

A New Right? Moral Issues and Partisan Change in Canada*

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Objective. Beginning with the 1993 election, Canada's Progressive Conservative Party was replaced as the dominant force on the political right by the more ideological Reform Party/Canadian Alliance. This article examines what specific issues most centrally motivated this seismic shift among conservative Canadians. *Method.* Using data from the 1993, 1997, and 2000 Canadian Election Studies, we employ bivariate analyses and multinomial logit voting models to determine whether constitutional, economic, nativist, or moral issues most clearly differentiate PC supporters from R/A voters. *Results.* Regional concerns are important and other issues have sporadic impacts, but moral traditionalism is the most consistent and powerful factor distinguishing supporters of the new party from supporters of the old one. *Conclusions.* Although existing studies have focused primarily on other sources of R/A support, moral traditionalism is clearly a key factor in explaining the party's ascendancy. This phenomenon, we contend, is part of a larger trend toward postmaterial politics in Western democracies.

Two decades ago, Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck (1984), surveying the changing electoral landscape in advanced industrial democracies, identified several potential hypotheses to explain what they described as the rise of "new right" politics (see also Lawson and Merkl, 1988). Reacting to the "new politics" that emerged during the 1960s (Inglehart, 1971), they suggested that existing party systems would likely be unable to accommodate the cleavages created by these cultural upheavals. The potential bases of new right politics, they argued, were an amalgam of cultural conservatism, political decentralization, and traditional anti-government liberalism (1984: 4–5)—a point amplified by Kitschelt (1995). Although Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck noted the destabilizing potential of the new political cleavage, they

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were unable to determine if they were witnessing a true realignment or merely a breakdown of existing electoral allegiances. More importantly, they were uncertain which elements of the new right would have the most profound effects on Western party systems.

The passage of time affords opportunities not available to earlier analysts. The 1990s, for example, provided at least one example of electoral realignment on the political right in an advanced industrial democracy. This change, which occurred in Canada, was dramatic. The Progressive Conservative Party, which actually predates the founding of the nation, appears to have been supplanted as the dominant party of the right in the space of three elections beginning in 1993.¹ This article takes advantage of that opportunity to test extant hypotheses regarding the rise of new conservative parties. By exploring the issue/ideological bases of the electoral shift in Canada, we hope to shed light on the more general phenomenon of new right partisan change.

When Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative (PC) government was elected in a 1984 landslide, there was cautious optimism on the part of Canadian Conservatives. Tory landslides were not unprecedented. In 1958, they had won a similar victory, only to see themselves consigned to their traditional position on the opposition benches five years later. Mulroney was determined not to suffer a similar fate. Yet by 1993, his party won only two seats and lost its status as an official party in the House of Commons. In terms of seats won, it has finished *fifth* in the past three federal elections. In its place, the new Reform Party (by 2000 the Canadian Alliance) emerged as the largest party of the political right² and by 1997 had become the official opposition.³

In a two-party system, the rise of a new major party necessitates the decline, although not necessarily the disappearance, of an existing major party (Sartori, 1976). Sundquist (1983) argues that such an electoral realignment will occur when a large segment of public opinion on a significant issue or issues is not reflected in the agendas of existing partisan options (see

¹In December 2003, the membership of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties voted to merge, forming the Conservative Party of Canada (CPOC). The merger spells the end of the Progressive Conservative Party and paves the way for the reestablishment of Canada's traditional two-party "plus" electoral dynamic.

²Those who had voted Conservative in 1988 were twice as likely to have supported the Reform Party in 1993 as to have voted for any other party (Nevitte et al., 2000:80). Indeed, Clarke et al. (2000) demonstrate that the vast majority of Reform Party members cited dissatisfaction with the PCs as a "very important" factor in their partisan shift.

³The effect of the partisan shift, especially in the earlier elections, is more stark in terms of parties' seat totals. Reform was clearly helped along by the geographic concentration of its voters in western Canada, allowing it to maintain a relatively favorable seats-to-votes ratio. In 1993, the Reform Party won 19 percent of the popular vote and 52 seats; the PC won 16 percent of the vote, but only two seats. In 1997, Reform and PC had roughly equal vote shares (19 percent), but Reform won three times as many seats (60 to 20). In 2000, the Canadian Alliance significantly outperformed the PC, taking 26 percent of the popular vote to 12 percent, and 66 seats to 12.

also Burnham, 1970). Such dissatisfaction certainly appeared to characterize Canadian party politics in the 1990s. We seek here to identify the underlying ideological and/or sociological bases of the fundamental shift in Canadian partisan allegiance. On what issues did supporters of the new conservative party differ most sharply from supporters of the old one? Is the partisan change rooted in idiosyncratic Canadian questions, or in attitudinal shifts of more general scope and application?

