

**WOMEN TO THE LEFT, MEN TO THE RIGHT?  
GENDER AND VOTING IN THE 1997 CANADIAN ELECTION**

Elisabeth Gidengil, McGill University  
André Blais, Université de Montréal  
Neil Nevitte, University of Toronto  
Richard Nadeau, Université de Montréal

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## **Women to the Left, Men to the Right? Gender and Voting in the 1997 Canadian Election**

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### **Introduction**

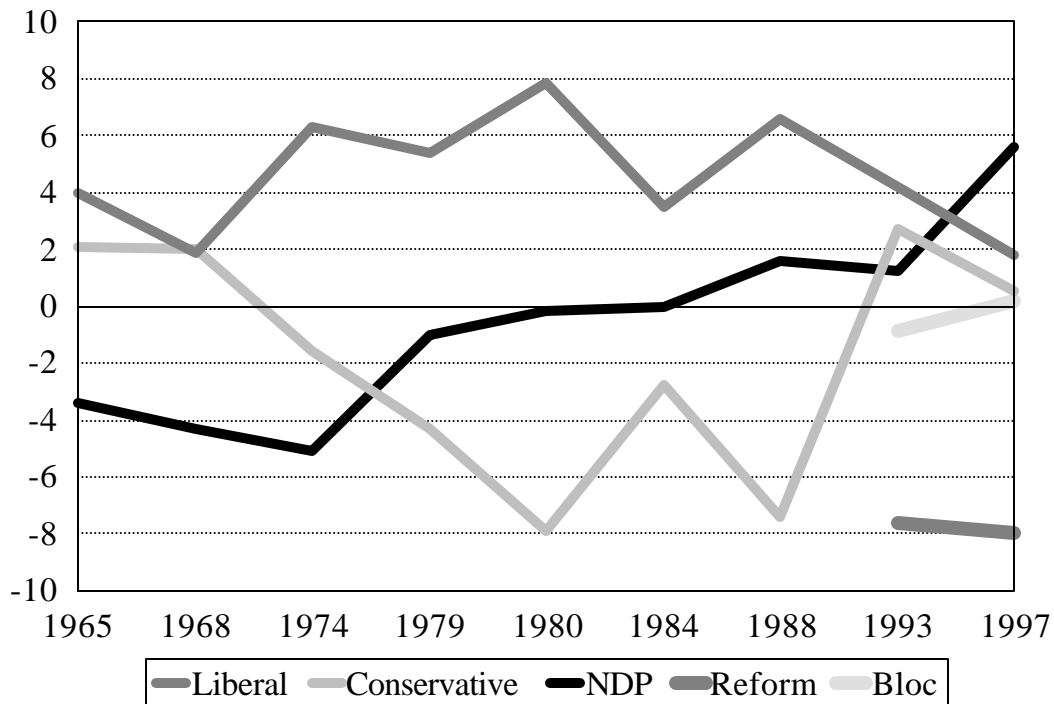
In the 1997 Canadian election, women were more likely than men to vote for the party of the left, while men were more likely than women to vote for the new right party. This mirrors a pattern that is becoming increasingly common in advanced industrial democracies. Inglehart and Norris (2000) have recently presented a theory of the gender gap that explains differences in male-female voting patterns in developmental terms. They argue that a process of gender realignment is reversing the “traditional gender gap”. Where women were once more right wing than men, they are now more left wing. The result is the sort of “modern gender gap” that we are seeing in Canada. Inglehart and Norris attribute this realignment to structural changes and value shifts that have transformed women’s lives, and along with them, women’s values and priorities. While they do refer to men’s move to the right, their focus is very much on the “realignment in women’s politics”. Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999), though, have recently challenged the conventional wisdom that women’s changing political behaviour is at the root of the gender gap in the United States. On the contrary, they argue, it is men’s changing behaviour that accounts for the gap.<sup>1</sup> They attribute this realignment in men’s politics to the increased salience of social welfare questions on the political agenda, questions on which men have long been more conservative than women (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Deitch 1988; Gilens 1988; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999).<sup>2</sup>

With gender gaps on **both** the left **and** the right, the 1997 Canadian election provides a particularly useful case for examining whether men’s changing behaviour or women’s changing behaviour is the more important factor in the gender realignment of politics, and why men and women are diverging in their vote choices.

### **The Evolution of the Gender Gap in Canada**

If we track the gender gap in support for the party of the left (the New Democratic Party) since the first Canadian Election Study in 1965, Canada presents a clear case of ‘gender realignment’ (Figure 1). Where women were once less likely to vote for the left, by the 1990s they were clearly more likely than men to cast a left-wing vote. How early we choose to date the emergence of the ‘modern gender gap’ in Canada depends very much on how we locate the other parties along the left-right spectrum. Throughout the period, women were more likely than men to vote Liberal and a case could be made for characterizing this as a ‘modern gender gap’, too. After all, it was under Liberal governments in the 1960s and 1970s that Canada’s welfare state achieved its greatest growth. But the Liberal Party does not fit neatly into the category of “centre left”. As Canada’s ‘brokerage party’ *par excellence*, it has moved from centre left to centre right (though never far from the centre) as electoral considerations dictate.

