zero means that the government is not at all responsible and ten means that the government is fully responsible. In the middle, five means that the government is partly responsible for what is going on. If you're not sure, please say so.

In the federal election wave, voters in both provinces were asked about value for money in health care, social services, and the economy. A fourth issue, different in each province, was the farm crisis in Saskatchewan and the budget deficit in Ontario. In the federal survey the responsibility scale was replaced with a four-point verbal scale comprising: "No Responsibility, A Little Responsibility, A Lot of Responsibility, or Full Responsibility".

Responsibility Judgments in Federal and Provincial Elections

The first task is to characterize Canadians' federal responsibility judgments. We can learn something about voters' attempts to attribute responsibility by asking how much responsibility citizens attribute to their governments across levels of a federation, across electoral contexts, and across issues. In previous work, we have found sensible variation across issues, both in the government most often chosen as 'mostly responsible', as well as in the frequency of a 'both governments responsible' response (Cutler and Mendelsohn 2001; Cutler 2004). But the current study is based on separate responsibility scales for each government, which is a much finer instrument for measuring responsibility.

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[4] The surveys obtained 800 respondents in Ontario and 811 in Saskatchewan. Of these, reinterviews were conducted during the federal campaign with 376 voters in Ontario and 477 in Saskatchewan for a total of 853 respondents.

Figures 1a and 1b present smoothed histograms[5] of the distribution of responsibility attributions to the provincial governments in the context of the provincial elections in Ontario (1a) and Saskatchewan (1b). First, variation across issues is strikingly minimal. The means are between 6 and 7.5 on the 0-10 scale, indicating that voters saw the provincial government, on average, as more than partly responsible. On no issue in Ontario did more than 10% of respondents give the province less than 5. In Saskatchewan a few more did so, with the "Farm Crisis" standing out as the only issue where the provincial government escaped substantial responsibility among one-quarter of its citizens. At the other end of the scale, on each issue we find 20% in Ontario and 10% in Saskatchewan saying that the government is "fully responsible". Reassuringly, the highest mean provincial responsibility is found on electricity in Ontario, where a distinctive provincial policy was widely connected with a dramatic event just before the election (a major multi-day blackout), and was a focus of opposition attacks on the government's record.

Does this just reflect low levels of information about sub-national politics? Or is the 10-point measurement scale too subtle, generating a lot of random measurement error? No: a similar pattern is evident in Figure 1c, showing federal responsibility as measured on the "No responsibility" to "Full responsibility" scale during the federal campaign. Overall, there is little variation across issues in the level of responsibility attributed to the federal government. Notably, it is highest in an area of formal provincial jurisdiction, health care. The modal response is "A lot of responsibility" on all issues except the Saskatchewan economy and the Ontario deficit. Across a range of issues, then, voters hold both governments jointly responsible for current conditions. Very few voters are willing to use the ends of the responsibility scale, declaring either government not responsible or fully responsible. Given the prevalence of the blame-game in most of these issue domains, one is tempted to conclude that the 'game' has no obvious winners.

Of course, these graphs present responsibility in isolation, but there are two governments involved in each of these policy areas. Just as relevant, therefore, is the *total* and *relative* allocation of responsibility to the two governments. Here, the evidence shreds any remnants of a view of Canadian federalism of "watertight compartments". On all eight issues in the provincial campaigns, more than 75% of voters have a total federal-plus-provincial responsibility score more than ten on the 0 to 20 scale. That is, both governments are *more than partly responsible*. In the federal election context the story is the same. Total responsibility can run from 0 to 6, and the means range from 2.9 (SK economy) to 3.8 (Health Care, both provinces). The majority of respondents, on most issues, see no need to impose some kind of logical limit to responsibility such that the two governments responsibilities add up to full responsibility. This has important implications for intergovernmental blame avoidance.

To measure relative responsibility we divide the responsibility of the government in question by the total provincial-plus-federal responsibility. Figures 2a-2c present the evidence. On all issues the relative share of responsibility is tightly clustered around a judgment of equally shared responsibility. All issues at the provincial level except electricity in Ontario have mean provincial responsibility shares between 53% and 57%. Only a small minority of voters judge relative responsibility outside of the 40/60 to 60/40 range. The same goes for the federal share of responsibility in the federal study (Fig. 2c). The economy, health care value for money, and the farm

[5] These are kernel density estimates.

crisis are all clustered around 50%, while only on social services and the Ontario deficit do we see responsibility on average tilting toward the province. Given that social services are clearly a provincial responsibility and the Ontario deficit was widely attributed to aggressive provincial tax cuts, we can only be somewhat encouraged by the public's ability to lean toward provincial responsibility on these matters. To be sure, aggregate variation across issues corresponds to expert judgment of the shares of responsibility, but the variation is so small that the real story is the muddled nature of responsibility judgments. The bottom line is that the great bulk of voters see both governments as at least partly responsible in most domestic policy areas. This, despite, or perhaps *because of*, the loud blame-game politics played by both governments and opposition at both levels.

We should therefore dismiss the notion that citizens take a zero-sum approach to responsibility attributions. To see this, we can summarize the relationship between the two judgments with a regression of provincial on federal responsibility for a given issue as measured within one interview [results not shown]. A zero-sum approach to responsibility would imply strongly negative coefficients. But using the provincial election wave, we find no significant relationship between federal and provincial responsibility for taxes, changes to health care, and electricity in Ontario. More telling, the relationship is *positive* and significant for health care and the economy in Ontario and for all three issues in Saskatchewan. In the federal election wave, four issues have positive relationships while only one is zero.[6] Putting it simply, those who attribute above-average responsibility to one level of government also attribute above-average responsibility to the other level. If this holds in general, politicians should think twice before they try to avoid responsibility by pinning it on other political actors. If the relationship is in fact positive, this strategy will be worse than ineffective; it will backfire. The reason might be that attempts to say the other government is to blame will simply make voters believe that *governments* in general are more to blame, and then voters divide that increased responsibility in a more-or-less equal fashion.

Two possible mechanisms might produce the patterns observed so far. The first, and more flattering, is that voters recognize that in a truly intergovernmental policy world, both governments are *necessary* conditions for the results of government policy. The second, more pessimistic, is that voters cannot tell which government is responsible, so they guess that both are, and accordingly give them similar values on all but the most obvious issues.

One issue in particular points toward the latter mechanism. The evidence on federal responsibility for the fact that "In the last couple of years there have been some problems with the supply of electricity" indicates widespread ignorance and confusion about responsibility. Any well-informed observer would give the federal government almost no responsibility for this situation. And on this issue there was no blame-game. Provincial attempts to blame the federal government would have lacked credibility. But just 43% of Ontario voters give the federal government less than a score of 5 on the responsibility scale, while 15% said the federal government was 'fully responsible', giving a score of 10! And of these, more than two-thirds attributed full responsibility to the province as well. With this evidence from separate questions asking about both levels' responsibility, our conclusion has to be distinctly more pessimistic than the findings from existing questions that have

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[6] Obviously, part of this is due simply to interpersonal variation in interpretation of the scale itself, but the relationship between the two responsibility judgments is certainly not negative. But including responsibility ratings on the other issues as controls does not change the conclusion.

asked which government is "more responsible".

Campaign Discourse and Responsibility

Although there is a relatively balanced intergovernmental blame-game over the long haul, Canada's nonconcurrent federal and provincial elections present a quasi-experiment that can indicate whether or not voters are federal dupes, as Cairns once suggested (1977, 708), tacking back and forth between provincial and federal responsibility in response to politicians' attempts to shift blame. With nonconcurrent elections, the campaigning government can attempt to shift blame to the other level without much immediate, direct response from that other level. During the campaign, reporters are unlikely to make the effort to ask for a response from the other level of government. Moreover, leaders of governments at the other level usually want to avoid the appearance of meddling in the other-level election. (I do not yet have a campaign content analysis to substantiate these claims, but I expect they would not be controversial among election observers in Canada.) The upshot of this is that if a blame-game (and credit claiming) is being played on some of these issues—as it surely was in these elections—and if the game is successful, then we should see voters parcelling out blame more heavily to the government at the other level and credit to the government under examination.

