

Is Canada A Case of Gender Realignment?

Elisabeth Gidengil
Department of Political Science
McGill University

Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, August 28-31, 2003. The author can be contacted at:
elisabeth.gidengil@mcgill.ca

“Is Canada A Case of Gender Realignment?”

Elisabeth Gidengil
 Department of Political Science
 McGill University

Introduction

In the 2000 Canadian election, women were more likely than men to vote for the party of the left, the New Democratic Party (NDP), while men were more likely than women to vote for the new right party, the Canadian Alliance. This mirrors a pattern that is becoming increasingly common in advanced industrial democracies. Inglehart and Norris (2003) 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 in women’s politics” to structural changes and value shifts that have transformed women lives, and along with them, women’s values and priorities.

This paper uses data from the Canadian Election Studies to analyze the evolution of gender gaps in vote choice since 1965. It begins by asking whether Canada really does qualify as a case of “gender realignment”. It then goes on to determine whether the changing nature of the gender gap in NDP voting can be explained by structural and situational changes in women’s—and men’s—lives. It concludes that these changes can provide only a very partial explanation of the process of gender realignment in Canada.

Gender Realignment and Structural Change

Accounts of the “traditional gender gap” typically adduced three key factors to explain why women were less likely than men to vote for parties of the left: age, religiosity and labour force participation (see De Vaus and McAllister 1989; Togeby 1994; Mayer and Smith 1995; Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998; Inglehart and Norris 2003). According to these accounts, women were less likely to cast a left-wing vote because they typically live longer than men, were more likely to be regular church-goers, and were less likely to be in paid employment.

The “senescence argument” (De Vaus and McAllister 1989, 246) is based on the premise that women and men alike become more conservative as they age. Since women tend to enjoy greater longevity than men, the implication is that conservative women will out-number conservative men. This will show up in a greater propensity on the part of women to favour parties of the centre and centre-right over those of the left. If this pattern no longer holds, one possible inference is that the tendency for people to become increasingly conservative with age has weakened or even disappeared.

A second possible explanation for women’s changing electoral behaviour is that women have become more secular. Women’s greater religiosity has frequently been invoked to explain why women have traditionally been less likely than men to vote for parties of the left. Again, the assumption has been that this makes for greater conservatism on the part of women, given the conservative values typically promoted by the established churches (Mayer and Smith 1995). In a similar vein, O’Neill (2001) has argued that religiosity serves as a countervailing force to

feminism, and that women's greater religiosity may explain why there is not more of a gender gap in support for feminism in Canada. She found that religious beliefs made for significantly more conservative positions on issues like abortion, gender roles, censorship of pornography, and gay marriage. It could be, though, that Canadian women are not as religious as they once were. If so, this could explain why some have been moving to the left.

Another factor may be women's rising labour force participation. Confinement to the domestic sphere was typically cited as one of the reasons for the "traditional gender gap". Women who do not work outside the home for pay are supposedly insulated from the radicalizing forces that would motivate a vote for the left (Lipset 1981, 217). If this is so, women's movement into paid employment outside the home should help to explain why the "traditional gender gap" has disappeared.

The diminishing effects of longevity, growing secularization, and the dwindling number of full-time homemakers may be able to explain why the "traditional gender gap" has disappeared, but they cannot explain its reversal. To understand why the changing electoral behaviour of women and men could lead to gender *realignment*, as opposed to gender *dealignment*, we have to consider some additional possible explanations.

One such explanation also invokes women's move into the paid work force, but now it focuses on women's distinctive experiences in the work place (Klein 1984; Togeby 1994; Manza and Brooks 1998). Gendered patterns of employment often mean that women find themselves confined to low-paying jobs in "pink-collar ghettos." If this results in a keener awareness of gender inequalities, increasing labour force participation may foster a growing feminist consciousness and a questioning of traditional gender roles. At the same time, the challenge of juggling full-time work and family responsibilities means that working women have a greater need of state services. Accordingly, women should be readier to support the party that favours public provision.

Indeed, women's greater reliance on the welfare state has been seen as an important source of their support for parties of the left. This reliance takes two forms. For some women, it entails reliance on the state for employment. Given that women are more likely than men to be employed in the public sector, they have a greater interest in maintaining (or expanding) current levels of state services. For many other women, it is a question of reliance on the state for basic forms of support. And the growing "feminization of poverty" means that there are more women who need this social safety net. According to the "welfare state dismantlement hypothesis" (Erie and Rein 1988; cf. Piven 1984), cutbacks in government spending in the 1980s and 1990s threatened women in their roles as both welfare service providers and welfare recipients. One result was to encourage more women to vote for the left.

Another explanation takes a more sanguine view of the changes that have occurred in women's lives over the past four decades. It points to the enhanced autonomy that many women enjoy with increased economic and psychological independence from men (Carroll 1988). The sources of this independence are to be found in rising levels of education, the increasing average age of first marriage, a growing divorce rate, and movement into the paid work force. The assumption is that more women now have the autonomy they need in order to express their differences from men. These differences relate to fundamental values and priorities. Whether they originate in childhood socialization (Gilligan 1982) or in women's experience of motherhood and parenting (Ruddick 1989), they are said to incline women toward a more compassionate view of those in need and a greater aversion to the use of force. Freed from the

constraints of dependence on men, these are assumed to find their expression in greater support for parties of the left.

Women who are younger are also assumed to enjoy greater autonomy because they have been socialized into more egalitarian conceptions of gender roles. Indeed, Norris (1999) has pointed to the existence of a “gender-generation gap.” This gap is seen as reflecting the mobilizing effect of feminism on the generations of women who grew to adulthood in the wake of second- and third-wave feminism. As a result of this feminist mobilization, younger women are more liberal in their views than both men and older women. In a similar vein, Conover (1988 cf. Brodie 1991) has argued that feminism has served as the catalyst for the expression of women’s “difference” at the ballot box by raising their consciousness of their latent “female” values. The real gap, she argues, is between men and feminist women.¹

Data and Methods

The first task is to determine whether there has indeed been a process of gender realignment in Canada. To this end, I have pooled data from all of the Canadian Election Studies, beginning with the first Canadian Election Study in 1965 and ending with the 2000 Canadian Election Study. This 35-year time span encompasses 10 federal elections.² The gender gap for each party is the percentage of women minus the percentage of men voting for the party, excluding non-voters. A positive (negative) sign thus indicates that more (fewer) women than men voted for the party. Quebec respondents are omitted from the analysis. The NDP has never succeeded in winning even one seat in Canada’s French-speaking province. Its best electoral performance came in 1988 when it attracted 14 percent of the Quebec vote. Since the advent of the separatist 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) and the NDP has been virtually shut out of the province, winning a mere 1.8 percent of the popular vote in the 2000 election.³

Rather than relying simply on a visual inspection of changes in the male and female vote shares across time, logistic regression is used to determine whether a trend line can be fitted to the data. For each party, the dependent variable is vote choice, coded “1” for the named party and “0” for all other parties.⁴ The regression model thus predicts the log odds of choosing that party over all other parties. The model includes terms for the main effects of election year and thus controls for election-to-election fluctuation in the odds of voting for a given party that affect women and men equally.

Once a best-fitting model has been found for the NDP, logistic regression is used to assess the various possible explanations for the changing electoral alignment of women and men. This is achieved by adding the various explanatory factors to the best-fitting model to see whether they succeed in reducing the trend term to statistical insignificance. Controls are included for region and for union households, both of which have traditionally proved to be significant correlates of NDP voting (Archer 1985). First, a series of models are estimated where each explanatory factor is considered separately. Then a single model is estimated to assess the independent effects of those factors that proved to be significant in the separate estimations.