Figure 1: Trends in the Gender Gap, 1965 to 1997



Note: The gender gap is the female vote share minus the male vote share

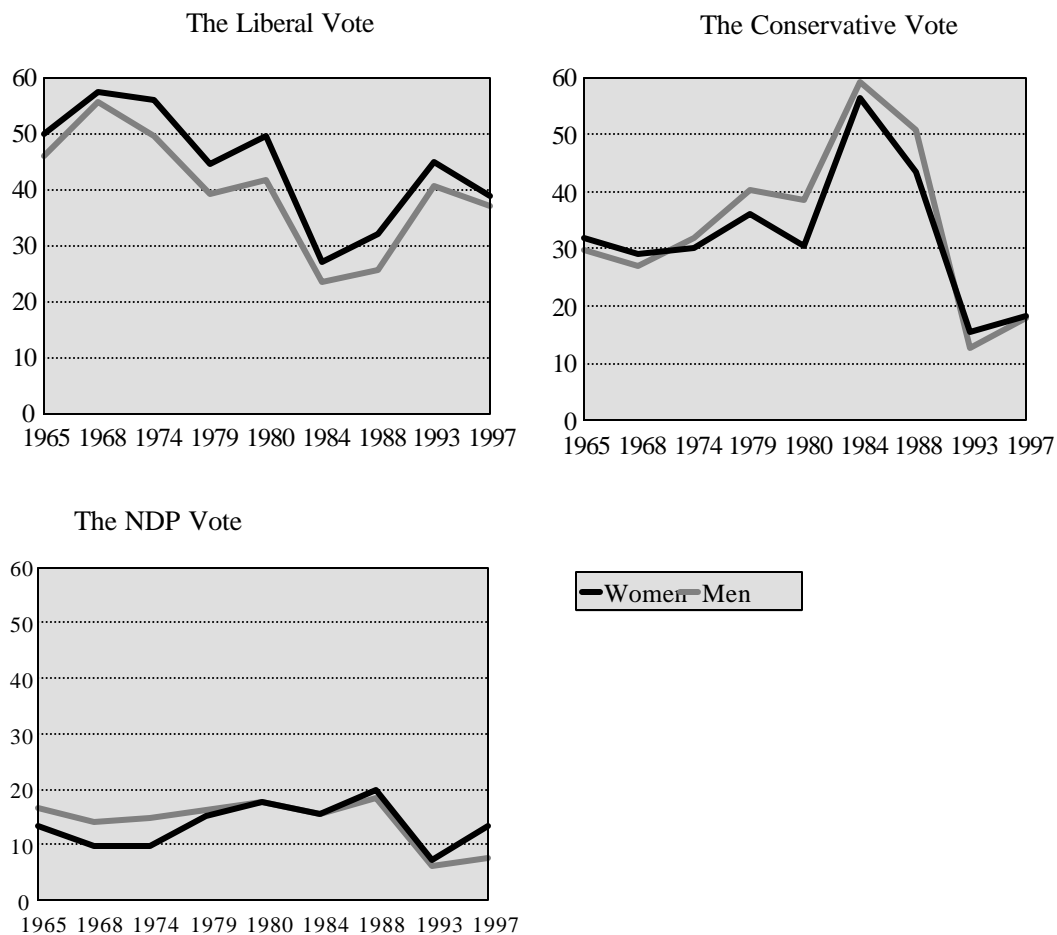
It may not have been a 'modern gender gap' in its own right, but the gender gap in Liberal voting certainly marked a transition to such a gap. All trace of the 'traditional gender gap' had disappeared by the early 1970s. Even in the mid to late 1960s, women were only a little more likely than men to vote for the Conservative Party, and by the time of the 1974 election, the gender gap in Conservative voting had actually been reversed, as Canada's traditional party of the right became more popular with men than with women.

In the 1993 election, two new parties smashed through Canada's 'two plus one' party system. The impact of this 'electoral earthquake' on the gender gap is clear. First, the gender gap in support for the Conservative Party was temporarily reversed. As Brenda O'Neill (1998) has demonstrated, this is probably due to the presence of a female leader who was able to attract some new women to the party, despite the massive haemorrhaging of support. Of far more significance, though, is the emergence of a sizeable gap in support for the Reform Party. Men were much more likely than women to opt for Canada's new right neo-populist party.<sup>3</sup>

This is important because it gets at the question of movement. Inglehart and Norris (2000) argue that the traditional gender gap is reversing in advanced industrialized countries because women are moving to the left and men are moving to the right. The gender gap in Reform voting provides compelling evidence that men **have** been more likely than women to move to the right. The party only became a viable option in 1993 and so a vote for the party was

*ipso facto* a move, if not from another party, then from abstention.<sup>4</sup> There is little evidence, by contrast, that women have been shifting to the left. As Figure 2 shows, support for the NDP has fallen among men and women alike since the 1988 election. The “modern gender gap” has emerged in Canada, not because women have been moving **to** the left, but because women have been less likely than men to move **away from** the left. Fifty-five percent (55 percent) of women who reported having voted for the NDP in the 1993 election voted for the party again in 1997, compared with only 39 percent of men. While the party did begin to rebound among women<sup>5</sup>, women were no more likely to vote for the left in 1997 than they had been in 1965. Among men, though, support for the left fell by 50 percent over the same time period.

Figure 2: Trends in Gender and the Vote, 1965 to 1997

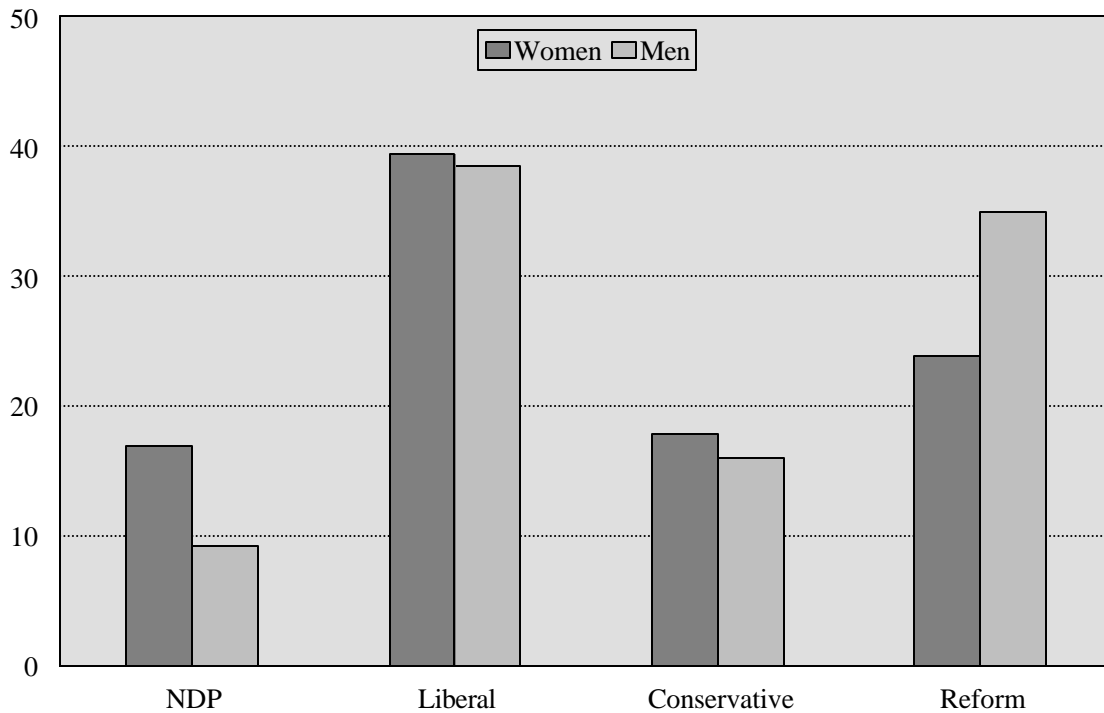


Since the advent of the Bloc québécois, voting in federal elections in Quebec has revolved to a remarkable degree around the issue of Quebec sovereignty (Blais et al. 1995; Nevitte et al. 2000) and there is no hint of a gender gap in support for the Bloc (see Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we will confine our analysis of the gender gap to Canada outside Quebec. When we exclude voters from Quebec (where the Reform Party ran only token candidates), the gender

gap in Reform voting becomes larger still (Figure 3). At 35 percent, Reform's vote share outside Quebec was almost 50 percent higher among men than among women (24 percent).<sup>7</sup>

Focusing on “gaps” to the neglect of the overall vote distributions, however, risks obscuring an important aspect of the sex-vote relationship, namely that women were more likely to vote for the new right than they were to vote for the left (see Figure 3). Indeed, more striking than the differences in women's and men's vote choice is the similarity in the trends across time. When a party loses support, it typically loses support among women and men alike. The same is true of gains in support. The similarities, in short, outweigh the differences. That said, the differences are substantively important because gender is the ‘fault line of maximum potential cleavage’ (Jennings 1988, 9), dividing the electorate almost neatly in half (in contrast to cleavages like ethnicity and religion that typically only implicate a minority of voters). What this means is that even modest sex differences can have a significant impact on the outcome, especially in tight races.

