

Women in Newfoundland and Labrador Politics

Amanda Bittner
Political Science
Memorial University
abittner@mun.ca

Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant
Political Studies
Queen's University
egg@queensu.ca

Abstract

The political history of Canada's easternmost province shares much in common with other jurisdictions in the country and across the world on the issue of women's status in formal politics: the higher, the fewer and the more competitive, the fewer (Bashevkin 1993). This paper examines women in elite-level politics in the province, relying on comparative literature from other Canadian jurisdictions, the US, and elsewhere in order to understand the trends in NL over roughly the past decade. Women are under-represented in the NL legislature and in Cabinet, and this has been the case over the last two decades, although their numbers are rising. Recently, women's share of Cabinet positions has reached the so-called "critical mass" threshold. The implications of this will be discussed in the paper, for a critical mass in terms of numbers is typically thought to provide the mechanism or enabling condition for greater substantive representation of women's policy interests. Overall, the paper provides a survey of women's political representation in the province, and seeks to situate the NL case within a broader framework focussed on general trends prominent in the Canadian and comparative literatures.

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Introduction

Canada's easternmost province shares much in common with other jurisdictions in the country and across the world on the issue of women's status in formal politics. Much of Newfoundland and Labrador's recent electoral history provides evidence of Bashevkin's (1993) two 'rules' of women in politics: a) the higher, the fewer; and b) the more competitive, the fewer. This paper examines the patterns of women's involvement in elite-level politics in the province, relying on comparative literature from other Canadian jurisdictions, the US, and elsewhere in order to understand the trends in NL over roughly the past decade in women's share of candidacies, legislative seats, cabinet positions, and leadership posts. After identifying the trends in women's representation, the paper also identifies and assesses explanations for these patterns, moving last to a discussion of what this all means in relation to prospects for equitable gender representation in the province.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador has undergone substantial change over the past couple of decades. The province's reliance upon natural resources has continued, although the type of resource being extracted has changed. The early 1990s, with the closure of the commercial cod fishery, saw growing unemployment in the province combined with substantial outmigration as people sought jobs elsewhere. More recently, the development of the offshore oil industry has led to significant change, as the province's GDP has risen sharply, resulting in Newfoundland and Labrador's re-classification from a "have-not" to a "have" province (and then back to a "have-not").

Changes have occurred in the legislature as well. While the population has decreased, employment levels, education levels, and average income levels have increased. These increases have been matched by increases in the representation of women. Despite gender wage gaps and gender-based occupation segregation, much has improved in the province. We expect that a continued upward trend in the economy (including increases in education and employment rates) will be accompanied by continued improvements in women's representation. Furthermore, attitudes in the province surrounding traditional family values, gender, and women's representation appear to be (for the most part) similar to those in the rest of Canada, thus providing a setting that should facilitate growth in women's representation. Indeed, structure and culture are among the most important determinants of women's political representation, thus the situation in NL is likely moving in a positive direction.

The current demographic picture of the province reflects a history of labour-related outmigration and an aging population, particularly since the birthrate has been halved over the last 20 years.¹ The distribution of the population across the province is concentrated in a few regions. The largest concentration (just over 35% of the province's total population) is located in the metropolitan area of the province's capital, St. John's, which includes the largest cities and suburbs. After St. John's, the next largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) include Corner Brook on the west coast (5.3% of the population), Grand Falls-

¹ While the last two decades in the province show a decrease in the birthrate, recent data from the Centre for Health Information of Newfoundland and Labrador suggests that the birth rate is on the rise (Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information 2008).

Windsor (2.7%) and Bay Roberts (2.1%). These larger urban centres also tend to be the supply areas of female candidates (NL's more urban areas provided a high of 68% of women candidates in 1999 to a low of 29% in 1993). In the past five elections, the bulk of female candidates have competed in ridings in or proximate to Cornerbrook, Grand-Falls Windsor, Bay Roberts, Gander, Clarenville, or the St. John's CMA.²

According to the 2006 Canadian census, only 14% of adult Newfoundlanders (25-64) were university graduates, below the national average of 23%. Moreover, 26% in this age category had not finished high school, a much larger proportion than the national average of 15%. About 22% of the province's adults had a college diploma, while 20% had a high school diploma. Overall, education levels are increasing. The proportion of the total population with a high school diploma increased by 4 percentage points between 2001 and 2006, suggesting that the education gap with the rest of the country is decreasing. As will be discussed in due course, there are important gender gaps in education favouring women, at least over the past decade, and this trend may be evidence that representation gaps between women and men will decrease over time.

Educational attainment is one change that we have seen in the province over time, and engagement in the labour force is a second. In broad strokes, unemployment and lack of economic opportunity continue to pose problems in all corners of the province, for both genders. While women's labour force participation has increased over the past two decades, two patterns have undoubtedly contributed to their political under-representation in the province: a) occupational segregation, whereby women tend to be disproportionately concentrated in lower-status, lower-paying jobs; and b) gender-income gaps, where women are generally paid less than men.

Structural factors are important determinants of women's political power, and so too is culture. Indeed, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs strongly condition women's prospects for equity in representation, for culture affects whether women see themselves as contenders for office, as well as whether parties and voters will support women candidates. Culture defines the context of meaning in which women compete for representation. As will be discussed further on, we find that there is little evidence that Newfoundland and Labrador's political culture is particularly detrimental to women's political advancement, despite prevailing stereotypes about the province. This finding can be understood alongside evidence that Canadian voters themselves are not biased against women candidates, all else being equal (e.g., Black and Erickson 2003). Indeed, when women run, they often win, providing they are not candidates in one of their party's lost-cause ridings.

This last point is an apt transition into the third set of factors that define the background conditions for women's representation: politics. This broad category encompasses all the important institutions that define the political arena, and key here will be political parties, for they control recruitment and nomination, they structure campaigns, and they define legislative agendas. A broad characterization of party politics in Newfoundland and Labrador is that they operate much like the major parties do in other Canadian jurisdictions: they are not particularly pro-active on the issue of enhancing women's representation, although there is variance across parties; the two mainline parties – Conservatives and Liberals – do the least to promote women's representation, and the

² These more urban ridings include (as named in the 2007 election) Humber East and Humber West (Cornerbrook); Grand Falls-Windsor/Buchans and Grand Falls-Windsor/Green Bay South (Grand Falls-Windsor); Trinity North (Clarenville); Gander; Port de Grave and Carbonear/Harbour Grace (Bay Roberts); and Harbour Main, Conception Bay South, Kilbride, St. John's South, St. John's Centre, St. John's North, St. John's East, Topsail, Mount Pearl South, Mount Pearl North, Conception Bay East/Bell Island, Cape St. Francis, Virginia Waters, and Signal Hill-Quidi Vidi (St. John's CMA). Earlier (differently named) iterations of these ridings are also included and classified as "urban."

NDP is more active; for all parties, however, their decentralized structure makes coordinated action on the matter difficult.