In order to determine whether women’s declining religiosity accounts for their changing electoral behaviour a dummy variable was created that takes the value of ‘1’ for those who have no religion and ‘0’ for those who provide a religious affiliation. Ideally, attendance at a place of worship would be used, but this variable is only available in the early election studies. An

interaction term is used to assess the declining salience of the “senescence hypothesis.” This is a multiplicative term that tests whether the impact of age has declined across the ten elections. The impact of confinement to the domestic sphere is assessed with a dummy variable that takes the value of ‘1’ for full-time homemakers and ‘0’ for all others. Similarly, labour force participation is represented by a dummy variable that takes the value of ‘1’ for those who are employed and ‘0’ for those who are not. This variable is interacted with gender in order to allow for the impact of women’s distinctive experiences in the work force. Unfortunately, there is no value for either the homemaker variable or labour force participation for 1965 since that study only asked about the employment status of the main wage earner in the family. In addition to labour force participation, the “women’s autonomy” thesis is also examined using dummy variables to represent the effects of marital status and education. The marital status variable takes the value of ‘1’ for those who are married and ‘0’ for those who are not and/or never have been married. Two dummy variables are used for educational attainment, one takes the value of ‘1’ for university graduates, while the second takes the value of ‘1’ for those who dropped out of high school. Voters who have completed high school and/or some college serve as the reference category. More precise distinctions are not possible given the changes in response categories across time. The possible impact of feminist mobilization is captured by a series of dummy variables. Following O’Neill (2003), these variables take the value of ‘1’ for the second-wave cohort (born between 1943 and 1957), the post-movement cohort (born between 1958 and 1968), and the third-wave cohort (born since 1969). The pre-second-wave cohort (born before 1943) serves as the reference category. Each variable is interacted with gender to allow for the possibility of a gender-generation divide. Finally, the “welfare state dismantlement hypothesis” is evaluated using dummy variables to represent material circumstances and sector of employment. In order to approximate measurement equivalence across time, two income dummies were created, one corresponding to those in the lowest income tercile in a given survey and the second corresponding to those in the highest tercile. Voters in the middle tercile served as the reference category. Questions about sector of employment were only asked beginning with the 1988 study. Voters employed in the public sector are coded ‘1’ and all others are coded ‘0’.

Findings

The Evolution of the Gender Gap in Canada

[Figure 1 about here]

If we track the gender gap in NDP voting since 1965, Canada (outside Quebec) presents a clear case of “gender realignment” (Figure 1). Where women were once less likely to vote for the party of the left, by the late 1990s they were clearly more likely than men to cast a left-wing vote.⁵ The clearest evidence of gender realignment comes when logistic regression is used to fit a trend to the data (see Table 1). The results indicate that a simple linear trend term adequately captures the changing impact of gender. This is shown graphically in Figure 1 where the fitted probabilities of women’s and men’s vote choice, derived from the coefficients of the regression model, have been used to estimate change in the gender gap in NDP voting since 1965. A predicted gap between women and men of almost –6 in 1965 had become a predicted gap of +7 by 2000.

[Table 1 about here]

In a multi-party system like Canada tracking the changing nature of the gender gap in support for the party of the left tells only part of the story of gender realignment. 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. In every election held between 1965 and 1993, women were more likely than men to vote for the Liberal Party (see Figure 2). The gap was over seven percentage points in the 1974 election, and achieved statistical significance in every election save for 1968.⁶ It is only in the two most recent elections that the gap has effectively disappeared. When logistic regression is used to fit a trend the best-fitting model indicates trendless fluctuation between 1965 and 1993, followed by a significant decline in the two most recent elections (see Table 1).⁷ A case could be made for characterizing the gender gap in Liberal voting 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. If not a “modern gender gap” in its own right, the gender gap in Liberal voting may have marked a transition to such a gap: the gender gap in NDP voting emerged in the very same election (1997) that the Liberal gap disappeared.

[Figure 2 about here]

Certainly, there is little evidence of a “traditional gender gap” even in the 1960s. Women may have been less likely than men to vote for the party of the left, but they were only a little more likely than men to vote for the party of the centre-right, the Progressive Conservatives (see Figure 3). In the 1965 and 1968 elections, the gap was just over two percentage points, and as such failed to come even close to conventional levels of statistical significance. All trace of this “traditional gender gap” had disappeared by the early 1970s, 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 significantly more popular with men than with women.⁸

[Figure 3 about here]

In the 1993 election, two new parties smashed through Canada’s “two plus one” party system: the Bloc québécois in Quebec and the Reform Party, coming out of Western Canada. The Conservatives suffered a stunning defeat: one of the two parties that had dominated Canadian politics since Confederation, it was reduced to a mere two seats in the House of Commons, and saw its vote share plummet from 43 percent to 16 percent. Despite the massive haemorrhaging of support, the party was able to attract some new women voters. This was possibly due to the presence of a female leader, Kim Campbell, who had briefly served as the country’s first female prime minister on assuming the party’s leadership (O’Neill 1998). As a result, the gender gap in Conservative voting was reversed,⁹ and that gap has persisted. The best-fitting specification of the overall trend in the gender gap in Conservative voting since 1965 clearly takes the form of a curve (see Table 1). This can be seen quite graphically when the fitted probabilities are used to plot the changing gender gap in Conservative voting (see Figure 3).

The 1993 election should not be taken as somehow signalling the re-emergence of a “traditional gender gap” in Canada. Of far more significance than the reversal in the gender gap in Conservative voting was the emergence of a substantial gap in support for the Reform Party. Women were significantly less likely than men to vote for Canada’s new right neo-populist party.¹⁰ That 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 election. In that election, the gender gap outside Quebec was 11 points. The Reform vote edged up in the 1997

election, but the gender gap held steady at 11 points. By the time of the 2000 election, the Reform Party had reconstituted itself as the Canadian Alliance, but while the new party

improved on Reform's performance, it failed to narrow the gap between women and men, which remained unchanged at 11 points.

The emergence of this gender gap raises critically important questions about the nature of gender realignment. It suggests that it is as much—if not more—*men's* changing behaviour that is driving the process of gender realignment. The Reform Party only became a viable option in 1993 and so a vote for the party was *ipso facto* a move. And clearly, many more men than women moved to the new party. This gender gap in support for the new right is not unique to Canada. Similar gaps have been observed in Europe (Betz 1994; Gidengil et al. 2003).

[Figure 4 about here]

Women's shift to the left, by contrast, has been quite modest. The reversal of the gender gap in NDP voting owes at least as much to men's changing preferences. Certainly, as Figure 4 shows, women did move to the NDP in the late 1970s. By the time of the 1979 election, the party was doing equally well among women and men, and continued to do so through the 1980s. And when the party's support collapsed in the 1993 election, it did so among women and men alike. It was in the next election that women and men diverged: while men continued to stay away from the party, women were moving back. In other words, the "modern gender gap" 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. Looking at the entire period from 1965 to 2000, support for the NDP increased by only three percentage points among women. Among men, by contrast, support for the left fell by almost 10 percentage points. This represents a drop of over 50 percent.

Social Structure and the Evolution of the Gender Gap

True to the "senescence hypothesis", the odds of voting NDP do decline with age (see Table 2). However, there is little to suggest that the impact of age has declined since 1965. While the interaction term has the correct sign, it does not even approach statistical significance. In other words, we cannot attribute the disappearance of the "traditional gender gap" to the diminishing effect of age. If women are now more, rather than less, likely than men to vote NDP it is not because the tendency to become more conservative with age has weakened. A second set of tests were run where age was interacted first with gender and then with both gender and year in a three-way interaction. None of these terms proved to be statistically significant (results not shown), and so we can rule out the possibility that the impact of age has diminished for women but not for men.