Figure 3: Gender and Vote Choice in 1997 (outside Quebec)



### Explanations of the Gender Gap

Explanations of the gender gap have typically focused on why women are more likely than men to favour the left. Much less attention has been paid to the other side of the question, namely why men are more likely to favour the new right. Ironically, even Kaufmann and Petrocik's (1999) discussion of possible explanations for men's greater Republicanism in the United States focuses on women's attitudes and priorities. To some extent, of course, men's political distinctiveness can be seen as the flipside of women's distinctiveness, allowing similar theories to be employed. When men's **changing** political behaviour is the focus, though, greater theoretical leverage may be obtained by incorporating a male-centered perspective as well.

Simplifying somewhat, we can identify two broad types of explanation for the gender gap phenomenon (c.f. Gilens 1986; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998). One set of explanations focuses on structural and situational factors that differentiate the life experiences of men and women, whereas the second set focuses on differences in men's and women's values and priorities. While the first type of explanation points to objective differences between women and men, the second type centers on socio-psychological differences that transcend differences in objective circumstances.

In the case of the "traditional gender gap", the structural and situational explanations emphasized women's longevity, greater religiosity, and lower levels of participation in the paid workforce (see De Vaus and McAllister 1989; Togeby 1994; Mayer and Smith 1995; Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998; Inglehart and Norris 2000). All of these factors were assumed to give rise to greater conservatism on the part of women which, in turn, predisposed them to vote for the traditional right in greater numbers. These same variables are now being invoked to account for the gender gaps in support for new right parties in Western Europe (Betz 1994). The age hypothesis attributes these gaps to the fact that women tend to live longer, on average, than men and older voters are more likely to stay loyal to the traditional right. According to the labour force participation hypothesis, on the other hand, women are less likely to vote for the new parties because they are less likely to be in paid employment. This explanation assumes that labour force participation makes for greater awareness of the shift to the right and the global forces that are presumed to be driving it. Finally, the gender gap in support for the new right has been linked to women's greater religiosity. The assumption is that women are less likely to desert the old right because they are more religious than men, and religiosity is correlated with traditional conservatism. Switching the conceptual focus to men, the implication of these explanations is that men are more likely than women to opt for the new right because men are younger, more secular, and more likely to be part of the paid workforce. According to the first set of structural and situational explanations, then:

**H<sub>1</sub>** The gender gap in support for the new right reflects sex differences in age, religiosity, and labour force participation.

Structural and situational theories that focus on the "modern gender gap" suggest that women are all too aware of the shift to the right and its consequences. The costs of retrenchment in the 1990s have been borne disproportionately by women (Bashevkin 2000). According to the "welfare state dismantlement hypothesis" (Erie and Rein 1988; cf. Piven 1984), women are more likely than men to vote for the left because they are more likely to need the social safety net and

because they are more likely to depend on the state for their employment. Cutbacks in government spending are threatening women in their roles as welfare recipients and welfare service providers, and thus encouraging a vote for the left. The literature on support for new right parties in Western Europe emphasizes a second aspect of women's role as state workers (see Betz 1994). According to this argument, women will be less receptive to the new right's anti-immigration rhetoric because they have more contact with immigrants in their role as government service providers, the assumption being that contact makes for empathy. Both sets of arguments can readily be given a male-centered reading. Men are less likely to need welfare services because they earn more, on average, than women and they are also less likely to have the care of children or elderly or infirm relatives. And men are more likely to work in the private sector where they face competition for jobs from newcomers. Hence:

**H<sub>2</sub>** The gender gaps reflect sex differences in income and employment sector.

Greenberg's (2000) current research, though, takes the male-centered approach a good deal further. Her work builds on Mettler's (1998) study of the gendered nature of the American New Deal. Mettler argues that social welfare programmes at the national level started out benefiting white men. Under the impetus of the women's movement and the civil rights movement, though, benefits for women (and racial minorities) expanded in the 1960s and 1970s, and white men ceased to be the primary beneficiaries. Men responded by defecting from the ranks of the Democratic Party. In contrast to the welfare state dismantlement thesis, then, this welfare backlash argument provides an explanation for men's **changing** political behaviour:

**H<sub>3</sub>** The gender gaps reflect a welfare backlash on the part of men.

Whether the focus is on women and cutbacks in the welfare state or on men and changes in welfare provision, these arguments assume that both sexes vote on the basis of material interests. The socio-psychological explanations, by contrast, trace the gender gap, not to differences in material interests, but to distinctive values and priorities associated with men's and women's roles in the family and/or the workplace. One of the most influential variants of this type of explanation derives from the work of Gilligan (1982). Gilligan found that men's moral reasoning tended to emphasize separation and to give primacy to the individual. This "male voice" resonated with the tenets of liberal individualism, with its emphasis on the liberty, autonomy, and privacy of the individual. Women's moral reasoning, on the other hand, was more likely to emphasize connection and to treat relationships as primary. If men are indeed more individualistic than women (Phelan 1990), this would explain their lower level of support for government intervention and social welfare programmes. Gilligan's theory has been linked to the finding that women tend to take more compassionate stands than men (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986) and it has been used to account for the fact that women in the United States are more likely to vote sociotropically while men are more likely to vote their pocketbooks (Miller 1988; Welch and Hibbing 1992; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998). In Canada, the theory has been used to explain the gender gap in support for the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in the 1988 election (Gidengil 1995). Consistent with the images of "economic man" and "social woman", men were more likely to base their opinion on free trade on economic considerations, while women were more likely to base theirs on social concerns. So we can hypothesize that:

**H<sub>4</sub>** The gender gaps are a function of sex differences in values and priorities.

Difference theories have had to confront a timing puzzle. The sex differences in fundamental values and priorities are presumably longstanding, so why is the “modern gender gap” a relatively recent phenomenon? Carroll (1988) argues that women need autonomy in order to express their differences from men.<sup>8</sup> This requires economic independence, as well as psychological independence from traditional sex-role socialization. Being younger, having more education, being part of the paid workforce, and being unmarried are all factors that could make for enhanced autonomy (Klein 1985; Carroll 1988; Everitt 1998b). While this argument has been used to account for the gender gap on the left, it is also potentially relevant to the gap on the right. Here the argument would be that women whose circumstances are more constrained will be more likely to follow the shift to the right:

