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Network Diversity and Vote Choice: Women's Social Ties and Left Voting in Canada

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Building on Mark Granovetter's concept of weak ties, we argue that diverse social networks can enhance the propensity of women to vote for a party of the Left. Using data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study, we test two hypotheses: First, the wider the range of women known, the more likely women are to vote for the Left, and second, the wider the range of higher-status women known, the more likely married women are to vote for the Left. We argue that socially communicated cues may be particularly consequential for women because they tend to know less about the parties and their platforms than men do. Accordingly, casual acquaintances can be an important source of new information for women. Women with more diverse ties to other women, we argue, are more likely to encounter women who are voting for the party of the Left and to recognize their shared interest in voting similarly. Our second hypothesis builds on Susan Carroll's argument that women require sufficient autonomy to express their gender-related interests in their choice of party. We argue that married women's political

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autonomy can be enhanced if their social networks include a range of women who do enjoy such autonomy. Ties with higher-status women can be a source of psychological resources that facilitate voting for a party of the Left. We find support for both of these hypotheses.

INTRODUCTION

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2003) have pointed to a process of gender realignment: Where women were once more likely than men to vote for parties of the Right or Center Right, they are now more likely than men to vote for parties of the Left. As such, these women's vote choices are increasingly aligning with their long-standing support for a strong social safety net, reproductive choice, gender equality, and opposition to the use of force (see, for example, Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Smith 1984). Factors like age, income, employment status, occupation, and religiosity have not proved very useful in explaining the "modern gender gap" (Erickson and O'Neill 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003). Accordingly, we switch the focus from women's social background characteristics to their social networks. As such, we offer a structural theory of women's vote choice that is much more within the classic Columbia tradition of voting studies (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948). Building on Mark Granovetter's (1973, 1982) concept of "weak ties," we argue that diverse social networks can provide women with information and psychological resources that enhance their propensity to vote for a party of the Left.

The 2000 Canadian election provides a particularly suitable case. Voting patterns in this election (outside Quebec)[1] exemplified the modern gender gap: Women (16%) were more likely than men (9%) to vote for the New Democratic Party (NDP), Canada's social democratic party.[2] Moreover,

1. Since the advent of the Bloc Québécois in the early 1990s, voting in federal elections in Quebec has revolved to a remarkable degree around the issue of Quebec sovereignty (Blais et al. 2002). The NDP has never won a seat in Quebec and attracted only 1.8% of the popular vote in the 2000 election. We thus restrict our analysis to Canada outside Quebec.

2. While some commentators have characterized the Liberal Party as a center-left party, it is more often described as a "brokerage party" that seeks to maximize its vote share by shifting a little to the left or a little to the right as electoral considerations dictate (Clarke et al. 1984). Beginning in 1993, the Liberals shifted to the right of center, embarking on a policy of deficit reduction that entailed significant cuts to social programs. Women bore the brunt of these cuts. Accordingly, it makes sense to focus on the NDP when analyzing the modern gender gap.

this was a relatively new development. If we track the evolution of the gender gap since the first Canadian Election Study in 1965, Canada presents a clear case of gender realignment. In the 1960s and 1970s, voting patterns conformed to the "traditional gender gap": Women were less likely than men to vote for the NDP. This gap disappeared in the late 1970s and finally reversed in the 1997 election when a gap of almost six points emerged, with women more likely than men to vote for the NDP. This gap has persisted in the 2004 and 2006 elections.[3]

Since its inception in 1961, the NDP has always had the highest percentage of female candidates. Moreover, its candidates — men and women alike — score highest on views about the role of the state, the use of force, and rights and freedoms and on views about women's rights (Tremblay and Pelletier 2000). Key elements of the party's platform in 2000 included increased funding for health care, introduction of a national prescription drug plan, doubling the Child Tax Benefit, and creating a National Early Years Fund for early childhood education and child care (Whitehorn 2001). Meanwhile, Canadian women remained more supportive than men of the welfare system, more opposed to private health care, more concerned about gender inequality, and less open to a get-tough approach to crime (Gidengil et al. 2003). For a variety of reasons, then, we could expect the NDP to have more appeal to women than to men. Our aim is to assess whether the diversity of women's social networks enhanced their odds of voting NDP.

WEAK TIES, INFORMATION, AND AUTONOMY

The key insight of the Columbia school was that "a person thinks, politically, as he [*sic*] is socially" (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948, 27). However, this was far from being a crude structural model that simply related people's vote choice to their social background characteristics. On the contrary, vote choice was seen as being a social process that was heavily influenced by people's social networks (Sheingold 1973; Zuckerman 2005). In a similar vein, we see women not as atomized individuals but as social beings embedded in social networks. Our argument thus follows in a tradition of feminist

3. The gap was four points in the 2004 election and six points in the 2006 election. Since reaching a low of 9% in the 1993 election, the NDP's vote share (outside Quebec) has steadily increased to 21% in 2006. Still, the perennial weakness of class voting in Canada (Gidengil 2002) has left the party trailing the Liberals (33%) and the Conservatives (40%).

scholarship that emphasizes the importance of women's relationships with others (Chodorow 1974; Gilligan 1982). Women's networks can be a source of information and psychological resources and, as such, we argue, they can have a significant effect on women's propensity to vote for a party of the Left.

Robert Huckfeldt and his colleagues (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987, 1991, 1995; Huckfeldt et al. 1995) have played an important role in reviving a network-based approach for understanding the formation of political preferences. In building on this tradition, they have drawn on Mark Granovetter's (1973, 1982) concept of the "strength of weak ties." This simple but powerful argument suggests that casual acquaintances (weak ties) can provide people with information and resources beyond those that are available from within their immediate circle of close friends and relatives (strong ties). Casual acquaintances can serve as bridges to social circles beyond our own. As such, they bring us into contact with ideas and information that we might otherwise not encounter. This means that weak ties may be particularly important when it comes to the diffusion of new ideas and new patterns of behavior (Granovetter 1973, 1982).

