The Growth of Women's Representation in the Canadian House of Commons and the Election of 1984: A Reappraisal

Donley T. Studlar; Richard E. Matland


Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-4239%28199403%2927%3C53%3ATGOWRI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I

*Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* is currently published by Canadian Political Science Association.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/cpsa.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
The Growth of Women’s Representation in the Canadian House of Commons and the Election of 1984: A Reappraisal*

DONLEY T. STUDDLAR  West Virginia University
RICHARD E. MATLAND  University of Houston

Introduction

Despite being far from numerical equality in terms of legislative representation, Canadian women have made significant gains in the past decade. Before the federal election of 1993, Canada ranked second in its female representation among industrialized democracies with single-member district electoral systems; at 13 per cent, Canada had a higher proportion of women than several proportional representation countries.¹ The 1984 election was the turning point. The number of fe-

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the Midwest Association of Canadian Studies meetings, Springfield, Missouri, 1992. Donley Studlar wishes to thank the American Political Science Association for support of this research through its small grant program for faculty in non-Ph.D. institutions, Oklahoma State University for aid through the Dean’s Incentive Grant Program, and the Department of Political Science at the University of Waterloo, his host in the summer of 1991. Richard Matland wishes to thank the North American Treaty Organization for support of this research through its Studies in Democratic Institutions Program. David Scribner and David Wright of the University of Houston were excellent research assistants. Various advice and data were provided by Sylvia Bashykin, Sandra Burt, Harold Clarke, Munroe Eagles, Frank Feigert, Christine Jackson, Michael Martinez, William Mishler, Adele Pawley, Howard Pawley, Peter Woolstencroft, Frank Baumgartner and Maggie Sullivan. Only the authors bear responsibility for the analysis, interpretation and conclusions.


Donley T. Studlar, Department of Political Science, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506-6317, USA
Richard E. Matland, Department of Political Science, University of Houston, Houston, Texas 77204-3474, USA

male candidates for all three major parties nearly doubled, and the percentage of female MPs jumped from 5 to 10. In the 1988 election female candidacies for major parties increased further, and female MPs increased to 13 per cent. What has changed in Canada in the 1980s to bring about this increased representation for women at the federal level?

Comparative research in political science has long identified single-member district electoral systems, in which only one person is elected to serve a constituency, as a major hindrance to women becoming legislators. The major problem seems to be that each contest, and indeed each party nomination, becomes a zero-sum game in which only one contestant can win. Given women’s other disadvantages in running for seats, it is little wonder that, especially in the race for winnable seats, women tend to lose to a male candidate. Unlike systems of proportional representation, parties do not need to run “balanced tickets” in each district; with only one candidate per seat, they cannot. Furthermore, once ensconced in a seat, incumbents are difficult to remove. It is, therefore, not surprising that Canada does not have a large female contingent in the House of Commons. Yet in the 1980s, Canada be-

Run: The Critical Contextual Factors in Women’s Legislative Representation,” Western Political Quarterly 34 (1981), 60-77. There are currently six single-member district electoral systems among the central legislatures of industrialized democracies: Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, the Japanese single nontransferable vote system effectively functions as a single-member district system, even though it is formally a multimember district system.


Abstract. In the 1980s, Canada went from having one of the lowest levels of female representation in its national legislature to having one of the highest among countries with single-member district electoral systems. The authors examine the common assertion that this increase was largely due to the surprising Progressive Conservative landslide in the 1984 federal election. By simulating plausible alternative election results they find there would have been a substantial increase in the number of women in the parliament, regardless of how the vote split in 1984. The simulations are followed by probit analyses for 1980, 1984 and 1988 which examine what factors affected the probability a major-party candidate would be a woman and what factors affected the probability that a successful candidate would be a woman.

Résumé. Le Canada a commencé les années quatre-vingtièmes avec un des plus faibles pourcentages de femmes dans sa législature nationale parmi les pays à circonscription parlementaires uninominales; à la fin de la décennie, ce pourcentage était parmi les plus forts. Les auteurs examinent l'idée répandue voulant que cet accroissement de la représentation féminine soit dû au surprenant ras-de-mare à la partie conservatrice aux élections fédérales de 1984. En simulant plusieurs résultats électoraux alternatifs, les auteurs démontrent qu'il y avait tout de même eu un accroissement important du nombre de femmes parlementaires en dépit de la forte progression du parti P.-C. Ces simulations sont suivies d'analyses probit des élections de 1980, 1984 et 1988 qui examinent les facteurs déterminant la probabilité de succès d'une femme comme candidate d'un parti majoritaire, et ceux déterminant la probabilité que le candidat victorieux soit une femme.

came a leader rather than a laggard in women's legislative representation among countries which employ single-member district electoral systems.

Since women usually achieve better representation among leftist parties, one would not expect that two elections in which the Progressive Conservatives won overwhelming victories would be especially beneficial for women's representation. Nevertheless, several commentators have attributed the increase in women particularly to the fact that the Conservatives nominated several women for what were originally thought to be hopeless seats in Quebec in 1984. When the partisan tide turned and the Conservatives won an overwhelming victory, these women were swept into office, and many retained their seats in 1988.

This explanation, however, may be too simple. Not all of the increase in female MPs in 1984 occurred in Quebec. While 11 women were elected from Quebec, an additional eight were elected in the other provinces which had previously returned only two women. When the 1988 election resulted in a further increase in Conservative female MPs, some researchers suggested that after 1984 a "new dynamic" developed in all parties whereby women no longer were satisfied to be nominated for unwinnable seats, but others remain unconvinced. As

"Legislative Turnover and the Election of Women to the Canadian House of Commons," in Megey, ed., Women in Canadian Politics, 81-99.
5 Norris, Politics and Sexual Equality, 126-30.
7 Young, "Legislative Turnover and the Election of Women," 84.
Brodie and Chandler put it: "Any optimism about the inevitability of women's representational gains should be tempered with a hard dose of political reality. Nominating women to seemingly lost-cause ridings and waiting for electoral volatility and an unexpected electoral tide to sweep them into office is hardly a promising strategy for increasing the political representation of women in Canada." This article examines the general relationship between political parties and female candidates, alternative scenarios for the 1984 election, and what social and political factors affect women's nomination and election.