**H<sub>5</sub>** The gender gaps are a function of women’s autonomy

According to Conover (1988 c.f. Brodie 1991), on the other hand, feminism has served as the catalyst for the expression of women’s “difference” at the ballot box by raising women’s consciousness of their latent “female” values. The real gender gap, she suggests, is between men and feminist women<sup>9</sup>:

**H<sub>6</sub>** The gender gaps are a function of feminist sympathies.

Switching the focus to men’s changing behaviour instead raises the possibility of a feminist backlash on the part of men who resent the transformations in gender roles wrought by second-wave feminism. From this perspective, men’s shift to the right may be motivated by a sense that too much is being done for women. This type of explanation can be taken a step further to encompass a reaction against socio-cultural change in general. Ignazi (1992) has attributed the rise of the new right in Europe to a “silent counter-revolution” that has manifested itself in a renewed emphasis on tradition, identity and security. These themes may have a particular resonance with men. Men, for example, have long taken a more hard-nosed approach to issues relating to social control and law enforcement (Smith 1984; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Everitt 1998b). Only with the advent of the new right, though, have these issues been placed on the political agenda. More importantly, changes in cultural values and practices associated with the shift from industrial to post-industrial societies have challenged the traditional status of the white male. Men who resent this loss of status may well be repelled by the left’s embrace of post-materialist values—and attracted to new right parties that espouse more traditional values. Accordingly, we can hypothesize that:

**H<sub>7</sub>** The gender gaps are a function of sex differences in traditional values.

A final possible explanation for the gender gaps is the sex of the leaders. Does the fact that the NDP has a female leader (Alexa McDonough) help to explain the emergence of a gender gap in support for the party of the left? O’Neill (1998) concludes that there were significant sex-of-leader effects in the 1993 election when two of the parties (the NDP and the Conservatives) were headed by women. In that election, women rated the two female leaders more favourably than men did and this appears to have been a factor in drawing some female recruits to both

parties. Although these gains were more than offset by massive defections, O'Neill did not find any evidence to suggest that men were more likely than women to desert parties led by women. Banducci and Karp (1999) provide further evidence that the leader's sex was a factor in the 1993 election, at least when it came to voting for the NDP. Even though this leader effect did not translate into a sizeable gender gap in support for the party in that election, it is still worth testing whether:

**H<sub>8</sub>** The gender gaps are a function of differences in leader evaluations.

### Data and Methods

Our data are taken from the 1997 Canadian Election Study<sup>10</sup>. The first step of the hypothesis testing involves comparing men's and women's political views in order to see whether they differ in ways that favour one set of explanations over another. The second step involves assessing the effects of these differences on vote choice. It is quite possible for men and women to differ in their views without these views necessarily factoring into their vote choice. It is also possible for men and women to have identical views and yet politicize these views quite differently. Indeed, the notion that men and women differ in their basic values and priorities implies that different factors may matter more—or less—in their vote calculus. In order to allow for these possible salience effects, we estimate two sets of vote models, one for women and one for men (Klein 1984; Gilens 1988; Gidengil 1995; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999). Blocks of variables are added sequentially to the vote models, starting with social background characteristics, then basic values, followed by economic evaluations, issue positions, and finally leader evaluations. The reason for proceeding in stages is that we are likely to underestimate the effects of causally prior variables if we look at all of the variables simultaneously, regardless of their distance from the vote (Nevitte et al. 2000).

Factor analysis was used to develop composite measures of the various value and issue dimensions (see Nevitte et al. 2000). Details of scale construction and single-item measures can be found in the appendix.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the variables of theoretical interest, we include controls for other variables that were related to vote choice in the 1997 election, notably variables relating to Canada's regional, cultural, and linguistic divides (Nevitte et al. 2000). In addition to ensuring that observed relationships are not spurious, taking other factors that shape perceived interests and political preferences into account avoids the trap of homogenizing women—and men (Norris, 2000). We have opted not to include party identification in our vote choice models. In studies of the gender gap, there is a risk of over-control. Both Chaney and her colleagues (1998) and Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999) make the point that party identification can, to a large extent, be explained by issue preferences. This is likely to be particularly true for the Reform Party in Canada. As a new party, it is very likely that people came to identify with it **because of** its stance on various issues of concern. Given the skewed distribution of the dependent variables (left/not left and new right/not new right), all estimation is by maximum likelihood.

## Results

### Sex Differences in Values and Political Orientations

Table 1 compares women's and men's mean scores on a variety of measures that pertain to the hypotheses of interest. All of the measures have been centred around the neutral point. The free enterprise scale yields the largest sex difference in fundamental values. While women tend to be ambivalent about the capitalist system, men are much more persuaded of its virtues. They have more confidence in the profit system and are more likely to think that people who do not get ahead have only themselves to blame. This difference in support for free enterprise is consistent with the notion that men are more individualistic than women ( $H_4$ ). The sex difference cuts across income levels<sup>12</sup>, confirming that it is not just a function of differences in men's and women's material circumstances. The fact that men are less sceptical than women of the value of closer ties with the United States lends further support to  $H_4$ . This echoes the division between men and women over the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in the 1988 election, a division that proved to be consistent with the notion that women are less individualistic than men and less motivated by material considerations (Gidengil 1995).

Men and women also differ in their views on fiscal and social welfare policy. Men are less opposed than women to cuts in government spending and more in favour of eliminating the deficit. There is little difference, though, when it comes to cutting taxes. At the time of the last election, neither men nor women were in favour of tax cuts, especially when faced with the tough choice between maintaining social programmes and lowering taxes. The division is sharper over the issue of job creation which was central to the 1997 election (Nadeau et al. 1999). Consistent with their belief in the free enterprise system, men are less supportive than women of the government's role in creating employment. These sex differences in views about spending cuts, the deficit, and job creation are as large in the highest income quintile as in the lowest, suggesting that they cannot be explained away by differences in men's and women's objective needs ( $H_4$ ).

There are certainly differences in men's and women's perceptions of economic circumstances. Like their American counterparts (Welch and Hibbing 1992; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998), men in Canada are more optimistic than women about the state of the national economy, as well as their own financial situation. The largest differences appear for evaluations of the Canadian economy. Barely a third (32 percent) of women thought that the Canadian economy had improved over the previous 12 months, compared with almost half (47 percent) of the men.