But even this is asymmetrical: provincial governments can blame-shift unproblematically, while federal ones face important obstacles to blame-shifting. Federal governments campaign across the country and so have to blame all provincial governments, diffusing the effectiveness of the claim, or blame one specific province when speaking directly to voters in that province. Given Canadians' famous attachment to their provincial governments, that is a risky strategy. So we should expect provincial governments to be more successful at blame-shifting and credit-stealing, if either level is.

In table 3, however, we find almost no evidence of success by either federal or provincial governments. On a range of issues, there is no difference in either the government's level of responsibility or their share of responsibility across the range of positive and negative evaluations of the status quo. Table 3 presents mean responsibility scores for the government facing election across the range of judgments of the status quo for health care and the economy. In three of the four cases there is simply no significant variation in responsibility share for the different judgments. In the bottom right table (3d) there are differences, but not in a consistent direction. The provincial government does get a greater share of responsibility for a positive economy, but the difference is only 5% and this likely reflects a fundamental attribution error whereby greater responsibility is attributed to positive events that occur to objects closer to the self, in this case the province (Madsen 1987). As for absolute levels of reponsibility there is no difference for the federal responsibility on health value during the federal election or for provincial responsibility on the economy during the provincial election. In the other two cases (3b and 3c) the evidence shows no blame-avoidance success: voters who saw negative conditions gave *more*, not less, responsibility to the government in question.[7]

One plausible explanation for this is that the logic of electoral competition prevents these "presentational strategies" (Hood 2002) from succeeding. Despite the silence of the other level of government, any attempts at blame-shiting are balanced by opposition parties' attempts to pin as

[7] Recall that the responsibility question is worded neutrally, in reference to the respondent's judgment of conditions in a given policy area. In other words responsibility denotes equally credit and blame.

much blame as possible on the government. In the language of the dominant model of public opinion change, opinion about responsibility will not shift because there are balanced messages of equal intensity cancelling each other out (Zaller 1992). As long as the opposition parties have an incentive to correct the government's claims about responsibility, the result may be, at worst, greater confusion about responsibility.

Who Makes Better Responsibility Judgments?

Canadian federal voters appear to be confused, vague, and imprecise when attributing responsibility to their governments. But is this, in fact, the clearest and most important *consequence* of the intergovernmental blame-game, or is it just a reflection of widespread ignorance in matters political? This question can be addressed by examining the effect of political information, education, and certainty on the consistency and clarity of responsibility judgments. Political information is usually taken to be the best measure of attentiveness to media coverage of politics (Zaller 1992). So if political information has a positive relationship with the precision and certainty of responsibility judgments, we can conclude that the blame-game does not impair citizens' ability to make and use meaningful responsibility judgments. But if political awareness does not promote consistency, certainty, and clarity of responsibility, then it must be the case that the blame-game and associated intergovernment conflict does cloud the lines of responsibility. This in itself may not threaten accountability, however. Citizens may, in fact, react to the situation by hedging their bets, punishing *both* governments if responsibility is unclear.

Consistency

Questions about responsibility for health care, the economy, and the farm crisis were asked in both provincial and federal election waves and they were asked about both levels of government. Table 4 shows regressions of the 2004 federal wave response on the 2003 provincial wave response and on interactions of the provincial response with education, political information, and the respondent's professed certainty about her responsibility judgment in the provincial wave. Only a few results stand out. First, judgments about responsibility are inconsistent. A perfect correspondence would have required a coefficient of .36 on the provincial response variable to get from the zero-to-ten provincial wave scale to the four point federal wave scale. The coefficients range from basically zero to .17. In the pooled Saskatchewan and Ontario analysis, two respondents five points apart on the provincial 0-10 scale are predicted to be only .55 apart on the four-point federal responsibility scale even on the most consistent issue, provincial responsibility for the economy in Saskatchewan. What strengthens the correspondence? The short answer is: not much. Education, if anything, weakens it. Being certain about the judgment does not promote consistency. In the pooled regression, we see some evidence that political information (facts) does make respondents a bit more consistent in their assignment of responsibility. On health care, the best informed voters are about twice as consistent as the least attentive ones, though this does not apply to responsibility for the economy. In sum, these are not highly crystallized attitudes, impervious to change. They look more like random "non-attitudes" (Converse 1964).

Clarity

Two variables measure the clarity of responsibility judgments. One is the total responsibility attributed to both governments. Given the evidence so far, we should expect voters more knoweldgeable about federalism and intergovernmental relations to give total responsibility closer to

10. That is, unless the blame-game clouds matters so much that it is the people who pay the most attention to politics that are most confused by the situation. The other measure can be called discrimination, measuring how far is the attribution from 50/50, shared responsibility. Note, however, that in many policy areas, 50/50 may correspond with expert opinion on the shares of responsibility.

Table 5 presents total responsibility regressed on education, certainty, and political information (awareness). The better educated do attribute lower total responsibility, closer to the logical maximum of ten, except on Health Care and on the the Saskatchewan economy where they are no different. On the others, a university-educated voter gave on average one point lower total responsibility than one who had not completed high school. The real impact comes from attentiveness to politics, where the best-informed voters gave roughly three points lower total responsibility than the least-well-informed voters. Those who said they were most certain, by contrast, tended to give higher responsibility. This result is difficult to explain.

Using discrimination as a dependent variable, in Table 6, tells roughly the same story. It ranges from 0 to .5, measuring how far from 50% was the voter's judgment of provincial responsibility. The clearest impact is from political awareness, with differences across the range of the varible translating into discrimination differences of 4% (3*.011) for the Saskatchewan economy and farm crisis up to 13% (3*.042) for electricity in Ontario. And the impact of political awareness is stronger the clearer the information available, as the highest coefficients are on electricity and taxes in Ontario. Attention to and awareness of political discourse helps voters separate responsibility to some extent. This suggests that there is real information available on responsibility. The result on certainty is also illuminating, since greater certainty is associated with greater discrimination only on electricity and taxes in Ontario. All this is sensible, and implies that the blame-game is not so dominant as to make the most attentive voters the most confused about responsibility. But it is important to realize that the total predicted difference in discrimination on the electricity issue comparing one voter who only finished primary school, is uncertain about responsibility, and is politically inattentive, with another voter with a post-graduate degree, who is certain, and is very attentive to politics, amounts to only 28%. The former voter might allocate responsibility 50%/50%, while the attentive, confident voter would make it 32%/78% on average. On health care in Ontario the difference would be a mere 10%, from 50/50 to 60/40.

All of this evidence, combined, indicates that responsibility judgments are not meaningless non-attitudes in Canada. But nor are they highly rational, well-informed, or centrally processed by most voters? If they were, we would expect a much flatter distribution of the share of responsibility attributed to each government. Some voters, at least, would be differentiating the two governments' roles more clearly. We would also expect more variation across issues. And education and attentiveness would more strongly structure differences in responsibility attributions. Instead, most Canadian voters are by-and-large grudgingly accepting the "muddle" of federalism by employing a default assumption that both governments have contributed to current conditions and both should therefore be credited or blamed to the same degree.

Responsibility and Policy Performance Voting

Whatever the content of responsibility judgments, electoral accountability in federations demands that these judgments really do intervene between assessments of policy outomes and voting. In

theory, and in the minds of those who try to deflect responsibility, voters who attribute no responsibility to the government should show no effect from these judgments. More realistically, with responsibility judgments mostly occupying the upper half of the scale, we can suggest that voters who say the government is 'partly responsible' should translate negative judgments of current conditions into an anti-government vote about half as strongly as those who say it is 'fully responsible'. Yet, given the findings above, it is unlikely that they do so with much clarity. To assess this we need a model of vote choice with retrospective judgments interacted with responsibility.