There have been many excellent analyses of the bases of Reform/Alliance (R/A) support in the 1993, 1997, and 2000 elections (Nevitte et al., 2000; Gidengil et al., 2001; Blais et al., 2002; Laycock, 2002). Although each has contributed to our understanding of R/A's emergence as the preeminent party of the right in Canada, none has sought explicitly and systematically to explain what issues R/A was able to exploit in establishing itself as a viable replacement for the discredited PCs. Few would dispute that R/A has staked out distinctively conservative positions on Quebec, immigration, taxation, and moral traditionalism. The key question, however, is which issue(s) most strongly differentiate R/A from the traditional right-of-center party in the eyes of Canadian voters. Is it "old" issues (like taxes and Quebec), rooted in the traditional cleavages of Canadian politics, or is it a new value-based dimension rooted in more generalizable, postmaterial concerns?

We argue that moral traditionalism is central in explaining the decline of the Progressive Conservatives and the rise of R/A. A variety of factors, discussed in detail below, may have played some role in the partisan shift. Nonetheless, we contend that the PCs' failure to occupy the socially conservative issue space is more important than regional, constitutional, fiscal, and nativist issues in explaining the partisan shift on the Canadian right. Thus, we argue, the rise of R/A is an important case of the more general prominence of new right cultural politics suggested by earlier theorists.

Our argument unfolds in three sections. The first section presents four hypotheses that might explain R/A success. The second tests these using data from the 1993, 1997, and 2000 Canadian Election Studies. Finally, the conclusion discusses the findings, highlighting their general significance for understanding the partisan dynamics of other postindustrial societies.

Competing Hypotheses

Regional/Constitutional Issues

One explanation for the fate of the PC Party is that Mulroney mishandled the delicate regional balance that has long characterized Canadian politics. That is, the PCs failed adequately to represent the regional bases of their support. In short, to use Mulroney's own unfortunate phrase, he "rolled the dice" and lost the support of western Canadians by seeking to satisfy Quebec's constitutional demands under the auspices of the Meech Lake and

Charlottetown constitutional accords. In this view, regional concerns and related constitutional issues were at the root of partisan change on the Canadian right. In their study of the 1997 federal election, Nevitte et al. (2000:92) lend support to this hypothesis, suggesting that the “Reform vote is a powerful lightening rod for both anti-Quebec sentiment . . . as well as a feeling that the voter’s province is treated unfairly” (see also Laycock, 2002). However, the same authors (Gidengil et al., 2001; Blais et al., 2002) find that attitudes toward Quebec were unrelated to support for the Alliance in the 2000 election. In any case, to the extent that the Quebec issue is central in explaining the rise of R/A, Canada would be an idiosyncratic case rather than representative of a more general phenomenon.

Since the 19th century, and with remarkable consistency thereafter, the Conservatives have been adept at alienating French-speaking Canadians, largely concentrated in the populous Province of Quebec. With over one-quarter of the Canadian population (and parliamentary seats), Quebec’s penchant for voting virtually *en bloc* established for the Liberals a Canadian version of the “solid South” that delivered a steady string of victories. By the late 1980s, however, Mulroney sensed a weakness in the Liberals’ position in Quebec and moved to exploit it.

Mulroney sought to capitalize on the failure of Canada’s 1982 constitutional amendment (backed by the Liberals) to incorporate Quebec’s core constitutional demands. Sensing the prospect of driving a wedge between the Liberal Party and its traditional base of support in Quebec, Mulroney promised to reopen constitutional negotiations to produce an amendment that Quebec would accept with “honour and enthusiasm” (Mulroney, 1984). He delivered on the promise with the Meech Lake Accord, a package of constitutional amendments unanimously supported by the premiers of all 10 provinces, but that failed to secure ratification in all provincial legislatures.