Granovetter's (1973) work is directed mainly at information related to jobs, but his logic readily extends to information about politics. As Huckfeldt et al. (1995, 1028) argue, "if political communication only occurs through close friends, the social reach of political information is likely to be quite limited. Alternatively, the casual acquaintances of my casual acquaintances are not so likely to be my associates, and thus information conveyed through such patterns of interaction is likely to travel farther." James Coleman (1988) also highlights the role of social relations in the acquisition of information about current events, especially for those who are not much interested. In a similar vein, Robert Putnam (2000, 338) maintains that "political information flows through social networks," and he, too, emphasizes that "bridging" interactions with people from different social backgrounds are more conducive to the acquisition of political information than "bonding" interactions with people from similar backgrounds. Finally, Diana Mutz and Jeffrey Mondak (2006) report that only casual social acquaintances rival the workplace when it comes to bringing people into contact with different political perspectives.

Weak ties are likely to entail brief and intermittent interactions, but this does not prevent them from being a source of politically relevant information and influence. In fact, Huckfeldt et al. (1995) have shown

that casual interactions can be a *more* important source of political influence than discussions with close friends and intimates. As Huckfeldt and John Sprague (1991, 122) observe, "political discussion is not the only or even the most important form of social influence [in politics]. . . . Many mechanisms of social influence bypass discussion entirely — yard signs, bumper stickers, lapel pins, and so on." Similarly, Damarys Canache, Jeffrey Mondak, and Annabelle Conroy (1994, 526) emphasize that the social transmission of political information does not necessarily require talk: "[O]ther more subtle forms of information transmission are also possible." Casual chat can be an opportunity to learn about shared values and group interests. It does not have to involve active attempts to persuade in order to be a source of politically relevant information and influence.

Socially communicated information may be particularly consequential for women. Women tend to be less interested than men in electoral politics and to know less about political parties and their platforms (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Gidengil et al. 2004; Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Mondak and Anderson 2004; Norris 2000; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997).[4] Accordingly, casual acquaintances are more likely to be a source of new information. Moreover, new information may have more impact on women because they are less likely than men to have well-established vote intentions and are more likely to decide their vote only when an election campaign is under way (Fournier et al. 2004).

Simply interacting with a wide range of *people*, however, is not going to enhance a woman's likelihood of voting for the Left. What matters from this perspective is the diversity of *women* with whom she interacts. According to social comparison theory, people are more susceptible to the influence of people who resemble themselves in salient respects (Festinger 1954). This applies to politics as well. Paul Sniderman, Richard Brody, and Philip Tetlock (1991) show that people who share similar traits can provide important information shortcuts to voters who lack the time or inclination to follow politics closely, as many women do. Gender serves as one of the simplest shortcuts of all because it is an immediately recognizable trait (Cutler 2002).

4. For example, despite the fact that the NDP leader was a woman, fewer women (65%) than men (74%) could name the NDP leader in 2000. There was a similar gap for the NDP's promise to introduce a prescription drug plan: 36% of men answered correctly, compared with 26% of women. More men (77%) than women (60%) could name Canada's finance minister, and 62% of men knew that the Alliance had promised a single tax rate on incomes under $100,000, compared with 37% of women.

By definition, the wider the range of women known, the more likely a woman is to know a representative cross section of women. This is a crucial point, especially in a context of gender realignment:[5] Women who are acquainted with a wide range of women are more likely to encounter women who are already voting for the Left. And to the extent that the diversity of political preferences in people's networks increases their likelihood of understanding rationales for different political preferences (Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004; Mutz 2002; Mutz and Mondak 2006),[6] women who know a wide range of women will be more likely to understand the reasons for voting for the party of the Left. They will also be more likely to recognize their shared interest in voting similarly. Knowing women in various walks of life will enhance awareness of different women's situations and highlight the relevance of issues like child care, health care, and the social programs to women's lives. Bonnie Erickson (2006) has shown that knowing women in a wide range of occupations significantly shifts them toward the side preferred by other women on a number of issues that divide women and men. Accordingly, women who have the widest array of same-sex social ties should have the highest levels of left voting (Hypothesis 1).

Information is not the only potential causal mechanism linking network diversity to vote choice. The composition of women's social networks can also provide psychological resources. Susan Carroll (1988) has argued that women need to enjoy sufficient autonomy to express their gender-related interests in their choice of party. According to Carroll, women require both economic independence from men and psychological independence from traditional sex-role socialization in order to express their political difference on issues like the welfare state, the use of force, and women's rights. She links the emergence of the gender gap in the United States to the enhanced autonomy that women enjoy as a result of rising levels of education, the increasing average age of first marriage, a growing divorce rate, and movement into the paid workforce.

The notion of autonomy has often been criticized by feminist scholars as entailing an individualistic and masculinist conception of agency (see Mackenzie and Stoljar 2000). However, feminist scholars have recently begun to reclaim the concept of autonomy. Explicitly relational, these

5. Przeworski and Soares (1971, 56) link the effectiveness of social interactions in promoting left voting to the proportion of people who are already voting for the Left: When the proportion is not high, a random encounter is more likely to bring a left voter into contact with a recruitable person who is not yet voting for the Left.

6. Note that their research involved stronger ties than those considered in this study.

feminist reconceptualizations recognize that "persons are socially embedded and that agents' identities are formed within the context of social relationships" (ibid., 4). Theories of relational autonomy emphasize that some relations are autonomy enhancing, whereas others are undermining (Brison 2000, 283).

Carroll sees marriage as the key factor that undermines women's autonomy: "[U]nmarried women may express different political views and choices from those of married women or men because unmarried women are able to make independent assessments of their political interests, unconstrained and undominated by the political interests of individual men" (1988, 257). Women are particularly prone to influence in marital relationships because of the differential power relationships present. Feminist scholars have long pointed out that the institution of marriage tends to recreate traditional power divisions between women and men (Pateman 1988), and research has shown that marriage negatively affects the level of personal control that women feel (Ross 1991). Marriage has the opposite effect for many men: To the extent that they assume the leadership and wield the power in the family, they can learn valuable skills that carry over to the public sphere (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 1997).