Thus simplified, the estimation model required is:

$$\text{Prob(Vote for Opposition)} = \Phi\,(\theta\,PID_p + \beta_{k1}CONDITIONS_k + \beta_{k2}(RESPONSIBILITY_{kg}) + \beta_{k3}(RESPONSIBILITY_{kg}*CONDITIONS_k) + \beta_4(\text{ISSUE FACTOR}) + \varepsilon_i)$$

Where,

Φ is the standard normal cumulative distribution function, implying probit estimation;

θ is a vector of coefficients on p dummy varibles measuring party identification;

β_{k1} is a vector of k coefficients (one for each of k issues) relating judgments of conditions (or issue position) to vote choice;

β_{k2} is a vector of k coefficients relating the main effect of responsibility attributions to vote choice[8]; and

β_{k3} is a vector of k coefficients relating the joint conditional effect of judgments and attributions of responsibility to vote choice;

β_4 is a coefficient relating a general issue dimension to the vote; and

ε_i represents all other factors influencing vote choice for voter i.

The dependent variable is a dummy variable indicating that the voter expressed an intention to vote for an opposition party. This is the clearest exertion of electoral accountability.

Outside of the variables interest there are two main control variables. The first is strong party identification.[9] The other is a one-factor maximum-likelihood factor score from a confirmatory factor analysis. In each province and in the federal election, multiple issues occupied one same general policy dimension.[10] The factor score is preferable to individual variables to maximize estimation

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[8] The federal estimations omit this main effect to preserve degrees of freedom. This decision was made after ensuring that the main effect coefficients were zero.

[9] The model controls for party identification, but strong party identification only. Party identification certainly colours responsibility attributions, so it is a required control (Rudolph 2003a, 2003b). But only strong partisans are likely to have their attachment to the party determine their responsibility judgments. Controlling for all levels of identification probably over-controls, masking other effects. For Saskatchewan, it is not possible get estimates when controlling for identification with the Saskatchewan Party: none of its strong identifiers voted for another party. Because it is a new party, partisanship is too close to the vote. Instead, I control for federal identification with the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties.

[10] In Ontario the issues were increasing welfare rates; not allowing teachers to strike; a tax-programs trade-off; contracting out non-medical hospital services; and mortgage deductibility. In Saskatchewan the issues were: private delivery of non-medical hospital services; workfare; keeping the crown corporations; and city people not understanding rural problems. In the federal election the factor was dominated by the question of whether the government's priority should be cutting taxes, paying down the debt, or spending on social programs.

efficiency. In these three elections, socio-demographic variables were minimally influential, so they are excluded to preserve efficiency in such a highly interactive model (see Achen 1989).

Probit estimates are not shown because they provide little information to the reader in a model that is non-linear and non-additive in the first place and contains multiple interaction terms. Nor are reported tests of statistical significance for the interaction terms very useful, since the test is conditional on the values of all the independent variables. A much simpler way to present the results is to use *Clarify* software (Tomz et al 2003; King et al. 2001) to generate simulations of predicted probabilities of voting for an opposition party. I plot these probabilities and their confidence intervals. The graphs show two lines, representing the estimated probability of voting for an opposition party when state-of-the-world judgments are positive (or neutral) and negative.[11]

The basic hypothesis is that the effect of retrospective policy judgments should increase as more responsibility is attributed to the government in question. Overall, it receives only weak, inconsistent support across a total of 12 issues—four in Ontario, three in Saskatchewan, and five at the federal election . Figures 3a through 3d present Ontario results; 4a through 4c are Saskatchewan graphs, and 5a through 5e are federal election results. When looking at these graphs, though, it is important to remember how few respondents—less than 10% in Ontario, for example—gave the government less than partial responsibility (5) for all of these issues (see Tables 1a and 1b).

It is easiest to begin with a picture that shows federal voters using responsibility to mediate their judgments of government performance as we would expect, in Figures 3a and 3b. These issues were ones where the provincial government was relatively distinctive: aggressive tax cuts led to the government's inability to contain the deficit, and yet the economy did well. In Figure 3a, horizontal dotted and dashed lines represent different assessments of the economy. The dashed line slopes downward, indicating that a voter who saw the provincial economy as "better" "over the past few years" was much less likely to vote for an opposition party as that voter attributed more and more responsibility to the provincial government (moving right on the x-axis). And the opposite is true for a voter whose economic assessment was negative (dotted line). But, importantly, the slope is much less steep. For voters sour on the economy, the difference in government support between no responsibility and full responsibility is less than 10%. So although the picture does confirm that responsibility is a mediator, the effect looks somewhat asymmetrical, with responsibility having a much stronger mediating influence for credit (better economy) than for blame (worse economy). If this pattern is widespread it has striking implications for the blame-game: stealing credit may be far more effective than ducking or shifting blame!

Voters' judgments of taxes appear in figure 3b. The pattern is similar, but without the same asymmetry. But lest these two graphs merely confirm common sense expectations about responsibility, it is important to recall how few voters gave a response below five on any of these issues.[12] In essence, the graphs start at the horizontal midpoint. So the real contrast in the economy and taxes graphs is the comparison of "partly responsible" and "fully responsible" categories—the

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[11] I experimented with a model that used share of responsibility as the interactive variable. No significant interactions were found, indicating that absolute responsibility is more useful as a mediator as voters face a decision about one government alone in nonconcurrent elections.

[12] The large confidence intervals (vertical lines) reflect this.

middle and right side of the responsibility scale. The economic assessments had a only a small effect on the vote among those who found the provincial government only partly responsible. In this category, those who saw the economy better or worse, taxes up or down, were not greatly different in their voting behaviour, all else equal. As I found in previous work, only those who gave closer to full responsibility to a government could take their judgments to the vote (Cutler 2004). If this pattern generalizes, then governments may be able to do enough to avoid accountability by simply implicating the other government, if voters then judge both governments as partly responsible.

Looking across issues and to other contexts (Sask, Federal), however, cautions against generalizations. Beginning with health care in Ontario, figure 3c is puzzling. It reveals a pattern that runs against the grain of the theory. First, the upper line indicates that for those who say there is a crisis in the health care system the probability of casting an opposition vote is virtually constant, whether the voter sees the government as blameless or fully responsible. As with the asymmetry noted above, for this negative judgment, the government cannot duck responsibility. But that is not to say that responsibility does not matter, since it has a large effect among those who see only some difficulties in health care. Responsibility is relevant to the vote in and of itself for these voters. In effect, there were two ways voters were pushed to the opposition parties. One was by judging health care to be in a terrible state. The other was to judge the long-serving provincial government to be responsible for whatever problems do exist in the system. On this issue too, a government will help itself if it can get voters to believe that it is only partly responsible, but only among voters who do not think the situation is all that bad.

A similar pattern appears for electricity, in Figure 3d. The judgement here was not in question, so it was assumed that all respondents agreed that there "were problems in the delivery of electricity in Ontario." Instead, we asked about policy options for moving forward: continue with privitization or go back to a regulated monopoly. This was the one issue where provincial responsibility was highest and clearest. There is no responsibility effect for those who disagree with the government's policy move to privatize the industry. But among those who agree with the government's approach responsibility for the problems pushes voters toward opposition parties. Here again are two routes to disapproval of the government, disagreement with the policy *or* responsibility for a problem. When the model is estimated [not shown] with only the responsibility, it is clear that the government suffers for being judged responsible for the electricity problems faced by Ontarians.

We now turn to the Saskatchewan graphs (4a to 4c). The government in question was the New Democratic Party which had held office as long as the Ontario Conservatives. In Saskatchewan, perceptions of the economy were not powerful drivers of vote choice. Nor did responsibility mediate what little effect they had. While the gap between positive and negative perceptions of the economy was close to ten per cent, it is not statistically significant by any standards. Increasing attributions of responsibility appear to have the same effect as on health and electricity in Ontario, but again the estimates are very imprecise. There is a hint of the same asymmetry as was seen in Ontario. All this may reflect the very limited economic control of this small, resource-dependent province.

