

**THE GENDER GAP IN SUPPORT FOR THE NEW RIGHT:  
THE CASE OF CANADA**

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## **Gender Gap in Support for the New Right: The Case of Canada**

One of the most consistent predictors of support for radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe has been gender. Men are much more likely than women to be attracted to the new right (Betz 1994, 142-6). Why this should be so is “a complex and intriguing puzzle” (Betz 1994, 146). It is all the more puzzling given the diversity in the nature and electoral fortunes of the political parties that fit under the new right umbrella (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995; Betz and Immerfall 1998). In this paper, we examine the gender gap in support for Canada’s new right party in the 2000 federal election.

### **Explaining the Gender Gap in Support for the New Right**

There has been surprisingly little sustained analysis of the possible explanations for the gender gap in support for radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. Betz (1994, 142-6) has offered one of the few extended discussions of why support for these parties is “gender-biased” (p. 142). He offers a multifaceted explanation that emphasizes four factors: labor force participation, religiosity (c.f. Falter 1994, 28-30; Kitschelt 1995, 297), age, and occupational stratification. The first three factors have been invoked by a variety of scholars to explain women’s traditional ties to the old right (see De Vaus and McAllister 1989; Togeby 1994; Mayer and Smith 1995; Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998; Inglehart and Norris 2000). Women’s confinement to the domestic sphere, religiosity, and longevity have all been seen as encouraging greater conservatism and thus predisposing women to vote for the traditional right in greater numbers than men. These same factors are now being cited to explain why fewer women than men have been attracted to the new right. Women are less likely than men to support radical right-wing populist parties because they are less likely than men to be part of the paid workforce, they are more likely than men to be regular church-goers, and they typically live longer.

Participation in the paid workforce is seen as encouraging a vote for the new right by enhancing awareness of the shift to the right and the global forces that are presumed to be driving it. Women who are not working for pay outside the home are supposedly insulated from these radicalizing forces. Indeed, if anything, confinement to the domestic sphere is said to strengthen their ties to the old-style conservative parties and thus lessen their chances of defecting to the new right. Some scholars have argued that this conservative tendency may be reinforced by women’s traditional child-rearing responsibilities (De Vaus and McAllister 1989; Togeby 1994). However, these same scholars see the radicalizing effect of entry into the paid work force very differently. Their expectation has been that women’s distinctive experiences in the work place will move them to the left. If women find themselves confined to low-paying jobs in “pink-collar ghettos”, the effect may be to foster a feminist consciousness and a questioning of traditional gender roles (Klein 1984; Manza and Brooks 1998). At the same time, working women may be more in need of state services to help them with child-care and other family responsibilities. As a result, women in the work force may actually be even *more* resistant than their stay-at-home counterparts to new right appeals.

Betz (1994) suggests that women are more resistant to these appeals because they are more likely than men to attend church services regularly. The relationship between religious observance and party preference has at least two possible sources (Mayer and Smith 1995). First, there are the conservative values that are promoted by the established churches. Second, there are the strong ties between the Catholic Church and Christian democratic parties in several Western

European countries. To the extent that women attend church more regularly than men, then, they may be more likely to stay loyal to the traditional conservative right.

Betz (1994) also attributes the impact of women's greater longevity on new right support to the effects of religiosity: older women are more likely to be regular churchgoers and regular churchgoers are more likely to vote for the old right parties. However, other scholars have made a more direct link between age and party preference. The "senescence argument" (De Vaus and McAllister 1989, 246) assumes that people become more conservative as they age. Given that women tend to live longer than men, it follows that they will tend to be more conservative than men. This argument has been used to explain why women have traditionally been more likely to support conservative parties, but it can also be taken to imply that women will be less likely to desert the old right for the new. This could explain why the new right fares poorly among older women, but, as Betz (1994, 148) points out, it cannot explain why young women are also less likely to support radical right-wing populist parties.

This observation prompts Betz to speculate about the impact of gendered patterns of employment. Women are more likely than men to be working in the public sector. As such, they do not experience the same degree of economic insecurity as the male-dominated industrial work force. They are less vulnerable to both restructuring and to competition from immigrants. According to Betz, there is another reason why public sector workers may be more sympathetic toward newcomers: their jobs are likely to expose them to the hardships that immigrants and refugees confront in their new surroundings. Given the anti-statist and ethnocentric rhetoric of radical right-wing populist parties, then, public sector workers have good reason to resist their appeals.

Women are disproportionately dependent on the welfare state, not just for employment but also for social services. The "feminization of poverty" means that women are typically more likely than men to need the "social safety net". According to the "welfare state dismantlement" thesis women will be more supportive of state provision and more opposed to policies that compromise it (Erie and Rein 1988; see also Piven 1984; Deitch 1988). Given the hostility of radical right-wing populist parties toward the public sector in general and the welfare state in particular, it is plausible that these parties will have less appeal to the poor. To the extent that women are more likely to be among the ranks of the poor, this could account for the gender gap in support for the new right.

All of the possible explanations considered so far share two characteristics. First, they focus very much on women and on why women are less likely to support the new right. Second, they focus very much on structural and situational factors that differentiate women's lives and experiences. Arguably, though, what really begs explanation is why radical right-wing populist parties have held more appeal for men than for women. What is it about these parties that men have found more attractive?

One possible answer revolves around material self-interest. It points to an erosion of support for the welfare state on the part of men, as a result of the changing nature of collective provision. This anti-welfare state backlash argument was developed by Greenberg (2000) to explain men's defection from the Democratic Party in the US. Drawing on Mink's (1990) and Mettler's (1998) analyses of the gendered nature of the welfare state, she links the changing partisan loyalties of white males to the fact that they have ceased to be the primary beneficiaries of welfare programmes in the US. According to Greenberg, this shift had its origins in the 1960s and 1970s when benefits for both women and racial minorities were expanded. A similar anti-welfare state backlash on the part of West European men could explain the gender gap in support

for the new right. Esping-Andersen (1985, 1996), in particular, has attributed the emergence of both gender and racial cleavages in Western Europe to the “decommodification” of the welfare state, which has resulted in white males becoming net contributors rather than beneficiaries. Promising, as they do, to “recommodify” the welfare state by restoring the connection between contributions paid and benefits received, radical right-wing populist parties may have an understandably greater appeal to men than to women.

There are also a variety of socio-psychological explanations that could account for the gender gap in new right support. These explanations focus on gender differences in values and priorities that persist regardless of objective circumstances. The most developed of these explanations is derived from Gilligan’s (1982) work on gender differences in moral reasoning. She found that men typically reasoned their way through moral dilemmas by weighing competing rights and giving primacy to the individual. Women, meanwhile, focused on conflicting responsibilities and attached primary importance to relationships. With its emphasis on maximizing the autonomy and privacy of the individual, Gilligan’s depiction of the “male voice” resonates with the tenets of liberal individualism. If the values of liberal individualism really are more salient to men than to women (Phelan 1990), this could help to explain why they are more likely to be attracted to parties of the new right. Men may well be more receptive to the new right’s market vision of society.