[Table 2 about here]

Religiosity tells a similar story. It is certainly plausible that the reversal of the gender gap in NDP voting reflects the growing secularism of Canadian women. At the time of the 1965 Canadian Election Study, only one woman in a 100 (1 percent) responded "none" when asked for her religion. That figure had risen to close to one in six (16 percent) by the time of the 2000 Canadian Election Study. Given that secular voters are significantly more likely to vote NDP (see Table 2) declining religiosity should help to account for women's changing electoral behaviour. However, the coefficient for the trend in the gender gap does not shrink at all when this variable is taken into account. Additional tests were run that allowed for the impact of

religiosity to change across time and to change for women, but not for men (results not shown). Neither test offered any support for the secularization hypothesis.

Canadian women have moved into the paid workforce in massive numbers since the 1960s. In the 1968 Canadian Election Study, almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the women said that they were full-time homemakers. By 2000, this number had dwindled to one in ten (10 percent). This sea change in women's lives seems to have had remarkably little impact on their propensity to vote for the NDP. Accounts of the "traditional gender gap" pointed to the role of women's confinement to the home as the source of their reluctance to vote for parties of the left. However, being a full-time homemaker only reduces the odds of voting NDP by a small amount, and certainly not enough to meet conventional levels of statistical significance. And there is little to suggest that the impact of being a full-time homemaker has declined across time (results not shown). Conversely, women's movement into paid employment has failed to have the radicalizing effect predicted by some theories of the "modern gender gap", at least when it comes to voting NDP. People who are employed are typically less likely to vote for the party, and this is true whether they are male or female. This tendency may be a little weaker for women, but the interaction term falls well short of statistical significance. And again there is little to suggest that the impact of employment has changed across time or changed for women, but not for men (results not shown).

There is more support for the argument that the gender gap reflects the feminization of poverty. Women with household incomes in the bottom third of Canadian households have typically been significantly more likely to vote NDP. There is no comparable effect for men. Not only has the proportion of women with household incomes in the bottom tercile grown since the 1960s, there has also been a modest tendency for the effects of income on women's vote choice to increase across time.¹¹ Meanwhile, women and men alike have been less likely to vote NDP if their household incomes are in the top tercile, but women make up a smaller proportion of this group than they did in the 1960s.

The fact that women have greater need of the social safety net may help to explain why they have been less ready to desert the NDP in recent years. However, the same cannot be said of their reliance on the state for employment. This variable is only available from 1988 onwards, but its effects are clear. Public sector workers *are* more likely to vote NDP, but *not* if they are female.

One of the most significant changes in Canadian society since the 1960s is the growing number of Canadians who have a university degree. In the 1965 Canadian Election Study, only seven percent of respondents had a bachelor's degree; by the 2000 Canadian Election Study, this figure had risen to 25 percent. The rising level of education in Canada has affected NDP voting in two quite opposite ways. First, the drop in the proportion of Canadians who lack even a high school education has meant a shrinking base for the NDP since voters who have not completed high school have typically been more likely to vote for the party. Second, a university education enhances the odds of voting NDP, but only among women, and the number of graduates has been growing. The asymmetrical effects of a university education are very much in line with the "women's autonomy" argument. A university education presumably makes it easier for women to transcend the effects of traditional sex-role socialization and achieve both economic and psychological independence from the men in their lives. There is also evidence that the tendency of university-educated women to vote NDP has increased across the years.¹²

Marriage is conventionally seen as a constraint on women's autonomy. Carroll (1988, 256), for example, observes that, "economic independence from men is highly, although not perfectly, correlated with marital status." It turns out that married voters are indeed typically less

likely to vote NDP. This is true of women and men alike. The proportion of women who are married has dropped since the 1960s: in the 1965 Canadian Election Study, over three-quarters (78 percent) of the women were married, but by 2000 this figure had dropped to under two-thirds (64 percent). However, this does not account for the trend in the gender gap, probably because there is evidence that the impact of marriage has declined across time.¹³

Finally, there is no support for the feminist mobilization argument. True, the one generation that is significantly more likely to vote NDP is the generation that grew to adulthood in the wake of second-wave feminism. However, this generational effect is similar for women and men.¹⁴

[Table 3 about here]

Even used in combination, the various structural explanations can provide only a very partial account of the trend in the gender gap across time (see Table 3). Age, religion, and generation (but not marriage or employment¹⁵) all continue to have independent effects on the odds of voting for the NDP, but when it comes to the trend in the gender gap, the two key factors are income and education. Women are more likely to vote NDP if they have low incomes. This effect has increased across time, albeit modestly. In line with the "welfare state dismantlement" thesis, one plausible inference is that income became more important as cutbacks in government spending went deeper (see Bashevkin 2000). The odds of an NDP vote are also higher among women who have a university education, and again this effect has grown across time. This suggests that there is something to the enhanced autonomy argument. Still, these effects are very modest. This can be illustrated by performing some simulations. The education effect proves to be the most consequential, given that the proportion of university-educated women has grown more than the proportion of low-income women. However, if the proportion of women and men with a university education had remained unchanged since 1965 and if the impact of education had been constant, the gender gap would have been only one point less in 2000.

Leader Ratings and Gender Realignment

Clearly, accounts that emphasize structural change leave a good deal unexplained. This may well be because they have typically focused very much on women. Yet it is men's changing behaviour that has been the more consequential when it comes to gender realignment. From this perspective, it is worth considering whether the sex of the party's leaders has been a factor. O'Neill (1998), for example, concludes that there were significant sex-of-leader effects in the 1993 election when both 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, though these gains were more than offset by massive defections. However, O'Neill did not find any evidence to suggest that men were more likely than women to desert the NDP and the Conservatives. Banducci and Karp (1999) also found evidence that the leader's sex was a factor in NDP voting in the 1993 election. In the 1993 election, though, this did not translate into much of a gender gap in actual vote choice. In the 1997 election, by contrast, leadership was clearly a factor in the newly-emerged gender gap in NDP voting (see Nevitte et al. 2000). Women rated the party's leader, Alexa

McDonough, more highly than men did (see also Erickson 2003), and their ratings of McDonough had more effect on their vote. Adding leader ratings to a model of vote choice caused the gender coefficient to shrink to non-significance.

[Figure 5 about here]

In order to determine whether leadership can help to explain the long-term trend in the impact of gender on NDP voting, ratings of the NDP leader were added to the structural model (see Table 3).¹⁶ Predictably, leader evaluations prove to be a significant factor in NDP voting. The more voters like the leader, the higher their odds of voting for the NDP. More importantly, leader evaluations prove to be a significant factor in explaining the trend in the impact of gender: when leader evaluations are added to the model, the coefficient for the trend term is cut by more than half and it achieves only borderline statistical significance. The reason is clear when women's and men's average ratings of the NDP leader are tracked across time: women and men increasingly diverged and they diverged because men came to like the leader less (see Figure 5). This became pronounced with the advent of a woman leader in 1993, but a gap was already opening up. This gap is all the more consequential, given that leader evaluations carry more weight with women than they do with men. This is evident when an interaction term is added to the model.

Attributing a major role to leadership evaluations in explaining the process of gender realignment is not altogether satisfactory. What is left unexplained is *why* women and men have come to differ in their ratings of the NDP leader: Is it something to do with the identity of the leaders or do changing leader evaluations and changing vote preferences have some common underlying cause? Still, the fact that leader evaluations diverged *before* the gender gap in vote choice emerged suggests that the relationship may not necessarily be spurious.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the mid-1960s, women were less likely than men to vote for the party of the left in Canada. Thirty years later, that gap had reversed. Just as the developmental theory of the gender gap would predict, this reversal occurred gradually over an extended period of time. It occurred, though, not so much because women moved toward the party of the left, but because men turned away from it. Even in the mid-1960s, women were only a little more likely than men to vote for the old right party, and the 35-year time span from 1965 to 2000 saw a net increase of only three percentage points in the share of their vote that went to the left. Meanwhile, the left party's vote share among men was cut by more than half.