In the wake of that failure, and facing the threat of a Quebec referendum on separation, the Conservative government brokered yet another constitutional deal—the Charlottetown Accord—in 1992. This time, in order to avoid the perceived pitfalls of the Meech Lake Accord, it was decided that the Charlottetown Accord would be ratified in each province and territory by popular referendum. Referenda failed in most provinces, including Quebec. Moreover, the following year witnessed a different sort of referendum in Quebec: the federal election of 1993 saw the PCs’ seat total in Quebec fall from 63 to only one. In its stead, a new party, the *Bloc Québécois*, emerged to win 54 seats. Conservative electoral success in Quebec proved short-lived indeed.

Mulroney’s roll of the dice appears to explain his party’s misfortune in Quebec. More importantly for our purposes, however, it may also explain the defection of voters in western Canada. It was the perception, in the wake of the Meech Lake Accord, that the PCs were more interested in wooing Quebecers than in representing westerners that led to the founding of the

Reform Party; indeed, the new movement organized in 1987 under the banner of “The West Wants In.” Like the *Bloc Québécois*, the Reform Party rose to electoral prominence in the immediate aftermath of the Charlottetown failure. Charlottetown was decisively defeated in all western provinces, assisted in part by strong campaigning by Reform leader Preston Manning, an ardent opponent of special constitutional treatment for Quebec.

Economic Issues

Another facially reasonable explanation is that economically speaking, the Progressive Conservatives by the 1990s had become more progressive than conservative. As a result, and especially in light of the introduction of a national value-added sales tax, a persistent budget deficit, and high taxation and spending levels under the Mulroney government, an electoral niche was exploited by the fledgling Reform Party (Clarke and Kornberg, 1992; Laycock, 2002). This view casts the rise of the Reform Party primarily as a fiscal revolt against an existing political order in which all major parties were committed to relatively high levels of taxing and spending. From this perspective, the new right would represent little more than a manifestation of more committed traditional anti-government liberalism (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, 1984; Kitschelt, 1995).

Clarke and Kornberg (1992) have argued that the decline of the Progressive Conservatives was grounded in poor economic performance. Indeed, in the wake of the 1988 election, Canadians were very pessimistic about the state of both the national economy and the state of their personal finances. Moreover, two major economic initiatives, the 1988 Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the 1990 Goods and Services Tax (GST), resonated poorly with respondents in surveys following the 1988 election. Clarke and Kornberg base their (as it then was) prediction of the Tory demise on the failure of economic policy. Similarly, Laycock suggests that a principal reason for taking R/A seriously as Canada’s party of the right is its commitment to liberal individualism—both through democratic reform and its determination to “wean Canadians off the welfare state” (2002:23).⁴ Although the other federal parties adopted less statist positions beginning in the 1990s, Laycock suggests that the Reform Party’s early advocacy of fiscal conservatism was an important element in launching the fledgling party.

A core element of the Reform Party message was *laissez-faire* economics. The party advocated tax cuts and a halt to the growth of the Canadian welfare state. Simply put, the party’s philosophy is that when it comes to the

⁴In part, this ties into issues of moral conservatism as well. Reform supporters tend to see a large, interventionist state as the ally of those who support anti-family, pro-abortion policies (Laycock, 2002:24).

economy, governments rarely make things better and often make them worse (Laycock, 2002). It is not unreasonable to suppose, therefore, that R/A capitalized on Canada's lack of a true fiscally conservative party in displacing the Conservatives as the leading party of the right.

Nativism

A third possible explanation is that, in light of strong nativist, anti-immigration sentiments that strengthened in many western European nations during the 1980s, the PC decline and coincident ascent of the Reform Party reflects the activation of a latent "paleo-conservatism." That is, it is reasonable to hypothesize that R/A benefited from a new, nativist nationalism grounded in traditional conceptions of what it means to be Canadian (Laycock, 2002). The PCs' acquiescence, so the argument runs, to the influx of immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, and elsewhere opened a nativist issue space that made partisan realignment possible. If such a circumstance proves to explain the Canadian case, it would be an interesting finding, but would not serve to support the argument advanced by Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck. If anything, such an anti-immigrant backlash would trace its roots to a trend in early, rather than "post," industrialization.