The evidence regarding  $H_7$  is more mixed. Men are less willing to agree that more should be done for women, but they are no more hostile toward feminists than women are. They do score higher on the moral traditionalism scale, but the difference is of borderline statistical significance, and men, on average, are more likely to reject than to accept traditional views about marriage, children and gender roles. The results for crime and gun control are more in line with expectations. While women and men alike tend to favour a tougher approach to dealing with young offenders, women are less convinced than men that this is preferable to spending more on rehabilitation. The largest sex difference, though, emerges on the issue of gun control. Women

Table 1: Gender Differences in Fundamental Values and Political Orientations

## 1.1 Fundamental Values

	WOMEN	MEN	MALE-FEMALE
Free Enterprise	.04	.20	+.16 <sup>***</sup>
Continentalism	-.21	-.13	+.07 <sup>***</sup>
Feminism	-.11	-.11	.00
Moral traditionalism	-.22	-.16	+.06
Anti-minorities	-.09	-.06	+.03

## 1.2 Economic Evaluations

	WOMEN	MEN	MALE-FEMALE
Personal finances	-.13	.06	+.19 <sup>***</sup>
Canadian economy	.12	.35	+.23 <sup>***</sup>

## 1.3 Issue Positions

	WOMEN	MEN	MALE-FEMALE
Spending cuts	-.47	-.38	+.09 <sup>**</sup>
Cutting taxes	-.33	-.36	-.03
Eliminating the deficit	.21	.29	+.08 <sup>**</sup>
Job creation	.52	.37	-.15 <sup>***</sup>
Women's Issues	.54	.40	-.14 <sup>***</sup>
Gun control	.25	-.08	-.33 <sup>***</sup>
Tough on crime	.26	.37	+.11 <sup>*</sup>
Cutting immigration	.46	.34	-.12 <sup>***</sup>

## 1.4 Leader Evaluations

	WOMEN	MEN	MALE-FEMALE
Left leader	-.03	-.21	-.18 <sup>***</sup>
New Right leader	-.14	-.06	+.08 <sup>**</sup>

\*\*\* &lt;.001

\*\* &lt;.01

\* &lt;.05

tend to agree that only the military and police officers should be armed, whereas men are much more ambivalent. This difference is consistent with the well-established tendency for women to be more averse to the use of force and violence. Overall, then, there is modest support for the argument that the gender gap reflects a reaction on the part of men who feel threatened by socio-cultural shifts.

Women are as lukewarm as men in their views about outgroups and they are even more likely than men to favour a reduction in immigration. This is at odds with the arguments that have been advanced in Europe, suggesting that women's role as service providers will make them more sympathetic to immigrants, while competition for jobs will make men less sympathetic to newcomers (**H<sub>2</sub>**).

Finally, consistent with **H<sub>8</sub>**, men rated the female leader much more negatively than women did. Any easy assumption that women will react favourably to a female leader is undercut, though, by the fact that the left leader's average score was neutral. Women liked Alexa McDonough more than men did, on average, but this is not to say that they felt particularly warmly toward her. The pattern is reversed for the leader of the new right party who was male. Now it is women who reacted more negatively and men who were more neutral.

All of these differences in values and political orientations are very much differences of degree. There is no dimension on which men and women are polarized and on every dimension, save gun control and personal finances, their mean positions are on the same side. Even modest differences, though, can translate into significant differences in vote choice, depending on how these differing tendencies are politicized.

### **The Gender Gap in the New Right Vote**

The "traditional gender gap" was typically explained in terms of women's greater conservatism. This was linked to their greater religiosity, confinement to the domestic sphere, and the fact that women are more long-lived than men (**H<sub>1</sub>**). None of these explanations fares very well in explaining why women have proved more resistant to the appeal of the new right (Table 2). If the new right has proved less attractive to women than to men, it is clearly **not** because women are less likely to be in paid employment and, if anything, being a full-time homemaker enhances the odds of preferring the new right. We can also rule out the possibility that men were more likely than women to opt for the new right because there are fewer older men than older women. Age is clearly not a significant factor for either women or men. Religion, though, does play some role in the new right vote. Women are more religious than men (cf. O'Neill 1995): 41 percent of women said that religion was very important in their lives, compared with only 29 percent of men. But it is religious denomination rather than self-described religiosity that affects voting for the new right. Catholics are significantly less likely to vote for the new right. This effect holds for men and women alike, but consistent with **H<sub>1</sub>**, the effect is stronger for women.

Table 2: Gender and Voting for the New Right

## 2.1 Social Background Characteristics

	WOMEN	MEN
Employed	-0.03 (.25)	0.05 (.22)
Homemaker	0.66 (.35)	
Age	-0.08 (.64)	-0.29 (.55)
Religiosity	0.31 (.33)	0.41 (.29)
Catholic	-1.06 (.24)***	-0.67 (.21)***
Income	0.14 (.65)	-0.32 (.28)
Public sector	-0.32 (.23)	-0.26 (.21)
Traditional marriage	0.45 (.22)*	0.07 (.20)
Education	-0.17 (.58)	-1.35 (.48)**
Constant	-1.88 (.54)***	0.06 (.43)
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.24	.21
-2 log likelihood	685.5	848.2

## 2.2 Fundamental Values

	WOMEN	MEN
Free enterprise	0.67 (.26)**	-0.03 (.23)
Continentalism	0.16 (.35)	0.35 (.29)
Moral traditionalism	0.94 (.21)***	0.58 (.19)**
Feminism	-0.19 (.27)	0.15 (.22)
Anti-minorities	0.41 (.22)	0.66 (.20)***
Constant	-3.13 (.49)***	-1.21 (.40)**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.42	.39
-2 log likelihood	542.7	676.4

## 2.3 Economic Evaluations

	WOMEN	MEN
Personal finances	0.05 (.17)	-0.10 (.14)
Canadian economy	-0.16 (.16)	-0.40 (.15)**
Constant	-3.12 (.48)***	-1.24 (.40)**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.42	.41
-2 log likelihood	541.4	671.3

Table 2 (continued): Gender and Voting for the New Right

## 2.4 Issue Positions

	WOMEN	MEN
Spending cuts	0.44 (.22) <sup>*</sup>	0.04 (.20)
Cutting taxes	0.47 (.22) <sup>*</sup>	0.46 (.19) <sup>*</sup>
Eliminating the deficit	-0.02 (.22)	-0.01 (.20)
Job creation	-0.81 (.29) <sup>**</sup>	-0.37 (.23)
Women's issues	-0.22 (.21)	-0.30 (.17)
Gun control	-0.14 (.12)	-0.25 (.10) <sup>*</sup>
Tough on crime	0.26 (.14)	0.30 (.13) <sup>*</sup>
Cut immigration	-0.23 (.21)	-0.11 (.16)
Constant	-1.78 (.59) <sup>**</sup>	-0.78 (.47)
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.45	.45
-2 log likelihood	507.2	631.9

## 2.5 Leader Evaluations

	WOMEN	MEN
Leader evaluations	3.67 (.41) <sup>***</sup>	3.07 (.31) <sup>***</sup>
Constant	-2.40 (.68) <sup>**</sup>	-0.81 (.55)
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.67	.63
-2 log likelihood	346.4	473.6

Note: column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. Estimation is by maximum likelihood. Each model includes controls for causally prior variables. Only variables that are statistically significant were retained as controls.