This is not a uniquely Canadian pattern. Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999) 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.¹⁷ This may well explain why structural explanations do not do a very good job of explaining gender realignment (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Erickson and O'Neill 2002). Typically, these explanations have focused very much on the sweeping changes that have occurred in *women's* lives over the past thirty or forty years. What really begs explanation, though, is why men have been moving away from the left, and in Canada and Europe, why men have also been moving in greater numbers than women toward the new right.

One possible answer revolves around material self-interest. Greenberg (2000), for example, has pointed to a possible anti-welfare state backlash to explain men's defection from the Democratic Party in the US. She suggests that men's support for the welfare state has eroded

as a result of the changing nature of collective provision. 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. In a similar vein, Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999) attribute the 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 in the United States (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Deitch 1988; Gilens 1988; Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998), as they have in Canada (Terry 1984; Kopinak 1987; Brodie 1991; O'Neill 1995; Gidengil 1995; Gidengil et al. 2003). The notion of an anti-welfare backlash on the part of men may find some support in the fact that low-income men, in contrast to low-income women, are not any more likely to vote NDP than their middle-income counterparts. However, there is a problem with timing: changing patterns of provision in Canada pre-dated men's move away from the NDP.

Rather than an anti-welfare backlash, we may be witnessing a backlash against the cultural changes 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) has characterized 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. To the extent that the left has rejected traditional conceptions of gender roles and social mores, it may have undercut its appeal to those men who resent this loss of status.

Looking at Canada as a case of gender realignment drives home an important point: when gender gaps reverse, we should not automatically assume that the reversal is driven by women's changing electoral behaviour. But this is not the only lesson to learn from the Canadian case. Canada should also remind us that focusing on "gaps", to the neglect of the overall vote distribution, can obscure important aspects of the gender-vote relationship. In particular, in Canada, it should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that more women have moved toward the party of the new right than have moved toward the party of the left.

Table 1: Logistic Models of Change in the Gender Gaps in Vote Choice, 1965-2000

	Best-Fitting Model
1. NDP	
Gender	-0.646 (.103)***
Gender*year	+0.124 (.017)***
-2 Log Likelihood	13,295.81
2. Liberal	
Gender	+0.316 (.077)***
Gender*year _{>1993}	-0.119 (.053)*
-2 Log Likelihood	20,450.67
3. Conservative	
Gender	+0.397 (.136)**
Gender*year	-0.234 (.058)***
Gender*year ²	+0.023 (.005)***
-2 Log Likelihood	18,522.12

Note: The column entries are regression coefficients, with standard errors shown in parentheses. The total number of cases was 15,749. All models include election year, represented as a series of dummy variables with 1965 as the omitted category. The gender variable takes the value of “1” for women and “0” for men.

*** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

Table 2: Social Structure and the Gender Gap in NDP Voting (separate models)

	Structural Effects	Gender	Gender *year	-2 Log Likelihood	N
Age (in years)	-0.010 (.003)**	-0.591 (.105)***	+0.119 (.017)***	12,764.57	15,577
Age*year	+0.001 (.001)				
No religion	+0.627 (.067)***	-0.538 (.105)***	+0.116 (.017)***	12,683.31	15,545
Homemaker (1968-)	-0.106 (.077)	-0.535 (.135)***	+0.115 (.020)***		14,422
Employed (1968-)	-0.154 (.079)*	-0.725 (.143)***	+0.127 (.020)***	11,839.79	14,422
Employed*gender	+0.098 (.104)				
Lowest income tercile	-0.091 (.082)	-0.659 (.124)***	+0.113 (.018)***	12,090.98	14,767
Highest income tercile	-0.371 (.078)***				
Low income*gender	+0.237 (.113)*				
High income*gender	+0.055 (.116)				
Public sector (1988-)	+0.260 (.125) ^a	-1.545 (.546)**	+0.242 (.065)***	4,960.41	6,671
Public sector*gender	-0.291 (.164) ^a				
High school dropout	+0.149 (.074)*	-0.636 (.132)***	+0.116 (.018)***	12,758.17	15,546
University graduate	-0.097 (.092)				
Dropout*gender	+0.039 (.106)				
University*gender	+0.293 (.129)*				
Married	-0.213 (.073)**	-0.625 (.132)***	+0.118 (.017)***	12,813.98	15,638
Married*gender	+0.060 (.102)				
Second wave generation	+0.234 (.099)*	-0.565 (.107)***	+0.120 (.020)***	12,751.11	15,577
Post-movement	-0.004 (.141)				
Third wave generation	+0.226 (.213)				
Second wave*gender	-0.102 (.110)				
Post-movement*gender	-0.035 (.151)				
Third wave*gender	+0.066 (.236)				

Note: The entries in columns two to four are regression coefficients, with standard errors shown in parentheses. The total number of cases is shown in column five. The structural variables are all dummy variables, with the named category coded '1', except for age, which is measured in years. All models include election year, represented as a series of dummy variables with 1965 as the omitted category (except for employment status and homemaker where 1968 is the omitted category and sector of employment where 1988 is the omitted category). Controls are also included for union membership and region (Atlantic Canada and Western Canada, with Ontario as the omitted category). The gender variable takes the value of "1" for women and "0" for men.

*** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

Table 3: Social Structure and the Gender Gap in NDP Voting (combined model)

	No Leader Ratings	Leader Ratings	Gender*Leader Interaction
Gender	-0.563 (.108)***	-0.387 (.148)**	-0.910 (.298)***
Gender*year	+0.097 (.020)***	+0.044 (.025) ^a	+0.053 (.026)*
Age in years	-0.005 (.002)***	-0.008 (.002)***	-0.008 (.002)***
No religion	+0.618 (.071)***	+0.529 (.084)***	+0.529 (.084)***
Lowest income tercile	-0.047 (.076)	+0.018 (.092)	+0.017 (.091)
Highest income tercile	-0.349 (.060)***	-0.337 (.071)***	-0.339 (.071)***
Low income*gender*year	+0.033 (.015)*	+0.040 (.018)*	+0.041 (.018)*
High school dropout	+0.226 (.059)***	+0.152 (.072)*	+0.152 (.072)*
University graduate	-0.022 (.089)	-0.222 (.102)*	-0.215 (.101)*
University*gender*year	+0.033 (.018) ^a	+0.031 (.020)	+0.029 (.020)
Married	-0.081 (.057)	-0.029 (.068)	-0.029 (.068)
Second-wave generation	+0.200 (.056)***	+0.190 (.065)**	+0.192 (.065)**
Leader rating (1968-)	-	+0.669 (.018)***	+0.635 (.024)***
Leader rating*gender	-	-	+0.070 (.035)*
Constant	-1.514 (.132)***	-6.173 (.196)***	-5.930 (.227)***
-2 Log Likelihood	11,763.63	8,144.56	8,140.48
Number of cases	14,515	12,290	12,290

Note: The column entries are regression coefficients, with standard errors shown in parentheses. The structural variables are all dummy variables, with the named category coded '1', except for age, which is measured in years. Leader rating is a 0 to 10 scale. The models include election year, represented as a series of dummy variables. Controls are also included for union membership and region (Atlantic Canada and Western Canada, with Ontario as the omitted category). The gender variable takes the value of "1" for women and "0" for men.

*** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

References

Archer, Keith (1985) "The Failure of the New Democratic Party: Unions, Unionists, and Politics in Canada," Canadian Journal of Political Science 18: 354-66.

Banducci, Susan A. and Jeffrey A. Karp (2000) "Gender, Leadership and Choice in Multiparty Systems," Political Research Quarterly 53: 815-848.