Gilligan’s counter-posing of the male and female “voices” could also help to explain why men may be more readily swayed by authoritarian appeals, a factor that Winkler and Schuman (1998, 104) have linked to the gender gap in support for the new right. The men and women in Gilligan’s study tended to have very different conceptions of society. While the women conceived of society as a web of connection and valued relationships, the men were more likely to favor a hierarchical conception and to value separation. Gilligan links these contrasting conceptions to opposing views about the causes of human aggression: “If aggression is tied, as women perceive, to the fracture of human connection, then the activities of care...are the activities that make the social world safe, by avoiding isolation and preventing aggression...In this light, aggression appears...as a signal of a fracture of connection, the sign of a failure of relationship” (1982, 43). Men, meanwhile, are more likely to view aggression “as an unruly impulse that must be contained” (Gilligan 1982, 43). And the masculine model of hierarchy and subordination justifies the resort to coercion and control as a way of containment. Pratto and her colleagues (1997) have made a similar argument in explaining why men are more likely than women to favor the use of force. They link men’s attitudes and beliefs to a “social dominance orientation” that promotes “group-based social hierarchy” (p. 50). If they are correct, then this could help to explain the gender gap in support for the new right. Men have long taken a more hard-nosed approach to issues relating to social control and law enforcement (Smith 1984; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986), but it is only really with the advent of the new right that these issues have been placed squarely on the political agenda.

Finally, the new right’s appeal to men may reflect a reaction to the sweeping processes of socio-cultural change that have accompanied the evolution from industrial to post-industrial society in Western Europe and North America. Ignazi (1992), for example, has attributed the rise of the new right to a “silent counter-revolution”, while Minkenberg (1992) characterizes it in similar terms as a “reaction to the rise of the post-materialist left”. The key point is that the shift in cultural values and practices has undercut the traditional dominance of the white male. The emphasis that some new right parties put on traditional morality and family values may be particularly appealing to those men who resent this loss of status. In a similar vein, Kitschelt

(1995, 20) has highlighted the possible link between “gender conflict” and support for the new right. This suggests that the gender gap in support for radical right-wing populist parties could reflect an anti-feminist backlash on the part of men who resist the transformations in gender roles that have been wrought by second-wave feminism.

### **The Gender Gap in Support for the Canadian Alliance**

Here we use the case of the Canadian Alliance to see how well these various explanations can account for the gender gap in support for the new right. A gender gap was apparent from the first, when the upstart Reform Party smashed through Canada’s traditional “two and one half” party system in the 1993 federal election (see Figure 1). In that election, the gender gap outside Quebec<sup>1</sup> was 11 points: almost one-third of men (31 percent) voted Reform, compared with only one-fifth of women (20 percent). In the next election in 1997, the Reform vote edged up among women (24 percent) and men (35 percent) alike, but the gender gap held steady. Between 1997 and 2000, the Reform Party reconstituted itself as the Canadian Alliance, but while the new party improved on Reform’s performance, it failed to narrow the gap between men (38 percent) and women (27 percent). The gender gap has thus remained a remarkably constant feature since the new right first emerged as a viable electoral force in Canada.

[Figure 1 about here]

### **The Canadian Alliance as a New Right Party**

Before trying to account for this gender gap, we need to justify the characterization of the Canadian Alliance as a “radical right-wing populist party”. The party’s roots are to be found in the frustration that gripped the Reform Party when it failed to make a breakthrough in Ontario in the 1997 federal election. When the Reform Party garnered 18.7 percent of the vote in the 1993 federal election, it became one of the most successful of the new breed of radical right-wing populist parties. It achieved that success in textbook fashion by politicizing “a hidden issue” (Ignazi 1992, 24 c.f. Bardi 1996). The issue was Quebec. This was a classic case of an issue that had been effectively “organized out” of electoral politics (Schattschneider 1960, 71), and the new party was able to benefit from the space left vacant by the established parties (see Nevitte et al. 1998). However, with the 1997 election, Reform seemed to have reached the limits to its growth. It had increased its share of the vote by a mere 0.7 points. And while that translated into a sufficient number of seats for the party to become the Official Opposition in Canada’s Parliament, that did not make up for the party’s failure to break out of its Western heartland and win seats in Canada’s most populous province. The very issue that had been the key to its success had now become an electoral liability. Reform’s tough stance on Quebec had contributed to the impression that the party was just too extreme (see Nevitte et al. 2000). This stance had fuelled a sense that the party spoke only for the West and that the party’s leader was a threat to national unity. There were also suspicions that the party was racist, homophobic, and anti-immigrant, and would reverse the gains made by Canadian women.

If Reform was to achieve its hoped-for electoral breakthrough in Ontario, it was going to have to shake the perception that it was too extreme. This meant softening its stance on Quebec, dispelling the impression that it was just a mouthpiece for the West, shedding its ethnocentric image, and being seen as more tolerant of changing social values. By re-making its image, the party could also aspire to joining forces with what was left of the old right to create a “united alternative” to the governing Liberals. The culmination of this strategy was the formation of the

Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance (to be known as the Canadian Alliance) in early 2000. Over 90 percent of Reform Party members voted to adopt the constitution of the Canadian Alliance and the Reform Party ceased to exist.<sup>2</sup>

The question is: does the Canadian Alliance still qualify as a radical right-wing populist party?<sup>3</sup> The most detailed answer has been provided by Laycock (2002) in his analysis of the new right and democracy in Canada. Laycock concludes that the Alliance has retained its predecessor's "antipathy towards the federal government ... its visceral anti-statism, and the anti-secular social conservatism of many prominent Reformers" (p. 165). The one element of "Reform's populist package" (*ibid.*) that was *not* adopted by the new party was the anti-Quebec sentiment.

To be sure, with both its Liberal and Conservative rivals promising lower taxes in the 2000 election, the Alliance no longer appeared as radical on the fiscal front as Reform had in 1993. As Laycock (2002, 170) notes, though, it was "the flat-taxing Alliance" that offered voters "the heaviest dose" of fiscal conservatism.<sup>4</sup> And the party's social conservatism sharply differentiates it from its competitors. The party's Declaration of Policy resonates with such themes as law and order and the traditional family.<sup>5</sup>

Like its predecessor, Alliance offers a brand of populism that is anti-statist and anti-politician. The Reform Party campaigned on a platform of deficit reduction in the 1993 election that was arguably as much about rolling back the state as it was eliminating the budget deficit. The Alliance continues to preach the virtues of self-reliance and self-sufficiency as it presses for cutbacks in social programmes (with the notable exception of medicare). The party's Declaration of Policy promotes a vision of government that is "small and effective ... and whose powers are strictly limited," a government that must "refrain from interfering in the lives of Canadians." Arguing that "families, communities and non-governmental organizations are best placed to respond to individual needs," the Declaration of Policy promises to "leave resources in the hands of those who are best able to help" those in need.