One of the unsettling features of the 1980s was the rise to prominence in many developed industrial countries of strongly nationalistic, even racist, right-wing parties (Betz, 1993). The National Front in France, the Northern League in Italy, and the Austrian Freedom Party all exemplify this anti-immigrant trend. Although R/A cannot fairly be grouped with these parties, it clearly shared the characteristic of being a populist party that appealed to those on the political right (Nevitte et al., 1998). Naturally, it attracted its share of xenophobes and racists. While party policy was to expel those whose views were incompatible with core liberal values of equality, in practice the party was loath to purge members unless they became an embarrassment. As a result, some of the more unpalatable elements on the far right of Canadian public life became associated with the Reform Party (Flanagan, 1995:32–36, 152).

Moreover, it was not merely the extremist element that generated a sense of unease about the new party's nativist orientation. In its 1994 assembly, the party staked out a fairly conservative position on immigration, resolving that the Immigration Act be amended so that sponsored immigrants must obtain Canadian citizenship before becoming eligible for health care or other federally funded social services. Moreover, the assembly resolved that immigration should be capped at 150,000 per year until unemployment levels fell below 10 percent (quoted in Flanagan, 1995:197; see also Archer and Ellis, 1994).

It seems rather clear that if there exists a significant paleo-conservative element in the Canadian electorate, R/A would be its natural home. To

extend this logic, it is possible that the party's success can be traced to its willingness to go beyond the political pale and, implicitly at least, provide an electoral haven for those whose extreme nativist views lie outside the mainstream of what had been the prevailing party system.

Moral Issues

Finally, a fourth hypothesis (and our central claim here) suggests that the principal failing of the Progressive Conservative Party was that it did not address the concerns of those who feared a moral drift away from traditional values. This phenomenon has been discussed in the extant literature. For example, Nevitte et al. note that Reform voters in the 1997 election were more likely to favor traditional social values than were PC voters. However, they also contend that the "sharpest differences between supporters of the two right parties appear on the Quebec question" (2000:100). The same authors also note that social conservatism was the second most important ideological dimension (after views pertaining to Quebec sovereignty) in the 2000 election. Even so, they argue that the impact of socially conservative values on the "overall outcome of the election tended to be small" (Gidengil et al., 2001:28; see also Blais et al., 2002). Laycock (2002) also notes that social conservatives were attracted to R/A. However, like the authors cited above, he does not seek to determine the extent to which social conservatism motivated voters to abandon the established PCs for the upstart party. What the extant literature does make clear is that appreciable minorities (and in some cases majorities) of Canadians held pro-life views on abortion, were suspicious of the gay-rights agenda, and sought a renewed social emphasis on traditional family ties. In the 1980s and early 1990s, however, no major party (including the "conservative" one) served to articulate any of these concerns. Especially in light of the Mulroney government's failure to re-criminalize abortion in the wake of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Morgentaler v. The Queen* (1988), it is reasonable to suppose that social conservatives in Canada were decreasingly represented within the prevailing party system. The "libertarian consensus" on social issues among existing partisan options created a significant political opportunity for a new party that could speak to the concerns of morally conservative Canadian voters.

Beginning in the early 1970s, Inglehart (1971) articulated the concept of postmaterialism to explain the cultural upheavals of the 1960s. Basing his work on Maslow's (1954) widely known hierarchy of needs, Inglehart sought to order individuals' political values. Respondents were provided a menu of value preferences and asked to rank them. Each menu consisted of statements that represented basic priorities (i.e., those that ensure economic or physical security) as well as higher-order, postmaterial objectives (non-physiological needs, such as esteem, self-expression, and aesthetic satisfaction). Alternatively, and slightly more broadly, we can conceptualize

postmaterial values as those that money cannot buy. As he had expected, responses tended to represent a dichotomy between two groups—those who had come of age politically prior to the end of World War II and those who came of age afterward.

It is not surprising that younger respondents might exhibit a less “sensible shoes” set of value preferences than do their elders; however, the significant thing about Inglehart’s work is that postmaterial values appear to be robust over a person’s lifetime. That is, as the generational cohort that came of age after World War II aged, respondents tended to retain postmaterial values. Even as the economic requisites of mortgages and marriage intruded on them, they tended not to mature into a preference for material values.