Responsibility has no mediating effect on the farm crisis in Saskatchwan, as figure 4b shows. The worse a voter judged the situation, the less they supported the government, whatever responsibility they attributed to the government. Responsibility is likely irrelevant here because the huge rural-urban cleavage in Saskatchewan politics is at its root representational and distributional.

Where this is true, judgments of current conditions are very likely driven by raw interests, so they do not require responsibility to connect them to vote choice.

Only on health care does the graph (4c) present a picture that meets our expectations. Here, increasing attributions of responsibility push voters apart. The gap between voters who saw a crisis and those who did nearly doubles from 17% to over 30% as voters move from attributing partial responsibility (5) to full responsibility (10). Part of this is produced by voters who see no crisis getting more positive toward the government as they give it more responsibility, or perhaps credit. The distinctive pattern on this issue is probably produced by relatively clearer responsibility and clearer policy outputs (hospital consolodation). The NDP was closely associated with health care reform, particularly through the person of its former leader Roy Romanow. The province's policy distinctiveness was clear to its residents and some were willing to credit it as well as blame it for the state of health care. On this issue in this particular provincial context the conditions were in place for any blame-game politics to play out in the manner predicted by our theories (Weaver 1986; McGraw 1991; Hood 2002).

We turn now to the federal graphs, Figures 5a-5d. Note that the geographic referent for all of these issues is still the province. Questions asked about value for money for health care in the province, the provincial economy, social services in the province, the farm crisis (SK), the provincial deficit (ON). This is therefore a different context for the effect of responsibility. To the extent that voters are focussed on national conditions, we will find weaker retrospective voting. But there is good evidence that voters are, in fact, concerned with their province's welfare (Simeon and Elkins 1980). Whatever the overall level of influence of provincial conditions on national voting, if we do observe retrospective punishment for provincial conditions, it should be no less strongly mediated by responsibility.

On these four issues, resposibility has its expected mediating effect only for the economy in Figure 5a. (I consider 5e separately below). Even here, though, the effects are not large and of marginal statistical significance. Using the health care crisis question from the provincial wave of the study gives insignficant results. The other health care question, in Figure 5c, does have an effect on vote choice, but it does not vary with responsibility attributed to the federal government. The social services question in Figure 5d produces a perverse result whereby positive assessments lead to stronger opposition support at full responsibility. Clearly, there is something different about the impact of judgments of provincial-level policy outputs on voting at the federal level. Despite the fact that voters pin significant responsibility on the federal government for the provncial state of affairs, they likely consider these policy areas less relevant for an evaluation of the federal government. This is *prima facie* evidence that there is something of an issue bias: voters are probably correct in attributing responsibility to both governments, and yet do not hold the federal government accountable in these policy areas.

Figure 5e tells a different story, however. It represents the direct effect of responsibility judgments on issues where negative conditions were assumed. The issues were the large provincial deficit in Ontario and the farm crisis in Saskatchewan, and they are pooled for the purposes of this analysis. Clearly, as federal responsibilty increased, voters were more and more likely to reject the governing party. On these issues, where there is little doubt about the poor conditions, even the federal government would have an incentive to shift blame *if doing so did, in fact, reduce its own responsibility*. But if implicating the other level of government does not affect one's own

government's responsibility, as the evidence above suggests, then the real effect of this strategy may come through the effect of uncertainty about responsibility.

Finally, I re-estimated the models to incorporate voters' certainty about responsibility. There are two possibilities. First, voters might punish governments that make them uncertain, so the relevant measure is the sum of the respondent's certainty across all issues. The results were insignificant, indicating that voters are not punishing governments directly because responsibility is unclear. So in this, at least, they can take comfort, since if blame-avoidance does increase overall uncertainty about responsibility, it does not obviously backfire. The second possiblity is that certainty might mediate the effect of responsibility and issue judgments, requiring a three-way interaction: certainty*responsibility*judgment. This obviously taxes the data severely. Despite trying a number of specifications, results from this model were simply too unstable to report any conclusions.

All told, the twelve issues provide no ringing endorsement of voters' ability to make and use responsibility attributions in a federal system. The pattern of findings across issues suggests that accountability for government performance in a federal system is highly contingent. Accountability in its basic sense may be evident only on very prominent issues and when a government's policy is clearly separable from both its opposition and the policy of the other level of government. These conditions were most apparent on health care in Saskatchewan and economic, role-of-the-state matters in Ontario. When these conditions are met, or among voters who meet these conditions, voters' attributions of responsibility are probably meaningful.

In these domains where responsibility does seem to have the expected mediating effect, we do see evidence of threat to accountability found in previous work (Cutler 2002). Where voters judge governments partially responsible, they seem to exert accountability *less than half as strongly* as voters who see one or both governments as fully responsible. We also observe some asymmetry, however, where less responsibility does not save governments from voter retribution for negative conditions but does influence how much of a boost they get from positive ones.

In other policy domains and contexts, policy and responsibility judgments may be quite separable, as on health care and electricity in Ontario. In some policy domains the conditions are not really debatable, as with electricity or the budget deficit in Ontario and the farm crisis in Saskatchewan. The real judgment is how much the government did (or failed to do) to bring those conditions about.

The evidence here also confirms the asymmetrical nature of federal and provincial contexts. Provincial governments simultaneously have more need for blame-avoidance and will see a better payoff if they can reduce their responsibility. The federal government may not be able to play the blame-game as effectively, but may also have less need of it, since voters seem to hold it less accountable even in policy areas where it is adjudged to have significant responsibility. Further investigation of this asymmetry is required.

Conclusion

These results demonstrate that voters under multi-level governance face serious challenges in holding their governments accountable for policy outputs. One of the challenges is that their governments

feel the irresistable temptation of blame-avoidance, which often results in blame-shifting to the other level of government. However the evidence here suggests that these strategies will rarely succeed. First, blame-avoidance must affect responsibility attributions. On this score, in Canada they will meet with limited success because voters are so vague already about responsibility in the federal system and because increasing the blame of another level of government may not decrease responsibility attributed to the blame-avoider's own. Furthermore, it looks as though those voters who will hear the message are the ones least likely to change their assessment of responsibility, partly because the better educated are more aware of the *de jure* division of powers in the federation. Second, even if all this succeeds, responsibility only appears to mediate voters' evaluations of policy outputs when a government has implemented a policy that is clearly distinctive from both other provinces and the federal government. In other areas, where the government has muddled through, doing nothing particularly notable, responsibility seems to have little effect on the influence of policy judgments by voters. So responsibility is most powerful in cases where the government will be least credible in blaming another level of government. Finally, if there is asymmetry in blame and credit, the pattern most prevalent is that responsibility mediates judgments of blame much less than judgments of credit. If so, politicians should pursue credit-stealing strategies far more assiduously than blame-avoidance.

While all this might leave us less troubled by the threat to accountability posed by blame-avoidance, we should be far more pessimistic about the broader relationship between federalism and accountability. If we need not be overly concerned by the federal blame-game, it is because it cannot take us much further away from the accountability envisioned by classical federalism: where each government ought to be blamed or credited within its own policy sphere. The intergovernmental, accusatory blame-game will have little effect if it operates on voters who have already thrown up their hands at the jurisdictional confusion, finding it unproductive to try to cut through the intergovernmental thicket and discriminate each government's responsibility. Interlocking, shared, cooperative, or even competitive spheres of power are therefore one institutional design that may ward off the pernicious effects of blame-shifting by one government alone. The price to be paid for this, however, is that in the policy areas with the most power-sharing, overall accountability may suffer (Cutler 2004). This may even lead voters to force action from politicians on other matters of less concern but where responsibility is clearer.