The Declaration of Policy contains a number of proposals for enhancing democratic accountability in Canada, including allowing free votes in Parliament, arguing that "Where an MP finds that a clear consensus has been reached on an issue, his or her responsibility is to represent that consensus over party or personal views." The party is also committed to "increased direct democratic responsibility through referenda and citizens' initiatives," including recall initiatives that would enable voters to petition for a by-election in the event of dissatisfaction with their MP's performance. Laycock (2002, 148) questions whether these promises amount to "very much more than a handy rhetorical and ideological club with which to beat hapless 'old line' parties," given the party's internal decision-making practices. The fact remains, though, that the rhetoric is firmly populist, and like its predecessor, the Alliance has been able to capitalize on popular disaffection with politics and politicians. While not portraying itself so explicitly as an "anti-party" party,<sup>6</sup> the Alliance does not even use the word 'party' in its title.

What most sets the Alliance (and its predecessor) apart from its more radical right-wing counterparts in Western Europe is the absence of any stridently anti-immigrant rhetoric. As Betz (1994, 142) emphasizes, in the late 1980s Europe's radical-right wing populist parties "increasingly muted their commitment to individualism, entrepreneurship and a free-market spirit in favor of the new issues of xenophobia and ethnic exclusion" (Betz 1994, 142). Canada's new right, by contrast, has continued to promote the market vision of society that first brought it electoral success. While the Alliance, like its predecessor has been tarred with the brush of racism and ethnocentrism, Laycock (2002, 145) is firm in his conclusion that "a large gap

remains between parties of the new right in Canada and Europe on the questions of immigration and racial tolerance.”

Nonetheless, within the Canadian context, the Alliance clearly qualifies as a party that is radical, right-wing, and populist. It adheres to an image of undifferentiated citizenship that is at odds with the group-rights-based thrust of recent years. The Declaration of Policy proclaims multiculturalism to be “a personal choice” that should not be funded at public expense. It promises to end preferential hiring practices based on language in the federal civil service, the military and the RCMP, and to do away with affirmative action and “any other type of discriminatory quota system.” Aboriginal Canadians are to have “the same rights and responsibilities as all other Canadians.” The list could go on. Alliance policy may look “anemic” to some observers, in comparison with Reform’s “harder-edged platforms” (Ellis 2001, 76), but the fact remains that significant numbers of Canadians continue to see the party as “just too extreme” (see Blais et al. 2002)

## **The Gender Gap in Alliance Voting**

### **Structural and Situational Explanations**

In order to explore what it is about the party that explains the gender gap in support for the Alliance, we use data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study.<sup>7</sup> We start by examining the argument that the gender gap in Alliance voting reflects women’s greater longevity, religiosity, and confinement to the domestic sphere. As Figure 2 shows, there is no support for this interpretation. It was not full-time homemakers but women in full-time employment who were the least likely to vote Alliance in the 2000 election. Far from narrowing, the gender gap was actually wider among full-time employees (15 points) and the self-employed (18 points). Age, meanwhile, had very little effect on Alliance voting. And to the extent that it did make a difference, it was older women, not younger women, who were the most likely to vote Alliance. Indeed, the gender gap reached 19 points among women and men in the 18 to 25 year old age group. This parallels Betz’s (1994, 148) observation that young women are less likely than young men to vote for new right parties in Western Europe. As for religiosity, women (42 percent) were indeed more likely than men (32 percent) to say that religion was very important in their lives. However, the lowest levels of Alliance voting were to be found not among voters who attached a great deal of importance to religion, but among those who declared that it was not at all important to them. This is quite different from the pattern of new right support in Western Europe where radical right-wing populist parties have tended to do better among secular voters (see Betz 1994). In Canada, the new right vote is very much a Protestant vote. From the earliest surveys of voter preference, it has been apparent that Catholics disproportionately support the Liberal Party, and despite the “electoral earthquake” of 1993, the Catholic vote has remained a bed rock of Liberal support (see Blais et al. 2000). This explains why the gender gap in Alliance voting is much smaller (6 points) among Catholics. Protestants meanwhile tended to split their vote evenly between the Liberal Party and Canada’s traditional party of the right, the Progressive Conservative Party. That changed with the advent of the Reform Party. The party’s leader, Preston Manning, was a Christian fundamentalist, a lay preacher, and the son of former Alberta premier, Earnest Manning, who had a long-running “Back to the Bible Hour” on the radio. And he was succeeded as leader of the Alliance by Stockwell Day, another devout evangelical Christian and former lay minister. It is thus easy to understand the party’s appeal to many conservative Protestants.

[Figure 2 about here]

Explanations that point to gender differences in material circumstances and patterns of employment do not fare much better. Recall that the “welfare state dismantlement” thesis implies that the new right will have less appeal for women because women are more likely to be dependent on the welfare state, whether as recipients of social welfare or as service providers. The implication of this argument is that the gender gap in support for the new right would disappear if men’s and women’s material circumstances and patterns of employment were more similar. As Figure 3 shows, this was clearly not the case. True, the gender gap in Alliance support all but disappeared among high income Canadians. However, household income was a poor predictor of Alliance voting and certainly cannot account for the gender gap in support for the party. Men with household incomes in the bottom 20 percent were still more likely to vote Alliance than similarly disadvantaged women. As for sector of employment, it made no difference whether women were employed in the private sector or the public sector. And private sector men were actually a little less likely than their public sector counterparts to opt for Alliance. What did make a difference for women, albeit a modest one, was union membership. Women from union households were even less likely to vote Alliance. There was no comparable effect for men.

[Figure 3 about here]

In Canada, the new right vote owes much more to ethno-cultural factors than it does to material circumstances (see Nevitte et al. 2000; Blais et al. 2002). We have already seen the importance of religious affiliation. The other key variables are region of residence, race, ethnicity, language and type of community. The Alliance vote was highest among Western Canadians, Canadians of northern European ancestry, and rural Canadians, and it was lowest among Atlantic Canadians, members of racial minorities, and French speakers. This was true of men and women alike.

It has been suggested that gender gaps are most likely to occur when women enjoy autonomy. According to Carroll (1988), for example, women need to be free of both economic and psychological dependence on men in order to be able to express their difference. Being younger, having more education, being part of the paid work force, and being unmarried are all factors that are likely to enhance women’s autonomy. While this argument was developed to explain the gender gap in support for the left, it also seems to have some relevance in accounting for the gender gap in support for the new right. We have already seen that the Alliance vote was lower among self-employed women and women in full-time employment, and that the party had little appeal to young women. When we look at marital status, it is clear that married women<sup>8</sup> were more likely (33 percent) to vote Alliance than women who had never been married (15 percent) or who were divorced, separated or widowed (18 percent). And while the gender gap in Alliance voting shrank to six points among married women, it grew to 20 points among those who were no longer, or had never been, married. Tellingly, marital status has much less effect on men than on women. However, the opposite is true of education. The gender gap disappears among university graduates, not because university-educated women are less likely than other women to vote Alliance, but because only 29 percent of university-educated men voted for the party.