\*\*\* <.001

\*\* <.01

\* <.05

The positive effects for both traditional marriage and being a full-time homemaker are consistent with the argument that women who enjoy less autonomy are more likely to vote for the new right ( $H_5$ ). The effect for homemakers, though, is of borderline statistical significance and there is no hint of either an age or an education effect for women. The effects of education are confined to men, with higher education reducing the odds of a new right vote.

Explanations cast in terms of sex differences in material interests fare poorly in explaining the gender gap in support for the new right. The “welfare state dismantlement” hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) suggests that women will be more resistant to the new right’s anti-statist rhetoric because they are more likely to depend on the state for the provision of welfare services and/or employment. Income and sector of employment, though, are unrelated to new right support among women and men alike. The “welfare state backlash” hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) also receives little support. Men are a little readier than women to take a tough line on government spending (see Table 1), but views about spending and social programmes do not figure very prominently in their vote calculus. The only relevant effect is for the trade-off between tax cuts and social programmes, an issue that is just as salient to women. Moreover, views about spending play into women’s decision to vote for the new right or not as well, suggesting that the whole question of social programmes is more salient to women than it is to men. The more women oppose cuts in social spending and the more committed they are to maintaining and improving social programmes, the less likely they are to vote for the new right. The new right’s market liberalism also reduces the party’s appeal to women who believe that the government should play a role in creating employment. It is important to emphasize that all of these effects hold regardless of women’s household income, suggesting that they reflect more basic differences in fundamental values and priorities ( $H_4$ ).

In contrast to the United States (Miller 1988; Welch and Hibbing 1992; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998), there is no consistent pattern of men voting their pocketbooks and women voting more sociotopically on the basis of their evaluations of the national economy. The results are, nonetheless, in accord with the expectations of difference theorists. Economic evaluations are much more important for men than they are for women ( $H_4$ ). The more negative men’s evaluations of the performance of the national economy over the preceding year, the more likely they are to opt for the new right. There is barely a trace of a comparable effect for women. A much more important factor for women is their views about the workings of the capitalist system. The more sceptical women are of the free enterprise system, the less likely they are to vote for the new right. Views about free enterprise simply do not figure in men’s decision to vote for the new right or not.

Moral traditionalism is a consideration for men and women alike, but the effect is much weaker for men. This weak effect for traditional “family values” is difficult to reconcile with the notion of a “silent counter-revolution” on the part of men threatened by rapid change in acceptable lifestyles and social standards ( $H_7$ ). So is the lack of impact of antipathy toward feminists. Views about racial minorities, though, do affect men’s vote choice. The less sympathetic men are to racial minorities, the more likely they are to opt for the new right. The sex differences in the effects of social issues are also consistent with the notion that traditional “family values” and law and order issues are more salient to men ( $H_7$ ), though the differences are very modest. Men who want to see less done for women are more likely to vote for the new right, but the effect is too borderline to constitute a “feminist backlash on men’s part. Similarly, men who favour a get-tough approach to crime are more likely to be drawn to the new right, though the effect is not very strong. The largest sex difference appears on the issue of gun control. Not only are men more opposed to gun control but the issue is more salient in their decision to vote for the new right. Finally, views about immigration are not a factor for either men or women.

Leader evaluations clearly matter (**H<sub>8</sub>**). Voters, on the whole, did not particularly like the leader (and founder) of the new right party, but women tended to like him less than men did and these feelings played an even stronger role in their decision to vote—or not—for the party he led.

### **Gender and Voting for the Left**

The results for left voting are not simply the mirror image of those for the new right. First, the ‘welfare state dismantlement’ hypothesis (**H<sub>2</sub>**) has some explanatory power in accounting for the gender gap in voting for the left (Table 3). The lower women’s adjusted household income, the more likely they are to opt for the left. Thus, the women who are the most likely to need the shelter of the welfare state are the most likely to vote for the left. Public sector employment, though, fails to encourage a vote for the left. And the effects of income are confined to women.

The lack of effects for economic evaluations suggest the limits of material interests in explaining the gender gap in support for the left. Economic evaluations are not a factor for either men or women. The pattern of effects for social welfare issues suggests that socio-psychological differences may be more important than material interests in accounting for the gender gap phenomenon (**H<sub>4</sub>**). Women who favour social programmes over tax cuts are more likely to opt for the left and so are women who oppose the incumbent’s policy of eliminating the deficit, but even with these issue positions included in the vote model, income remains statistically significant for women.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the greater salience of these issues for women is not simply a function of their material interests. These issues also figure in men’s vote calculus, but the effects are weaker for the deficit and borderline for the tradeoff between programmes and taxes. For men, the salient issue is spending cuts. The more cuts men want to see, the more likely they are to reject the left. The effect for women is much less robust. This lends some support to the “welfare backlash” argument (**H<sub>3</sub>**). There was much less evidence of this effect in support for the new right (see above), suggesting that the notion of a welfare backlash is more relevant to explaining why men are turning **away** from the left than why they are turning **to** the right. Job creation is more or less equally salient to men and women. People who believe that job creation cannot be left to the private sector are more likely to choose the left. The most salient factor by far, though, for men is beliefs about the capitalist system. The stronger men’s belief in the free enterprise system, the less likely they are to choose the left. The same is true of women, but the effect is much less powerful. Views about continentalism, on the other hand, are only a salient consideration for women. The more opposed women are to stronger ties with the United States, the more likely they are to opt for the left.