Bashevkin, Sylvia (2000) "Rethinking Retrenchment: North American Social Policy during the Early Clinton and Chretien Years," Canadian Journal of Political Science 33: 7-36.

Betz, Hans-Georg (1994) Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe New York: St. Martin's Press.

Blais, André, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevitte (2002) Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election Broadview: Peterborough.

Blais, André, Neil Nevitte, Elisabeth Gidengil, Henry Brady, and Richard Johnston (1995) "L'Élection fédérale de 1993: le comportement électoral des Québécois," Revue québécoise de science politique 27: 15-49.

Blais, André, Neil Nevitte, Richard Nadeau, Elisabeth Gidengil (2000) "Do People Have Feelings Towards Leaders About Whom They Say They Know Nothing?" Public Opinion Quarterly 64: 452-463

Brodie, Janine (1991) "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada" in Kathy Megyery, ed., Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation volume 6 Research Studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing. Toronto: Dundurn.

Carroll, Susan J. (1988) "Women's Autonomy and the Gender Gap: 1980 and 1982," in Carol Mueller, ed., The Politics of the Gender Gap Newbury Park, CA.: Sage, 236-57.

Chaney, Carole Kennedy, R. Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler (1998) "Explaining the Gender Gap in US presidential Elections, 1980-1992," Political Research Quarterly 51: 311-339.

Cook, Elizabeth Adell, and Clyde Wilcox (1991) "Feminism and the Gender Gap—A Second Look," Journal of Politics 53: 1111-22.

De Vaus, David, and Ian McAllister (1989) "The Changing Politics of Women: Gender and Political Alignment in 11 Nations," European Journal of Political Research 17: 241-62.

Deitch, Cynthia (1988) "Sex Differences in Support for Government Spending," in Carol M. Mueller, ed., The Politics of the Gender Gap: The Social Construction of Political Influence Beverly Hills: Sage.

Erickson, Lynda, and Brenda O'Neill (2002) "The Gender Gap and the Changing Woman Voter in Canada," International Political Science Review 23: 373-92.

Erickson, Lynda (2003) "In the Eyes of the Beholders: Gender and Leader Popularity in a Canadian Context," in Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, eds., Women and Electoral Politics in Canada Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 160-76.

Erie, S. P. and M. Rein (1988) "Women and the Welfare State," in Carol M. Mueller, ed., The Politics of the Gender Gap: The Social Construction of Political Influence Beverly Hills: Sage.

Everitt, Joanna (1998) "Public Opinion and Social Movements: the Women's Movement and the Gender Gap in Canada," Canadian Journal of Political Science 31: 743-65.

Gidengil, Elisabeth (1995) "Economic Man-Social Woman? The Case of the Gender Gap in Support for the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement," Comparative Political Studies 28: 384-408.

----- André Blais, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte (2003) "Women to the Left, Men to the Right?" in Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, eds., Women and Electoral Politics in Canada Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 140-59.

Gilens, Martin (1988) "Gender and Support for Reagan: A Comprehensive Model of Presidential Support," American Journal of Political Science 32: 19-49.

Gilligan, Carol (1982) In A Different Voice Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Goldberg, Anna (2000) "Why Men Leave: Gender and Party Politics in the 1990s," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC.

Ignazi, Piero (1992) "The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe," European Journal of Political Research 22: 3-34.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris (2003) Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kaufmann, Karen M. and John R. Petrocik (1999) "The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap," American Journal of Political Science 43: 864-87

Klein, Ethel (1984) Gender Politics Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Kopinak, Kathryn (1987) "Gender Differences in Political Ideology in Canada," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 24: 23-38.

Lipset, Seymour Martin (1981) Political Man Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Manza, Jeff, and Clem Brooks (1998) "The Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections: When? Why? Implications?" American Journal of Sociology 103: 1235-66.

----- (1999) Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignments and U.S. Party Coalitions New York: Oxford University Press.

Mayer, Lawrence C. and Roland E. Smith (1995) "Feminism and Religiosity: Female Electoral Behaviour in Western Europe," in Sylvia Bashevkin, ed., Women and Politics in Western Europe London: Frank Cass.

Mettler, Suzanne (1998) Divided Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mink, Gwendolyn (1990) "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race and the Origins of the American Welfare State," in L. Gordan, ed., Women, the State and Welfare Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Minkenberg, Michael (1992) "The New Right in Germany: The Transformation of Conservatism and the Extreme Right," European Journal of Political Research 22: 55-81.

Nevitte, Neil, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Johnston, and Henry Brady (1998) "The Populist Right in Canada: The Rise of the Reform Party of Canada," in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall, eds., The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 173-202.

Nevitte, Neil, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil and Richard Nadeau (2000) Unsteady State: The 1997 Canadian Federal Election Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Norris, Pippa (1999) "Gender: A Gender-Generation Gap?" in Geoffrey Evans and Pippa Norris, eds., Critical Elections: British Parties and Voters in Long-term Perspective Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage, 148-63.

O'Neill, Brenda (1995) "The Gender Gap: Re-evaluating Theory and Method," in Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code, eds., Changing Methods: Feminists Transforming Practice Peterborough: Broadview.

----- (1998) "The Relevance of Leader gender to Voting in the 1993 Canadian National Election," International Journal of Canadian Studies 17: 105-30.

----- (2001) "A Simple Difference of Opinion? Religious Beliefs and Gender Gaps in Public Opinion in Canada," Canadian Journal of Political Science 34: 275-98.

----- (2003) "On the Same Wavelength? Feminist Attitudes Across Generations of Canadian Women," in Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, eds., Women and Electoral Politics in Canada Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 178-91.

Piven, Francis Fox (1984) "Women and the State: Ideology, Power and the Welfare State," Socialist Review 14: 11-19.

Ruddick, Sara (1989) Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace Boston: Beacon.

Shapiro, Robert Y. and Harpreet Mahajan (1986) "Gender Differences in Policy Preferences: A Summary of Trends from the 1960s to the 1980s," Public Opinion Quarterly 50: 42-61.

Studlar, Donley T., Ian McAllister and Bernadette C. Hayes (1998) "Explaining the Gender Gap in Voting: A Cross-National Analysis," Social Science Quarterly 79: 779-98.

Terry, John (1984) "The Gender Gap: Women's Political Power," Current Issues Review Ottawa: Library of Parliament.

Togebly, Lise. 1994. "The Political Implications of Increasing Numbers of Women in the Work Force," Comparative Political Studies 27: 211-40.

Wearing, Peter, and Joseph Wearing (1991) "Does Gender Make A Difference In Voting Behaviour?" in Joseph Wearing, ed., The Ballot and Its Message: Voting in Canada Toronto: Copp, Clark, Pitman, 341-50.

Wirls, Daniel (1986) "Reinterpreting the Gender Gap" Public Opinion Quarterly 50: 316-330.

Endnotes

This research was made possible by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would also like to thank Blake Andrew for his research assistance.

¹ However, Cook and Wilcox (1991) have countered that these values are common to feminist men as well as feminist women.

² There was no election study in 1972 and so this election cannot be included in the analysis.

³ There is no hint of a gender gap in support for the Bloc. In the 2000 election, 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), but these differences were not statistically significant (see Blais et al. 2002).

⁴ Given that the vote in Canada is not a binary choice, a case could be made for using multinomial logit, instead of binary logistic regression. However, the latter is more appropriate in this case because the focus is on the choice of the NDP over all other parties, rather than the dynamics of inter-party choice.

⁵ Chi square tests indicate that the female-male difference in NDP voting was statistically significant at $p < .01$ in 1965, 1968 and 1974 and $p < .001$ in 1997 and 2000. Erickson and O'Neill (2002) offer a more qualified assessment, but their analysis does not include the 2000 election, which suggested that the "modern gender gap" may have staying power.