While some of the literature on the effects of marriage has painted a picture of mutual influence (Hayes and Bean 1994; Stoker and Jennings 1995; Zuckerman, Fitzgerald, and Dasović 2005), Laura Stoker and Kent Jennings (2005) have recently provided a compelling test of the direction of influence, based on their panel study of married couples. They found that both spouses are likely to report that the wife yields to the husband more often than the husband yields to the wife when political disagreements occur. This is consistent with research showing that women often take on responsibility for maintaining the relationship (Weigel and Ballard-Reisch 1999; Zipp, Prohaska, and Bemilier 2004). Stoker and Jennings go on to show that the gender gap in political preference is confined to single men and single women; married couples are much more likely to resemble single men than they are to resemble single women. This mirrors findings that married couples tend to be more conservative (Kingston and Finkel 1987; see also Wilson and Lusztig 2004). It is not that conservative women are more likely to marry. Rather, the panel data suggest that married women are more likely to adopt their mates' political preferences than vice versa.

Married women's political autonomy may be enhanced, though, if they are embedded in diverse social networks. The autonomy-enhancing

potential of social networks has long been recognized. Rose Laub Coser, in particular, has argued that diverse social networks can serve as "a seedbed of individual autonomy" (1975, 237; see also Coser 1991). According to Coser (1975, 237, 243), the more people "interact with different people who themselves occupy different positions," the greater their ability to "understand the outside forces that [have] an immediate impact on their lives." A multiplicity of weak ties brings people into contact with different perceptions and expectations, and encourages them to behave and think in ways that reflect innovation, flexibility, and self-direction, qualities that Coser argues are necessary for autonomy. Granovetter (1982, 108) similarly recognizes the ability of weak ties to produce more autonomous, thoughtful actions. Having to deal with many different people in many different contexts fosters greater self-awareness, enhances the capacity for abstract thought, and encourages people to reflect on their choices in the face of conflicting demands and expectations.

From Coser's perspective, what matters is network diversity per se: The more diverse people's networks, the greater their individual autonomy. From Carroll's perspective, though, simply having ties with a wide range of people may not be enough to transcend the effects of women's dependence on men. If these women are to achieve political autonomy, their networks will need to include a range of women who enjoy both economic and psychological independence. In other words, they need to have the right sorts of ties.

Research in the "work and personality" school suggests that ties to women in high-status occupations should be particularly important. High-status occupations are conducive to independence in decision making because working on complex, nonroutinized tasks without close supervision fosters self-directedness (Kohn and Schooler 1983, 2). This self-direction carries over into other spheres of life: "[T]he experience of self-direction in so central a realm of life as work is conducive to valuing self-direction, off the job as well as on the job, and to seeing the possibilities for self-direction not only in work but also in other realms of life" (ibid., 6). Self-directedness reduces conformity to authority, encourages people to think for themselves, and fosters "a belief in the possibilities of rational action toward purposive goals" (ibid., 33).[7] This would explain why college-educated women in high-status occupations

7. The latter may be particularly important where the party of the Left is not competitive. High-autonomy women will see the potential for promoting a women's agenda, if only by exerting pressure on more powerful parties.

are able to exercise independent political judgment, whether they are married or not (Carroll 1988). But even married women who do not enjoy these advantages may find their autonomy enhanced if they have diverse contacts with women who do. If so, we should expect to see a significant interaction between marital status and network diversity: The more varied married women's ties to higher-status women, the more likely they will be to vote for the party of the Left (Hypothesis 2).

Women with high-status jobs are greatly outnumbered, of course, by women with low-status jobs or without paid employment. However, the size of an occupational category is only weakly related to the size of its *network audience*, or the number of people who know at least one person in that occupation (Erickson 2004). High-status jobs typically enjoy more *networking power* (ibid.). The *networking power* of an occupational category is measured by the extent to which its members appear in people's social networks, relative to the category's share of the population. By this criterion, people with higher-status jobs are greatly overrepresented in social networks. On the job, their work brings them into contact with a wide range of people, and off the job, their income and education enhance their attractiveness as network members, while their involvement in voluntary associations increases their opportunities to be known.

DATA AND METHODS

The previous section has developed two hypotheses about the effects of network diversity on women's propensity to vote for parties of the Left. First, the more diverse women's same-sex social ties, the greater their probability of voting for the Left. Second, building on Susan Carroll's argument about marriage and autonomy, the more ties married women have with women in high-status occupations, the greater their likelihood of voting for the Left. Whereas the first hypothesis emphasizes the role of weak ties in promoting the spread of information, the second hypothesis points to the psychological resources that diverse networks can provide.

We use data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study (CES) to examine these hypotheses. The study comprised a campaign survey, a postelection survey, and a mail-back questionnaire. The response rate for the campaign survey was 60%. Outside Quebec, 2,387 participated in the

campaign survey, 1,933 (81%) were reinterviewed after the election, and 1,051 (54%) completed the mail-back questionnaire.[8] The network questions were only included in the latter, and so our analyses are based on the mail-back sample. While this limits the number of cases, the mail-back respondents are very similar to the campaign respondents. Only two differences approached statistical significance: Mail-back respondents were more likely to be Protestants ($p = .11$) and less likely to belong to a racial minority ($p = .07$). Importantly, the gender gap observed in the full postelection sample was replicated within the mail-back sample.[9]

The measures of network diversity are derived from a position generator. This technique was pioneered by Nan Lin and Mary Dumin (1986) as an alternative to the more familiar name-generator technique. The latter involves asking respondents to name people with whom they discuss politics and to specify whether these people are relatives, close friends, or acquaintances. This approach has two drawbacks for our purposes: It only captures a small number of ties, and those ties are likely to be strong ties because the first names to spring to mind will typically be those of people with whom respondents have close relationships, whether by kin or by friendship (Lin, Fu, and Hsung 2001). The position generator is intended to measure the resources that are available to individuals through their social networks and is designed to elicit weak ties. Respondents are presented with a list of occupations and asked to indicate whether they know anyone in each of the listed positions. Because the occupations are chosen to reflect the range of occupational status or prestige within a given society, responses are indicative of the *types* of people known.[10] The generator represents, in effect, a sample of the sorts of people known, and as such, it "casts a wide net over a range of relationships" (Lin, Fu, and Hsung 2001, 63).