**Canadian Parties, Elections and Women's Representation**

As in other single-member district countries, women in the Canadian Parliament have been rare. The 1980s have witnessed, however, a substantial increase in both feminist consciousness and the ability to focus demands on the political system. Perhaps the foremost example of this was the ability of women's groups to persuade the Liberal federal government in 1982 to incorporate language favourable to gender equality in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Women activists have also been interested in increasing the number of women in positions of political power. Table 1 shows the distribution of female candidates and MPs among the three major parties of Canada for the five federal elections from 1974 through 1988. After the 1979 election women were 3.5 per cent of federal MPs. In 1980 this rose to 5 per cent, in 1984 it leaped to 9.6 per cent, and in 1988 increased further to 13 per cent. Other single-member district systems have not shown such rapid increases in representation, despite considerable pressure from women's advocacy groups.

Table 1 indicates that, unlike many European countries, it has not been the leftist parties that have taken the lead in bringing women in appreciable numbers to the Canadian House of Commons. In fact the big leap forward in female representation occurred in 1984, when a large number of Conservative women were elected in the Conservative sweep. Representation continued to increase in 1988 as all three parties increased their number of women in the House.

If we consider internal party policy, rather than seats in the House of Commons, it is not the Conservatives, but rather the New Demo-

---

The Growth of Women's Representation in the House of Commons

cratic party which has most strongly promoted women. Beginning in the 1970s, the NDP began organizational efforts particularly directed at women and adopted the most avowedly feminist policy positions, advocating women's equality through affirmative action in both the public and private spheres. Furthermore, the NDP has traditionally had the most women candidates in federal elections, even if not the most elected (Table 1).

**Table 1**

**Women as Candidates and MPs by Party and Year of Election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Candidates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>(72)</td>
<td>(82)</td>
<td>(70)</td>
<td>(131)</td>
<td>(174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female MPs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a The first number in each cell is the percentage and the second the actual number of women.


11 When the NDP has won power recently on the provincial level, these victories have been accompanied by significant increases in women's representation. In 1990 the unexpected NDP majority (74 of 130 seats) obtained in the provincial election in On-
The NDP has clearly been the leader in progressive party policies for women's advancement and in selecting women as federal parliamentary candidates in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the bulk of female representatives in the House has been provided by the Conservatives and Liberals. While being less supportive of specific feminist issue positions, the Conservatives and Liberals have both increased their proportion of candidates who are women in the 1980s. This may be partially due to internal pressure to provide greater access, but it is also possible that for competitive reasons these parties felt a need to react to the NDP's strong promotion of women.\textsuperscript{12}

Party competition changed significantly in the 1980s. Although still decidedly the third party, the NDP vote crept up to a persistent 20 per cent level. No longer were there many, if any, safe seats for either the Liberal or Conservative parties. If Canadian elections before the 1980s were characterized as having a volatile electorate but stable outcomes, in the 1980s both the electorate and the outcomes became more volatile.\textsuperscript{13} The Conservatives twice overwhelmingly won in Quebec, in a manner reminiscent of earlier Liberal dominance in that province. The Liberals reached a low ebb as a viable electoral opponent in the West, where the New Democrats became the major federal opposition party.\textsuperscript{14}

In such an environment of unpredictability from one election to the next, it is hard to think in terms of safe seats for a party.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, Ontario brought 20 women to the legislature, and the Ontario New Democrats established a provincial cabinet which was more than one third female. For discussion, see Bashevkin, "Women's Participation in Political Parties"; and Bashevkin, "Building a Political Voice." Similar advances for women in both legislative representation and cabinet positions occurred with the victory of the New Democrats in provincial elections in British Columbia and Saskatchewan in 1991. On the federal level the NDP had the first female party leader, Audrey McLaughlin, and in 1991 adopted a position that one half of all their candidates for the next federal election should be women, visible minorities and handicapped people.

\textsuperscript{12} In short, there could be a contagion from the left in nominating female candidates without such parties having to lead in electing female candidates. See Donley T. Studlar and Susan Welsh, "The Party System and the Representation of Women in English Metropolitan Boroughs," \textit{Electoral Studies} 11 (1992), 63-69.


\textsuperscript{14} After 1988, the Bloc Québécois formed as a federal splinter party from the Conservatives, and the Reform party surged in popular opinion eastward from its Alberta base.

massive voter shifts such as in Quebec in the federal election of 1984 suggest that close party competition is now the norm. Much of this party competition involves two parties presenting viable candidates in a constituency, but sometimes, particularly in Ontario, it means strong three-party competition.

In this atmosphere of intense competition for the votes of a variety of groups, parties are paying more attention to women and women's issues. The election of 1984 was the first in which there were more major-party than minor-party female candidates. Furthermore, in 1984 one of the three campaign debates among the party leaders was devoted exclusively to women's issues. By 1988 all three parties had set aside special campaign funds to aid the election of their female candidates. Despite these central party actions supporting women, it is important to note that the selection of federal candidates in Canada is very much a local constituency operation, with few tools other than moral suasion available to central party organizations. Even the necessity of having the party leader approve the nominee in each riding has not shifted power appreciably toward the central party organization. The crucial decision as to who will be the party's candidate for the House of Commons is usually decided in local party meetings.

It has been well established that, for a variety of social, situational and institutional reasons, the proportion of women contesting nominations is far below their proportion of the electorate. Canada is no different. As in several other countries, however, the development of "second-wave" feminism in Canada led to an increasing political engagement among women. Women became increasingly active in party politics in the 1970s. As Table 1 shows, there was a delayed effect as these in-
creases in the number of female activists in the 1970s did not produce a significant increase in major party candidates until 1984. This was followed by another significant increase in female candidates in 1988.

Consideration of individual party actions and the historical trends affecting representation of women in the House of Commons provide an important contextual understanding of how representation is changing. This review indicates that one important reason for the rise in female MPs may be the increased number of nominated candidates. We would like to move beyond the contextual data to consider the Canadian case in a broader theoretical perspective. Statistical analyses drawing on comparative research hypotheses on women’s representation also provide useful suggestions as to why women increased their representation dramatically in the 1980s. Before turning to those theories, however, we take a closer look at the 1984 election and at the currently accepted wisdom on why women’s representation increased dramatically in 1984.