Women's Political Representation in Newfoundland and Labrador: The Numbers

In general terms, Newfoundland and Labrador possesses many of the characteristics that hinder women's political participation elsewhere: gender wage gaps, occupational segregation, under-employment, and the like. NL does not have a particularly conservative political culture, at least not in relation to questions about gender ideology, women's public roles, and the appropriate means for correcting representational imbalances. Predictably, then, women's representation in the province follows many of the patterns characteristic of women's representation across the country, as well as globally. Women are numerically under-represented as candidates, legislators, and as cabinet members. For substantial periods in the province's electoral history, women have tended to run in greater proportions for uncompetitive parties – namely the CCF/NDP – a manifestation of Bashevkin's the more competitive, the fewer rule of women's representation (1993). Women's appointment to cabinet positions has grown over time, although women are often concentrated in 'soft' or 'feminine' portfolios, such as culture, education, and social services, a pattern that is common elsewhere (e.g., Bashevkin 1993; Davis 1997; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Krook and O'Brien 2010; Moon and Fountain 1997; Reynolds 1999; Studlar and Moncrief 1999). Finally, while the province has lagged behind the others in the timing of growth in women's representation – an important finding of Arscott's (1997) analysis in the book's first version (see also Brodie 1991; Studlar and Matland 1996) – recent increases in the number of women running and winning office in NL bring it more in line with the federal level and with many of the other provinces. At the same time, some of the patterns in women's representation in NL politics are not reflective of trends common elsewhere, a natural consequence of the fact that local conditions and political context are powerful influences on electoral and legislative politics.

Candidates

For most of its electoral history, Newfoundland's performance on women's numerical representation lagged behind that of most other jurisdictions in the country. Over the past half-decade, this seems to have changed. In the 2007 provincial election, which saw the return of a Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of Danny Williams, 27% of the candidates running for office were women, and 21% of MHAs elected were women (Table 1). Broadly, these numbers reflect those at the federal level. In fact, given the marked upward climb of women's numbers in NL since the early-1990s, the province may soon surpass women's federal representation, which has stagnated at about 20% of the House of Commons for over a decade.

(Table 1 about here)

Women's success rates – the number of women elected as a proportion of the number of women candidates in an election – is lower than the success rates of male candidates over the nearly the entire electoral history of the province. Part of the explanation for this is the disproportionate number of women who have run as NDP candidates. While the NDP has won seats in the province, it is not electorally competitive in the usual sense of the word,

and NDP candidates are more likely to lose than Liberal and PC candidates. In fact, of the small number of NDP MHAs, only one of these, current party leader Lorraine Michael, has been female. The exception to the general finding of women's lower success rates is the 2003 provincial election, where women and men had essentially equal success rates (34% and 33%, respectively). This is important, for it suggests that men and women had equal chances of winning once they had decided to run, and it may also suggest that women were not disproportionately placed in lost-cause ridings, at least not in that election. In the 2007 provincial election, a 10-point gap re-opened in women's and men's average success rates, a development accounted for, in part, by the greater proportion of women on the NDP slate in 2007 compared to their much lower proportions from 1996-2003.

(Table 2 about here)

There are obviously some interesting idiosyncrasies that deserve exploration regarding the parties' records on women candidates. The first observation – and quite a striking one at that – is the apparent instability in women's share of candidacies across the three major parties (Table 2). For both the Liberal and PC parties, the general story from the early-1990s to the most recent 2007 provincial election is one of modest increases in the proportion of women candidates. However, both parties' paths to an overall increase have been marked by gains and losses in the proportions of women's candidacies from one election to the next. In other words, there are very few unbroken data trends in the series (see Figure 1). There have been no clear patterns, moreover, in terms of which party leads the way in women's representation.

(Figure 1 about here)

In 1993, the NDP had 35% women candidates, and in 2007, 39% were women. Both of these satisfy the 30% critical mass threshold commonly thought to encourage the translation of numerical representation to substantive representation for marginalized groups (e.g., Dahlerup 1988; Kantor 1977)³. Yet, between 1996 and 2007, the NDP's proportion of women candidates plummeted, and was actually below the PC Party's in 1996 and both the Conservatives' and the Liberals' proportions in 2003. While the NDP led the way in nominating women in 1993 and 2007, the other parties nominated more women in the three intervening elections: the PCs nominated the most in 1996, the Liberals in 1999, and the PCs again in 2003. Looking at parties' averages over the period, however, the typical pattern exists: the NDP leads the way in women candidates with 25%, the Liberals follow with 19%, and the PCs bring up the rear with 17%. This ordering, if not the magnitude of proportions, is common of the parties of the same name at the federal level over the same time period.

Legislators

Women's share of seats in the legislative assembly has grown substantially since the early-1990s. In the language of literature on critical mass and representation, the NL legislature has transitioned from a *skewed* group, in which women comprised less than 15% of the total, to a *titled* group, in which women MHAs comprise between 15% and 40% of the total (Kantor 1977). The most dramatic change was from 1993 to 1996, where women's seats

³ Dahlerup has not pegged the critical mass at the 30% rate, rather she is the scholar to whom the critical mass theorizing is commonly attributed.

increased from 2 to 7, a change from 5.8% of the legislature to 15%. Women won 17% of seats in 1999, and then 21% in each of the 2003 and 2007 provincial elections. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that women's share of seats has been on a stable upward trajectory over the period. Women's representation in the province is now virtually on par with their representation in the House of Commons.

At the same time, women's seat totals were the same following the most recent two provincial elections in Newfoundland and Labrador, leading to questions about the possible plateauing of women's representation at around 20-22%, a development in women's representation in the House of Commons that has been identified (e.g., Bashevkin 2009, 2011; Trimble and Arscott 2003). With another election coming in the fall of 2011, additional insight on this issue will be gained. Either way, women have moved beyond the token numbers in the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislative Assembly that Arscott (1997) describes.

Looking at the partisan distribution of women MHAs, there are measurable differences across the major parties (see Figure 2). In the four elections from 1996 to 2007, the Liberal caucus had higher proportions of women MHAs than its PC counterpart. Following the 1996 election, women constituted 16% of Brian Tobin's 37-person Liberal caucus, which contrasts sharply with the complete absence of women in the nine-member Progressive Conservative caucus. Women's share of the Liberal caucus has grown in relative terms in every election since, although not in absolute size given the shifting fortunes of the party across the time period. From 1993 to 2007, the average proportion of women in the Liberal caucus was 20%.

(Figure 2 about here)

Women have not fared as well numerically in PC caucuses and have made up, on average, 10% of PC MHAs from 1993-2007. Similar patterns whereby Liberals outstrip Conservatives on women's representation in caucus have been reported at the federal level, as well as in other provinces (e.g., Trimble and Arscott 2003: 59; Young 2003: 186). The gap between the Liberal and PC parties in NL has narrowed in recent years, particularly following the 2003 provincial election, in which women comprised 25% and 21% of the Liberal and PC caucuses, respectively. Women's proportion of PC seats fell slightly following the 2007 election, from 21% to 18%. In terms of raw numbers, the Conservatives increased their seat take from 34 to 44 in 2007, but the number of women MHAs in the party only increased by 1, from 7 to 8 members. In other words, women's presence in the Conservative caucus has not kept pace with the party's overall growth in seats in recent years.

The NDP presents a different story. The party is not a major force in provincial elections and has never won more than two seats in a single election. There has been only one female NDP House Member, the party's current leader Lorraine Michael. Thus, while the party sometimes runs far more women candidates than the other principal parties in the province, the low success rates of NDP candidates means that these women are almost universally defeated.