8. The late November election made for a lower response rate because the mail-back coincided with the holiday season. More information on the study can be found at www.fas.umontreal.ca/POL/Ces-eec/ces.html.

9. As an additional check, we ran the baseline model in Table 2, using the full postelection sample. The same effects emerged as statistically significant with one exception: Using the full postelection sample, the coefficient for Protestant attained statistical significance.

10. It could be argued that if knowing one person in a given occupation is good, knowing five people might be even better since it would increase the chances of being exposed to new information. However, it is doubtful that respondents could report reliably on just how many people they know in a given occupational category. Because it is does not take account of the number of ties *within* occupational categories, our analysis may underestimate the impact of ties. As such, it provides a conservative test of our hypotheses.

Table 1. The position generator

	Occupational Prestige	*Percentage Female*	*Networking Power*
Lawyer	73	31	.021
Pharmacist	64	56	.054
Human resources manager	60	47	.032
Sales manager	60	25	.009
Social worker	52	76	.026
Computer programmer	51	25	.016
Tailor, furrier, dressmaker	40	86	.031
Farmer	40	24	.005
Carpenter	37	1	.010
Cashier	34	86	.004
Delivery driver	31	9	.010
Security guard	30	20	.012
Sewing machine operator	25	92	.007
Janitor	25	32	.004
Server	21	81	.005

Notes: The occupational prestige scores are taken from Ganzeboom and Treiman (1996). The percentage female for each occupation comes from the 1996 Census of Canada. Networking power is the number of survey respondents who knew someone in the occupation divided by the number of people in that occupation. The figures are taken from Erickson (2004) and are based on responses to the 2000 CES self-administered mail-back questionnaire.

The position generator used in Table 1 differentiates occupations in terms of gender dominance as well. It includes male majority jobs and female majority jobs that span the occupational hierarchy to include higher professionals, middle managers, other professionals, skilled trades, lower-level service workers, semiskilled trades, and the unskilled. At each level, one of the most male-dominated and one of the most female-dominated occupations was selected from among those with at least 20 thousand people (to ensure that respondents would have a reasonable chance of knowing someone in that occupation) and with easily understood job titles. Finally, farmers were included to ensure the representation of rural and agricultural occupations. To allow for the gendered nature of social networks, respondents were asked whether they knew any men or any women in each of the occupations, not simply whether they knew someone.

Following Lin and his colleagues (2001, 63), we use simple counts to measure the "extensity or heterogeneity" of women's

ties.[11] "Ties with women" is the number of occupations in which respondents knew a woman. As such, it measures the diversity of female contacts. "Ties with higher-status women" and "ties with lower-status women" are counts of the number of higher-status and lower-status occupations in which respondents knew a woman. "Higher status" is defined as the six occupations with prestige scores of .50 or more, while "lower status" is defined as the nine occupations with prestige scores of .40 or less. Finally, "ties with people" is a measure of network diversity per se. It is a simple count of the number of occupations in which respondents knew *either* a man *or* a woman.[12]

The vote models are estimated using logistic regression, with voting for the Left coded "1" for an NDP vote and "0" for a vote for any other party.[13] Separate models are estimated for each network measure. Omitted variable bias is a potential threat to our analysis since the same factors that predispose women to vote for the party of the Left might also affect the size and diversity of their networks. Accordingly, our models include controls for social background characteristics in order to guard against spurious associations between network variables and NDP voting.

The diversity of people's social networks partly depends on the opportunities that they have to meet potential network members (Blau 1977; Erickson 2004; Moore 1990). Prior research in Canada points to a number of social background characteristics that affect the diversity of people's networks (Erickson 2004). Networking opportunities tend to peak in midlife when people are most likely to be involved in work, family, and social activities that bring them into contact with a wide range of persons. Belonging to a racial minority, by contrast, can limit the opportunities for building varied social networks because of racial

11. The range (from low to high prestige) of people known and the standard deviation of their prestige scores are both sensitive to atypical extreme values. Using the standard deviation, someone who knows people in all 15 occupations would actually receive a lower score than someone who knows, say, a pharmacist, a social worker, a cashier, and a delivery driver. The range is even more problematic, given that a respondent who knows only a pharmacist and a janitor would receive the same score as someone who also knows a human resources manager, a social worker, a computer programmer, a tailor, and a carpenter. Accordingly, a simple count provides a more valid measure of the variety of a person's social ties. We repeated the analyses using the number of ties weighted first by the range of prestige scores and then by their standard deviation. The basic findings were replicated with both measures.

12. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of reliability for these indices are: ties with women (.80); ties with higher-status women (.67); ties with lower-status women (.72); ties with people (.85).

13. The dependent variable is dichotomous because we are interested in what motivates women to vote for the Left, not in the specifics of why they chose the NDP over one rather than another of the other parties. Hence, we use binary logistic regression, rather than ordered logistic regression or multinomial logistic regression.

prejudice on the part of some whites and because racial minorities tend to be concentrated in residential and economic enclaves. Education enhances women's networking opportunities by encouraging their involvement in voluntary associations, which are a rich source of social contacts, but household income is not a critical factor.[14] Employment significantly enhances the diversity of women's contacts with men but has only a marginal effect on the diversity of their ties with other women. Family life also seems to increase the opportunities for building cross-gender ties. Rural life makes for diverse networks and so does living in Atlantic Canada (Canada's poorest region), perhaps as a way of coping with economic hardship.