[Table 1 about here]

So far, we have been considering each of the possible explanatory factors independently of the others and thus ignoring the possible relationships among them. In Table 1, we present the results of a multivariate analysis that identifies which ones continue to have an impact when all of the factors are examined together.<sup>9</sup> Only factors that attained conventional levels of statistical significance for either men or women (or both) were retained in the final models.

Both the men's and the women's models confirmed the importance to the Alliance vote of ethno-cultural factors. However, rural residence was only a significant factor for women, while the effect of belonging to a racial minority was confined to men. If the Alliance had not had a significantly greater appeal to rural women than to urban women, the gender gap would have been wider still. According to our simulations, the gap would have increased by close to three points.<sup>10</sup> And, if the Alliance had had as much appeal to minority men as it had to white men, the gender gap would have grown by well over two points.<sup>11</sup>

The "female conservatism" explanation of the gender gap fared poorly. Far from depressing the Alliance vote, religiosity was associated with a higher probability of voting for the party. This was true of women and men alike, but the effect was stronger for women than it was for men. Combined with the fact that the women were indeed more religious on average than the men, the gender gap in Alliance voting was about four and a half points smaller than it might otherwise have been.<sup>12</sup> The greater salience of religion for women was also apparent in the fact that religious affiliation had a stronger effect for women than for men. But for this, the gender gap would have increased by one and a half points. And, once religiosity was taken into account, being a full-time homemaker no longer made a difference. In other words, it was because homemakers were more likely to be religious that they were more likely to vote Alliance (not because they were homemakers *per se*). Finally, age was simply not a factor in Alliance voting for women or men, once other factors were taken into account.

The "welfare state dismantlement" thesis fared just as poorly. Neither income nor sector of employment had a significant effect on Alliance voting, even when other factors were held constant. What did matter for women, albeit weakly, was living in a union household. The effect was to depress the Alliance vote. If living in a union household had mattered as much to men as it did to women, fewer men would have voted for the Alliance and the gender gap would have shrunk by just over two points.

Finally, only one factor associated with the women's autonomy argument had a significant effect, net of other factors, and that was marital status. Women who were married were indeed significantly more likely to vote Alliance than women who were not married. There was no comparable effect for men. If marital status had had no effect on women, even fewer women would have voted Alliance and the gender gap would have increased by close to nine points. However, neither employment nor age had any effect on women (or men), and the effect of university education was confined to men.

Indeed, it is how little of the gender gap in Alliance voting can be explained by structural and situational factors. Far from accounting for the gender gap, factors like religiosity, marriage, and rural residence can only explain why the gender gap was not larger still: but for their impact, even fewer women would have voted Alliance.

### **Gender Differences in Values and Beliefs**

Religiosity, marriage and rural residence are all factors that are traditionally associated with greater conservatism, which begs the question of whether the causes of the gender gap are

to be found in the realm of values and beliefs instead.<sup>13</sup> The “silent counter-revolution” thesis, for example, suggests that the new right vote reflects a backlash against changes in cultural values and practices. To the extent that these changes have diminished the hitherto dominant status of white men, we might expect the new right to do better among men than among women. As Figure 4 shows, men were indeed more likely than women to take socially conservative positions on questions of traditional morality. However, there was little difference between men and women when it came to their views about feminism and doing more for women. If there is an anti-feminist backlash in Canada, it does not appear to be a predominantly male phenomenon. And while men were a little more likely to want to see less being done for racial minorities, it was actually women who were more likely to favor cuts to immigration.

[Figure 4 about here]

There was little evidence of an anti-welfare backlash on the part of men either. Men were only a little more likely than women to want to cut spending on welfare, and the difference was not statistically significant. Any anti-welfare backlash was very much a minority position among men and women alike. Where men and women did differ was in their desire for tax cuts. At the time of the 2000 election, men were significantly more likely than women to believe that at least half of the federal budget surplus should be used for cutting taxes.

Explanations inspired by Gilligan’s work fared better. Men did prove to be more persuaded than women of the virtues of free enterprise and the market vision of society that it entails. They also took a much tougher stance than women on questions related to law and order. They were more likely than women to favor the death penalty and more likely to want tougher sentences for young offenders.

Finally, there was little to suggest that men harbor more negative feelings than women do about politics and politicians. The differences in political disaffection between men and women were very modest and failed to meet conventional levels of statistical significance. Where gender differences did appear was in feelings of regional alienation. Men were more likely than women to feel that their province was not treated as well as other provinces by the federal government.

It is quite possible for men and women to differ in their views and yet for those views to have no effect on their vote choice. Differences in values and beliefs will only contribute to the gender gap in vote choice if those values and beliefs actually factor into men’s and women’s choice of party. Conversely, it is quite possible for men and women to have identical views and yet differ in how salient those views are to their vote choice. If men and women differ in the weight that they attach to these considerations when deciding how to vote, this could help to explain why their vote choices differ (see Gilens 1988; Gidengil 1995; Sapiro and Conover 1997; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999). Table 2 presents the results of a multivariate analysis that enables us to see which values and beliefs have an independent effect on vote choice and whether some values and beliefs matter more—or less—to men than to women.

[Table 2 about here]

The first thing to note is a striking difference from the pattern of support typically found for radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995; Van Der Brug, Fennema and Tillie, 2000): views about immigration and racial minorities were simply not

a significant factor in Alliance voting. This was true of men and women alike, and so the differences in their views on these questions cannot explain the gender gap in Alliance support.

Moral traditionalism and feminist sympathies, by contrast, did have a significant impact on vote choice. The more traditional people's views on social issues like gay marriage and the less sympathetic they were to feminism and feminist concerns, the more likely they were to vote Alliance. There is some support, then, for the thesis that new right support reflects a "silent counter-revolution" against the changes in cultural values and practices that have accompanied the shift from industrial to post-industrial society. As we saw above, women tended to take more liberal stances than men on questions of morality. If men had been as liberal on average as women, the gender gap in Alliance voting would have shrunk by a little over one point. However, men and women did not differ much when it came to feminism and feminist concerns, and these concerns were more of a consideration for women than they were for men. If feminism and feminist concerns had been as salient to men as they were to women, the gender gap would have narrowed by a further one point. This is because the average man, like the average woman, professed to be somewhat sympathetic, and feminist sympathies depressed the Alliance vote.