Cabinet

Questions about legislative representation quickly move to analyses of executive positions, since this is where much of the real power and prestige lie in Canadian politics, as in other Westminster systems. In NL, women's representation in Cabinet has exceeded their legislative representation for more than a decade (see Table 3). The average proportion of

women MHAs from 1993 to 2007 was 15%, whereas the average proportion of women in cabinet over the same period was 24% -- nearly a 10% difference. Again, the largest single increase in women's cabinet representation came after the 1996 provincial election, which saw the Liberal Party under leader Brian Tobin further increase its sizeable majority in the legislature. Tobin's cabinet was 25% women (4 of 16 members), compared to 7% women's representation in the cabinet formed immediately after the 1993 provincial election (and there was no turnover in governing party, so that does not account for the 1993-1996 jump).

(Table 3 about here)

Unlike the general pattern in legislative seats, cabinet appointments do not follow an unbroken trend of representational increases for women. Following the 1999 provincial election -- won again by Tobin and the Liberals -- women's representation in cabinet increased to 31% (5 of 16), surpassing the critical mass threshold, although just barely. This is slightly higher than women's representation in the current federal cabinet headed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and his is the most gender equitable cabinet in federal history. Yet, NL women's share of cabinet positions decreased slightly in each of the two provincial elections that followed (to 29% following the 2003 election, and to 28% following the 2007 election).

There are two ways, perhaps, to think about the recent decreases in women's cabinet representation in NL. First, the decreases may be a result of the turnover in government from Liberal to PC. The two most recent elections were won by the PC Party under Danny Williams, who has since retired from politics and has been replaced by Kathy Dunderdale, the current party leader and premier. Scholarly research has certainly provided compelling evidence that party in power matters for women's representation, and that women are more likely to gravitate toward, get recruited by, and move up in parties of the centre-left and left than those of the right (e.g., Kittilson 2006; Reynolds 1999). On the other hand, the decreases from 31% to 29% to 28% are very small, and may represent a situation of stasis -- essentially, no real change has occurred. This second way of framing NL cabinet composition, then, is to ask whether women's representation in cabinet has stalled over the past decade, and if so, why?

Women's representation in cabinets is not only a question of how many, but which types of portfolios are assigned to women. First identified by Duverger (1955), an important gender-based pattern has characterized portfolio allotments worldwide whereby women tend to be assigned disproportionately to "softer sociocultural ministerial positions rather than ... the harder and politically more prestigious positions ... which are often seen as stepping-stones to national leadership" (Reynolds 1999: 564; see also Bashevkin 1993; Davis 1997; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005; Krook and O'Brien 2010; Moon and Fountain 1997; Studlar and Moncrief 1999). There is certainly debate about *why* this pattern exists. In part, it is the result of stereotypes about women's policy skills and other barriers, but this pattern may also reflect, in part, women legislators' own policy priorities or their backgrounds and experiences related to these types of portfolios. The literature on substantive representation argues that women legislators do gravitate more than their male colleagues toward sociocultural policy fields such as health, social welfare, education, and women's issues (e.g., Childs and Withey 2004; Little, Dunn, and Deen 2001; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Skjeie 1991; Thomas 1991, 1994; Wangnerud 2000).

While women may gravitate towards these posts in greater numbers more generally, Studlar and Moncrief (1999) demonstrate change in provincial cabinet allotments over the period from 1976 to 1997, and show that women had greater success attaining prestigious

positions as time progressed, a finding repeated in the comparative literature (e.g., Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005: 838; see also Bashevkin 1993; Davis 1997; Erickson 1997; Moon and Fountain 1997). The question, then, is whether there is evidence of this progression in the makeup of cabinet posts in Newfoundland and Labrador in the decade leading up to the current period.

We use White's (1998) tripartite scheme for classifying portfolios as *important*, *middle-range*, and *junior* (see also Studlar and Moncrief 1999).⁴ Overall, from 1993-2007, of the 26 portfolios held by women,⁵ 6 have been *important*, 11 *middle-range*, and 9 *junior* (Table 4). Women have been most likely to head *middle-range* ministries, followed by *junior*, then *important* ministries. Looking at changes over time, a shift seems to have occurred after 1999, whereby the majority of portfolios held by women in any cabinet tend to be *important* or *mid-range*, such as education, transportation, and natural resources. Women held 5 *important* or *mid-range* portfolios compared to 1 *junior* portfolio in 1999; 4 versus 2 in 2003; and 5 versus 2 in 2007.

(Table 4 about here)

While positive growth is evident since the early 1990s, women's appointment to *important* portfolios seems to have waned over the past few election cycles, from 3 in 1999 to 2 in 2003 to 1 in 2007. It is also important to note that women in the *important* category over the period have tended to hold the Education or Health portfolios, often regarded as "soft" or "feminine" in nature. This suggests that a gendered pattern exists in NL cabinets in which women are assigned to policy fields linked with 'care' and nurture, even though these are accurately classified as important or prestigious positions. This gendered division of labour is standard across provinces, where women are often "limited to so-called 'women's positions' ... leaving not only the premiership but also major financial and legal positions reserved for men" (Moncrief and Studlar 1996: 11). Outside Education and Health, the only other *important* portfolios that have been assigned to women in NL are Industry, Trade, and Rural Development/Technology,⁶ held by Sandra Kelly after the 2003 election and Kathy Dunderdale after the 2007 election, and more recently, the premiership, held by Dunderdale since 2010. From 1993 to 2007, no woman held the Finance or Justice/Attorney General portfolios, arguably the most high-status post in the *important* category after the premiership.

Party Leaders

There have been four women party leaders in NL, three of whom are currently in office. Lynn Verge was the first woman at the helm of a party in the province. She led the PC Party from April 29 1995 to March 11 1996, and she was also the leader of the official opposition during this time. Prior to gaining the leadership of the party, Verge served as Minister of Education (1979 – 1985) and Minister of Justice (1985 – 1989) in Brian Peckford's PC government, and was one of the first women appointed to the provincial cabinet. She was first elected to her seat at the age of 28, and held it for 17 years. She

⁴ Important portfolios are premiership, attorney general, education, health, industry/economic development, and finance, and in NL fisheries would be added to this list for a total of seven. Middle-range portfolios are agriculture, environment, forests, housing, intergovernmental relations, labour, municipal affairs, natural resources, provincial secretary, public works, social services, transport, treasury board and planning and development, and all other portfolios are considered junior.

⁵ There are more portfolios than women cabinet members over the same time period because individual members sometimes hold more than one portfolio over time. For this portion of the paper the portfolio is the unit of analysis.

⁶ It was called Industry, Trade, and Technology in 2003 and Industry, Trade, and Rural Development in 2007.

resigned as PC leader after her party lost the 1996 provincial election to Brian Tobin's Liberals. "A high-profile feminist" (Rankin and Vickers 1998: 361), Verge was a founding member of the Corner Brook Status of Women's Council, and while in government worked to achieve policies that would benefit women and gender equality, such as changes to the matrimonial property act.