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Table 1a
Provincial Responsibility by Policy Area
Ontario

	Health Care		*Changes in HC*		*Economy*		*Taxes*		*Electric*	
Responsibility	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.
0	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
1	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	3%
2	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	4%
3	3%	5%	2%	4%	3%	6%	2%	3%	2%	6%
4	3%	8%	2%	6%	3%	10%	3%	6%	2%	9%
5	23%	31%	17%	23%	21%	31%	17%	23%	15%	23%
6	8%	39%	8%	32%	9%	40%	7%	30%	5%	29%
7	15%	54%	17%	49%	16%	56%	17%	47%	12%	41%
8	18%	72%	22%	71%	21%	77%	18%	65%	19%	59%
9	6%	79%	6%	77%	6%	82%	8%	72%	10%	69%
10	21%	100%	23%	100%	18%	100%	28%	100%	31%	100%
DK/refused		2%		3%		5%		5%		5%
Mean		7.06		7.35		6.92		7.51		7.55
Std. Deviation		2.22		2.09		2.21		2.12		2.41
	N=778		N=579		N=763		N=585		N=758	

Relative	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Responsibility	53%	14%	56%	15%	53%	13%	57%	18%	63%	20%

Total	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Responsibility	13.3	3.6	13.3	3.4	13.0	3.6	13.5	3.6	12.4	4.1

Table 1b
Provincial Responsibility by Policy Area
Saskatchewan

	Health Care		*Rural Sask*		*Economy*	
Responsibility	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative
0	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%
1	1%	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%
2	3%	4%	4%	7%	3%	4%
3	3%	7%	8%	15%	2%	6%
4	6%	13%	9%	24%	6%	13%
5	27%	40%	22%	47%	16%	28%
6	11%	51%	10%	57%	12%	41%
7	15%	66%	12%	69%	17%	58%
8	16%	83%	15%	84%	21%	79%
9	6%	88%	5%	89%	7%	87%
10	12%	100%	11%	100%	13%	100%
Don't Know/refused		4%		4%		4%
Mean		6.44		6.00		6.81
Standard Deviation		2.13		2.41		2.13
		N=777		N=773		N=775

Relative	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Responsibility	53%	14%	53%	13%	56%	14%

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total Responsibility	12.3	3.5	11.7	3.6	12.4	4.0

Table 2a
Provincial Responsibility by Policy Area - Federal Election Wave
Ontario

	Health Care		*Economy*		*Deficit*		*Social Services*	
Responsibility	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumulative
No responsibility	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%
A little responsibility	17%	20%	31%	33%	18%	20%	14%	16%
A lot of responsibility	63%	83%	57%	90%	54%	73%	65%	81%
Full responsibility	17%	100%	10%	100%	27%	100%	19%	100%
Mean		2.96		2.75		3.06		3.00
Std. Deviation		0.66		0.65		0.71		0.65
	N=358		N=359		N=363		N=329	

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Relative Responsibility	52%	14%	53%	15%	58%	17%	56%	16%

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total Responsibility	5.8	1.0	5.3	1.1	5.6	1.0	5.6	1.0

Table 2b
Provincial Responsibility by Policy Area - Federal Election Wave
Saskatchewan

	Health Care		*Farming*		*Economy*		*Social Services*	
Responsibility	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative
No responsibility	1%	1%	5%	5%	11%	11%	2%	2%
A little responsibility	17%	18%	38%	42%	41%	51%	17%	19%
A lot of responsibility	67%	85%	50%	93%	46%	98%	64%	83%
Full responsibility	15%	100%	7%	100%	2%	100%	17%	100%
Mean		2.97		2.61		2.40		2.96
Standard Deviation		0.59		0.69		0.71		0.65
	N=459		N=466		N=453		N=410	

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Relative Responsibility	52%	12%	48%	13%	46%	16%	55%	15%

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total Responsibility	5.8	0.9	5.3	1.2	4.9	1.2	5.6	1.0

Table 2c
Federal Responsibility by Policy Area - Federal Election Wave
Ontario

	Health Care		*Economy*		*Deficit*		*Social Services*	
Responsibility	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumul.	Percent	Cumulative
No responsibility	1%	1%	4%	4%	7%	7%	4%	4%
A little responsibility	28%	29%	42%	46%	45%	52%	43%	46%
A lot of responsibility	57%	86%	48%	94%	39%	91%	46%	92%
Full responsibility	14%	100%	6%	100%	9%	100%	8%	100%
Mean		2.84		2.56		2.51		2.58
Std. Deviation		0.66		0.67		0.76		0.69
	N=358		N=366		N=363		N=330	

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Relative Responsibility	48%	14%	47%	15%	42%	17%	44%	16%

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total Responsibility	5.8	1.0	5.3	1.1	5.6	1.0	5.6	1.0

Table 2d
Federal Responsibility by Policy Area - Federal Election Wave
Saskatchewan

	Health Care		*Farming*		*Economy*		*Social Services*	
Responsibility	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative	Percent	Cumulative
No responsibility	1%	1%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
A little responsibility	29%	30%	31%	35%	47%	50%	39%	42%
A lot of responsibility	60%	90%	56%	90%	44%	95%	50%	92%
Full responsibility	10%	100%	10%	100%	5%	100%	8%	100%
Mean		2.80		2.71		2.52		2.64
Standard Deviation		0.62		0.69		0.65		0.67
	N=459		N=466		N=468		N=410	

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Relative Responsibility	48%	12%	52%	13%	54%	16%	45%	15%

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total Responsibility	5.8	0.9	5.3	1.2	4.9	1.2	5.6	1.0

Table 3 - Mean Responsibility Shares by Status Quo Judgments

3a

Fed. Election				
Value for Money in HC	**Fed. Share**	**Fed. Resp.**	**Std. Dev.**	**N**
v. good	49%	2.86	0.16	49
good	47%	2.76	0.12	113
acceptabl	47%	2.76	0.12	350
poor	49%	2.91	0.13	212
v.poor	47%	2.85	0.17	92
Total	48%	2.81	0.13	816

3b

Fed. Election				
Prov Economy	**Fed. Share**	**Fed. Resp.**	**Std. Dev.**	**N**
worse	56%	2.67	0.15	468
same	53%	2.55	0.12	115
better	56%	2.32	0.14	224
Total	55%	2.54	0.14	807

3c

Prov Election				
Health Crisis	**Prov Share**	**Prov Resp.**	**Std. Dev.**	**N**
No Problems	44%	6.33	0.11	3
Some Problems	53%	6.46	0.15	109
A Lot of Problems	53%	6.53	0.13	482
Crisis	53%	7.18	0.15	220
Total	53%	6.69	0.14	814

3d

Prov Election				
Prov Economy	**Prov Share**	**Prov Resp.**	**Std. Dev.**	**N**
worse	52%	6.88	0.12	251
same	47%	6.81	0.11	373
better	57%	6.90	0.25	173
Total	51%	6.87	0.16	797