Some of these variables are also related to voting NDP (Blais et al. 2002; Nevitte et al. 2000). One of the most striking features of recent elections has been the regionalization of the vote: In the 2000 election, the NDP won twice as large a share of the vote in Atlantic Canada as it did in Ontario. Union membership has traditionally been associated with voting NDP. So, too, has marital status: People who are married have typically been significantly less likely to vote NDP. Finally, the NDP tends to do particularly well among those with no religious affiliation.

Given the importance of social background characteristics to both networking opportunities and vote choice, our models include dummy variables for region (two dummy variables, coded 1 for Atlantic Canada and 1 for Western Canada, with Ontario as the reference category), urban/rural (coded 1 for rural residents), ancestry (coded 1 for Northern European), race (coded 1 for non-European ancestry), marital status (coded 1 for married, including living common law), parenthood (coded 1 if at least one child is currently living at home), employment status (coded 1 for actively employed or self-employed), union membership (coded 1 for union households), public sector worker (coded 1 for those employed in the public sector), and religion (two dummy variables, coded 1 for Protestant and 1 for no religion, with Catholic and non-Christian religions as the reference group).[15] Income is coded into 10 categories, while education is entered in four levels (less than high school, high school, some postsecondary, completed university).[16]

14. The reverse is true for men: Household income, not education, is the critical factor. This probably reflects men's occupational status and the fact that men tend to have more say when it comes to household spending on leisure activities, which enhance their networking opportunities.

15. In Canada, Catholics and adherents of non-Christian religions alike tend to vote Liberal.

16. Using dummy coded variables for income and education instead does not affect the results.

In addition, age in years and age squared were included, to allow for the curvilinear effects of age on networking opportunities.

FINDINGS

Gender and Social Networks

On average, women reported knowing someone in 10 of the 15 occupations listed in the position generator. According to the homophily principle, people tend to be attracted to people like themselves. If so, we might expect women to have more same-sex than opposite-sex contacts. However, women's contacts with men proved to be more diverse than their contacts with other women: On average, women knew men in one more occupation (7.6) than they knew women (6.5). Meanwhile, men typically knew men in two more occupations (8.2) than they knew women (6.1). So men clearly enjoy a network advantage: Men's and women's networks alike include a significantly greater range of men than of women.[17]

However, when it comes to networking *power*, higher-status women enjoy an advantage. Low-prestige jobs typically have low networking power, whether they are male dominated or female dominated (see Table 1). Among jobs with higher prestige, by contrast, the three occupations with the most women (pharmacist, human resources manager, and social worker) all have more networking power than the three occupations with similar prestige, but more men (lawyer, sales manager, and computer programmer). This is potentially consequential because it implies that higher-status women will have more opportunities to transmit information and ideas to other people (see Erickson 2004).

Social Networks and NDP Voting

We begin the analysis of vote choice by showing the effects of social background characteristics on women's propensity to vote NDP (see Table 2). There are two striking findings. First, as shown in other recent studies, social background characteristics have surprisingly modest effects on women's odds of voting for the party of the Left (Erickson and O'Neill 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003). Particularly noteworthy is the

17. The differences are all statistically significant at the .05 level or higher.

Table 2. Social background characteristics and NDP voting

Atlantic resident	0.57 (.51)
Western resident	0.37 (.36)
Rural resident	−0.15 (.43)
Protestant	−0.46 (.38)
No religion	0.33 (.45)
Racial minority	−0.04 (.66)
Northern European	0.20 (.44)
Age	0.11 (.05)*
Square root of age	−1.18 (.48)*
Full-time job	0.07 (.41)
Public sector worker	0.14 (.43)
Union household	0.90 (.40)*
Education	−0.12 (.19)
Income	0.18 (.61)
Parent	0.17 (.39)
Married/common law	−1.36 (.40)***
Constant	1.47 (.99)
−2 Log likelihood	256.60
Number of cases	332

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Note: The column entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors shown in parentheses. The dependent variable was coded "1" for NDP voting and "0" for all other parties.

absence of any significant association with women's material circumstances.[18] Second, the one social background characteristic that matters most is marital status. Married women were significantly less likely than other women to vote NDP. This is consistent with Stoker and Jennings's (2005) finding that married women are more likely to resemble married men than they are unmarried women, and it is exactly what Carroll's (1988) argument about marital status and women's need for autonomy would predict. It bears emphasis that this effect holds even in the absence of controls for other background characteristics. In other words, it is not an artifact of overcontrol.

Table 3 shows the results when measures of network diversity are added to the model. The results in column one offer strong support for our first hypothesis. Network diversity clearly has an impact on women's odds of voting for the party of the Left: The more diverse their contacts with other women, the more likely women were to vote for the NDP. As predicted, the network effects are confined to same-sex ties. As column four shows, simply having a wide range of ties with other people makes little

18. This is not an artifact of overcontrol. Even in the absence of controls, this finding holds for income, education, employment status, and public-sector employment.