If Inglehart is correct, and we suspect that he is, the “silent revolution” altered the boundaries of political contestation. The early effects pitted the new postmaterialists against the older, more established material generation. Certainly, the generation gap of the 1960s can be seen in this light. However, as noted by Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck (1984), a secondary, less-well-explored effect would be expected *within* the postwar generation(s). Not all socialized under the security of the welfare state may be expected to embrace the postmaterial values that we have come to associate with the “new left.” In the same way that material security liberates those on the left to focus on higher-order political objectives like cultural transformation, it motivates those on the right to emphasize the preservation of traditional social norms and values. Kitschelt (1995:2) sees the new right as “the mirror image and opposite political pole of a new left that began to mobilize in the 1960s.” Although the parameters of new right political contestation are potentially broad, an important dimension articulated by Kitschelt revolves around collective decision making. Specifically, public policy decisions for the new right tend to turn on “collective norm compliance, combined with hierarchical choice compliance.” By contrast, new left attitudes toward collective decision making are based on “individual freedom of political and cultural expression” (1995:4–5). Put differently, this dimension of political contestation pits new left moral relativists against new right moral objectivists.

This “postmaterial backlash,” we argue, took the form of the neoconservative movement (Sigurdson, 1994). Neoconservatives also articulated a postmaterial agenda, if we accept the broader definition of postmaterial values as a focus on things that money cannot buy. Indeed, it is reasonable to look at issues such as euthanasia, pornography, traditional conceptions of marriage and family, and opposition to abortion as the flip-side of what might be thought of as a postmaterial cleavage (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, 1984:4). Although this new cleavage—new left versus neoconservatism—has not obviated the salience of the prevailing material cleavage, it certainly has the potential to alter the boundaries of political contestation. The United States over the last three decades represents an excellent example.

Especially in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Republican Party in the United States has had to accommodate

the policy demands of a powerful coalition of neoconservatives, most prominently the Christian Coalition. The Democrats similarly have been obliged to adopt a broader range of policies in light of pressure from environmentalists, peace activists, and “justice seekers” representing the interests of women, African Americans, and homosexuals. Thus, while neither party shifted its position on issues of material distribution, both were forced to make concessions to the new line of political cleavage. No partisan replacement took place in the United States, but it is certainly reasonable to suggest that we have witnessed what Sundquist (1983) calls a realignment of the two existing parties.

With respect to the postmaterial cleavage, the NDP provided an important benefit to the Liberal Party in Canada by supplying a home for the most radical of the new left activists. The Liberals were able to position themselves in the middle of the ideological spectrum through a mix of market socialism and acceptance of moderate new left demands. The most significant manifestation of this moderate new left orientation can be seen in the values that Trudeau successfully incorporated into the Constitution with the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms.⁵ The postmaterial cleavage proved less easy to accommodate for the PCs. The party was internally divided among “red” and “blue” Tories, with the former advocating market socialism and embracing new left ideals and the latter cleaving to more traditional values.

As Flanagan (1995:40) points out, during the Mulroney years, neoconservatives were increasingly marginalized as the party accommodated new left politics at the expense of neoconservative values (see also Archer and Ellis, 1994; Flanagan and Harper, 1998; Clarke et al., 2000). Thus, in addition to pushing bilingualism in western Canada, for example, the PCs passed the Multiculturalism Act, and even created a Department of Multiculturalism. In addition, the Mulroney government passed the Employment Equity Act, which served further to institutionalize affirmative action in Canada. Finally, it promised to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include protection for Canadians of alternative sexual orientation.

Even more damaging, we might hypothesize, were two events in the late 1980s and early 1990s that conspired to provoke a postmaterial crisis in the Conservative Party. The first, already noted, was the birth of the Reform Party in 1987. The second was Canada’s version of *Roe v. Wade*. In 1988, the Canadian Supreme Court’s decision in *Morgentaler v. The Queen* struck down Canada’s section of the criminal code regarding abortion. The Mulroney government made a tepid attempt to pass new legislation that would

⁵Examples include equality rights provisions (s.15), which provide group-based rights, including constitutional protection for affirmative action programs, based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability. For good measure, in response to pressures from the feminist movement, s.28 provides for gender equality. Section 27 mandates constitutional interpretation that ensures the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians. Finally, also entrenched in 1982 were provisions under s.35 for group-specific aboriginal rights.

pass constitutional muster, but was unsuccessful. These events, we maintain, represented a stimulus to the articulation of new right politics manifested in the rise of the Reform Party.