Just as it did for the new right, moral traditionalism plays into men’s decision to vote for the left (**H<sub>7</sub>**). The more strongly men believe in traditional values, the less likely they are to opt for the left. The fact that the effect is more powerful suggests that any “silent counter-revolution” on men’s part is more a source of resistance to the left than attraction to the new right. There is no parallel effect for women. What matters to women are feminist sympathies

Table 3: Gender and Voting for the Left

## 3.1 Social Background Characteristics

	WOMEN	MEN
Income	-0.98 (.35) <sup>**</sup>	0.39 (.44)
Public sector	0.07 (.24)	0.30 (.29)
Age	0.73 (.68)	0.66 (.84)
Traditional marriage	-0.34 (.22)	-0.38 (.30)
Employed	0.32 (.28)	-0.31 (.33)
Homemaker	0.50 (.39)	
Education	1.86 (.64) <sup>***</sup>	0.15 (.74)
Religiosity	-0.52 (.36)	-0.39 (.44)
Catholic	0.10 (.24)	-0.33 (.33)
Constant	-2.58 (.58) <sup>***</sup>	-3.00 (.70) <sup>***</sup>
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.12	.09
-2 log likelihood	612.9	422.4

## 3.2 Fundamental Values

	WOMEN	MEN
Free enterprise	-1.24 (.29) <sup>***</sup>	-2.37 (.39) <sup>***</sup>
Continentalism	-0.93 (.42) <sup>*</sup>	-0.54 (.49)
Moral traditionalism	-0.23 (.22)	-0.73 (.30) <sup>*</sup>
Feminism	1.01 (.27) <sup>***</sup>	0.48 (.35)
Anti-minorities	0.02 (.24)	-0.40 (.31)
Constant	-2.64 (.47) <sup>***</sup>	-2.67 (.55) <sup>***</sup>
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.25	.30
-2 log likelihood	520.4	315.9

## 3.3 Economic Evaluations

	WOMEN	MEN
Personal finances	-0.22 (.18)	-0.28 (.23)
Canadian economy	0.03 (.17)	0.12 (.24)
Constant	-2.65 (.47) <sup>***</sup>	-2.84 (.56) <sup>***</sup>
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.25	.30
-2 log likelihood	515.7	319.0

Table 3 (continued): Gender and Voting for the Left

## 3.4 Issue Positions

	WOMEN	MEN
Spending cuts	-0.52 (.30)	-0.98 (.39)**
Cutting taxes	-1.04 (.33)***	-0.74 (.40)
Eliminating the deficit	-1.07 (.24)***	-0.74 (.30)**
Job creation	0.78 (.36)*	0.73 (.42)
Women's issues	-0.13 (.26)	0.28 (.31)
Gun control	0.02 (.13)	-0.08 (.18)
Tough on crime	-0.43 (.14)**	-0.45 (.18)**
Cutting immigration	0.06 (.24)	-0.38 (.28)
Constant	-3.34 (.64)***	-3.69 (.75)***
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.38	.39
-2 log likelihood	449.3	282.2

## 3.5 Leader Evaluations

	WOMEN	MEN
Leader evaluations	1.61 (.36)***	2.99 (.54)***
Constant	-3.41 (.66)***	-3.46 (.82)***
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.43	.54
-2 log likelihood	387.6	206.2

Note: column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. Estimation is by maximum likelihood. Each model includes controls for causally prior variables. Only variables that are statistically significant were retained as controls.

\*\*\* <.001

\*\* <.01

\* <.05

(H<sub>6</sub>). The more positive women's feelings about feminists, the more likely they are to vote for the left. This effect is confined to women, casting doubt again on the notion of a "feminist backlash" among men (H<sub>7</sub>). The limits of the "silent counter-revolution" argument are also suggested by the fact that, in contrast to their positive effect on new right voting, attitudes toward minorities are not a significant factor in men's rejection of the left. And, with the exception of crime, social issues are a very minor factor for men and women alike.<sup>14</sup> People who favour rehabilitation over a get-tough approach are more likely to vote for the left, but this is true of both men and women.

Arguments linking the “modern gender gap” to women’s enhanced autonomy generally find little support ( $H_5$ ). Age, marital status and labour force participation are all unrelated to voting for the left and, if anything, being a full-time homemaker actually increases women’s odds of choosing the left. One possible indicator of women’s enhanced autonomy, though, does produce a striking difference in the pattern of effects for men and women and that is the role played by education. The more education a woman has, the more likely she is to vote for the left. There is no hint of a comparable effect for men. The higher level of left voting among university-educated women in Canada is not a new phenomenon (Kay et al. 1988; Wearing and Wearing 1991).

The really striking sex difference is in the effects of leader evaluations ( $H_6$ ). Evaluations of McDonough were much more salient to men than to women. This is not just a matter of leader evaluations in general mattering more to men. We saw above that evaluations of the new right leader were less important in men’s decision to opt for the new right. It is tempting to see a role for gender identity in these asymmetrical effects (Banducci and Karp 1999): feelings about a female leader are more important for men, while feelings about a male leader are more important for women. And men liked the female leader less than women did, while women liked the male leader less than men did (Table 1).

### **Discussion**

Recent work on the gender gap in the USA points to the critical role of men’s changing behaviour in the realignment in gender politics (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999). This study of voting in the 1997 Canadian election lends further weight to the argument that the “modern gender gap” reflects not so much a move to the left on the part of women as a move to the right on the part of men. The emergence of gender gaps in support for the new right in some Western European countries (Betz 1994) suggests that this pattern may not be confined to North America. If the finding does extend to other settings, it has major implications for how we approach the study of the gender gap.

Work on the gender gap has typically placed the conceptual focus on the question of why women differ from men.<sup>15</sup> When the gender gap first attracted attention in the wake of the 1980 US presidential election, the question was not why men had become so disproportionately favourable toward Reagan, but why women were so disproportionately unfavourable (Sapiro 1987, 187). With only a few exceptions, the focus has remained firmly on the question of women’s difference. The use of this frame is ironic. By implicitly treating male behaviour as the yardstick, it unwittingly reproduces the androcentric presumption that “male is normative and female difference is associated with deviation from the norm” (Tomm 1989, 7). This frame also reflects a longstanding tendency to treat the study of gender as synonymous with the study of women rather than asking how gender as a social construct affects the behaviour of women and men alike.

Re-framing the study of the gender gap means broadening the conceptual focus to include men’s behaviour. The development of male-centered explanations is in its infancy and this is reflected in the fact that we have been able to offer only very partial tests. While we did not find any evidence of a feminist backlash, there was some support for the notion of both a welfare backlash and a reaction to the erosion of traditional values. Interestingly, both

explanations were more helpful in explaining why men were voting **against** the left than why they were voting **for** the new right. Testing all three explanations satisfactorily requires the development of survey measures framed with these hypotheses in mind.

Extending the conceptual focus to men should obviously not mean shifting the focus away from women. Indeed, the second major contribution of this study is to highlight the differences between men and women in the factors that shape their vote. Overall, we found more support for socio-psychological explanations than for explanations that emphasized structural and situational factors (c.f. Gidengil 1995; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998). The gender gaps in vote choice owed more to differences in values and priorities than differences in material circumstances. Men tend to be more individualistic and less statist than women, while economic concerns matter more to their vote and social welfare issues matter less. These differences cut across income lines.

At the same time, the role played by leader evaluations is a salutary reminder that political context must be part of any account of the gender gap phenomenon. In Canada in the 1990s, that context included the politics of deficit reduction. This may well have made issues like the role of the state and the scope of welfare provision especially salient. With the federal deficit eliminated, the contours of the gender gap could well shift. The future shape of gender politics will depend critically on whether—and how—sex differences in values and priorities are politicized.