Currently, all three major parties in NL are led by women – the first time this has occurred in any Canadian legislature. This is a major change in the province, for prior to 2006 only one woman in the province's electoral history had led a provincial party. NDP leader Lorraine Michael has led her party since 2006. Like Verge, she identifies as a feminist, and further describes herself as a "committed activist for gender and racial social and economic justice".⁷ Prior to entering provincial-level politics, Michael was a teacher and a community organizer. She has been active in the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), and served as its interim Executive Director for a time. Current Opposition Leader and Liberal leader Yvonne Jones has headed her party since 2007. A former mayor of Mary's Harbour in Labrador, Jones has been in the NL legislature since 1996. Support for Jones' leadership of the Liberal Party will be reaffirmed in the party's upcoming May 2011 leadership convention: she is the only candidate vying for this position.

The province's current Premier and PC leader (since 2010) is Kathy Dunderdale. Dunderdale is no stranger to formal politics. Former deputy mayor of Burin, she was the first woman to be elected President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities. She has served as a Director with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, and as President of the provincial PC Party. Prior to taking on the premiership, she was Minister of Natural Resources; Minister of Innovation, Trade, and Rural Development; and Minister Responsible for the Rural Secretariat. Outside politics, Dunderdale worked in the fields of community development, communications, fisheries and social work.

While Dunderdale is highly qualified for the position of leader and premier, Danny Williams is typically seen as fundamental to her rise to the top. Williams preceded Dunderdale as premier and PC leader, and is typically thought to have hand-selected her as his replacement. Indeed, news stories make reference to the "leadership coronation" (Gatehouse 2011) that occurred in April 2011 (a reference to the fact that she ran uncontested) and characterize Dunderdale as Williams' "hand-picked successor" (Moore 2011). While perhaps a bit exaggerated, such sentiments are essentially accurate. Thus, while Dunderdale does lead a highly competitive and powerful party, her success has been attributed, in part, to the influence of her male successor.

For the other two women leaders, their roles in provincial politics seems to fit the more competitive, the fewer pattern identified by Bashevkin (1993). Put simply, Michael and Jones both lead uncompetitive parties. The NDP has never been a major political force in the province. The Liberal Party is politically important, but currently it is not in a position to challenge the PCs for control of government. In March 2011, for example, 73% of decided voters in the province said that they would vote PC if an election were held the following day (Corporate Research Associates 2011). Jones took over the Liberal leadership at a point when the party was in financial dire straits and had been reduced to 3 of 48 seats in the provincial legislature, a poor showing for a party that had formed government two cycles earlier in 1999. Jones was acclaimed as party leader in the summer of 2010, after nominations for the upcoming leadership convention closed. She had no rivals; nobody else wanted the job. It is fairly straightforward, then, to understand both Michael and Jones

using Bashevkin's (2009: 44) explanation for the "loser syndrome" that seems to plague so many women politicians. Bashevkin argues that we must take into account the condition of the parties that women lead, and these tend to fall disproportionately into two categories: "wilderness parties that had long been far from power" or once-competitive parties that "had reached a critical condition – and had entered ... an irreversible slide – some time before women leaders ever got the keys to the corner office" (Ibid).

Explanations

The various factors that affect women's representation can be classified into three broad categories: structure, culture, and politics. It is these broad categories that explain the supply of and demand for women in formal politics, so these categories organize our analyses in the sections that follow. It can be difficult to conclusively identify the complex explanations for women's under-representation, but at various points it does seem possible to identify those factors that do not seem to be working against women in the province.

Structural Explanations

Structural perspectives focus on the effects of social structures, such as family, education, and the workforce, on women's opportunities for entry into the political system. The key question is whether these social structures are configured in such a way so women can attain the key skills and resources necessary for attaining political office. The evidence on this front is mixed, but it does suggest that there are important obstacles to women who may otherwise emerge as candidates for office. Interestingly, the contemporary NL gender gap in educational attainment favours women, as of the 2006 census. Women constitute more university graduates in St. John's and in the province as a whole, and this gap appears to be widening. In St. John's, which has the highest educational attainment in the province, among adults aged 35 to 64, 20% of women hold a university degree, while nearly 22% of men are degree holders (note these numbers are still slightly below the Canadian national average, but come much closer than the provincial average does). Among those aged 25 to 35, 34% of women hold university degrees, compared to only 26% of men. Among the youngest age group (15-24, which includes some recent graduates and some who are too young to attend university), 11% of women are degree holders, compared to 5% of men. The trend is clear: women are pursuing higher education in greater numbers than men, and in greater proportions than they have in the past.

In the long run, this may have some effect on women's presence in the legislature, as increased education levels may lead to increased employment in political "pipeline" careers, as well as increased interest in and awareness of the importance of women in politics (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Lawless and Fox 2005). While it is difficult to report comparative numbers over time, Canadian historical statistics suggest that education levels in Newfoundland and Labrador have been on an upward trajectory for some time. In 1955, women constituted 34% of university enrolments. This proportion increased to 36% in 1965, and 42% in 1975 (Wisenthal 2008). Jumping forward a couple of decades, the 1996 Census reports that 10.9% of women and 11.2% of men aged 25 or more had a university degree in the province. These numbers are nearly double in the St. John's CMA, as 20.4% of men and 17.6% of women aged 25 or older in the capital region held a university degree at the time (Statistics Canada 1996).

Women's position in the Newfoundland and Labrador labour market may be one of the primary reasons for women's under-representation in the province, and unlike trends in education, provides grounds for pessimism about the future. Indeed, while women's labour force participation has increased, occupational segregation and gender-income gaps are prominent in the province. As Figure 3 illustrates, women's participation in the labour force has increased nearly 50% from 1987 to 2010, which may be one of the reasons for increases in women's representation from the early-1990s to 2007 as more women become financially autonomous from men, enter professions that tend to be pipelines to political office, build professional networks in which recruitment is more likely to occur, and the like. Over the same period, men's participation saw a dramatic decrease over much of this period, coinciding with the closure of the northern cod fishery in the early-1990s, and has only recently rebounded.

(Figure 3 about here)

Of those included in the labour force, 2010 saw a total of 187,000 people working full time in the province, and 32,400 working part-time. These numbers reflect the population as a whole, and when we break it down by sex, there are some important differences. Participation rates vary by sex, with 64% of men participating in the labour force compared to 56% of women. In comparison with the rest of Canada, participation rates are lower: Canadian averages are 62% for women and 72% for men (Statistics Canada 2009). Participation rates in St. John's more closely reflect Canadian averages (72% of men and 65% of women) (Statistics Canada 2009). Another dimension on which we find gender differences in participation rates is in the full-time/part-time distinction: 92% of employed men work full time while 8% work part-time. For women, the proportions are different, as 79% of employed women work full-time and 21% work part-time (Statistics Canada 2009). The fact that women are not only less likely to be in the labour force, but at the same time are more likely to be under-employed no doubt contributes greatly to the gender income gap we see in the province, but so too does occupational segregation.

Substantial improvements in women's participation rates aside, there remain important differences in the types of work that women and men do. Women are more likely to be found in business, finance, and administrative occupations; jobs related to health, social sciences, and education; art, culture, and recreation; and sales and service. In contrast, men are more likely to hold jobs related to management; natural and applied sciences; trades, transport, and equipment operation; jobs related to primary industry; and related to processing, manufacturing and utilities. These differences are not necessarily surprising, and reflect, in part, divergent education and training paths. As of the 2006 Census, women were more likely to claim education, humanities, social sciences, business and management as their major fields of post-secondary study, while men were more likely to focus on physical and life sciences, math and computer science, architecture, engineering, and agriculture and natural resources.