Table 3. Network diversity and NDP voting

	Ties with Women	*Ties with High-Status Women*	*Ties with Low-Status Women*	*Ties with People*
Atlantic resident	0.51 (.52)	0.51 (.52)	0.54 (.51)	0.50 (.52)
Western resident	0.30 (.37)	0.32 (.36)	0.32 (.36)	0.34 (.36)
Rural resident	−0.32 (.44)	−0.21 (.44)	−0.33 (.45)	−0.26 (.44)
Protestant	−0.40 (.38)	−0.45 (.38)	−0.39 (.38)	−0.39 (.38)
No religion	0.47 (.46)	0.37 (.45)	0.49 (.46)	0.51 (.47)
Racial minority	0.11 (.67)	0.00 (.67)	0.12 (.67)	0.05 (.66)
Northern European	0.24 (.45)	0.26 (.45)	0.21 (.44)	0.26 (.45)
Age	0.11 (.05)*	0.12 (.05)*	0.11 (.05)*	0.12 (.05)*
Square root of age	−1.22 (.49)**	−1.27 (.49)**	−1.17 (.48)*	−1.22 (.49)**
Full-time job	0.00 (.41)	0.01 (.41)	0.02 (.40)	0.03 (.41)
Public-sector worker	0.16 (.43)	0.23 (.44)	0.09 (.44)	0.09 (.43)
Union household	0.82 (.40)*	0.87 (.40)*	0.82 (.40)*	0.85 (.40)*
Education	−0.17 (.19)	−0.21 (.20)	−0.12 (.19)	−0.14 (.19)
Income	0.14 (.61)	0.12 (.62)	0.18 (.61)	0.22 (.61)
Parent	0.17 (.39)	0.21 (.40)	0.14 (.39)	0.17 (.39)
Married/ common law	−1.42 (.41)***	−1.48 (.41)***	−1.36 (.41)***	−1.39 (.41)***
Network diversity	0.11 (.05)*	0.20 (.10)[a]	0.14 (.09)[a]	0.07 (.05)
Constant	1.06 (1.01)	1.38 (.99)	0.99 (1.03)	0.82 (1.08)
−2 Log likelihood	252.55	253.00	253.90	254.36
Number of cases	332	332	332	332

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [a] $p < .10$.
Note: The column entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors shown in parentheses. The dependent variable was coded "1" for NDP voting and "0" for all other parties.

difference to women's propensity to vote NDP. The importance of same-sex ties was confirmed when we reestimated the models using measures of women's ties with men. The diversity of their ties with men made little difference to women's odds of voting NDP: The coefficients were all positive, but none of the effects even approached statistical significance.

The logit coefficients are not easy to interpret because their meaning depends on the values of the other variables in the model. We can get a better sense of the impact of network diversity on women's likelihood of

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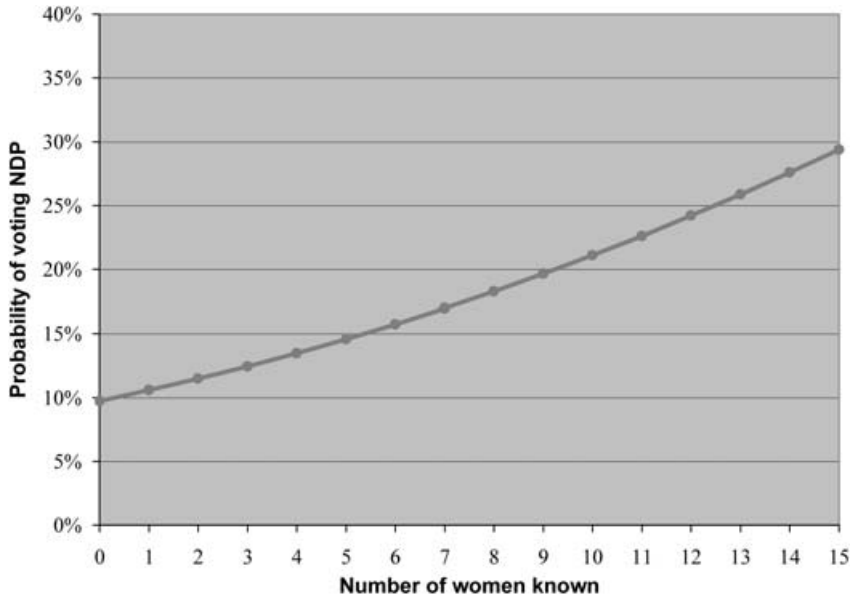

FIGURE 1. The impact of same-sex ties on woman's likelihood of voting NDP.

voting NDP if we use the regression equations to estimate how much the average probability of voting NDP changes, depending on the number of different occupations in which respondents know women (keeping the values of other variables unchanged). As Figure 1 shows, knowing women in 10 occupations more than doubles women's probability of voting NDP, compared with knowing women in none of these occupations. Knowing women in all 15 occupations increases the probability of voting NDP by 20 points.

Michael Woolcock (1998) suggests that "linking" ties to higher-status individuals may be particularly useful when it comes to obtaining information about formal institutions and elite-level processes beyond the community. Knowing women in a variety of higher-status jobs does have a stronger effect on the odds of voting NDP than knowing women in a variety of lower-status jobs, but the impact is modest. Our estimations suggest that the probability of voting NDP is only five points higher when women know women in all six higher-status occupations, compared with knowing women in six of the nine lower-status occupations (see Figure 2). So ties to higher-status women do not seem

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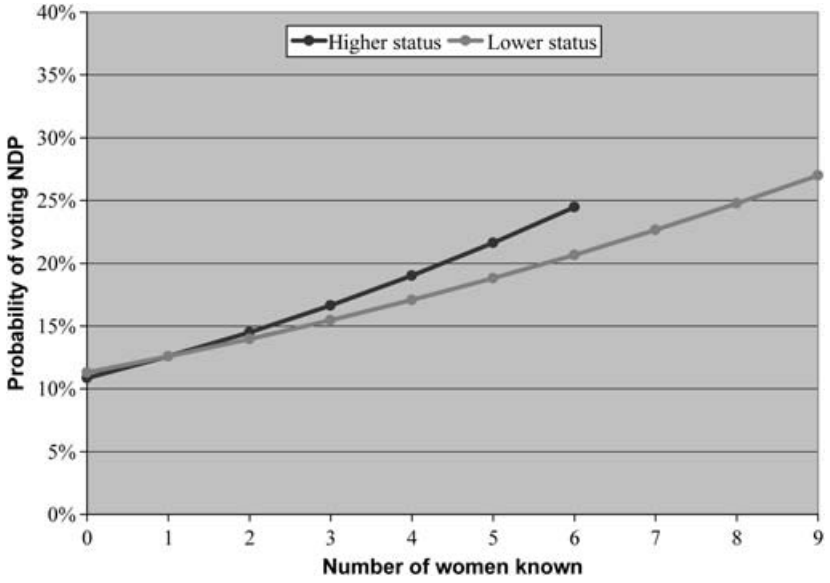

FIGURE 2. The impact of the occupational status of same-sex ties on women's likelihood of voting NDP.

to be much more information-rich in this regard than same-sex ties in general. What matters is the sheer diversity of women's ties to other women.