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## Appendix

### Scale Construction and Question Wording

#### Free Enterprise:

- Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:
  - a) People who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not the system. (pese19)
  - b) When businesses make a lot of money, everyone benefits, including the poor. (pesf20)
- How do you feel about big business? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. (pesf1)

#### Continentalism:

- How do you feel about the United States? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. (pesf13)
- Do you think Canada's ties with the United States should be much closer, somewhat closer, about the same as now, more distant, or much more distant? (pese4)
- Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: It would be a good thing if Canada and the United States became one country? (pese25)

#### Moral Traditionalism:

- Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:
  - a) only people who are married should be having children. (cpsf2)
  - b) Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children. (cpsf3)
- Now we would like to get your views on abortion. Of the following three positions, which is closest to your own opinion:
  1. Abortion should never be permitted.
  2. Should be permitted only after need has been established by a doctor.
  3. Should be a matter of the woman's personal choice. (pese5a, b, and c)

#### Feminist Sympathies:

- How do you feel about feminists? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them. (pesf4)

#### Anti-Minorities:

- In general, would you say that Canada's aboriginal peoples are better off, worse off, or about the same as other Canadians? (cpsj9)
- Should the federal government spend more, spend less, or about the same as now for aboriginal peoples? (cpsj10)
- How much do you think should be done for racial minorities: more, about the same as now, or less? (cpsf1)

**Economic Evaluations:**

- Financially, are you better off, worse off, or about the same as a year ago? (cpsc1)
- Over the past year, has Canada's economy gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same? (cpsg1)

**Spending Cuts:**

- If you had to make cuts, would you cut spending in the following areas a lot, some, or not at all? Pension and Old Age Security, Health Care, Unemployment Insurance, Education. (pese6c, d, e, f)

**Cutting Taxes:**

- How important are the following issues to you personally in this election: very important, somewhat important, not very important? Cutting taxes (cpsa2d).
- We face tough choices. Cutting taxes means cutting social programs and improving social programs means increasing taxes. If you had to choose, would you cut taxes, increase taxes, or keep taxes as they are? (cpse1a)
- What is the most important issue to you personally in this election? (cpsa1)

**Eliminating the Deficit:**

- How important are the following issues to you personally in this election: very important, somewhat important, not very important? Reducing the deficit (cpsa2b).
- Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree with the following statements? To maintain our social programs we must eliminate the deficit. (cpsf5)
- Which is the best way to fight unemployment: eliminate the deficit or reduce taxes? (cpsf8)

**Job Creation:**

- Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:
  - a) There's not much any government can do these days to solve the unemployment problem. (cpsf4)
  - b) The government should leave it entirely to the private sector to create jobs. (cpsf6)
- How important are the following issues to you personally in this election: very important, somewhat important, not very important? Creating jobs. (cpsa2c)

**Crime:**

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

**Gun Control**

- Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement? Only police officers and the military should be allowed to have guns. (pese12)

**Women's Issues:**

- How much do you think should be done for women: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less or much less? (pese1)

**Control Variables:****Accommodating Quebec:**

- How do you feel about Quebec? On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means you really dislike Quebec and 100 means you really like Quebec. (pesf12)
- How much do you think should be done for Quebec: more, less, or about the same as now? (cpse3a)
- Should Quebec be recognized as a distinct society? (cpsj3)

**Regional Alienation**

- Do you think the federal government treats your province better, worse, or about the same as the other parts of the country? (cpsj12)

**Cynicism**

- For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree:
  - a) Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with people. (cpsb10a)
  - b) I don't think the government cares much what people like me think. (cpsb10d)
  - c) Politicians are ready to lie to get elected. (cpsb10e)
- Do political parties keep their election promises most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever? (cpsj13)

### Endnotes

1. As Kaufmann and Petrocik readily acknowledge, this is in itself not a novel argument. Bolce (1985), Mansbridge (1985), Wirls (1986) have made a similar point in discussing the gender gap in the 1980 US presidential election.

2. For similar findings with respect to Canada, see Terry (1984); Kopinak (1987); Brodie (1991); O'Neill (1995); Gidengil (1995) Everitt (1998a, 1998b). These studies present data on sex differences on a variety of dimensions.

3. On the characterization of the Reform Party as a new right party, see Nevitte et al. (1998) and Nevitte et al. (2000), chapter 8. The characterization should not be pushed too far, though, since the Reform Party was less radical than its European cousins.

4. A detailed study of the flow of the vote in 1993 indicates that the Reform Party did no better than the established parties in drawing in non-voters and had only a very limited appeal to new voters (Johnston et al. 1996).

5. Seven percent of women who reported voting for another party (or not voting) in 1993 voted NDP in 1997, compared with only 4 percent of men.

6. Women were a little more likely than men to vote Liberal in Quebec (37 percent versus 33 percent) and a little less likely to vote Conservative (19 percent versus 22 percent).

7. It should be noted, though, that our sample underrepresented female voters in the West and this may cause the gender gap in Reform voting to be a little overstated. Simulations based on the male distribution suggest that the Reform vote among women might have been 0.8 points higher if the sample had contained as many women as men from Western Canada. This still leaves a substantial gender gap to be explained.

8. It should be noted that Carroll herself was seeking to transcend the either/or nature of explanations cast in terms of material interests versus fundamental values.

9. Cook and Wilcox (1991), though, have countered that these values are common to feminist men and feminist women alike.

10. The 1997 Canadian Election Study was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University (see Northrup 1998), under the direction of the authors of this paper. The study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and by Elections Canada. 3,949 eligible voters were interviewed during the campaign, of whom 3,170 were re-interviewed after the election. The campaign survey response rate was 59 percent. Interviews were conducted by telephone. The sample design was a rolling cross-section. The data are available at: [www.isr.yorku.ca/ISR](http://www.isr.yorku.ca/ISR).

11. Data were available for 750 men and 727 women. To conserve sample size, "don't know" responses were coded as neutral. This is defensible since lack of opinion (or ambivalence) should not move the vote one way or the other.

12. The male-female gap ranges from .32 in the lowest income quintile to .11 in the highest income quintile. Income was measured using household income, adjusted for household size.

13. The coefficient is -0.99 (.41)\*.

14. Gun control was a tricky issue for the left, given its traditional constituency of prairie farmers and southern Ontario city dwellers. The lack of effects for both men and women is testimony to the party's success in neutralizing the issue.

15. One plausible explanation for this focus is that the emergence of the "modern gender gap" significantly enhanced the leverage of organized women's groups in advancing a feminist agenda, especially with respect to increasing the representation of women in legislative politics (see, for example, Mueller 1988).