Interestingly, a substantially larger number of women claimed to have focused their education on business, management, and public administration than men (15,155 versus 5,765 residing in St. John's, and 33,640 versus 9,870 in the province as a whole). This fits with the proportion of women currently in business, finance, and administrative occupations (26,740 women in the province compared to 9,035 men), but it does not explain the larger number of men in management occupations (10,920 men versus 7,650 women across the province as a whole). Perhaps with time, and as education levels continue to

increase, the proportion of women in management positions will reflect their education levels.

The division of labour in the province is fairly clear in one area in particular: industry related to resource extraction is dominated by men, while services, especially retail, health and education, tend to be female-concentrated industries. Critically, this division fits neatly with a division across the province in relation to the basis of the economy. According to a recent (2010) NL government report, 61% of the province's GDP comes from what the government has labeled the "goods-producing sector", which includes industries such as agriculture, forestry, mining, oil extraction, manufacturing, and construction. While the bulk of the province's wealth is based in these industries, most jobs in the province are not. Combined, these industries only account for 21% of employment in the province. The other 79% of the province is employed in what the government has labeled the "services-producing sector", which includes retail, finance, education, health care, tourism, and public administration, among other things. While these industries account for the majority of jobs in the Newfoundland and Labrador, they account for less than 39% of the province's total GDP (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2010).

Hussey argues that the collapse of the fishery in the early-1990s led to the institutionalization of women's marginalization in the workforce. She suggests that retraining programs were tailored to re-tooling men rather than women, based on gendered expectations of workers' abilities (2003: 293-294). This gendered division of labour across industry types does in fact have an impact on earnings across the province. Average weekly earnings in the "goods-producing sector" amounted to approximately \$980. In contrast, in the "services-producing industries," where women are disproportionately concentrated, average weekly earnings came to \$710 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2008). Averaged over a year, this is a difference of approximately \$14,000 between the two types of industries. Critically, then, in highly valued industries related to resource extraction and the production of goods, men tend to hold most of the jobs, and earn more money.

When we look more closely at income specifically, similar patterns emerge. The most recent income statistics come from the 2006 census. The 2005 median income for full-time workers in the province was \$37,429, up from \$36,079 in 2000. Median income in the province was lower among women, however, at \$31,130, up from \$30,292 in 2000. Men's median income in 2005 was \$44,607 (Statistics Canada 2007). The gap is slightly smaller in St. John's, as women's median income was \$34,589, compared to men's \$45,466. When we incorporate part-time or seasonal workers, the total number of individuals receiving some earnings in 2005 is 271,250. Of these, the median income was \$18,086, down from \$19,746 in 2000. Focusing on women again tells a different story: the median income for all women earners was \$14,346 in 2005, up from \$13,922 in 2000. Median income for all of these groups was lower than the national average, which may reflect the lower levels of education in the province compared with the national average, as well as the history of poor economic performance, including low levels of diversification. According to Williams (2010) at Statistics Canada, women in Newfoundland and Labrador have the lowest average income across all provinces (at \$24,000 in 2008). The gap between women and men is quite pronounced, and more so than that of most other provinces: women earn approximately 57% of what men earn in the province (average income for men is \$41,900) (Williams 2010).

This may have something to do with minimum wage in the province, which is near the bottom of all provinces. In April of 2008, it was set at \$8.00/hour, and only New Brunswick was lower, at \$7.75/hour. Furthermore, NL has the highest proportion of minimum wage earners in the country, at 7.7%, which is 2.5% higher than the Canadian average. Statistics Canada (2009) notes that most workers earning minimum wage work in

“service-producing industries,” those working part-time, and that most minimum wage earners are women and young people.

Women are more likely than men to be considered “low income.” This is true across the country, and while the gender gap in low-income status is not large, NL has one of the largest gender gaps in low-income status across all the country’s jurisdictions. In NL, 11% of women are considered low-income compared to 9% of men. In St. John’s, this gap widens slightly, as fewer than 11% of men fit in this category, and more than 13% of women are considered to have low-income status.

Contributing to women’s poorer economic and political prospects compared to men are some important dynamics in family structure, particularly the rate of female-headed lone-parent families. In the province as a whole, as of the 2006 census, there were 24,165 lone-parent families, of which 82% were headed by a woman. After taxes, the median income of female-led lone-parent families is \$24,067, compared to \$30,729 for lone-parent families headed up by males. Simply put, women earn less, and when they are sole providers for their children, their children have less. Canadian averages indicate similar patterns: the mean income of female-led lone-parent families is \$38,900, compared to \$65,000 for families led by single fathers (Williams 2010).⁸

Cultural Explanations

Turning to culture, which is obviously related in important ways to structure, the combination of an older population, gender-based occupational segregation, and the gender income gap might lead us to expect that the province holds less progressive attitudes about women’s place in society, therefore leading to less demand for female legislators. Put simply, a comparison of attitudes in the province with those in the rest of Canada does not support this idea. Not only do we observe the lack of discriminatory attitudes toward women writ large in the province, but the data suggest that NL is strikingly similar to other Canadians on important indicators. Table 5 compares the attitudes of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, on the one hand, with those of Canadians from other parts of the country on a wide variety of questions related to gender, family values, and women in politics. These pooled data are from the Canadian Election Studies, 1997 to 2008. All variables were coded on a 0-1 scale, where 1 reflects more “progressive” or “pro-woman” attitudes, and then comparison of means tests were performed for each question in order to examine similarities or differences in attitudes.

(Table 5 about here)

As Table 5 makes clear, there are NL-Canada attitudinal differences, but no clear pattern emerges. Numbers in bold reflect more “pro-woman” attitudes, and of the 12 statements/questions related to gender and equality, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians hold more progressive attitudes on six questions, and other Canadians hold more progressive attitudes on the other six. Newfoundlanders are less likely to agree that “society would be much better off if women stayed home with their children,” and more likely to agree that “men and women can only be equal when they have the same responsibilities in government, business, and the family.” They are also more likely to believe that more should be done for women and more likely to feel positively about feminist groups. Finally, they are more likely to favour requiring the parties to have an

⁸ Numbers reflect constant 2008 dollars.

equal number of male and female candidates, and more likely to agree that the best way to protect women's interests is to have more women in parliament.

Canadians elsewhere, however, are less likely to believe that the "country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family values" and more likely to support easier access to abortion. They are also more sympathetic towards feminism, and more likely to believe that quotas should be used to increase women's presence in the work place. Canadians outside of Newfoundland and Labrador are also more likely to believe that the larger proportion of men than women in the House of Commons is a problem, and more likely to endorse legal requirements of parties to ensure a minimum numbers of female candidates. There is substantial overlap between Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Canadians outside of the province, suggesting that attitudes do not inhibit women's representation in Newfoundland and Labrador any more or less than they do elsewhere in the country. Most certainly, these data offer no support for the notion that Newfoundland and Labrador offers a less progressive, more morally or socially traditional political environment in relation to the range of issues that are normally associated with questions about women's political power. While challenges still remain for the province, the combination of education, labour force participation, and the more recent history of female presence in the legislature bodes well for women's representation in the future.