Table 4

Consistency: Provincial to Federal Surveys

	Ontario				Saskatchewan						Pooled			
Federal response	*Health Care*		*Economy*		*Health Care*		*Economy*		*Farming*		*Health Care*		*Economy*	
	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.	Fed. Respblty.	Prov. Respblty.
Prov. response	0.09	**0.14**	0.02	0.04	**0.08**	0.03	-0.03	**0.17**	0.00	0.03	**0.08**	**0.07**	-0.02	**0.11**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Education	0.02	**0.14**	-0.05	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	-0.06	0.08	**-0.09**	-0.05	-0.01	0.02	**-0.06**	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Education * Prov. Response	-0.01	**-0.02**	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	**-0.02**	**0.01**	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Certainty	-0.20	-0.08	0.18	0.11	0.34	0.47	**-0.44**	**0.71**	0.01	-0.15	0.10	0.27	-0.22	0.41
	(0.31)	(0.42)	(0.35)	(0.41)	(0.27)	(0.30)	(0.24)	(0.40)	(0.26)	(0.30)	(0.20)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.29)
Certainty * Prov. Response	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.03	-0.05	0.06	**-0.10**	0.00	0.02	0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.06
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Political Awareness	**-0.13**	-0.10	-0.01	0.04	-0.14	-0.18	0.06	**-0.34**	**0.22**	-0.17	**-0.13**	-0.11	0.01	-0.04
	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.09)
Awareness * Prov. Response	0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.03	-0.03	0.04	-0.02	0.02	**0.02**	**0.02**	-0.01	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	**2.39**	**1.85**	**2.42**	**2.53**	**2.43**	**2.80**	**2.96**	**1.45**	**2.93**	**2.77**	**2.44**	**2.48**	**2.78**	**1.91**
	(0.39)	(0.47)	(0.41)	(0.45)	(0.29)	(0.33)	(0.26)	(0.42)	(0.26)	(0.29)	(0.23)	(0.27)	(0.22)	(0.32)
Degrees of freedom	343	344	345	344	437	439	444	430	438	439	788	791	797	782
F-test	7.14	1.55	4.99	2.50	6.71	2.50	4.22	1.86	4.59	5.81	13.71	2.48	8.35	2.52
Probability	*0.0000*	*0.1504*	*0.0000*	*0.0161*	*0.0000*	*0.0159*	*0.0002*	*0.0743*	*0.0001*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0158*	*0.0000*	*0.0143*

Standard errors in italics Coefficients in bold are more than 1.64 times their standard errors

Table 5
Total Responsibility

	Ontario				Saskatchewan		
	Health Care	*Economy*	*Electricity*	*Taxes*	*Health Care*	*Rural*	*Economy*
Education	-0.086	**-0.170**	**-0.272**	**-0.219**	-0.005	**-0.158**	0.033
	(0.087)	(0.085)	(0.104)	(0.102)	(0.070)	(0.084)	(0.076)
Certainty	**3.425**	**3.680**	0.637	**1.998**	**0.934**	**3.659**	**2.801**
	(0.603)	(0.599)	(0.700)	(0.678)	(0.527)	(0.638)	(0.585)
Facts	**-0.859**	**-0.762**	**-0.747**	**-0.800**	**-1.123**	**-1.057**	**-0.975**
	(0.165)	(0.155)	(0.191)	(0.190)	(0.234)	(0.275)	(0.246)
Constant	**13.115**	**12.929**	**14.826**	**14.885**	**12.190**	**11.069**	**10.752**
	(0.705)	(0.717)	(0.873)	(0.858)	(0.563)	(0.674)	(0.610)
Degrees of freedom	359	352	344	270	451	444	448
F-test	18.17	23.89	9.86	12.26	8.39	16.94	12.51
Probability	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*

Standard errors in italics Coefficients in bold are more than 1.64 times their standard errors

Table 6
Discrimination

	Ontario				Saskatchewan		
	Health Care	*Economy*	*Electricity*	*Taxes*	*Health Care*	*Rural*	*Economy*
Education	**0.005**	0.000	**0.011**	0.003	-0.003	-0.001	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Certainty	0.002	0.017	**0.077**	**0.041**	-0.003	0.022	0.024
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.015)
Facts	**0.014**	**0.017**	**0.048**	**0.035**	**0.011**	**0.011**	**0.009**
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Constant	**0.041**	**0.054**	-0.019	0.027	**0.098**	**0.087**	**0.067**
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.015)
Degrees of freedom	750	737	707	556	745	740	756
F-test	9.17	8.99	47.58	15.98	4.52	4.42	5.32
Probability	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0000*	*0.0038*	*0.0043*	*0.0012*

Standard errors in italics Coefficients in bold are more than 1.64 times their standard errors

Figures 1a – 1c: Responsibility by Policy Area, Provincial and Federal Studies

Fig 1a. Ontario - Provincial Responsibility by Policy Area

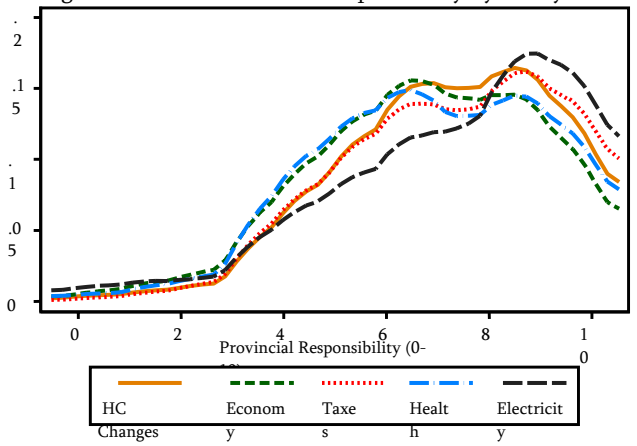
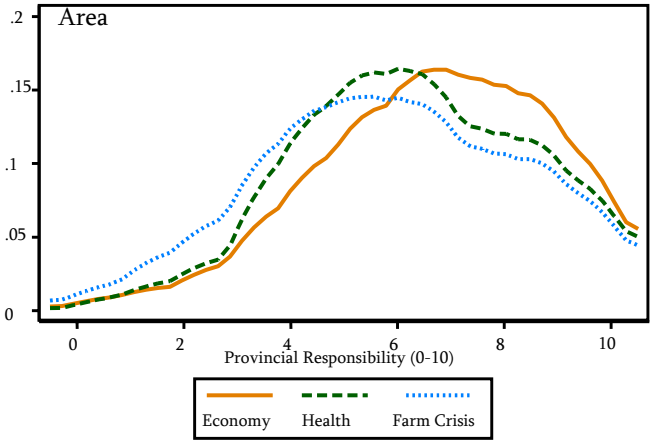
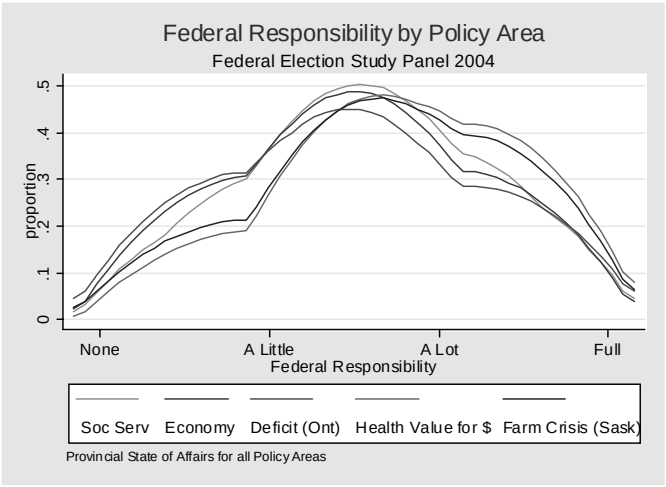


Fig 1b. Sask - Provincial Responsibility by Policy Area





Figures 2a – 2c: Share of Responsibility by Policy Area, Provincial and Federal Studies