Alternative Scenarios for the 1984 Election

As Table 1 shows, the major jump in female representation occurred in 1984. This becomes a critical election to examine if we are to understand the dynamics of changing female representation in Canada. The standard explanation has been that the jump in female representation was a “September surprise,” second only to the surprise created by the size of the Conservative landslide. In evaluating the results there is a natural and understandable desire to compare the 1984 election results with the 1980 election results. In that comparison one quickly notes the impressive gains by both the Conservatives and women in the 1984 election. It is also obvious that many of the new female MPs are Conservatives from Quebec, where that party made an astonishing leap from 13 per cent of the vote in 1980 to 50 per cent of the vote in 1984. The seemingly logical conclusion to be drawn is that women’s representation increased largely because candidates who were nominated in lost-cause ridings surprisingly came out as winners. The implication is that women were “lucky” to have increased their representation by so much.

There is, however, a critical flaw in this thinking. The counterfactual which the 1984 results are compared with are the 1980 results. This is not the correct comparison if we are trying to gauge the validity of the assertion that the big increase in women’s representation was a surprise. To estimate whether the substantial increase in female representation could only have occurred in conjunction with a Conservative landslide we have constructed two separate simulations to see what female representation would have been had two other plausible outcomes occurred.
### TABLE 2

**SIMULATIONS OF 1984 CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(193)</td>
<td>(212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(35 )</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(255)</td>
<td>(282)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Simulation 1: Based on 1980 election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(98)</td>
<td>(103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(130)</td>
<td>(147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(255)</td>
<td>(282)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Simulation 2: Based on pre-election polling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(172)</td>
<td>(183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(81)</td>
<td>(97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(255)</td>
<td>(282)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

a The first number in each cell is the percentage elected and the second the actual number elected.
Table 2 compares the actual outcome with two plausible hypothetical alternatives. Simulation 1 assumes that the 1984 results merely replicated the 1980 results. In other words, whichever party won the seat in 1980 is also chosen as the winner of the 1984 election. While this obviously did not happen, the results are not an unreasonable estimate of what might have happened. At a minimum, parties could reasonably assume that any constituency they won in 1980 was a constituency where they would at least be competitive in 1984. Therefore they would want to nominate good candidates for such seats. These were not "lost cause" ridings in which the nomination of sacrificial lambs was in order.

The results in simulation 1 show a precipitous drop in the number of Conservative MPs who are women from 19 to 5. This is entirely made up for, however, by an almost equally large increase in Liberal female MPs, from 5 to 17, and a smaller increase in female NDP MPs, from 3 to 5. Thus we conclude that had the results of 1980 been replicated riding by riding in 1984 women would have won 27 seats in the House of Commons, the exact number they won under a far different election outcome in the actual election of 1984.

Why such a major shift in party fortunes would not have led to a difference in the percentage of women in the House of Commons lies in the fact that the Liberals, who under the simulation would have gained 97 more seats than they did in the actual election, nominated almost twice as many women in 1984 as did the Conservatives. Our simulation shows that these women were not disproportionately nominated in unwinnable seats, but that many of them were chosen for seats which the Liberals held in 1980.

Simulation 2 takes a different, and in some ways more realistic, starting point. This simulation is based on combined national Gallup poll data for January, February and March 1984. This is a pivotal point because at approximately this time many local party organizations were having their nomination meetings. As noted earlier, much has been made of the surprising Conservative victory in Quebec in the September 1984 election; it has been suggested that the Conservative women who won had been nominated expecting to be sacrificial lambs. Yet well before the election there were clear signs that the Conservatives would do considerably better in Quebec than they had done in the recent past. Brian Mulroney had been chosen party leader in 1983 at least partially on the basis of a vow to revitalize the party in Quebec. Conservative party standing in the polls was up considerably, and in the spring party officials interviewed in conjunction with nomination meetings were talking about winning from 25 to 30 seats in Quebec.21 Their

21 Anthony Wilson-Smith, "The Tory Revival in Quebec," Maclean's, April 9, 1984, 14-16.
final victory was considerably larger, 58 seats, but it is obvious that already at the time of nominations the party did not believe their Quebec candidates were necessarily going to be sacrificial lambs.

To estimate what the 1984 election results would have been had the results from early 1984 represented the final outcome, the polling data for the three months were pooled by province. The polling data do not show significant movement over these three months. Therefore we are confident that each poll represents a draw from the same distribution and pooling is appropriate. The data were pooled to provide larger samples and thereby insure more accurate estimates in each province. This method provides us with a total sample of over 3,100 respondents and samples of over 1,100 in Ontario and over 800 in Quebec, two crucial provinces. The level of support for the three major parties nationally when pooling the three months was 53 per cent for the Conservatives, 33 per cent for the Liberals and 12 per cent for the NDP. This compares with the 1980 election outcome where the Conservatives received 33 per cent of the vote, the Liberals 44 per cent and the NDP 20 per cent.

The data were broken down to the provincial level and the 1984 Gallup data were compared with the provincial levels of support in the 1980 data. Based on this comparison, each party's level of support in each riding was adjusted to reflect the change in party support at the provincial level. Obviously there would be some slippage since it is highly unlikely that the provincial pattern of support changes are perfectly replicated in each riding. Nevertheless, the general provincial pattern should affect each of its constituent ridings. In most ridings this mechanism provides clear winners; in 250 of the 282 ridings the hypothetical margin of victory was greater than 10 per cent. In addition, where the margin was less than 10 per cent, the deviations from our predicted pattern would not have produced substantial differences in terms of the gender make-up of the House of Commons. The results in the second simulation mirror those of the first. There is a decrease in female Conservative MPs from the actual results, but this is made up for by an increase in female Liberal MPs. The final estimate is once again exactly 27 female MPs.

22 For example, in Ontario the three-party vote in 1980 was Conservative 35 per cent, Liberal 42 per cent and NDP 22 per cent, while the early 1984 Gallup totals were Conservative 54 per cent, Liberal 33 per cent and NDP 13 per cent. Therefore in each Ontario riding the 1980 Conservative vote total was increased by 54 per cent (54/35), the Liberal vote total was decreased by 21 per cent (33/42) and the NDP vote total decreased by 41 per cent (13/22).