However, if we look at those women who are the most likely to lack autonomy, there is clear evidence that knowing a variety of higher-status women enhances the odds of an NDP vote. According to Carroll (1988, 256), marriage often works to limit women's political autonomy. Based on her argument, we hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction between marital status and network diversity: The more varied their ties to women in high-status occupations, the more likely married women would be to vote NDP. This is exactly what we observe (see Table 4). The interaction term is both positive and statistically significant.[19] Once this interaction effect is taken into account, the range of higher-status women known ceases to make any difference to the odds of voting NDP. In other words, the effect of knowing a variety of

19. Ideally, highly educated married women in professional and managerial occupations would not be grouped with other married women because, in Carroll's view, they enjoy a high degree of autonomy. However, the 2000 CES does not include occupation. When university-educated married women are grouped with unmarried women, the interaction term is .46 (.20).

Table 4. Network diversity, marital status and NDP voting

	Ties with Women	*Ties with High-Status Women*	*Ties with Low-Status Women*	*Ties with People*
Atlantic resident	0.52 (.52)	0.48 (.52)	0.53 (.52)	0.49 (.52)
Western resident	0.33 (.37)	0.34 (.37)	0.31 (.37)	0.39 (.36)
Rural resident	−0.34 (.45)	−0.24 (.44)	−0.33 (.45)	−0.29 (.44)
Protestant	−0.37 (.38)	−0.34 (.39)	−0.40 (.38)	−0.34 (.38)
No religion	0.48 (.46)	0.41 (.45)	0.49 (.46)	0.54 (.47)
Racial minority	0.09 (.68)	0.11 (.68)	0.14 (.68)	−0.05 (.67)
Northern European	0.22 (.45)	0.26 (.45)	0.21 (.45)	0.21 (.45)
Age	0.11 (.05)*	0.11 (.05)*	0.11 (.05)*	0.11 (.05)*
Square root of age	−1.22 (.48)**	−1.15 (.49)*	−1.16 (.49)*	−1.21 (.49)**
Full-time job	0.03 (.41)	0.03 (.41)	0.01 (.41)	0.09 (.41)
Public-sector worker	0.14 (.43)	0.20 (.44)	0.10 (.44)	0.06 (.43)
Union household	0.85 (.40)*	0.92 (.40)*	0.81 (.40)*	0.87 (.40)*
Education	−0.17 (.19)	−0.19 (.20)	−0.12 (.19)	−0.14 (.19)
Income	0.11 (.62)	0.03 (.62)	0.19 (.61)	0.20 (.61)
Parent	0.19 (.40)	0.25 (.40)	0.13 (.39)	0.18 (.40)
Married/ common law	−2.10 (.87)*	−2.78 (.82)***	−1.24 (.75)[a]	−2.83 (1.19)*
Network diversity	0.06 (.07)	0.00 (.15)	0.16 (.12)	0.02 (.06)
Network diversity × married/ common law	0.09 (.10)	0.40 (.21)[a]	−0.03 (.16)	0.13 (.10)
Constant	1.25 (1.03)	1.52 (1.00)	0.94 (1.07)	1.28 (1.14)
−2 Log likelihood	251.73	249.30	253.86	252.56
Number of cases	332	332	332	332

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [a] $p < .10$.
Note: The column entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors shown in parentheses. The dependent variable was coded "1" for NDP voting and "0" for all other parties.

higher-status women is confined to women who are married. There is no hint of a comparable interaction for knowing a variety of lower-status women: The effect is similar, whether women are married or not.[20]

20. There were no significant interaction effects for knowing higher-status (or lower-status) men.

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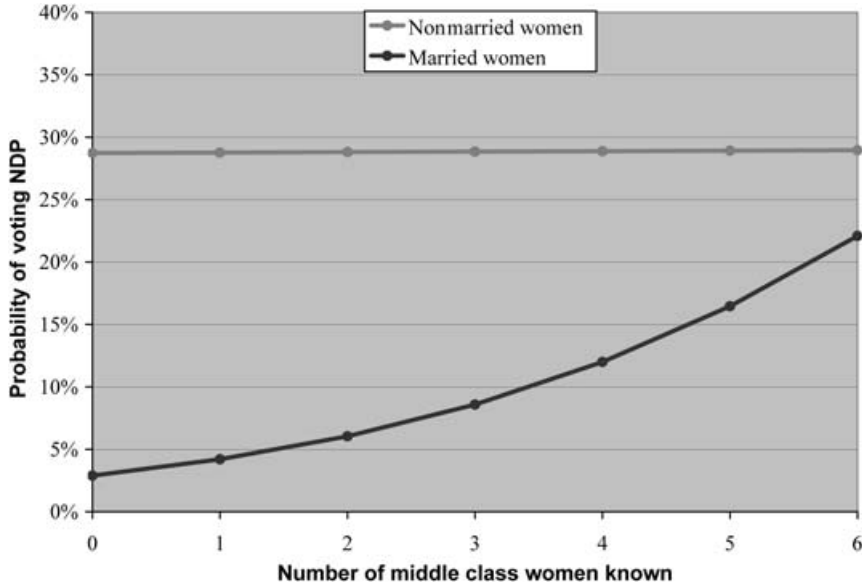

FIGURE 3. The ineraction between marital status and knowing higher-status women on women's likelihood of voting NDP.

Diverse ties with higher-status women, by contrast, are uniquely important for women who are married.

As Figure 3 shows, knowing women in all six higher-status occupations narrows the gap between women who are married and those who are not by almost 20 points. Were it not for the impact of knowing higher-status women, a woman who is married (or living common law) would be extremely unlikely to vote NDP. This is consistent with the argument that social networks can influence married women's political choices by providing psychological resources that facilitate autonomous decision making. There is little to suggest that network diversity per se has a similar effect, either for women in general or for married women in particular: Simply knowing a wide range of people does not significantly affect their odds of voting NDP.