⁶ Chi square tests indicate that the female-male difference in Liberal voting was statistically significant at $p < .01$ in 1974 and 1988, $p < .05$ in 1980, 1984 and 1993, and $p < .10$ in 1965 and 1979.

⁷ The trend term is coded "1" for 1965 to 1993, "2" for 1997 and "3" for 2000. Allowing the decline to occur exponentially did not improve the fit. A model suggesting a modest curvilinear trend fits the data equally well. Since it does not offer an improved fit, the simpler specification is preferred.

⁸ Chi square tests indicate that the female-male difference in Conservative voting was statistically significant at $p < .01$ in 1980 and 1988 and $p < .10$ in 1979 and 1984.

⁹ However, in 1997, the gap failed to satisfy conventional levels of statistical significance. Chi square tests indicate that the female-male difference was statistically significant at $p < .01$ in 1993 and $p < .05$ in 2000.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ In the 1965 Canadian Election Study, the proportion of women in the lowest income tercile was only one point lower than the proportion of men; by the 2000 Canadian Election Study, that gap had grown to six points. The three-way interaction between gender, low income and election year just achieves statistical significance at $p < .10$ with a coefficient of $+.030$ (.017).

¹² The three-way interaction between gender, university education and election year is significant at the $p < .01$ level with a coefficient of $+.042$ (.016). On the impact of university education in the 1988 election, see Wearing and Wearing (1991).

¹³ The two-way interaction between marriage and election year is significant at $p < .01$ with a coefficient of $-.058$ (.020). This effect is similar for women and men. The three-way interaction between gender, marriage and election year fails to achieve statistical significance.

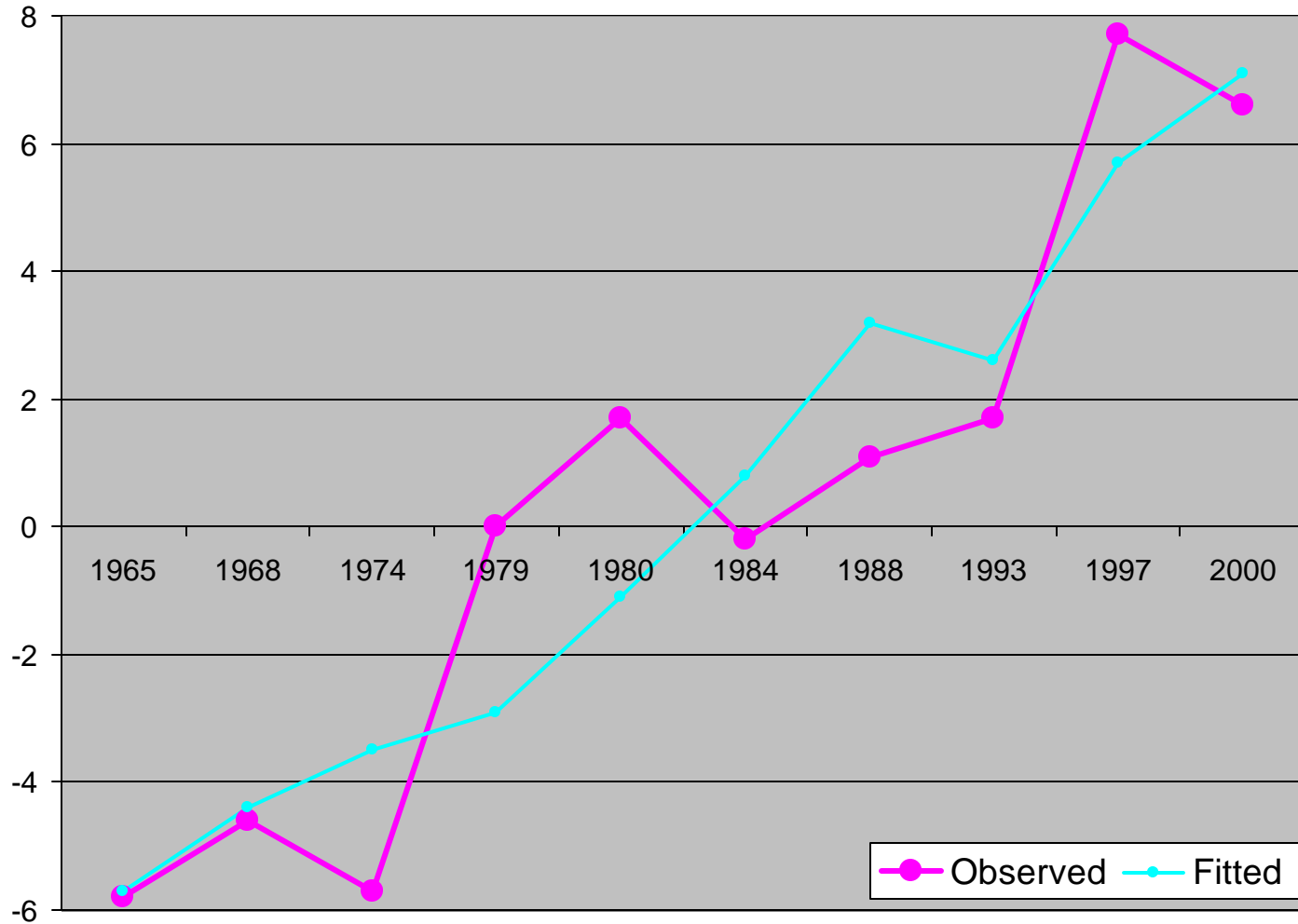
¹⁴ Everitt (1998) found that feminist mobilization appears to have affected young men and young women alike, at least on questions relating to feminism and equality.

¹⁵ The results for employment are not shown since the inclusion of this variable entails the exclusion of respondents from the 1965 Canadian Election Study (which only asked about the main wage earner in the family). When the model is re-estimated with this variable included, the coefficient is smaller than its standard error at -0.049 (.059). The other effects are unchanged, except that the marriage coefficient achieves borderline statistical significance.

¹⁶ The ratings were originally measured on a 0 to 100 scale. They have been re-scaled here to run from 0 to 10. Leader evaluations were not asked in the 1965 Canadian Election Study. In order to ensure comparability with the earlier studies (which were all post-election), the post-election evaluations are used for 1993, 1997 and 2000. In 1993, respondents who indicated that they knew nothing at all about the leader were not asked to rate that leader. Their exclusion may under-estimate negative feelings since there is evidence that most people do have feelings about leaders even if they say they know nothing about them. When asked how they feel about these leaders, people usually provide a rating and most of the time the ratings are meaningful, in the sense that they have an independent effect on their vote. However, these ratings are typically more negative than average (see Blais et al. 2000).