Fig 2a. Ontario - Provincial Share of Responsibility by Policy Area

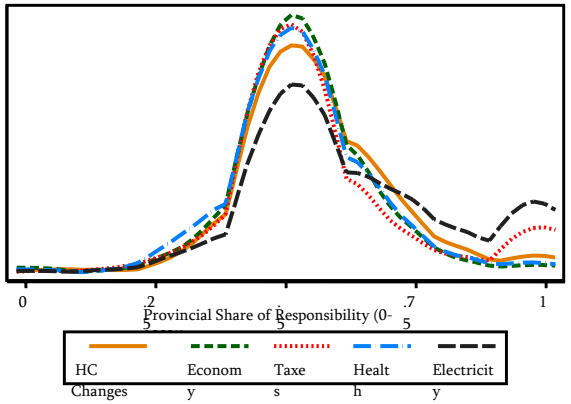


Fig 2b. Sask - Provincial Share of Responsibility by Policy

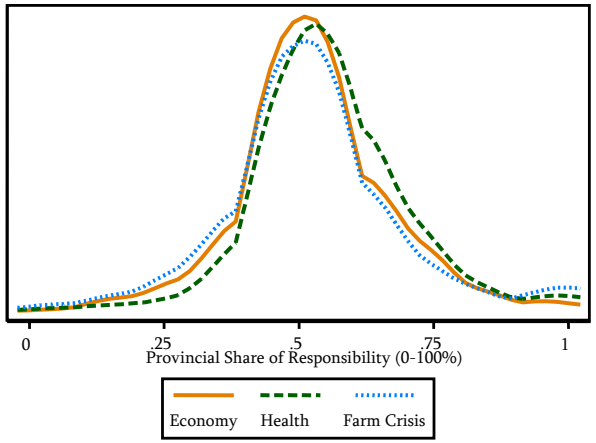
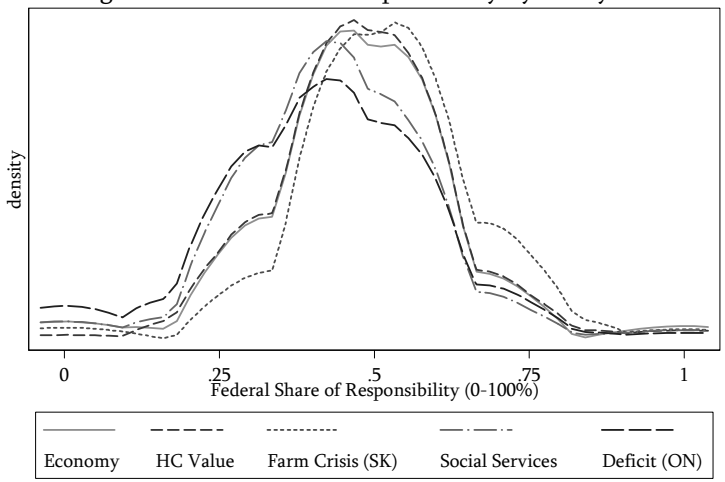


Fig 2c. Federal Share of Responsibility by Policy Area



Figures 3a-3d: Responsibility Mediating Retrospective Judgments on Probability of Opposition Vote, Ontario

Figure 3a - Ontario Economy

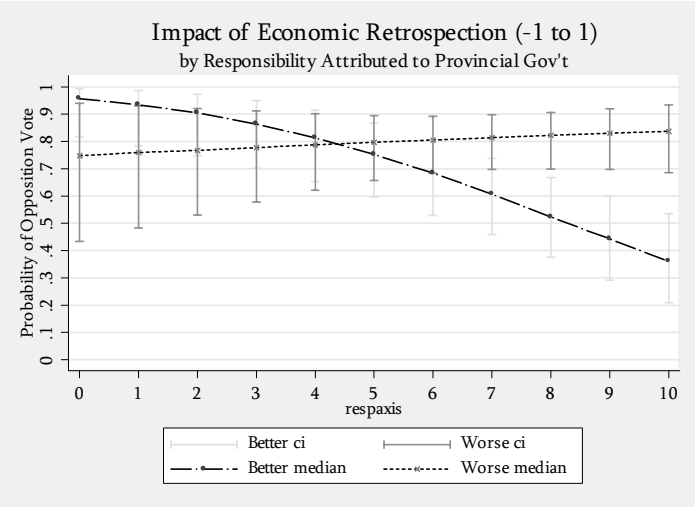


Figure 3b – Ontario Taxes

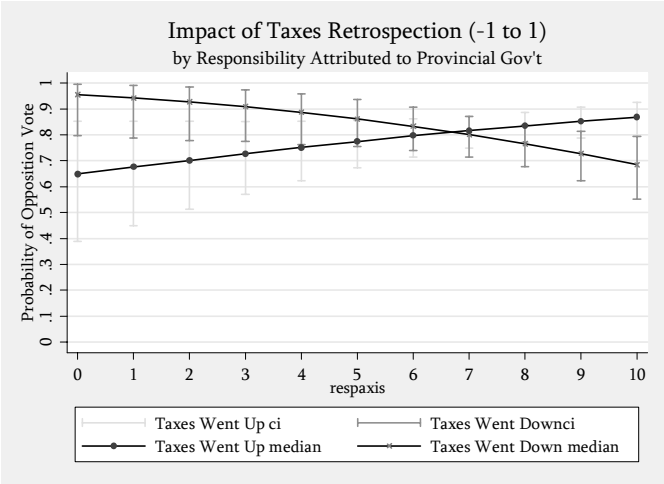


Figure 3c - Ontario Health Care

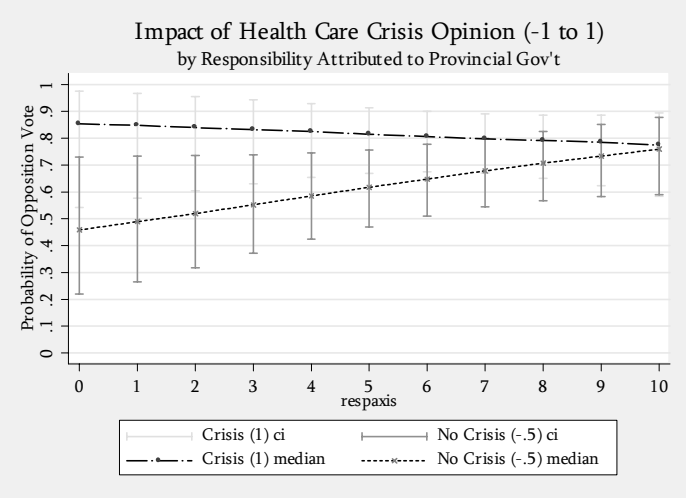
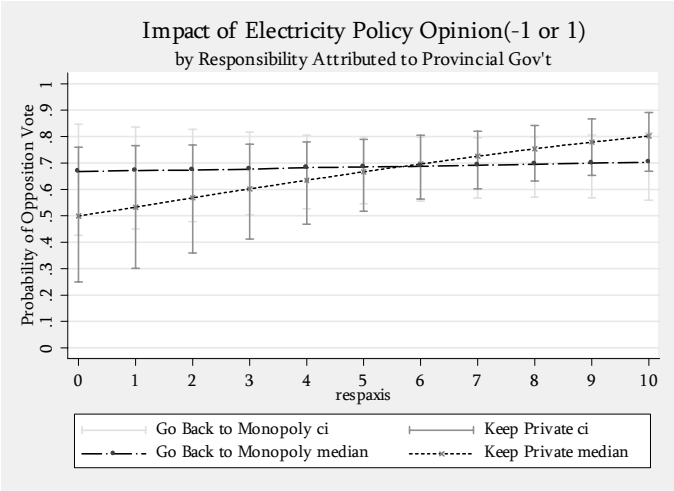


Figure 3d – Ontario Electricity



Figures 4a-4d: Responsibility Mediating Retrospective Judgments on Probability of Opposition Vote, Saskatchewan