23 We examined the sensitivity of our results by testing for a change in gender make-up if the 32 races where the margin of victory was less than 10 per cent had been won by the party which finished second. In four cases women would have lost seats, but in four other cases the new winning MP would have been a woman.
We do not believe that exactly 27 female MPs was the inevitable outcome of the 1984 federal election, but it is striking that in the three results described in Table 2 all voting scenarios led to the same number of women. These three radically different scenarios include a Conservative landslide with a decimated Liberal party, a Conservative victory over a solid Liberal party where the NDP almost disappears, and a repeat of 1980 which produced a Liberal victory over a strong Conservative party. About the only scenario which has not been tested is an extremely strong NDP showing. Since all the polling data indicated that the NDP was much closer to a disastrous election than a great victory, it seems highly implausible that a strong NDP showing would have been a reasonable a priori prediction for 1984. Nevertheless, if a strong NDP showing had occurred, we believe the result would have most likely been an increase in the number of women in the House of Commons. This seems a reasonable prediction, since the NDP nominated a substantially higher percentage of women than the other two parties.

The simulations show that women had enough nominations for quality seats in the Liberal party so that an increase in the Liberal party performance would have brought in sufficient women to compensate for losses among Conservative female candidates. Women's gains in representation in 1984 were solidly based, not accidentally based, in their increased candidacies for competitive seats in all parties. As far as women were concerned, there was no need for a September surprise in Quebec to increase their representation.

The simulations indicate that the crucial factor in 1984 was the increased number of female candidates, not the specific constellation of party votes. To the degree this is true it becomes important to consider what factors help or hinder women in becoming candidates in the three major parties.

**Multivariate Analysis of Women’s Candidacies**

We provide a data-based analysis of the factors affecting the probability that the nominated candidate for one of the three major parties is a woman. This is followed by an analysis of the factors affecting the probability that an MP is a woman. Our data are the aggregate electoral results for the three major-party candidates, by riding, for the Canadian federal elections of 1980, 1984 and 1988. In addition, extensive data are taken from the 1981 and 1986 censuses.25 Using three federal

---


elections allows us to see if trends changed over the course of the decade.

The dependent variable in the first set of equations is whether the party's nominated candidate is male or female (Sex = 1 if candidate is female). Since this is a dichotomous variable, probit is the preferred data-analytic technique. In this case probit also has the convenient property that it allows us to make estimates of the effects of each variable which are readily interpretable in percentage terms, controlling for other variables in the equation. We will be able to estimate the probability that any single candidate is a woman based on characteristics of the district and the candidate.

Independent Variables Affecting Women's Candidacies

There are several variables which have been identified in comparative research on women's representation that affect the probability that women will be candidates or elected representatives. This literature provides a number of plausible hypotheses which can be tested with these data.

One factor found to be of considerable significance in other countries is incumbency. Particularly in the United States, the extremely low rate of turnover in the US Congress has been seen as a serious impediment to women gaining more equitable representation. As federal MPs have historically been overwhelmingly male, it is also quite likely that incumbency has a negative impact on the probability that a candidate is female in Canada. It should be pointed out, however, that Canada has traditionally had high levels of legislative turnover, and this has provided women greater opportunities to become candidates. Candidate incumbency is measured as a dummy variable, 1 if the nominee is an incumbent, 0 otherwise. The expectation is that candidate incumbency should have a strong negative effect on the probability a nominee is a woman.

A factor which has received considerable emphasis in the literature is the competitiveness of the riding. It has been argued that parties

---


tend to nominate women in ridings where the party does not expect to do well. 29 In effect, women are chosen as sacrificial lambs. This hypothesis can be tested by developing a measure of how competitive the party was at the last election. Party competitiveness is measured by taking the party’s percentage of the three-party vote, in those ridings where the party did not win, and subtracting the winning party’s percentage of the three-party vote (these numbers are all negative). 30 In those ridings where the party won, one starts with the party’s percentage of the three-party vote and subtracts the vote percentage of the second-place party (these numbers are all positive). This scale provides an estimate based on the previous election of how competitive the party is in that riding. If there is a party bias against women in the strongest ridings, one should expect that as the party’s strength increases, the probability the candidate would be a woman decreases.

A final political variable which may affect the probability a candidate is a woman is political party. As noted in our earlier discussion, the NDP has been the most active in promoting women’s issues. In terms of representation, this should mean that being an NDP candidate should have a positive effect on the probability a candidate is a woman. Both the NDP and the Liberal party are entered into the equation as dummy variables.

In addition to the political variables, there are several social context variables which are mentioned in the literature as affecting the probability that the local party organization will nominate a woman. Moncrief and Thompson have shown that women are more likely to win nominations for provincial legislatures in urban ridings than in rural ridings. 31 We considered using a measure of urbanization, but in most cases we believe urbanization is a proxy for other variables. That is, it is not urbanization per se which leads to a more favourable envi-


30 There was a reapportionment of the federal electoral districts between the 1984 and 1988 elections. The number of constituencies was expanded from 282 to 295 and numerous borders were redrawn. Since the party competitiveness measure depends upon data from the previous election, this causes some problems for our 1988 probits. Elections Canada, however, has taken the 1984 electoral results and transposed them onto the newly reapportioned districts, providing estimates for party vote for all of the 295 districts based on the 1984 election results. We use these hypothetical results for the 1984 elections to estimate party competitiveness for 1988.

The Growth of Women’s Representation in the House of Commons

environment for women, but other factors which are correlated with urban areas. We believe cities provide a better environment for female candidates because cities have more of the specific attributes which are important in recruiting women as candidates. Among these are groups organized around women’s interests, a well-educated constituency and a higher level of women’s labour force participation.

While we do not have data on women’s political organizations, we do have data on education levels and women’s labour force participation rates (WLFPR) by riding. These data are provided on a riding-by-riding basis by Statistics Canada in their five-year census. We measure education as the percentage of the population above 15 years having either a university degree or some university education. We expect this to have a positive effect on the probability a nominee is a woman both because of greater tolerance among well-educated voters and more importantly because these ridings would have a greater pool of women who have the “appropriate” characteristics for parliamentary nominees. Research looking at the backgrounds of parliamentary candidates find they are more highly educated than the population as a whole and are disproportionately drawn from managerial positions and the liberal professions. Women’s labour force participation rates are also expected to have a positive effect on the probability that nominees are women. One of the clearest findings in the literature is that women who are in the labour force are far more active politically than women who are outside the labour force. It seems reasonable to us that in districts where there are high levels of women’s labour force participation there would be more qualified candidates and a greater demand for women nominees. We would therefore expect WLFPR to affect positively the probability a nominee is female. Rule found in her cross-national studies of advanced industrialized democracies that both these variables, university education and WLFPR, had positive effects on the level of

32 Thomas J. Volgy, John E. Schwarz and Hildy Gottlieb, “Female Representation and the Quest for Resources, Feminist Activism and Electoral Success,” Social Science Quarterly 71 (1990), 156-68.