Political Explanations

The final set of factors to examine relates to the politics of the province, and here we focus in particular on parties, for reasons stated above. As gatekeepers to political office, their importance is difficult to overstate. Unfortunately, there is little scholarly work on parties and the party system in NL specifically, although a few patterns can be identified. None of the parties are particularly pro-active on the issue of enhancing women's representation, however there is variance across parties; the two mainline parties – Conservatives and Liberals – do the least, while the NDP is more active. For all parties, their decentralized structure makes coordinated action on the matter difficult.

Like many parties elsewhere, provincial parties in NL are not extraordinarily active in the recruitment and support of women candidates. None of the parties has quotas for women candidates, and it seems as though among the parties the PCs have the fewest measures in place to aid in the identification and recruitment of women. The Liberal Party has a Women's Commission – much as it does at the national level – and this body performs a recruitment function (Thompson 2011). The Liberals also give money to female candidates to help with their campaign expenses, but the evidence suggests that this is not part of a formalized procedure, but rather done on an informal basis (Ibid.). The NDP seems to be the most active of the three major parties in recruiting and supporting women, including the provision of formal grants to support women candidates' campaigns and the inclusion of formal affirmative action requirements in the party's constitution (Ibid.). These general findings reflect similar observations of the three main parties' activities at the national level (e.g., Cross 2004), with the Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP ranked from least to most engaged in efforts to enhance women's access to office.

The fact that the NDP is most active in searching out and supporting women candidates is a familiar pattern, but unfortunately, NDP candidates are not elected all that often in the province. In other words, the NDP's higher proportion of women candidates in some elections over the last couple of decades means that a large share of women candidates in the province run in lost-cause ridings. Changes have occurred recently in party-status rules in Newfoundland and Labrador, and parties are now required to run full

slates of candidates in each provincial election in order to qualify for party status. Informal discussions with party insiders suggest that this provides part of the explanation for the wide swings in women's proportion of NDP candidacies over the period under study. Indeed, the party is not competitive in large swaths of the province, and thus maintains no constituency association in those areas. As such, when a slate must be formed in the run up to a provincial election, in some ridings, the NDP scrambles to find a name to put on the ballot, and often it is a woman who volunteers. This could be understood as a type of "sacrificial lamb" necessary for the maintenance of party status.

In a sense, women's representation in the province can be seen to have occurred despite the actions of political parties, rather than because of the parties. This may be partially explained by a very active women's movement in the province, a movement that is quite distinct from party politics. In the early 1970s, the Newfoundland Status of Women Council (NSWC) was formed in St. John's, leading to the creation of a number of organizations and resources for women in the province. In St. John's, a Women's Centre was opened, as was a rape crisis centre, and in the early 1980s the NSWC was re-named the St. John's Status of Women Council (SJSWC) to reflect the growing number of women's councils that had been created across the province. A website created at Memorial University in 2005 to "teach about women" in the province credits the NSWC and SJSWC with a number of important milestones in women's rights in the province, including the Jury Duty Reform Act, the Matrimonial Property Act, transition houses (shelters for battered women), abortion and reproductive rights, and low-cost housing for women (Let's Teach About Women 2005b).

The activities of these groups and organizations were crucial for supporting women's political representation in the province, not only by providing a foundation whereby women's political activism was seen as "normal," but also by working with other organizations specifically geared towards increasing women's presence in the legislature. Indeed, a number of the most prominent women politicians to have emerged on the provincial scene have had deep roots in the organized women's movement. As noted above, former PC leader and first woman to lead a party in the province, Lynn Verge, had been a founding member of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council. Current NDP leader Lorraine Michael was active in the organized women's movement for decades before her entry into formal politics, including a period as interim Executive Director of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the most prominent and powerful women's in the country. In the 1980s, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women partnered up with a group called the "52% Solution: Women for Equality, Justice, and Peace" to educate the province about women's experiences in politics and hold workshops on women's issues (Let's Teach about Women 2005a). Arguably, these activities in the 1970s and 1980s paved the way for increases in women's legislative representation in the 1990s and beyond. In sum, while the effects of organizational and movement resources on women's representation are difficult to quantify, there are no doubt there, for not only does a healthy movement work to identify and encourage women office-seekers, but it also works to create the kind of social, cultural, and political conditions that are fertile ground for growth in women's representation.

Conclusions: Prospects for the Future of Women in Politics in the Province

Bashevkin's (1993) seminal work on women in politics points to two key rules: first, she suggests that the higher you go up the political food chain, the less women you will find; and second, she argues that with increasing levels of political competitiveness, the number of women present declines. Newfoundland and Labrador provides an interesting backdrop within which to examine these two axioms. The province will be heading into the fall 2011 election with female leaders at the helms of all three major political parties, a phenomenon we're not sure has actually occurred in Canadian politics before. Arguably, this flies in the face of at least one of Bashevkin's rules, "the higher, the fewer," as these women hold positions at the very top of provincial politics. As for her second rule, we think that Bashevkin's observations still stand. While it is the case that women head up all three political parties, it has to be noted that the NDP has never held more than two seats in the provincial legislature, and that the Liberal Party is currently deeply in debt with very little chance of achieving a major electoral upset this fall. Even though Danny Williams (who had approval ratings at nearly 80% when he retired from office) is no longer premier, his influence on voters remains, and Kathy Dunderdale will benefit from his legacy. Whether or not women really have broken through the glass ceiling in the province remains to be seen. Until we see a real contest for control over the House of Assembly, we don't really know.

This is not to say that women's presence in the legislature isn't important, or that these three women haven't had a valuable impact on the future of women's representation in the province. Indeed, the opposite is true. Because of the work of women like Kathy Dunderdale, Yvonne Jones, and Lorraine Michael, and the 23 other women past and present who have held seats in the legislature, we are optimistic about the future of women's political representation in the province. A lot of the groundwork necessary for increases in women's presence has been laid: structurally, education levels in the province are such that women are not at a disadvantage; the gender gap in labour force participation rates has decreased over the last twenty years, and while important workforce related gaps remain (including the wage gap), improvements have occurred. Culturally, women do not appear to be at a disadvantage, at least no more so than they are in the rest of Canada, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians fare fairly well on a number of indicators that measure mass attitudes related to women at home, at work, and in politics. While the major political parties in the province have not made significant efforts to recruit women candidates, the fact remains that over the last four provincial elections, women's presence as candidates has gradually risen from 15% to 17% to 21%, and nearly the entirety of this increase has taken place in the Liberal and PC parties, neither of which has the type of institutional supports that the NDP has in place for women.

The proportion of women in the legislature over those same four elections was exceeded by women's presence in cabinet, ranging from 25%-31% in this time period. While this doesn't represent a massive number of women in leadership positions in provincial politics (it generally means that in a twenty person cabinet, about five are women), it does represent a large enough number that we would expect to see these women have an impact on the future of women's representation through role model effects. Past research has shown that women legislators have a positive influence on both women and girls, resulting in their greater levels of interest and participation in politics (for example, see Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). We expect therefore that the increase in women's presence over the last twenty years will have significant effects in the years to come, as the role model effect

should also make it easier to recruit more women in the future, as well as to demonstrate to parties and voters that women are viable, highly-qualified candidates for office. In sum, recent increases in women's representation in the province may have positive supply- and demand-side effects that bode well for continued growth in women's numerical representation in future electoral cycles.