Figure 4a – Saskatchewan Economy

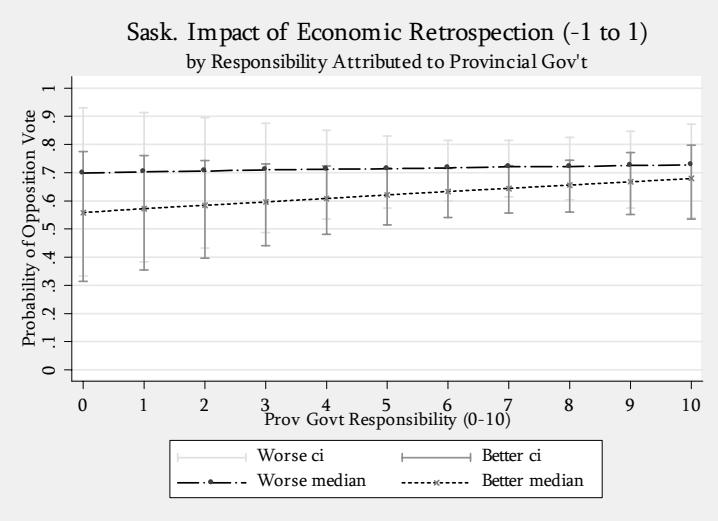


Figure 4b – Saskatchewan Farm Crisis

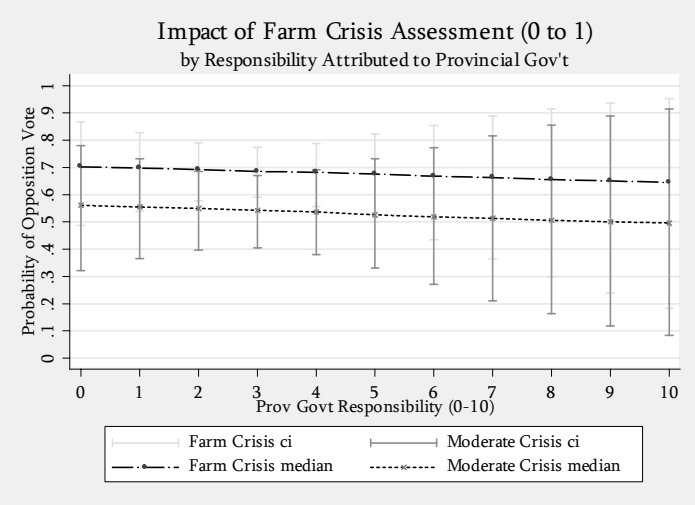
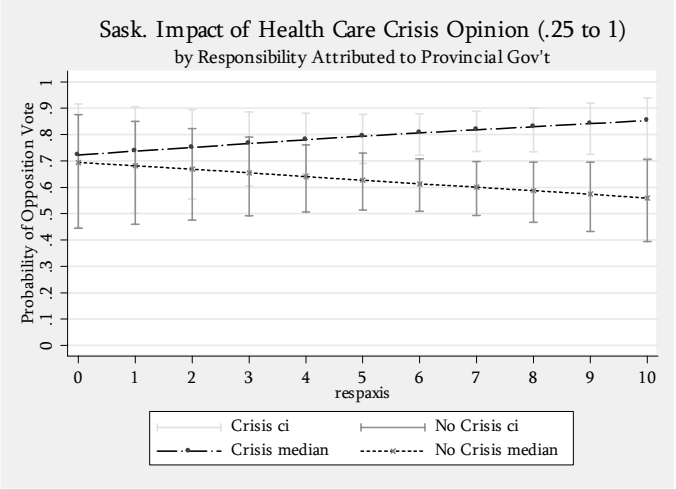


Figure 4b – Saskatchewan Health Care



Figures 5a-5d: Responsibility Mediating Retrospective Judgments on Probability of Opposition Vote, Federal

Figure 5a – Federal Election, Provincial Economy

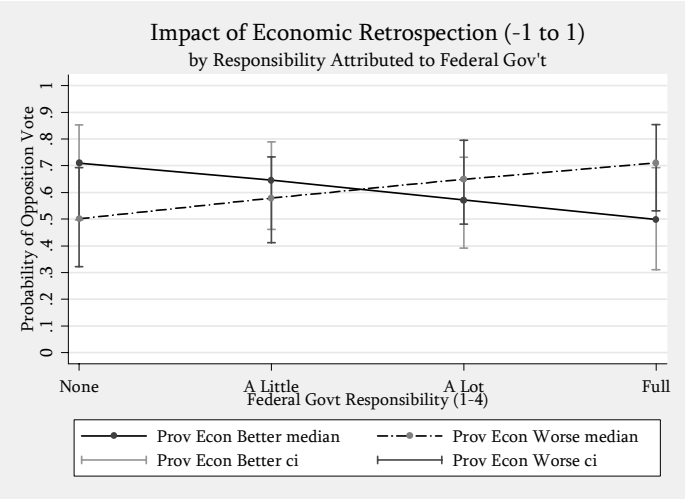


Figure 5b – Federal Election, Provincial Health Care Crisis

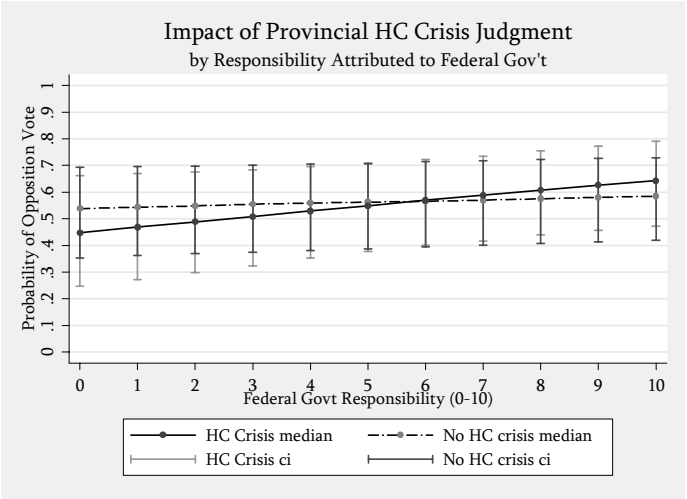


Figure 5c – Federal Election, Health Care Value

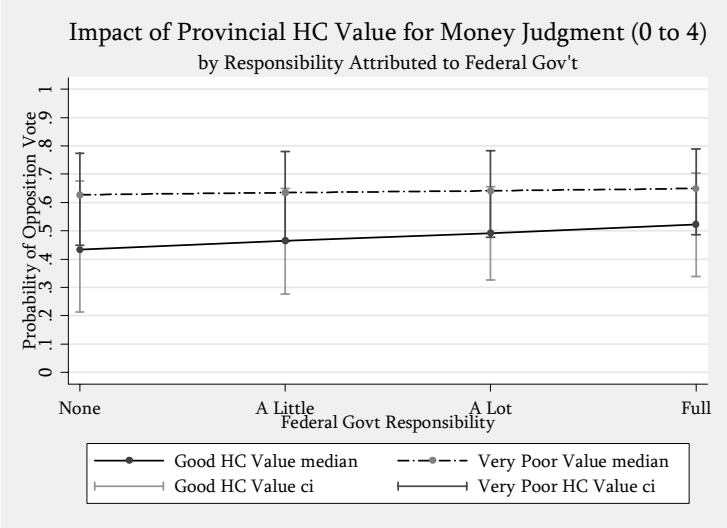


Figure 5d – Federal Election, Social Services

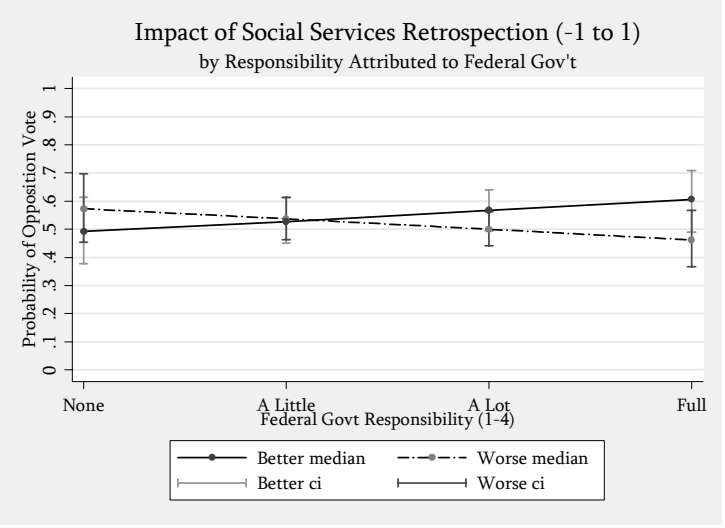


Figure 5e – Federal Election, Deficit (ON) and Farm Crisis (Sask)