The desire for cuts in welfare spending did help to fuel a vote for the Alliance, but this was a minority position among men and women alike and its impact was only a little stronger for men than for women. The notion of an anti-welfare backlash is thus of little help in understanding why men were more likely than women to vote Alliance. However, concerns about tax cuts were an important part of the gender gap. Tax cuts were simply not a significant issue for men, but they were a concern for many women. The less women wanted tax cuts, the less likely they were to vote Alliance. Had the question of tax cuts been as salient to men as it was to women, the gender gap would have been over two and a half points smaller. Like the average woman, the average man did not favor using the bulk of the federal surplus to fund tax cuts. So, if men had cared more about this issue, their support for the Alliance would have dropped.

Views about free enterprise were a significant factor for men and women alike. The more people favored a market vision of society, the more likely they were to vote Alliance. This was especially true of women. However, the average woman was actually quite ambivalent about market values, and so beliefs about free enterprise did not have much of an impact on the party's overall vote share among women (as opposed to women's odds of voting for the party). Had the average man been equally ambivalent, fewer men would have voted Alliance, and the gender gap would have diminished by one point.

Men's concern for law and order, however, was a more important factor in explaining the gender gap in support for the Alliance. Recall that men tended to take a more hard-nosed approach than women to this issue. Now we can see that it was also a more salient consideration for men when it came to deciding how to vote. In fact, views about law and order did not significantly affect women's odds of voting Alliance. If the same had been true of men, the gender gap would have been almost one point smaller. And, if the average man had shared the views of the average woman on questions of law and order, the gap would have shrunk by almost one and a half more points. The differences on this issue thus contributed almost two and one half points to the gender gap.

By far the most important factor, though, was one that has not figured in theorizing about the gender gap, and that is cynicism about politics. As we have seen, women tended to be as cynical as men about politics and politicians, but political cynicism turned out to be an even more important factor for men than it was for women. Had cynicism about politics been only as

salient for men as it was for women, the gender gap would have narrowed by almost five points. Feelings of regional alienation, on the other hand, made only a very modest contribution. While they did encourage a vote for the Alliance on the part of both men and women, they are not a lot of help in explaining why the party did better among men. If the average woman had been as dissatisfied on this score as the average man, the gender gap would have narrowed by only half a point.

## Discussion

In contrast to Western Europe (see Gidengil and Hennigar 2000), the “female conservatism” argument is of no help in accounting for the gender gap in support for the new right in Canada. Indeed, but for the greater salience of religion in women’s lives, the gender gap would have been wider still. Like its American counterpart, the Canadian populist right is very much a Protestant religious right. This sets it apart from the populist right in Western Europe. The contrast between Western Europe and Canada can be explained by the way that the religious cleavage has played out in Canadian politics. Religion has long been one of the best predictors of vote choice in Canada, but why this should be so has defied explanation (see Gidengil 1992). The religious cleavage has been likened to “a strikingly peculiar houseguest who has overstayed his welcome” (Irvine 1974, 560). After all, there has been very little, if any, explicitly religious content to federal politics. We would have to go back as far as 1921 to find a federal election campaign in which religion actually figured. Canada’s two traditional parties were conventionally characterized as “brokerage parties.” Like Europe’s “catch-all parties,” they competed for the median voter by downplaying ideological concerns. However, the Reform Party smashed through in the 1993 election, not by playing the brokerage game but by offering an explicitly conservative alternative. Canadians who shared the fundamentalist religious beliefs of its founder finally had a political home. The religious cleavage assumed a new form, and became more politicized, as witnessed by the fact that in the 2000 election the Alliance leader’s personal religious convictions preoccupied campaign commentary to a degree unprecedented in contemporary Canadian elections.

Religiosity was not the only factor that served to keep the gender gap in Alliance support from being even larger. Rural residence and marriage both served to keep the female vote from being lower still, while university education and belonging to a racial minority both worked to keep the male vote from going even higher. The only situational or structural factor that actually helped to explain the gender gap in Alliance support was belonging to a union household, which kept more women from voting for the party. There was no support for the “welfare state dismantlement” thesis, and the only element of the “women’s autonomy” argument that mattered was marital status. In line with the notion that women require economic and psychological independence from men in order to express their differences, women who were not married were indeed less likely to vote Alliance.

The “silent counter-revolution” explanation found some support in the fact that men tended to take more conservative positions than women on questions relating to traditional cultural values and practices. There was little evidence, though, of an anti-feminist backlash. There was also little evidence of an anti-welfare backlash on the part of men. It was the issue of tax cuts, rather than social spending *per se*, that set women and men further apart. Women’s preoccupation with how the federal surplus was spent and that too much not go for tax cuts was a significant factor underlying the gender gap in Alliance support.

In line with the notion that they tend to be more individualistic than women, men did show more support for free enterprise, and this was one of the factors that helps to explain the gender gap in Alliance support. So was men's preoccupation with questions of law and order and their penchant for a get-tough approach. While the role of views about free enterprise and law and order both fit well with explanations of the gender gap that derive their inspiration from Gilligan's work, they fade in importance when considered alongside the impact of gender differences in the importance of political cynicism.

It is not that women were any less cynical about politics and politicians. Nor that political cynicism failed to motivate an Alliance vote on the part of women. But the fact that disaffection with politics was a more important consideration for men than for women was a major contributing factor to the gender gap in Alliance support. We can only speculate about why this should be so, but it may well reflect the fact that politics is simply a less salient concern in most women's lives. In Canada, as in Western Europe and the United States, women typically express less interest in politics than men do, they discuss politics less often, and they know less about politics (Gidengil et al. forthcoming). Whatever the reason, though, it is clear is that any understanding of the gender gap in support for Canada's new right party needs to take account of the party's populist face and not just its radical right-wing aspect.

Table 1: Structural and Situational Determinants of the Alliance Vote

	Women	Men
Atlantic Canadian	-1.49 (.51)***	-1.02 (.35)***
Western Canadian	1.01 (.22)***	1.05 (.18)***
Northern European ancestry	0.45 (.26)*	0.44 (.24)*
Non-European ancestry	-0.23 (.44)	-1.77 (.41)***
Religiosity	0.92 (.38)**	0.66 (.27)***
Protestant	0.80 (.21)***	0.62 (.18)***
Rural resident	0.80 (.24)***	0.16 (.21)
Married	0.87 (.25)***	0.10 (.20)
Union household	-0.38 (.23)*	-0.07 (.18)
University graduate	0.14 (.24)	-0.45 (.20)**
Constant	-3.22 (.41)***	-1.37 (.28)***
-2 log likelihood	570.36	810.08
Number of cases	576	712

Note: Estimation is by binary logistic regression. The column entries are unstandardized coefficients with the standard errors shown in parentheses.