33 The census was taken in 1981 and 1986. The data from the 1981 census is used for both the 1980 and 1984 probit results. The 1986 census is used for the 1988 probit results. This does introduce some slippage as the data are not collected in the election year. Since these variables are primarily demographic characteristics of each riding, however, we are reasonably confident that there is unlikely to be major change in the two- or three-year period from data collection to the election in which they are used.


female representation in national legislatures. Norris’s cross-national study found effects for education, but not WLFPR. In looking at US state legislatures, Rule found that WLFPR positively affected the proportion of the state legislature which was female. Rule also found, in her studies of female representation in national legislatures, two other variables which had a significant impact on female representation: the level of unemployment and the percentage of the population who were Catholic. Unemployment had a negative impact on the percentage of the national legislature which was female; Catholicism also had a negative impact on women’s level of representation in national legislatures. Rule argues that unemployment is an indicator of depressed economic conditions which will hurt women’s chances to be elected, while adherence to Catholicism should have a negative effect, because the Church is more traditional and conservative on the proper role of women in society (in her sample of advanced industrialized democracies the non-Catholic countries were predominantly Protestant). Again using census data we can test whether we find the same effects within Canada that Rule found across countries.

**Female Candidates in 1980, 1984 and 1988**

Table 3 shows the results of the probit equations estimating the likelihood of a candidate being a woman for the three elections. The dependent variable is candidate gender (1 = female, 0 = male). The independent variables are candidate incumbency, party competitiveness, NDP candidates, Liberal candidate, women’s labour force participation rate, percentage of adult population with some university education, percentage of population which is Catholic and the unemployment rate among males above 15 years of age.

As expected, a party nominee being an incumbent had a significant negative effect on the probability that the candidate was a woman. This effect was strong in all elections, but strongest in the 1984 election. These results are consistent with those from other countries: incumbency strength hurts female candidates.


37 Norris, Politics and Sexual Equality, 131.


### TABLE 3

PROBIT COEFFICIENTS FOR EQUATIONS ESTIMATING
PROBABILITY OF NOMINEE BEING FEMALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>1980&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1984&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1988&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.43&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td>-2.09&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate incumbent</td>
<td>-.44&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td>-78&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party competitiveness</td>
<td>-.0014</td>
<td>(.0029)</td>
<td>-.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>.35&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>.60&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>(.18)</td>
<td>.51&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s labour force participation rate</td>
<td>.031&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(.014)</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population with university education</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>(.011)</td>
<td>.022&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population Catholic</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>.039&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(.024)</td>
<td>.033&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> N = 825, 70 cases where y = 1.
<sup>b</sup> N = 836, 131 cases where y = 1.
<sup>c</sup> N = 884, 173 cases where y = 1.
<sup>d</sup> Significant at the .01 level, two-tailed test.
<sup>e</sup> Significant at the .05 level, two-tailed test.
<sup>f</sup> Significant at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

Looking at the effect of the competitiveness variable, which tests the party bias hypothesis, the effect is far from significant for both the 1980 and the 1984 elections. Party competitiveness does meet some minimal standards for statistical significance in the 1988 equation, but there are several reasons to be both unimpressed and sceptical of this result. First, there are reasons to be concerned about significant measurement error. The 1988 party competitiveness values are not based on real election outcomes, but rather on the creation of hypothetical election results calculated by taking the 1984 election results and mapping...
them on to the reapportioned 1988 borders. Such a mapping assumes that parties do not change their strategies when there is a new apportionment and that voters are never strategic in their vote calculation. Both of these assumptions are suspect. Second, the standard of statistical significance it meets is a weak one and the substantive effect is very weak. An increase of 20 points in party competitiveness increases the probability a party candidate will be a woman by at most 3.6 per cent; under most conditions the increase is less than 3 per cent. Third, there may be some problems disentangling the effects of candidate incumbency from party competitiveness. If they are very highly correlated it may be difficult to get independent estimates of each variable’s effect. To test the robustness of the party competitiveness effect, that is, whether the effect continues to appear when tested in a different manner, and to test whether the high correlation between candidate incumbency and party competitiveness might be causing an inflated estimate of the effect of competitiveness, probits were run where all incumbent candidates were dropped from the sample and the candidate incumbency variable was dropped from the analysis. This eliminates

41 If the analysis is limited to those ridings which maintained the same borders (approximately two thirds), and where the party competitiveness variable can be estimated based on real election results, a re-analysis shows that party competitiveness is not statistically significant. The other variables, in this reduced sample equation, maintain approximately the same strength.


43 Multicollinearity does not lead to biased estimates of the underlying relationship. High multicollinearity will, however, tend to increase the standard errors of the estimates and also lead to greater instability. The usual problem one needs to be concerned about is whether multicollinearity has caused a variable which is significant to appear statistically insignificant because of an inflated standard error. A less common problem is whether estimate instability might be the reason a variable, such as party competitiveness, appears to be significant. We are concerned here about the correlation between party competitiveness and the remaining variables, especially candidate incumbency. We tested whether party competitiveness is a linear combination of the other independent variables by regressing all the independent variables on party competitiveness. Transforming the R² into simple R, R is .81 in 1980, .73 in 1984 and .79 in 1988. These are high, and the strong correlations can affect the estimates, but they are not so high that it is impossible to get independent estimates of each variable’s effect. There is also a strong correlation between women’s labour force participation rates (WLFPR) and proportion of adult population with some university education. Regressing all the other independent variables onto WLFPR produces a simple R of .74 in 1980 and 1984 and .75 in 1988. Again these are high, but we feel confident that the independent estimates are reasonable.
incumbency as a relevant factor and allows us to isolate the effect of competitiveness. Under these conditions, the unstandardized coefficient for party competitiveness drops slightly, but far enough that it is no longer significant at the .10 level (b = −.0048, s.e. = .0030). All in all we believe the 1988 results provide, at best, very weak grounds on which to argue there is evidence that women are less likely to be candidates in ridings where the party is strong.