Data and Results

The four previously discussed hypotheses present themselves as reasonable explanations for the decline of the Progressive Conservative Party. In this section, we seek to determine empirically exactly what set of issues was most critical in driving this realignment. Data from the 1993, 1997, and 2000 Canadian Election Studies are well suited for our investigation. These are nationwide, random, mass-sample surveys containing items tapping all of the competing hypotheses that we have outlined, as well as a wide array of control variables.⁶ Moreover, these particular studies bracket our critical period of interest—1993 saw the emergence of the Reform Party as a major force in Canadian national politics, 1997 marked the party's ascendancy to official opposition status, and 2000 was the first election in which the Alliance could be deemed *the* established second party in Canada. The party during this period was marked by the sort of leadership turnover and identity struggles that are likely to characterize any nascent political movement. Thus, it is important to examine the bases of R/A support in all of these elections in order to capture enduring, rather than ephemeral, elements of its appeal.

In exploring the underlying causes of the Conservatives' decline and the accompanying R/A ascendancy, we examine six key issues for evidence of differences between Conservative and R/A supporters. Four of these, the Quebec question, taxation, immigration, and moral traditionalism, are tied directly to the hypotheses that we outlined above. The other two, crime and the environment, serve as controls; crime because it serves to differentiate our measure of moral traditionalism from a more generally authoritarian conservative orientation, and the environment because it is a classically postmaterialist issue typically associated with the new left. With one exception,⁷ our analyses of these issues draw on measures that are consistent across

⁶Additional technical information regarding sampling, question format, and other details of the 1993, 1997, and 2000 CES can be found through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, where all of the Canadian Election Studies are archived. Principal investigators for the 1993 study are Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. For 1997 and 2000, the principal investigators are André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevitte.

⁷This single exception is the constitutional question of Quebec's status. The 1997 study has a good item tapping our key concept of interest here, asking respondents whether they believe that Quebec should be constitutionally recognized as a distinct society (0 = oppose such recognition, 1 = undecided, 2 = support). The 2000 study, while not including a specifically constitutional question on Quebec, did ask a reasonably good proxy: "How much do you think should be done for Quebec?" (with five response categories ranging from "much more" to "much less"). In 1993, however, these sorts of questions are regrettably missing

the three studies. On the issue of immigration, respondents are asked whether they think Canada should admit more or fewer immigrants than it does presently, or if the policy should remain the same. We have coded these three possible responses in order of increasing hostility toward immigration.⁸ On the issue of taxation, respondents are asked whether they would support higher taxes in order to maintain social programs, and can answer yes, no, or that it depends of the program. With regard to crime, the survey asks respondents to agree or disagree (in both cases, either strongly or somewhat) with the following statement: "We must crack down on crime, even if that means people lose their rights." The environment item is a similar variable, arranged according to how strongly a respondent agrees with the proposition that creating jobs is more important than protecting the environment.

Our key variable of interest is, of course, the moral traditionalism measure. This is an idea difficult to capture with a single survey question, since we wish to tap some mix of Judeo-Christian morality and respect for traditional familial norms. As a result, we have constructed a composite variable, drawing on six related items from the CES. These items ask respondents for their positions on legalized abortion, homosexual marriage, moral relativism, out-of-wedlock births, women's social role, and the importance of "traditional family ties."⁹ This results in a scale ranging from least to most morally conservative.

To get a sense of the issue basis underlying Canada's partisan shift of the 1990s, it is instructive to examine differences in positions between supporters of the various parties. Questions on which R/A voters are indistinguishable from Conservative voters are unlikely to be the source of significant partisan change. Instead, we should look to those issues on which R/A voters differ significantly from both Conservative voters and from supporters of the dominant left-leaning party, the Liberals. Sundquist (1983) argues that realignments of the party replacement type (the model that we argue is most closely approximated in the Canadian case) are driven by issues on which supporters of the emergent party deviate sharply from all existing political parties. Such a partisan shift is especially likely if the existing parties have become indistinguishable on issues that are both socially

from the campaign period survey. As a result, we are forced to rely instead on a rough proxy, feeling thermometer ratings of Quebec (ranging from 0 to 100). Thus, in our view, results on the role of the Quebec issue in the 1993 election must be viewed with some caution.