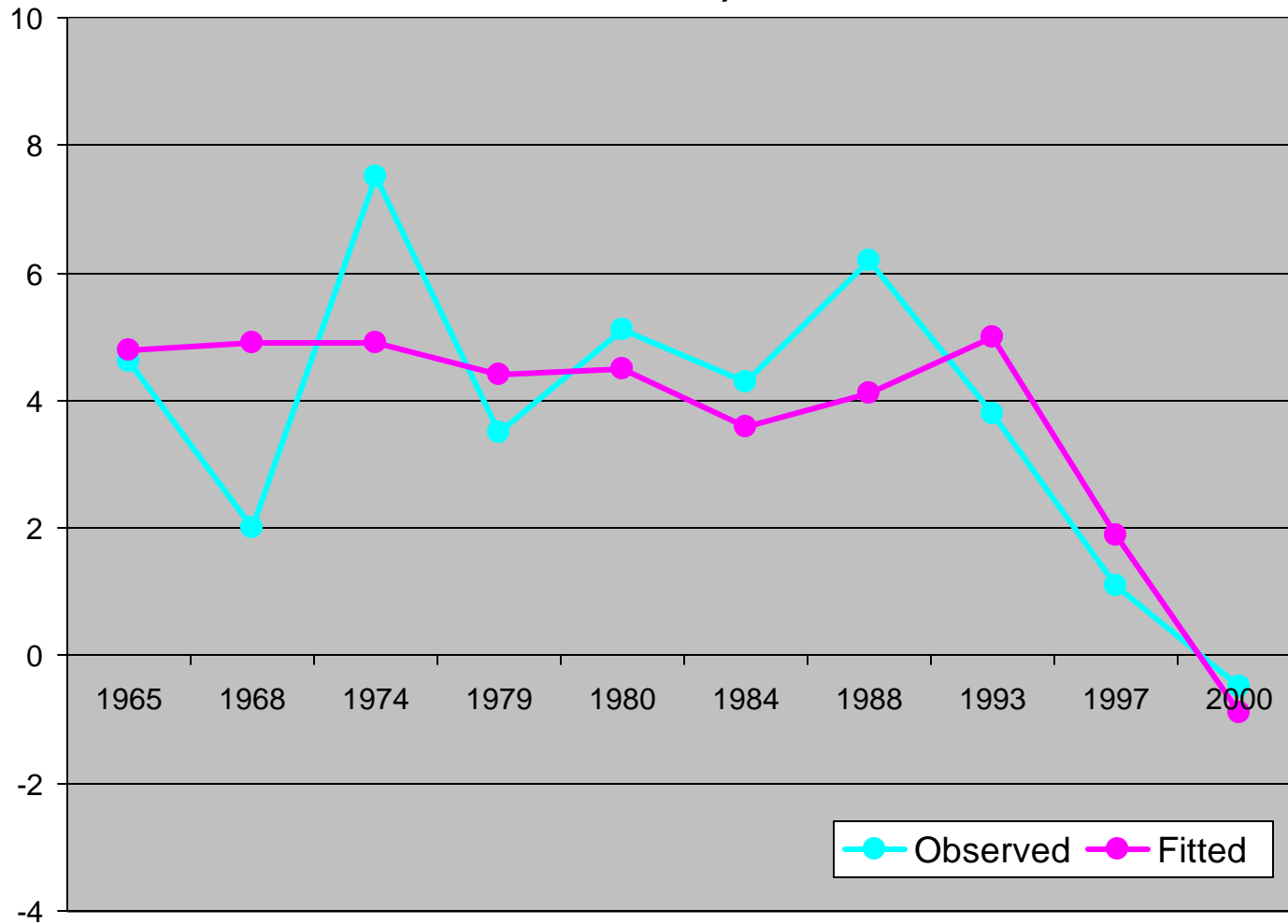
¹⁷ As Kaufmann and Petrocik readily acknowledge, this is in itself not a novel argument. Wirls (1986), in particular, made a similar point in discussing the gender gap in the 1980 US presidential election.

Figure 1: The Gender Gap in NDP Voting, 1965-2000 (outside Quebec)



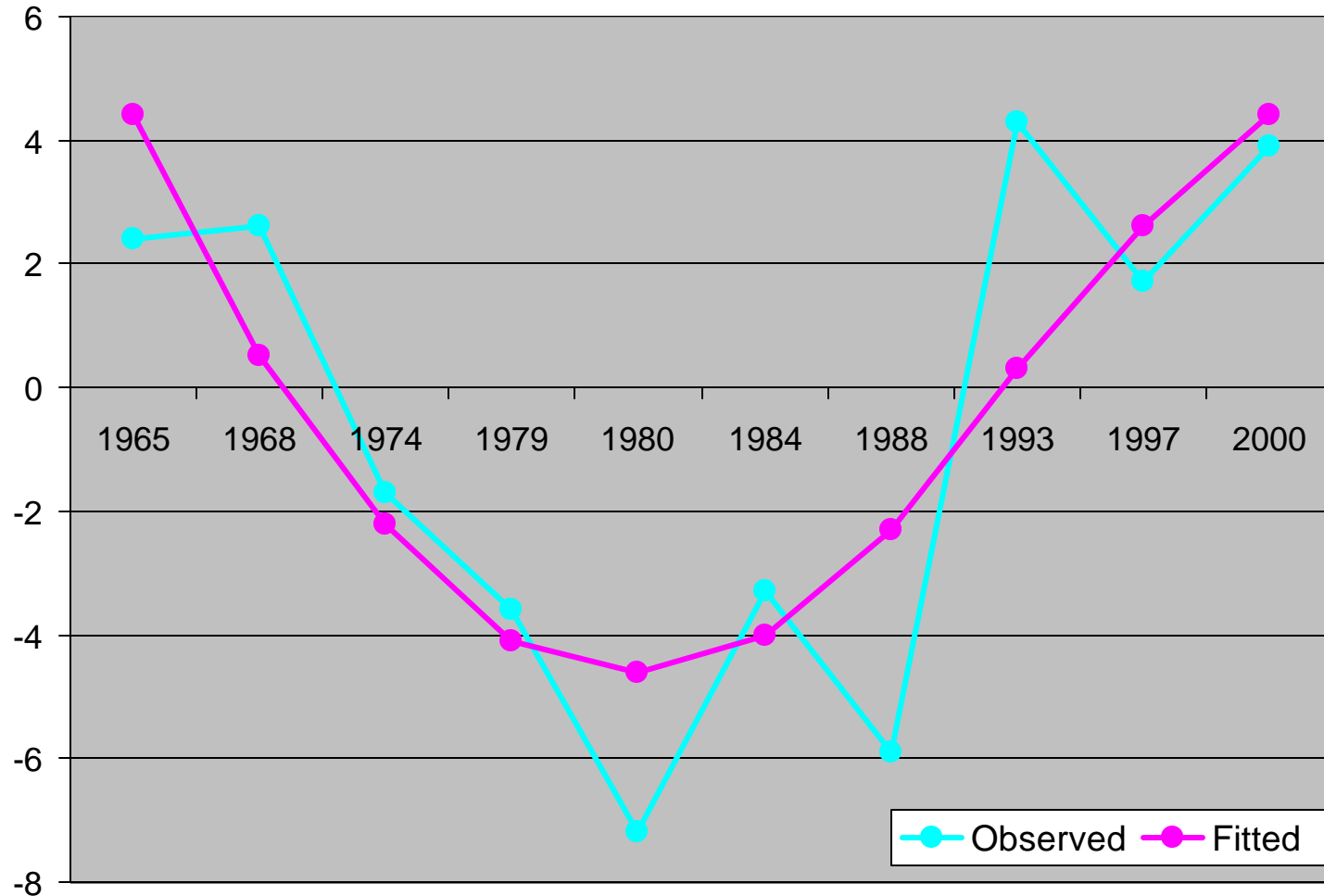
Note: The gender gap is calculated by subtracting the male NDP vote share from the female NDP vote share. A negative (positive) value indicates that women were less (more) likely to vote NDP than men.