The nonsignificance of party competitiveness in these equations bears comment. These equations show that the quality of the constituency does not affect a woman’s chance of being nominated. Once the effects of incumbency are partialed out, women were just as likely to run in ridings the party had won in the previous election as in those the party had lost. What this means is that the often-voiced idea that women are “sacrificial lambs,” more likely to receive party nominations where the party does not expect to do well, does not hold for any of the elections in the 1980s.

The upshot of these findings is that there is little evidence of a reluctance within parties to nominate women for winnable seats. This finding is consistent with Erickson’s finding that in ridings where both men and women competed for a party’s nomination, a woman was chosen 54 per cent of the time as the party standard bearer.44 The presence of (predominantly male) incumbents for all parties means there is a greater opportunity for new candidates to stand in ridings which a party is unlikely to win. Thus much of the increase in women’s candidacies has occurred among candidates running against an incumbent, which has possibly led to the observation that women tend to be nominated for poor seats. The crucial test is, however, whether men are systematically favoured for seats when the effects of incumbency are controlled. The probits provide fairly strong evidence against such a claim.

The coefficients for the Liberal and New Democratic parties dummy variables measure the differences these variables cause in the probability that a nominee is a woman compared to a base category, which in this case is the nominee being a Conservative. The New Democrats have a statistically significant positive effect on the probability that a nominee will be a woman for the 1980 and 1984 elections; the effect is positive but not significant in 1988. Given the NDP’s strong support for women’s issues, this is not a surprising result. The Liberals were significantly more likely to nominate women only in 1984; for the two other elections there is no statistical difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Turning to the demographic variables, we find that women’s labour force participation rate coefficient is positive for all three elections, but the effect is strong enough to be statistically significant only

44 Erickson, “Women and Candidacies for the House of Commons,” 112.
in 1980. The education variable has no effect whatsoever in 1980, but then has a strong positive and statistically significant effect for both the 1984 and 1988 elections. As these two variables are strongly correlated, .63 in the 1981 census and .60 in the 1986 census, it appears likely that in the 1980s women made their greatest gains in nominations in those ridings with high levels of education and high women's labour force participation rates.

Turning to the last variables, there is no evidence that Catholicism has any effect on a woman's chances of getting nominated in the individual ridings. While Rule found an effect in her cross-national study, there is no effect here. It is possible that either the Catholic church in Canada is more liberal than in other countries or its influence is more circumscribed than elsewhere. For example, in several strongly Catholic southern European countries, the Church plays a much more active role in politics and society. It is also important to note that in Canada, Catholicism has a distinct regional flavour, with Quebec ridings being the most strongly Catholic. Alternatively, the failure to confirm at the micro level Rule's result found at the macro level may be an indication that the initial result may have been a spurious or coincidental correlation. Finally, in looking at the unemployment rate, it is barely significant (and in the opposite direction from that hypothesized by Rule) at the .10 level for the 1980 and 1984 elections; it is insignificant in the 1988 election.

Table 4 puts these results in the form of probability estimates. Unlike unstandardized regression coefficients, which have a constant impact regardless of the other variables, probit coefficients vary in effect depending upon what values the other variables take. Table 4 shows the probability that a nominee will be a woman, by year, by party, for various combinations of demographic characteristics and variations in party competitiveness. Most of these variables are self-explanatory; the only one meriting additional description is the variation in party competitiveness. Under the candidate incumbent condition, the nominee is an incumbent and the party is assumed to have won the last election by 10 per cent. Under the party incumbent condition, the incumbent has stepped aside, but the party is assumed to have won the seat in the previous election by 10 per cent. Finally, no incumbent is a condition under which it is assumed the party lost the last election by 10 per cent.46

45 The census did not report religion in its 1986 count of the Canadian people, therefore we were forced to use percentage of population with French as their mother tongue as a proxy. This variable correlated with percentage Catholic above the .90 level in the 1981 census.

46 We should mention a number of additional technical issues which were dealt with in developing this table. The table is based on the probits presented in Table 3. The percentage Catholic and level of unemployment variables were set equal to their
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low level</th>
<th>Moderate level</th>
<th>High level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incumbent</td>
<td>No incumbent</td>
<td>Incumbent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Levels low, medium and high indicate the level of women's labour force participation and the percentage of population with university education.
The probabilities range from 0.9 per cent that an incumbent candidate for the Conservatives from a riding with low levels of women’s labour force participation and a low percentage of the population with some university education would be a woman in 1980, to 29.4 per cent that a woman would be a candidate for the New Democrats running as a challenger in a riding where there were high levels of female labour force participation and a high proportion of the adult population with university education in 1988.

Table 4 visually captures a number of important trends. One obvious trend is that for all categories the probability a nominee would be a woman goes up dramatically across the three elections. There is also a clear trend that women do better in ridings with high levels of university-educated electors and where women are more active in the workforce. In terms of the effects of parties, we see that women have better chances of becoming candidates for the NDP than for the other parties. We note also that the effect of competitiveness is quite small. One can compare the party incumbent category with the no incumbent category; this is the equivalent of holding everything constant but changing party strength within the riding from winning the last election by 10 points to losing the last election by 10 points. The maximum effect for this 20-point shift in competitiveness is in 1988 for the NDP, where there is an increase of 3.6 per cent in the probability that a candidate would be a woman. Finally, it is important to note that while the 1988 probabilities are significantly higher than the 1980 probabilities, even under the most favourable circumstances the probability that a candidate will be a woman is less than one third. There is still a long way to go before there is equality in nominations.