⁸All issue variables are scaled to run from 0 to 1, with higher values representing the most typically conservative positions (less environmentalist, stronger anti-crime, greater hostility toward Quebec, taxation, and immigration, and more morally traditional views).

⁹Factor analysis confirms that these items do indeed combine well to form a single scale. In all three years, a single underlying factor emerges (eigenvalue = 2.02 in 1993, 2.19 in 1997, and 1.96 in 2000). In all years, all factor loadings are greater than 0.45, with most in the 0.5–0.7 range. It is also worth noting that a law-and-order position on crime does not load significantly on the moral traditionalism factor for any year, indicating that we have indeed captured something distinct from more generalized social conservatism.

TABLE 1
Mean Issue Positions Among Supporters of Different Parties

	Reform Voters	PC Voters	Liberal Voters
<i>Issue (1993)</i>			
Environment	0.50 (0.01)	0.47 (0.02)	0.47 (0.01)
Crime	0.67 (0.02)**	0.56 (0.02)	0.56 (0.01)
Quebec	0.48 (0.01)**	0.38 (0.01)	0.36 (0.01)
Taxes	0.67 (0.02)	0.63 (0.02)	0.55 (0.01)**
Immigration	0.81 (0.02)**	0.70 (0.02)	0.70 (0.01)
Moral traditionalism	0.56 (0.01)**	0.47 (0.01)	0.50 (0.01)
<i>Issue (1997)</i>			
Environment	0.51 (0.02)*	0.56 (0.02)	0.53 (0.01)
Crime	0.80 (0.02)**	0.60 (0.03)	0.63 (0.01)
Quebec	0.81 (0.02)**	0.62 (0.03)	0.59 (0.02)
Taxes	0.59 (0.01)	0.56 (0.01)	0.54 (0.01)*
Immigration	0.75 (0.01)**	0.67 (0.02)	0.66 (0.01)
Moral traditionalism	0.64 (0.01)**	0.52 (0.02)	0.50 (0.01)
<i>Issue (2000)</i>			
Environment	0.32 (0.01)	0.28 (0.02)	0.24 (0.01)
Crime	0.68 (0.02)**	0.50 (0.03)	0.55 (0.02)
Quebec	0.66 (0.01)**	0.56 (0.02)	0.50 (0.01)**
Taxes	0.65 (0.02)**	0.52 (0.03)	0.44 (0.02)*
Immigration	0.63 (0.02)**	0.55 (0.02)	0.57 (0.01)
Moral traditionalism	0.62 (0.01)**	0.46 (0.02)	0.45 (0.01)

**Differs from PC mean, $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); *differs from PC mean, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

controversial and salient to a large number of voters. Our analysis here seeks to determine which issue or issues best fit this paradigm over the past decade.

Table 1 presents the mean positions and standard errors on our six issues of interest (discussed above) for Canadians of differing partisan orientations. For all three years, we have divided the sample into those who voted R/A, those who voted Conservative, and those who voted Liberal.¹⁰ On each issue, we ask two key questions: Do R/A supporters differ significantly from PC supporters? and Do PC supporters differ significantly from Liberals? Since the relevant comparison group in both cases is those respondents who voted Conservative, we have noted in the table those instances in which either R/A or Liberal voters (or both) deviate appreciably from the mean position of PC supporters.

¹⁰In other analyses, we compared supporters of the PCs to voters of all left-leaning parties in Canada, including the NDP and the *Bloc Québécois*. Although space does not permit us to include these results, they do not differ appreciably from those reported for the Liberal Party in Table 1. These results are available from the authors.

Beginning with the results for 1993, the first striking pattern that emerges is the almost total lack of division along Canada's traditional line of partisan cleavage. PC voters differ from Liberal supporters only on the issue of taxes. Surprisingly, supporters of a purportedly conservative party are indistinguishable from voters of the left on the environment, crime, immigration, and traditional moral values. When we look at Reform supporters, however, we find a much different pattern. They deviate sharply from both Conservative and Liberal supporters on several key issues, staking out positions well to the right on crime, Quebec, and immigration. Most importantly from our perspective, moral traditionalism emerges as a major dividing line between Reform and Conservative voters. Those who support Reform are significantly to the right of PC supporters on our index of moral issues. Interestingly, Reform voters do not differ significantly from the Conservatives on the issue of taxation, often held to be a key element of the new party's appeal. Still, the overall pattern is unmistakable: Reform voters were deserting a Conservative party that had become indistinguishable from its traditional opponents on a range of important issues.