We cannot provide direct evidence that ties to higher-status women are a source of psychological resources for married women, but we can discount some possible alternative interpretations. For example, if married women themselves were more likely to be in higher-status occupations, this

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might explain why they are more susceptible to the influence of similarly placed women. However, data from the 1997 Canadian Election Study indicate that marital status is unrelated to occupational status.[21] A second possibility is that married women's social networks are more homogeneous, and so any ties they may have to higher-status women are particularly consequential as a source of socially communicated information. However, married women's social networks actually tend to be a little more diverse: Married women typically knew women in more higher-status and lower-status occupations alike.[22] Finally, we can rule out the possibility that the observed effect is spurious: Adding interactions between being married and correlates of social ties does nothing to reduce the impact of ties with higher-status women on married women's odds of voting NDP.[23]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The composition of women's social networks clearly affects their odds of voting for the party of the Left. Both of our hypotheses are confirmed. First, the wider the range of women known, the more likely women are to cast a vote for the Left. This is consistent with our argument that same-sex ties communicate cues that enhance left voting on the part of women. Second, knowing women in a variety of higher-status occupations significantly increases the probability that women who are married or living in a long-term relationship will vote for the Left. These are just the sort of women who might otherwise lack the requisite autonomy to express their political difference (Carroll 1988). Like Carroll, we lack a direct measure of autonomous decision making and so the conclusion necessarily relies on inference, but the evidence is certainly consistent with our argument that married women's networks

21. Of married women, 16% were midmanagers, technicians, or semiprofessionals, and 11% were high-level managers or professionals. The comparable figures for women who were not married were 15% and 10%. The 1997 CES did not include a position generator, so we cannot use these data to analyze the impact of same-sex ties.

22. The averages for married women were 3.0 for higher-status occupations and 3.9 for lower-status occupations. The figures for unmarried women were 2.4 and 3.3, respectively. Married women also tended to have more diverse ties with men, though the difference was of borderline statistical significance ($p = .10$) in the case of ties with men in higher-status occupations.

23. When interactions between marital status and each of the sociodemographic variables were added to the model one by one, the coefficient for the interaction between marital status and ties with higher-status women varied between .38 and .49. When all of the interactions were added at once the coefficient increased to .57.

can provide psychological resources that enhance their scope for independent political decision making. Finally, as social comparison theory would predict (Festinger 1954), it is women's contacts with other women that matter when it comes to voting for the party of the Left.

Gender, of course, is only one of several possible bases of social comparison, albeit a very visible one. This may be one reason why the network effects that we have observed for women are relatively modest. Indeed, there are several factors that can work to diminish the impact of social networks. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) highlight three such factors: choice, misperception, and misrepresentation. There is an important element of choice when it comes to forming acquaintances. People tend to be attracted to people who share their tastes and values. This is what lies behind the phenomenon of homophily: Like attracts like. If this extends to politics as well, the impact of social networks may be muted. And even if people do interact with people whose political preferences are quite different, they may fail to perceive those preferences correctly. Finally, the people with whom they interact might fail to express their true preferences.

Diana Mutz's (2002) work suggests another factor that may limit the impact of social networks. She shows that cross-cutting networks can discourage political participation. There are two social-psychological processes that can account for this. First, exposure to alternative points of view about politics can make for ambivalence, and second, it can be threatening for people who dislike face-to-face conflict. By definition, diverse social networks will expose people to cross-cutting social influences and thus to political views that are different from their own. Indeed, this is one reason why the composition of women's social networks can be expected to influence their political choices. However, encountering people with different political preferences may end up discouraging some people from voting at all. This dampening effect on participation may be more limited, though, when we focus on weak ties. The desire to avoid face-to-face conflict that discourages voting when disagreement occurs among close friends may play less of a role with the types of casual acquaintances that our measure of network diversity taps.[24]

Despite these possible countervailing factors, women's social networks *do* affect their odds of voting for the Left. This is true even

24. Furthermore, Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn (2004) failed to find a negative effect on turnout even when disagreement existed in personal networks, though they did find that heterogeneous networks decreased interest in an election.

controlling for a variety of social background characteristics that could plausibly affect both their opportunities to develop diverse networks and their propensity to vote for a party of the Left. Our test is the more telling, given that only a minority of women in Canada vote for the left-leaning NDP. In other words, this is not simply an example of a "mainstreaming" effect where people with extensive social networks are more likely to encounter the majority preference within their social category (see Zuckerman, Valentino, and Zuckerman 1994). If this were the case, women with a wide range of contacts with other women would actually be less likely to vote NDP. Instead, it would seem that women with more female acquaintances are more likely to encounter the minority of women who do favor the NDP and to receive cues that encourage them to vote for the party.

The interaction between marital status and ties with high-status women provides clear evidence that women's same-sex ties can enhance their propensity to vote for the Left, even in the face of countervailing forces. It also underlines the superior networking power of women in high-status occupations. High-status, people-oriented jobs provide women with more opportunities to transmit their ideas and perspectives to other people. This networking power seems to be especially consequential when their networks bring them into contact with women who enjoy less autonomy in their personal and/or working lives.

Taken together, our findings suggest that explanations for the emergence of the modern gender gap need to consider the composition of women's social networks. Building on Granovetter's (1973, 1983) concept of weak ties, we have argued that women's same-sex ties can be a significant source of both information and psychological autonomy that encourage a vote for the Left. The observed effects of network diversity are consistent with this argument. Same-sex ties matter, and they matter the most to those who might otherwise be least affected by the process of gender realignment. While the evidence to date is based on a single country, our propositions offer a potentially fruitful way of enhancing our understanding of the gender-gap phenomenon and provide another impetus for reconsidering the importance of social networks in individual vote choice.

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