\*\*\* p<.01    \*\* p<.05    \* p<.10

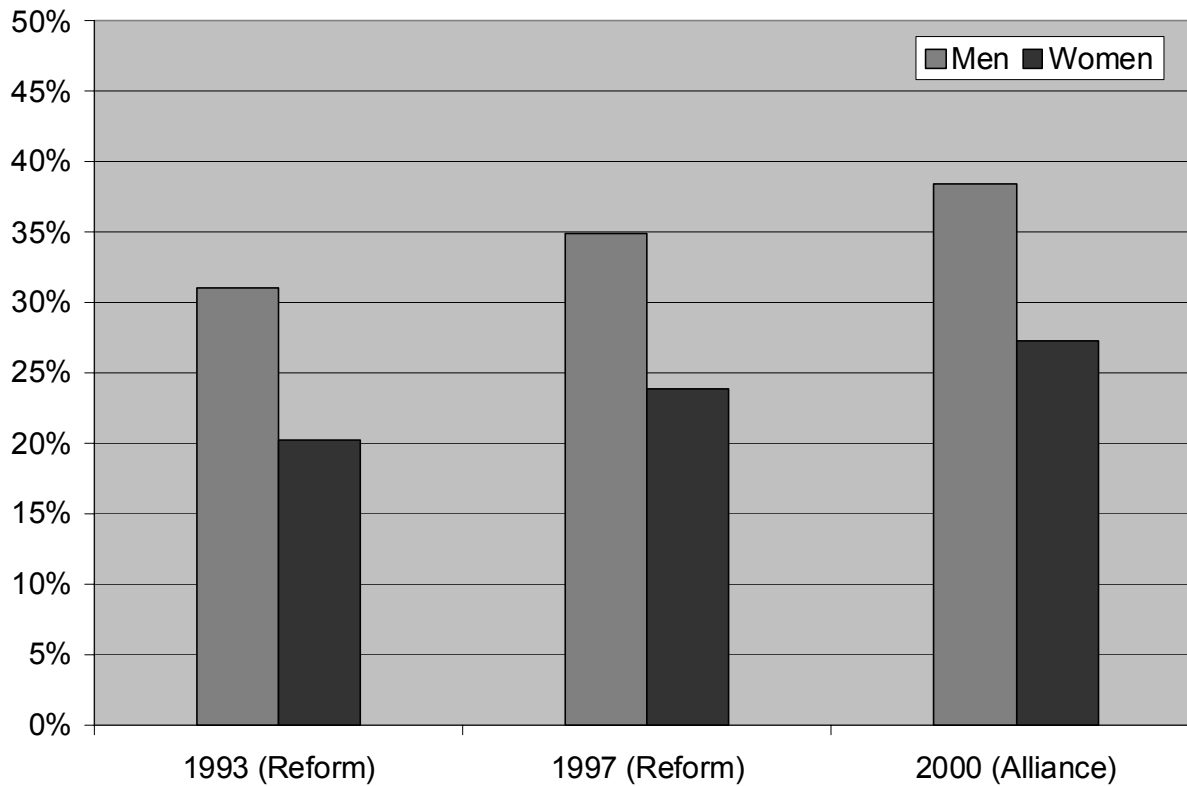
Table 2: Socio-Psychological Determinants of the Alliance Vote

	Women	Men
Moral traditionalism	0.71 (.21)***	0.54 (.18)***
Anti-feminist backlash	1.00 (.35)***	0.71 (.26)***
Fewer immigrants	0.20 (.21)	0.10 (.16)
Do less for racial minorities	0.34 (.29)	0.16 (.24)
Anti-welfare backlash	0.43 (.19)**	0.56 (.15)***
Tax cuts	0.82 (.29)***	0.12 (.21)
Free enterprise	1.03 (.40)***	0.72 (.29)***
Law and order	-0.16 (.18)	0.33 (.15)**
Political cynicism	0.72 (.36)**	0.98 (.29)***
Regional alienation	0.39 (.22)*	0.46 (.15)***
Constant	-1.59 (.50)***	-1.59 (.41)***
-2 log likelihood	436.42	661.00
Number of cases	529	690

Note: Estimation is by binary logistic regression. The column entries are unstandardized coefficients with the standard errors shown in parentheses. Controls were included for all social background characteristics that had statistically significant effects in Table 1.

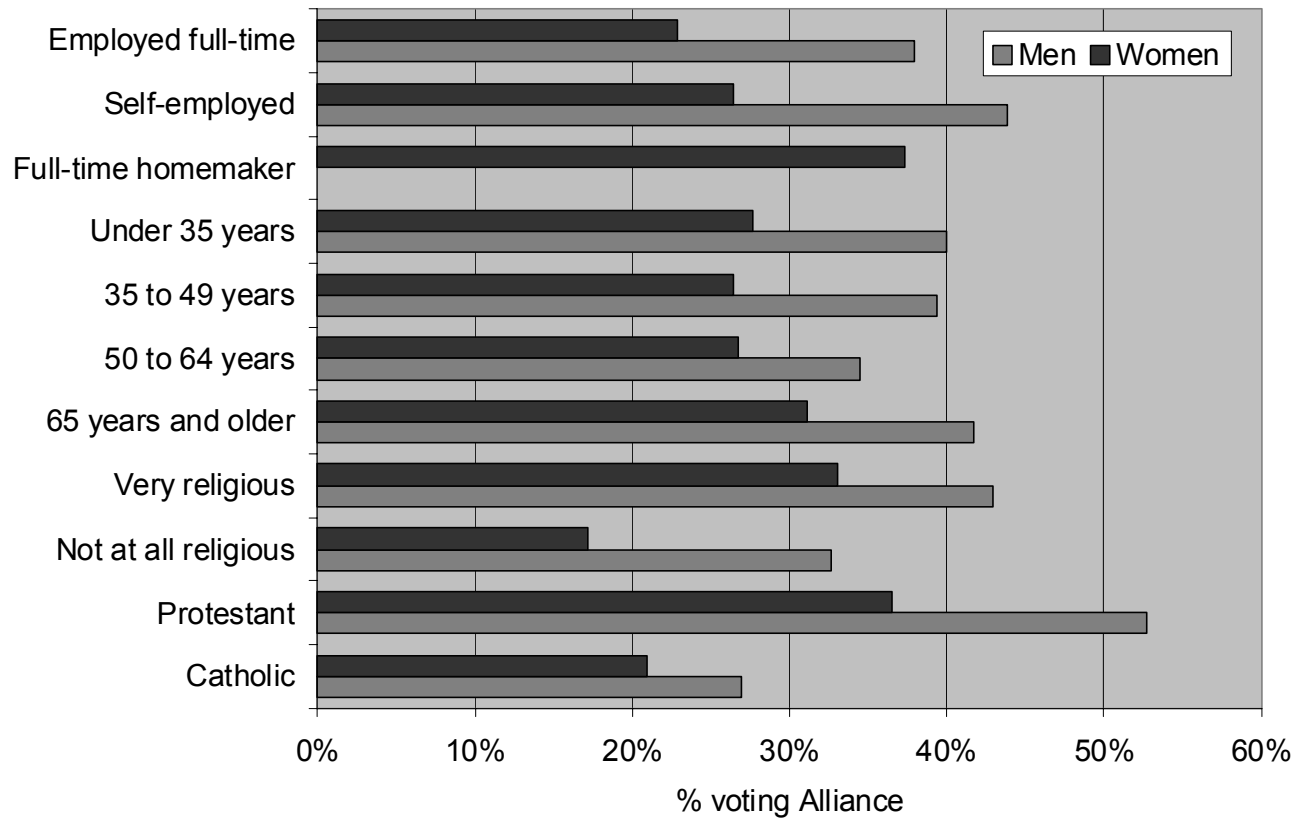
\*\*\*  $p < .01$     \*\*  $p < .05$     \*  $p < .10$