Tables and Figures

Information Box

Firsts for Women			
<i>Right to vote/right to stand for election</i>			
• Year most women won the vote/right to stand		1925	
• Note if any groups of women received the vote/right to stand at a later date (e.g. for Aboriginal, Asian/S Asian)		n/a	
<i>Contesting office</i>			
• First woman to contest office:			
o (pre-confederation) Helena Squires, Liberal		[by-election, 1930]	
o (post-confederation) Grace Sparkes, PC		[1949]	
• First woman to win office:			
o (pre-confederation) Helena Squires, Liberal		1930-1932	
o (post-confederation) Hazel McIsaac, Liberal		1975-1979	
• First woman appointed to cabinet: Hazel Newhook, PC, Consumer Affairs and Environment		1979-1980 (in this portfolio)	
Current Political Representation at a Glance			
(note- as of most recent election)			
	Date of election	# of women elected	% women
<i>Women in the Legislature</i>	2007/10/09	10	21%
<i>Women in the Cabinet</i>	2007/10/09	5	28%
<i>Women Political Party Leaders</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yvonne Jones, Liberal Party, since November 15th, 2007 • Lorraine Michael, NDP, since May 28, 2006 • Kathy Dunderdale, PC, since December 3, 2010 			
<i>Lieutenant Governor/ Governor General</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a 			
<i>Advisory Council on the Status of Women</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does one currently exist? Yes: Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW), created in 1980. 			

Election	# Women Candidates	% Women Candidates	# Women Elected	% Women MLAs	Women's Success Rate	Men's Success Rate
1930	1	1.16	1	2.5%		
1932	1	3.7	0	0		
1946	1	0.76	0	0		
1949	1	1.7	0	0		
1951	1	1.8	0	0		
1956	0	0	0	0		
1959	0	0	0	0		
1962	0	0	0	0		
1966	1	1.25	0	0		
1971	1	0.93	0	0		
1972	0	0	0	0		
1975	5	3.4	1	2%		
1979	13	8.0	2	3.8%		
1982	9	7.0	3	5.8%		
1985	19	12.0	1	2%		
1989	14	9.8	3	5.8%		
1993	31	19.1%	2	3.8%	6%	37%
1996	21	17%	7	15%	33%	40%
1999	28	19%	8	17%	29%	34%
2003	29	20%	10	21%	34%	33%
2007	36	27%	10	21%	28%	38%

Election	Liberal Women Candidates	PC Women Candidates	NDP Women Candidates
1930	1		
1932	1	0	
1946			
1949	0	1	
1951	0	1	
1956	0	0	0
1959	0	0	0
1962	0	0	0
1966	0	1	0
1971	1	0	0
1972	0	0	0
1975	1	1	3
1979	1	2	10
1982	2	3	4
1985	7	4	8
1989	3	3	7
1993	6 (12%)	6 (12%)	18 (35%)
1996	7 (15%)	10 (21%)	3 (15%)
1999	10 (21%)	7 (15%)	7 (20%)
2003	9 (19%)	10 (21%)	6 (18%)
2007	13 (28%)	9 (19%)	14 (39%)

Election	# Women in Cabinet	% Women in Cabinet
1993	1	7%
1996	4	25%
1999	5	31%
2003	4	29%
2007	5	28%

Election	# Women in Cabinet	# Important Portfolios held by Women	# Middle-Range Portfolios held by Women	# Junior Portfolios held by Women
1993	1	0	1	1
1996	4	0	2	3
1999	5	3	2	1
2003	4	2	2	2
2007	5	1	4	2
Total	19	6	11	9