Perhaps the most striking result in Table 4 is that women were most unlikely to be the party’s candidate when the candidate was an income and included in the constant. These two variables have very weak effects and even changing them substantially from the levels they were set at would not have noticeably affected the probability estimates. The ridings are characterized by low, moderate or high levels of women’s labour force participation and adults with university education. It is reasonable to couple these variables as they were strongly correlated in the data set ($R = .63$ and $.60$). For the estimates of low levels these two variables were set equal to their value at the 25th percentile mark. The moderate estimates were set equal to the value at the 50th percentile, and the high estimates were set equal to the value at the 75th percentile. For the 1980 and 1984 elections, the values for women’s labour force participation were 45.33 per cent (25th percentile), 50.44 per cent (50th percentile) and 56.12 per cent (75th percentile). The values for percentage of adult population with some university education were 10.14 per cent (25th percentile), 12.87 per cent (50th percentile) and 18.16 per cent (75th percentile). For the 1988 election, the values for women’s labour force participation were 50.51 per cent (25th percentile), 55.40 per cent (50th percentile) and 60.01 per cent (75th percentile). The values for percentage of adult population with some university education were 11.81 per cent (25th percentile), 14.68 per cent (50th percentile) and 21.78 per cent (75th percentile).
cumbent. As can be seen for all three types of ridings presented and for all three parties, the probability that an incumbent candidate would be a woman is in the single digits for all conditions in the 1980 and 1984 election. It does reach double digits under some conditions in 1988, but the probabilities are still low. Ironically, it is within the ranks of the party most aggressive in pushing women’s candidacies, the NDP, that incumbency most hinders women’s progress. Especially in 1984, but also in 1988, women received a substantial boost in their probability of being the candidate when an NDP incumbent stepped down. These numbers show that while women have been increasing their share of candidacies overall, they are most clearly hindered by the power of incumbency. Even though the turnover of MPs in the Canadian House of Commons is large by comparative standards, it is very unusual for a riding party to deny renomination to a sitting MP. Legislators may retire voluntarily or voters may retire them; party riding associations rarely do.

The effects of the various riding types is less dramatic, but there is a clear trend. For all three parties in 1988 there was a 6-10 per cent higher probability of women being nominated in ridings with high levels of education and an active female work force than in ridings with low levels of education and work force participation. Under every condition presented, moving from the low labour force/low education category to the high labour force/high education category results in an increase of more than 50 per cent in the probability the candidate would be a woman. For example, there was an 11.9 per cent probability of a woman being a Conservative nominee in a riding which that party held, but where the incumbent was not running, when the riding had low levels of education and labour force activity. This percentage increased to 19.8 per cent in a high education, high labour force participation riding.

**Female Members of Parliament in 1980, 1984 and 1988**

Thus far we have concentrated on nominees; we now turn to a consideration of winners. Do the variables having an effect on the probability of a nominee being a woman have the same effect on the probability that an MP is a woman? The unemployment number and the percentage Catholic exhibited little indication of being significant for nominees and are therefore dropped from this analysis. Otherwise the equations include the same independent variables considered for nominees.

Table 5 shows the results from the probit equations developed for factors affecting the probability that a member of parliament would be

48 Williams, “Candidate Selection,” 99-100; and Erickson and Carley, “Parties and Candidate Selection,” 342.
a women for the elections of 1980, 1984 and 1988. Incumbency shows a consistently negative effect, although it is statistically significant in only one case.

**TABLE 5**

**PROBIT ESTIMATES OF PROBABILITY THAT AN MP IS A WOMAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>1980(^d)</th>
<th>1984(^b)</th>
<th>1988(^c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.28(^d) (1.18)</td>
<td>-3.44(^d) (1.06)</td>
<td>-1.90(^c) (.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate incumbent</td>
<td>-.50 (.37)</td>
<td>-.63(^e) (.28)</td>
<td>-.14 (.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party competitiveness</td>
<td>.0025 (.0064)</td>
<td>-.0055 (.0040)</td>
<td>-.0138(^e) (.0057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>.53 (.48)</td>
<td>.30 (.37)</td>
<td>-.45 (.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>.53 (.37)</td>
<td>.79(^e) (.38)</td>
<td>-.44 (.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's labour force participation rate</td>
<td>.035 (.025)</td>
<td>.038(^f) (.022)</td>
<td>.014 (.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population with university education</td>
<td>-.017 (.025)</td>
<td>.011 (.016)</td>
<td>.023(^f) (.013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) N = 277, 11 cases where y = 1.
\(^b\) N = 278, 27 cases where y = 1.
\(^c\) N = 295, 39 cases where y = 1.
\(^d\) Significant at the .01 level, two-tailed test.
\(^e\) Significant at the .05 level, two-tailed test.
\(^f\) Significant at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

The variable testing the party bias hypothesis presents a mixed bag. In 1980 and 1984 the party competitiveness variable is not significant, contrary to what would be expected according to the party bias hypothesis. In 1988, however, party competitiveness is statistically significant and does indicate that as a party's traditional competitiveness in the riding increases, the probability an MP would be a woman diminishes. The effect is stronger and more substantive for MPs than it was for nominees, and this does provide support for the party bias hypothesis. These results, however, need to be considered with care. First, as in the case of nominees the party competitiveness variable is based on hypothetical election results and not real results; thus it is reasonable to be sceptical about the variable's validity. Second, the problems of multicollinearity are just as relevant in this case as in the case of nomina-
Once again we can try to deal with the multicollinearity problem by dropping all the incumbents from the equation and eliminating incumbency from the probit. When this is done the effect of party competitiveness plummets; competitiveness is both nonsignificant and substantially smaller. Based on no effect in 1980 and 1984, and an effect which is not robust to different specifications in 1988, we find little evidence that parties favour men at higher rates in ridings where they expect to do well.

The party variables provide interesting results. In none of the three elections does the NDP variable have a significant effect; in 1988 the effect is in fact negative. The NDP’s superior support for women as candidates does not carry over into advantages for women at the level of elected MPs. The effects of being a Liberal MP varies. While in 1984 there was a strong statistically positive effect, in 1988 the effect had slipped to both nonsignificant and negative. Finally, the two riding characteristic variables, women’s labour force participation and percentage of population with some university education, behave in a fashion similar to the pattern found for nominees; women are more likely to be elected in ridings with high levels of female labour participation and highly educated constituencies.

Conclusion

After examining the evidence it becomes difficult to credit the conventional wisdom that the rise of women in the Canadian House of Commons in 1984 was the product of an accident, a fluke in which intended Conservative sacrificial lambs were surprisingly elevated because of a massive swing of the Quebec electorate toward the Progressive Conservative party. Such an explanation ignores the broader patterns of candidacy underlying the rise of women in 1984. The probits show that women’s nominations in 1984 were not affected by the party’s strength in the ridings. The simulations show that no matter which major party the volatile Canadian electorate turned to in 1984, there were enough women candidates on the ballot as viable contenders to insure a significant increase in representation.