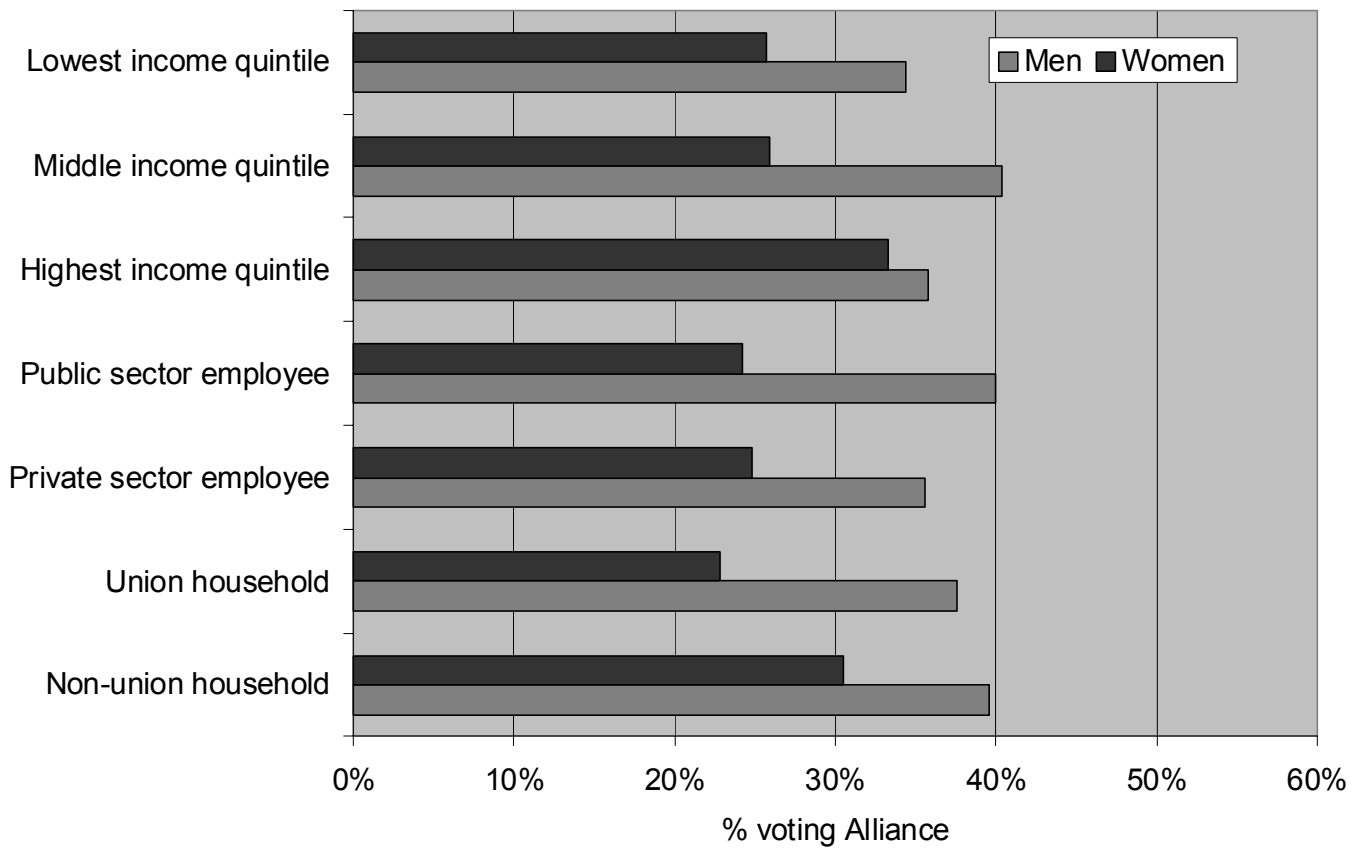
**Figure 1: The Gender Gap in Reform/Alliance Voting, 1993-2000  
(outside Quebec)**



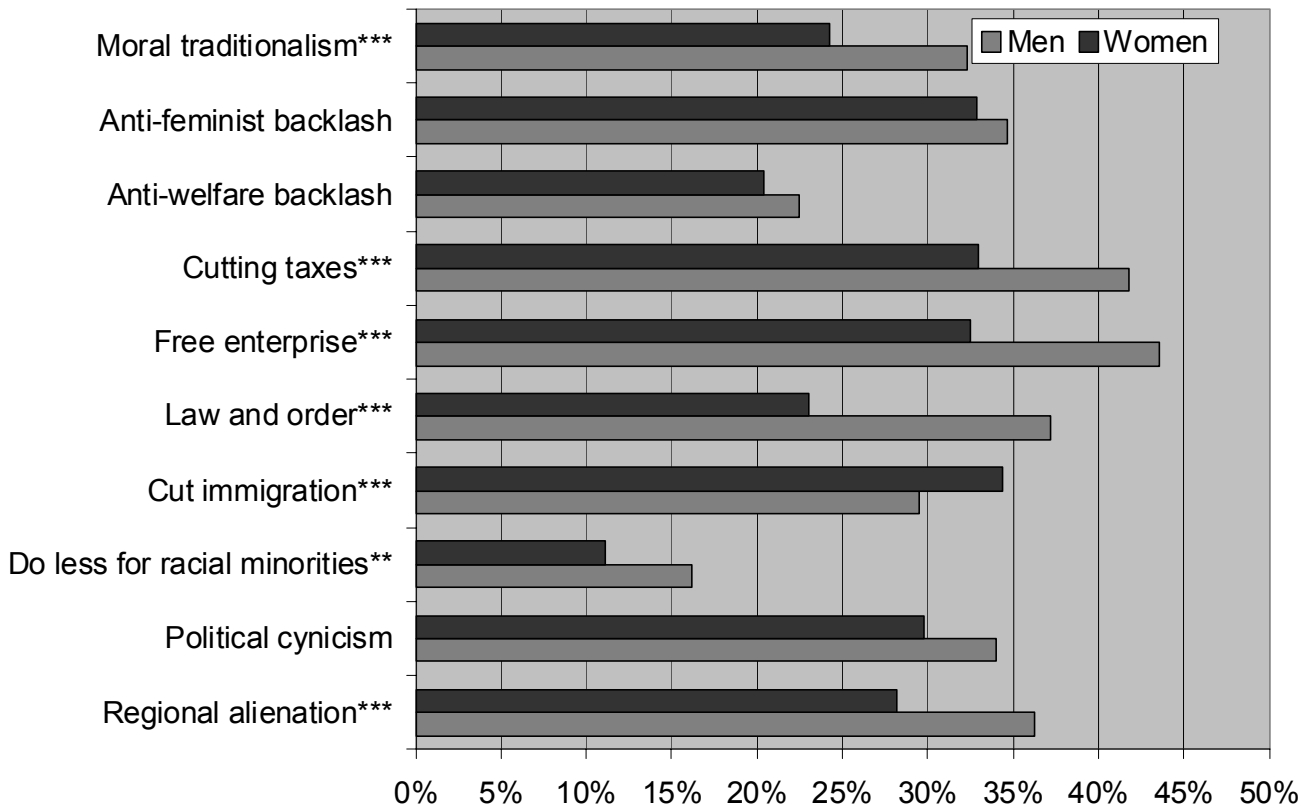
Source: 1993, 1997 and 2000 Canadian Election Studies