Figure 1

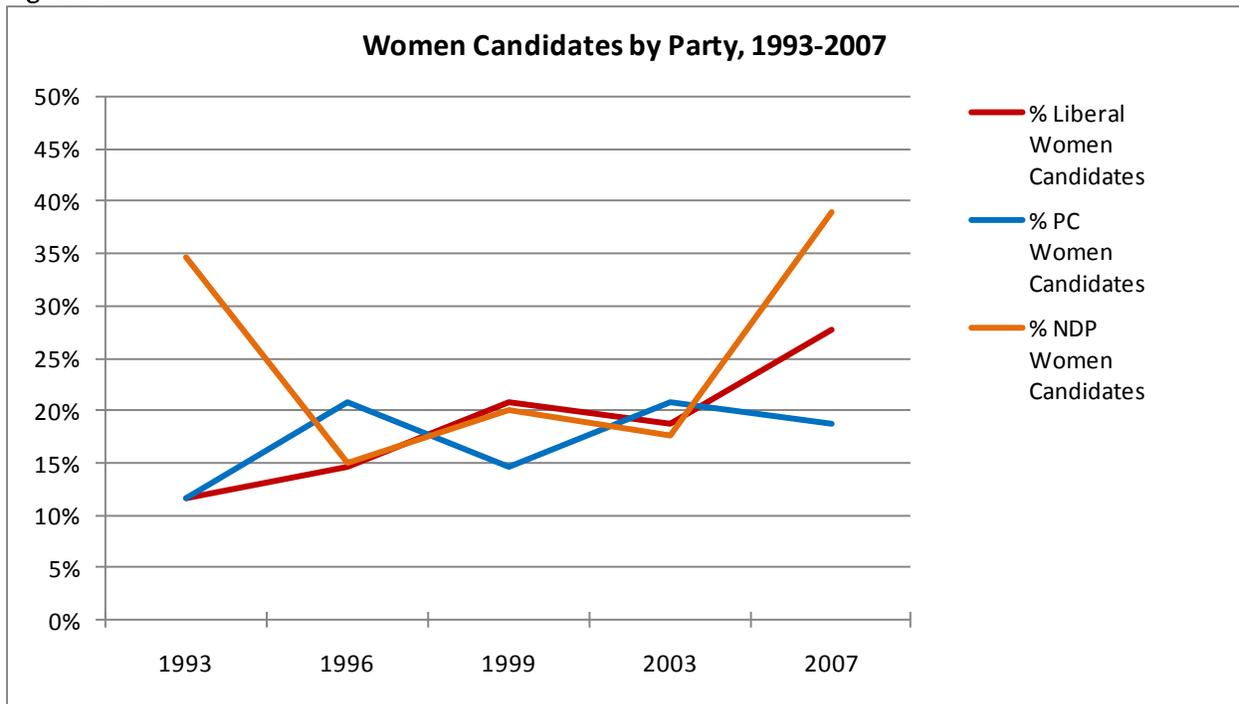


Figure 2

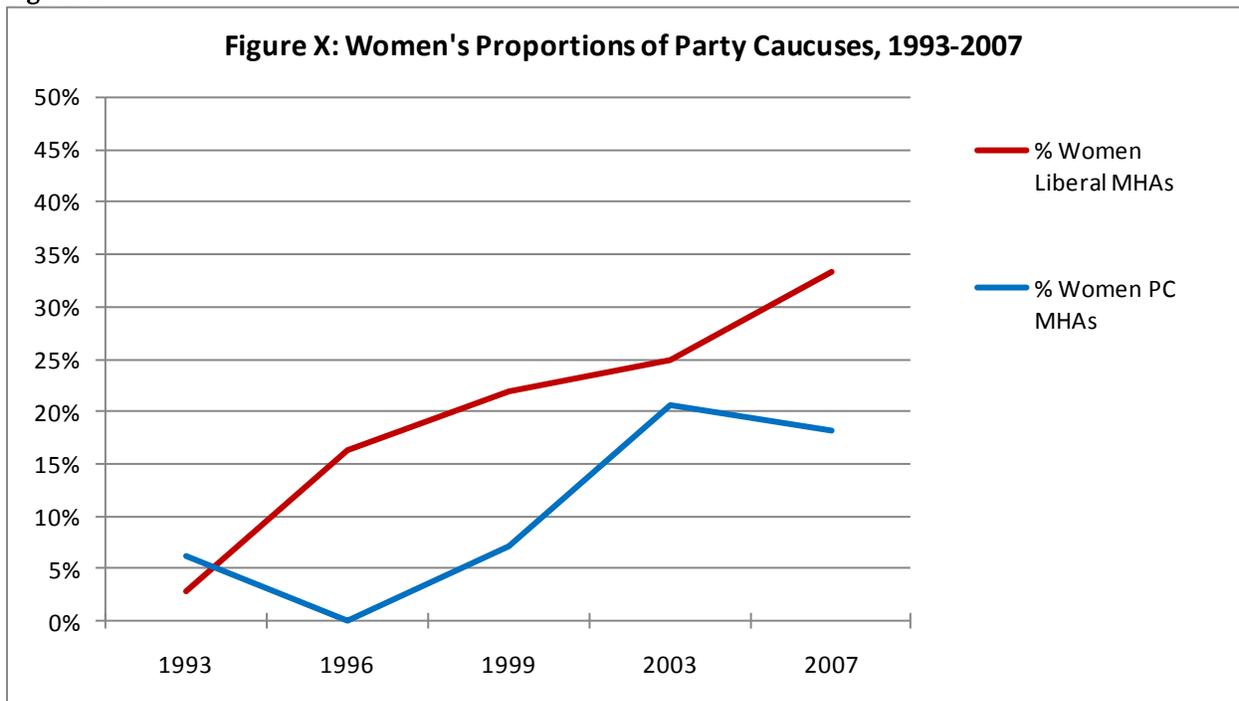


Figure 3

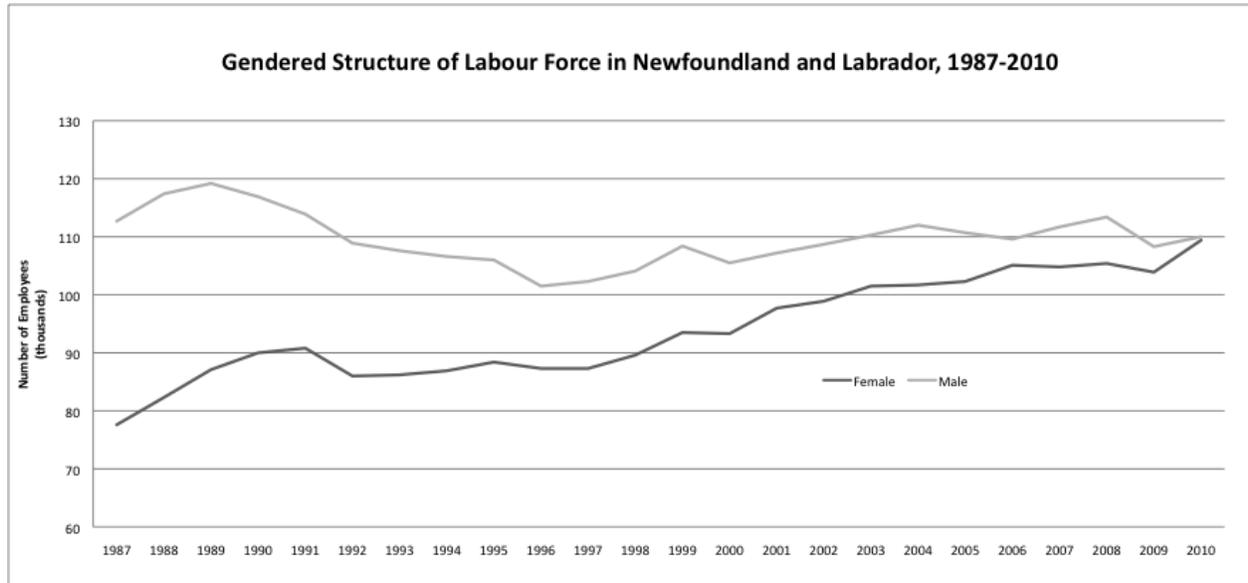


Table 5
Attitudes Towards Women, Gender, and Representation: Comparing NL with the Rest of Canada (1997-2008)

	ROC	NL	PR value	N (ROC/NL)
<i>Family Values</i>				
Society would be much better off if women stayed home with their children	0.570	0.616	0.000	84011/2233
This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family values	0.330	0.259	0.001	8633/205
Men and women can only be equal when they have the same responsibilities in government, business and the family. Or Equality can exist even when men and women have very different responsibilities	0.237	0.298	0.038	8615/205
Now we would like to get your views on abortion. We know that this is a sensitive question. Of the following three positions, which is closest to your own position: one, abortion should never be permitted. Two, should be permitted only after need has been established by a doctor, or three, should be a matter of a woman's personal choice	0.663	0.585	0.000	67442/1710
<i>Political Values</i>				
How much do you think should be done for women	0.689	0.741	0.000	82461/2201
We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country	0.500	0.500	0.960	27072/696
When it comes to feminism, are you: 1. very sympathetic. 3. quite sympathetic. 5. not very sympathetic. 7. not sympathetic at all	0.610	0.579	0.019	16856/505
How do you feel about feminist groups?	0.632	0.694	0.000	43243/1029
Discrimination makes it extremely difficult for women to get jobs equal to their ability	0.523	0.535	0.389	18494/491
Quotas should be used to increase the number of women in good jobs OR Hiring should be based strictly on merit	0.109	0.057	0.010	8626/210
<i>Quotas and Parliament</i>				
Would you favour or oppose requiring the parties to have an equal number of male and female candidates?	0.403	0.551	0.000	8477/235
The best way to protect women's interests is to have more women in Parliament	0.550	0.592	0.000	27116/690
As you may know, there are many more men than women in the House of Commons. In your view, is this a: 1. very serious problem. 3. Quite a serious problem. 5. Not a very serious problem. 7. Not a problem at all.	0.340	0.292	0.001	24669/546
Which comes closest to your own view? 1, Political parties should be required by law to have a MINIMUM number of female candidates; or, 2, it should be up to each political party to decide how many female candidates it wants.	0.616	0.512	0.000	22520/561

Variables coded 0-1 where 1 reflects more "progressive" or "pro-woman" attitudes

Data pooled from 1997-2008 CES: Means Reported, results of T-Tests

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