Even more women were viable candidates in 1988. It is important to note that while women’s candidacies and victories overall almost doubled from 1980 to 1984, there was a further 4 per cent increase in both candidacies and legislators from 1984 to 1988. This casts further

49 Running the other independent variables against party competitiveness produces a simple R of .73.
50 The coefficient is -.0077 with a standard error of .0074. The T-statistic drops from 2.37 to 1.04. While the sample does decrease quite a bit, there were still 135 cases left.
doubt on the "accident" theory of the 1984 results. Once women obtained seats, they were not refused renomination or defeated in proportions other than normal for male candidates in Canada. The increase in both candidacies and MPs was general across all three parties for these three elections. Moreover, the ratio of female candidates to women elected was much more favourable in Canada in the 1980s than in other countries with single-member district electoral systems, or indeed than it was in Canada in the 1970s.

There is a new dynamic for women's representation as candidates and members of parliament, but it emerged in 1984, not 1988. The "hard dose of political reality" is not that women's gains are tenuous, but that they are sufficiently secure in all three major parties to serve as a basis for further advances, as from 1984 to 1988, no matter what the swings of fortune for particular political parties in federal elections. Neither the single-member district electoral system nor the decentralized party nomination procedures for candidates are usually considered assets for women candidates. On the other hand, the lack of intense competition for many party nominations and the high turnover in the Canadian House of Commons are factors which might be expected to help women gain candidacies and legislative seats. Our data indicate that women's participation in the labour force and higher proportions of university-educated citizens have also been significant. Canada has, comparatively speaking, high levels of both of these factors and these could therefore provide a possible explanation for Canada's strong position among the world's democracies with single-member district systems. As the general societal trend has been towards both greater education and greater work force participation, it is likely these factors will continue to exert pressures towards more female nominees and MPs. It is also likely there are additional structural and/or cultural explanations for what appears to be a relatively generalized Canadian party commitment to women's political equality.\(^\text{51}\)

By the early 1990s, the Canadian party system had become even more fluid than it was in 1984. What are the prospects for female candidates at the polls? Since there is no evidence of a backlash against female candidates,\(^\text{52}\) the future of women as candidates lies in the hands of those women who might offer themselves as candidates (the supply side) and the parties who nominate candidates (the demand side). As Erickson and Carty point out, there is an astonishing lack of competitiveness for party nominations in many parliamentary seats, even ones

\(^{51}\) Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Norris, "Through the Eye of a Needle."

where the nomination at stake could reasonably lead to election to the House of Commons.53 By comparative standards, the Canadian parliamentary nomination process is a very open one.54 This provides plenty of opportunity for politically ambitious women to become candidates.

The numbers of women nominated and elected in the Conservative party was more dependent than the others on the results in one particular province which tends to vote as a bloc, namely Quebec. The position of women in the Conservative party is therefore somewhat tenuous. Nevertheless, the larger picture for women in the federal House of Commons today is similar to what it was in 1984, however much that pattern has failed to be recognized. Women’s place in Parliament is not dependent on the success of any particular party. With more candidates and MPs than in 1984, women are even better placed now than they were then to make substantial further advances.

The 1993 General Election: A Note

The foregoing analysis was completed before the 1993 federal general election. That election provided a stringent but confirmative test of the argument presented here. Despite the precipitous decline in parliamentary seats of both the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats, overall women’s numbers in the new House of Commons rose almost 5 per cent, from 13.2 per cent to 18.0 per cent (53 women). Turnover of seats was 69.5 per cent. Women not only gained a record number of seats, they did so with the loss of many of the incumbent women who had held seats, including the newly selected Conservative leader and prime minister. The loss of Conservative and New Democratic women was more than offset by the gains of Liberal, Bloc Québécois and Reform women. The preliminary conclusion from analysis of the general results is that it was no accident that women gained in number in the 1993 federal election, any more than it was a fluke that they doubled their strength in 1984 or gained another 4 per cent in 1988.

53 Erickson and Carty, ‘‘Parties and Candidate Selection,’’ 343-45.
18 Parties and Candidate Selection in the 1988 Canadian General Election
Lynda Erickson; R. K. Carty
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-4239%28199106%2924%3A2%3C331%3APACSIT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-4

19 Women as Political Animals? A Test of Some Explanations for Male-Female Political Participation Differences
Susan Welch
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28197711%2921%3A4%3C711%3AWAPAAT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-A

19 Recruitment of Women to Public Office: A Discriminant Analysis
Susan Welch
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-4078%28197809%2931%3A3%3C372%3AROWTP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G

27 Congressional Turnover and the Election of Women
Kristi Andersen; Stuart J. Thorson
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-4078%28198403%2937%3A1%3C143%3ACTATED%3E2.0.CO%3B2-A

27 A Formal Analysis of Legislative Turnover: Women Candidates and Legislative Representation
R. Darcy; James R. Choike
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28198602%2930%3A1%3C237%3AFAOLT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-A

NOTE: The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.
29 Les femmes sont-elles candidates dans des circonscriptions perdues d'avance? De l'examen d'une croyance
Réjean Pelletier; Manon Tremblay
Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-4239%28199206%2925%3A2%3C249%3ALFSCDD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R

31 Urban and Rural Ridings and Women in Provincial Politics in Canada: A Research Note on Female MLAs
Gary F. Moncrief; Joel A. Thompson
Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-4239%28199112%2924%3A4%3C831%3AUARRAW%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R

35 Working Women and Political Participation, 1952-1972
Kristi Andersen
Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28197508%2919%3A3%3C439%3AWWAPP1%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S

38 Why More Women Are State Legislators. A Research Note
Wilma Rule
Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0043-4078%28199006%2943%3A2%3C437%3AWMWASL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-2

42 "Sophisticated" Voting in the 1988 Presidential Primaries
Paul R. Abramson; John H. Aldrich; Phil Paolino; David W. Rohde
Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199203%2986%3A1%3C55%3A%22VIT1P%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X

NOTE: The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.
Constituency Characteristics, Individual Characteristics and Tactical Voting in the 1987 British General Election
Richard G. Niemi; Guy Whitten; Mark N. Franklin
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?siici=0007-1234%28199204%2922%3A2%3C229%3ACCICAT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5

NOTE: The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.