**Figure 2: The Gender Gap and "Female Conservatism"**



**Figure 3: The Gender Gap and Material Circumstances**

**Figure 4: Gender Differences in Values and Beliefs**



\*\*\* p<.001 \*\* p<.01 \*p<.01

## **Appendix: Description of Variables**

### **Values and Beliefs**

Variables were coded on a scale from -1 to 1, unless specified otherwise.

MORAL TRADITIONALISM is an index made up of two questions:

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement:

- a) Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children? (cpsf3)
- b) Gays and lesbians should be allowed to get married? (cpsf18)

The index is the sum of the two scores divided by 2.

Cronbach's Alpha - .45

ANTI-FEMINIST BACKLASH is an index made up of two questions:

Are you very sympathetic towards feminism, quite sympathetic, not very sympathetic, or not sympathetic at all? (pesg20)

How much do you think should be done for women: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less, or much less? (cpsc10)

The index is the sum of the two scores divided by two

Cronbach's Alpha - .42

FEWER IMMIGRANTS:

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

RACIAL MINORITIES:

How much do you think should be done for racial minorities: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less, or much less? (cpsc11)

ANTI-WELFARE BACKLASH:

Should the government spend more, less, or about the same as now on welfare? (pesd1b)

### TAX CUTS:

How much of the federal budget surplus do you think should be used for cutting taxes: almost all of it, most, half, some or almost none of it? (cpspla25)

FREE ENTERPRISE is an index made up of five questions:

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement:

- a) The government should leave it entirely to the private sector to create jobs? (cpsf6)
- b) People who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not the system? (pesg15)
- c) When businesses make a lot of money, everyone benefits, including the poor? (pesg16)
- d) How much power do you think business should have: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less, or much less? (pesd3)

How much power do you think unions should have: much more, somewhat more, about the same as now, somewhat less, or much less? (pesd2)

The index is the sum of the five scores divided by 5.

Cronbach's Alpha - .47

LAW AND ORDER is an index made up of two questions:

Which is the best way to deal with young offenders who commit violent crime: give them tougher sentences or spend more on rehabilitating them? (cpsj51)

Do you favour or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder? (cpssc15)

The index is the sum of the two scores divided by two.

Cronbach's Alpha - .50

### REGIONAL ALIENATION:

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

CYNICISM is an index made up of five questions:

Do political parties keep their election promises most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever? (cpsj13)

Use any number from zero to one hundred. Zero means you really dislike them and one hundred means you really like them. How do you feel about political parties? (pesc2d)

Now your views about political parties in general. How good a job do political parties in general do of presenting clear choices on the issues: a very good job, quite a good job, not a very good job, or not a good job at all? (pesk8a)

Do political parties in general do a very good job, quite a good job, not a very good job, or not a good job at all at finding solutions to important problems? (pesk8b)

Do political parties in general do a very good job, quite a good job, not a very good job, or not a good job at all at expressing the concerns of ordinary people? (pesk8d)

The index is the sum of the four scores divided by 5.

Cronbach's Alpha - .70

#### RELIGIOSITY:

In your life, would you say religion is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all? (cpsm10b)

NOTE: The parentheses refer to the question number in the survey; "cps" refers to the campaign survey and "pes" to the post-election survey.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> We restrict our analysis throughout to Canada outside Quebec. Since the advent of the Bloc québécois in the 1993 election, 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; Blais et al. 2002) The Reform Party only ever ran token candidates in Quebec. The Canadian Alliance made a more concerted effort to garner support in the province, but still ended up with only 6.2 percent of the Quebec vote.

<sup>2</sup> For more details of this process, see Ellis (2001) and Laycock (2002).

<sup>3</sup> On the parallels between Reform and radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe, see Nevitte et al. (1998).

<sup>4</sup> The final United Alternative Convention had adopted a 17 percent single-rate income tax policy, but this was unilaterally modified by the Alliance leadership going into the 2000 election. There were now to be two flat tax rates—17 percent for incomes up to \$100,000 and 25 percent for income in excess of \$100,000.

<sup>5</sup> The Declaration of Policy can be found on the party's website at [www.canadianalliance.ca](http://www.canadianalliance.ca).

<sup>6</sup> On the notion of Reform as an “anti-party,” see Gidengil et al. (2001a, 2001b).

<sup>7</sup> Funding for the 2000 Canadian Election Study was provided by the Social sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Elections Canada, and the Institute for Research in Public Policy. Outside Quebec, the field work was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University. The study consisted of a 30-minute campaign interview, a 30-minute post-election interview, and a self-administered mail back questionnaire. The response rate for the campaign survey was 60 percent. Eighty-one percent of those interviewed outside Quebec also completed the post-election survey.

<sup>8</sup> This includes women who were living with men in “common law” relationships.

<sup>9</sup> Logistic regression was used because the dependent variable is binary. In other words, it can only take two possible values (voted Alliance/voted for another party).

<sup>10</sup> This is the predicted Alliance vote for women when the male coefficient for rural residence is substituted in the female model (and all of the other coefficients are left unchanged). The simulation thus assumes that the effect of rural residence was as insignificant for women as it was for men.

<sup>11</sup> Now the simulation assumes that the effect of belonging to a racial minority was as insignificant for men as it was for women, and so the female coefficient for racial minorities was substituted in the male model (and all of the other coefficients were left unchanged).

<sup>12</sup> When the male coefficient for religiosity is substituted in the female model, women's predicted Alliance vote increases by 3.1 points, and when women are assumed to be no more religious on average than men, it rises by 1.3 points, for a total combined increase of 4.4 points.

<sup>13</sup> For more detailed information on gender differences in political beliefs and policy preferences, see Gidengil et al. (forthcoming).