Figure 2: The Gender Gap in Liberal Voting, 1965-2000 (outside Quebec)



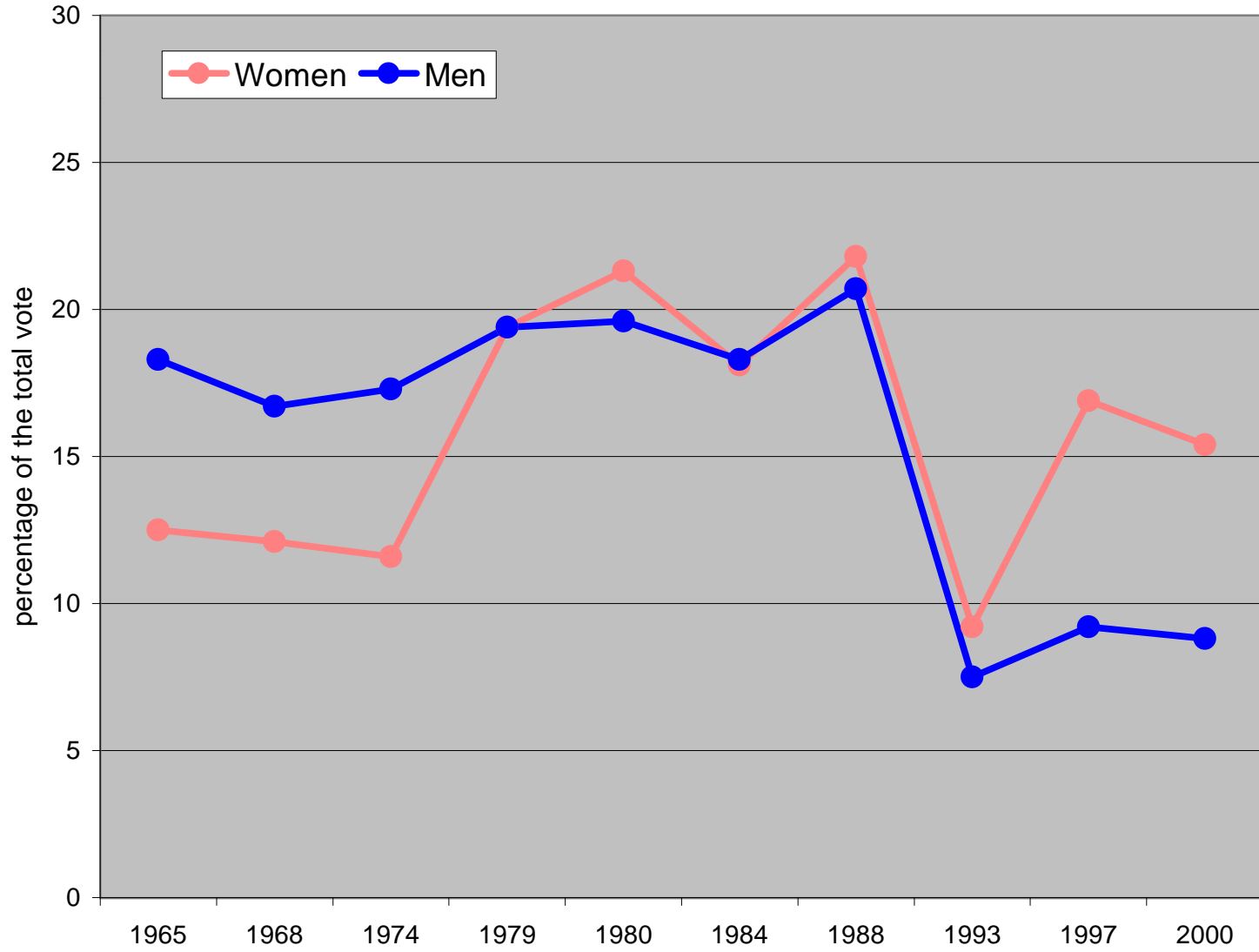
Note: The gender gap is calculated by subtracting the male Liberal vote share from the female Liberal vote share. A negative (positive) value indicates that women were less (more) likely to vote Liberal than men.

Figure 3: The Gender Gap in Conservative Voting, 1965-2000 (outside Quebec)

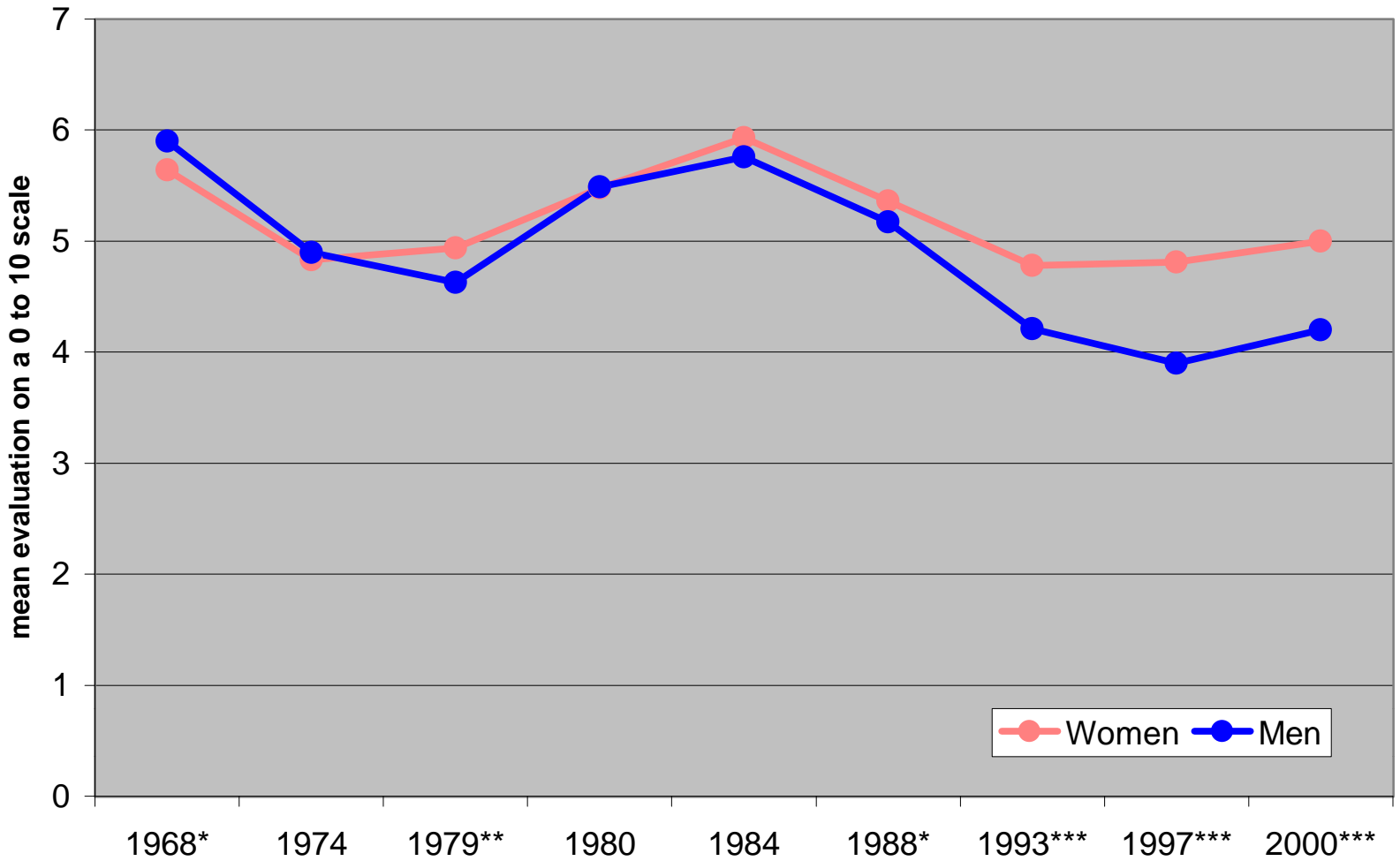


Note: The gender gap is calculated by subtracting the male Conservative vote share from the female Conservative vote share. A negative (positive) value indicates that women were less (more) likely to vote Conservative than men.

Figure 4: Gender and NDP Voting, 1965-2000 (outside Quebec)



**Figure 5: Trends in Evaluations of the NDP Leader, 1965-2000
(outside Quebec)**



Note: Male-female differences are significant at: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$