Turning to the results from four years later, in 1997 a similar pattern prevails, with some minor exceptions. A new and curious pattern emerges with regard to the environment, where Reform voters are noticeably more environmentalist than Conservative voters, and indeed are indistinguishable from Liberals on the environmental question. On our key moral traditionalism scale, the gap between supporters of the Reform and Conservative parties grew even larger than it was in 1993. Overall, the basic message in the 1997 data is the same as that from 1993: Reform voters are sharply to the right of PC voters on crime, Quebec, immigration, and, most importantly, moral traditionalism, while the Conservatives are indistinguishable from the left on many of these questions.

Finally, the 2000 data hint at some slight electoral adaptation on the part of the PC Party. Separation emerges between Conservative and Liberal voters on two issues: Quebec and taxes. More importantly, however, supporters of both the Conservatives and the Liberals remain strikingly different from Alliance voters. Alliance supporters are sharply to the right of all other parties on all issues except the environment. Pertinently, the gap between PC and R/A supporters on the moral traditionalism index grew even larger between 1997 and 2000.

Another important dimension of the distinction between PC and Reform support can be examined retrospectively using data from the 1993 study. Table 2 compares the issue preferences of 1988 PC supporters who remained loyal to the party with those who switched to the Reform Party in its inaugural national campaign. Here, a number of significant differences emerge. Most pertinently for our purposes, the moral traditionalism variable illustrates a sharp distinction between PC loyalists and Reform switchers. It is clear, therefore, that many PC supporters of the late 1980s found a more morally conservative party an enticing electoral option.

TABLE 2
Mean Issue Positions of PC Loyalists and Reform Switchers (1993)

Issue	Reform Switchers	PC Loyalists
Environment	0.49 (0.02)	0.47 (0.02)
Crime	0.65 (0.02)**	0.57 (0.02)
Quebec	0.47 (0.02)**	0.38 (0.02)
Taxes	0.67 (0.03)	0.65 (0.03)
Immigration	0.77 (0.02)*	0.70 (0.03)
Moral traditionalism	0.55 (0.02)**	0.47 (0.02)

**Differs from PC mean, $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); *differs from PC mean, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

The comparison of these mean issue positions is instructive, but it does not conclusively answer our fundamental question: the relative importance of constitutional, economic, nativist, and moral issues in motivating conservative Canadians to choose R/A over the Progressive Conservatives. The comparison of mean issue positions reported above suggests that R/A voters are consistently to the right of PC voters on crime, the Quebec issue, immigration, and moral traditionalism, but it does not give us a sense of how salient each of these issues is in the electoral decision making of conservative Canadian voters. To gain purchase on that critical question, we present in Table 3 multinomial logit models of partisan vote choice in 1993, 1997, and 2000. Since we are interested here principally in voters' choice between the R/A and Conservative Parties, we report coefficients from that portion of the model.¹¹ These models allow us to evaluate simultaneously the importance of each of our six issues in distinguishing between these two groups.

In addition to the six issue measures, our models include a variety of controls. Any analysis of R/A support must account for geographic variation, since the party made overt regional appeals to western voters.¹² Our models thus contain terms for residence in both the Canadian west (an area of

¹¹Full results from the multinomial logit models are available from the authors. For the choice between Reform and any party of the left (Liberal, NDP, or BQ), five of our six issues (all but the environment) emerge as significant predictors. These results, however, are of limited theoretical interest for our present purpose. We know that Reform voters differ ideologically from modal Canadians across a wide range of policy issues. The more critical question from the standpoint of partisan realignment is how they differ from supporters of the other party competing for the allegiance of the Canadian right (the Progressive Conservatives). Thus, we restrict our analysis here to those issues that differentiate supporters of the new conservative party from supporters of the old one.

¹²It could be argued that a superior model specification would include not just western residence, but specifically western alienation. We have attempted to capture this in a supplementary analysis. Using 2000 data, we interact residence in the western provinces with perceptions that one's own province is treated worse by the federal government than other provinces. Although this alienation measure is (not surprisingly) a strong predictor of

TABLE 3
PC Versus R/A Vote Choice (Multinomial Logit)

Variable	1993	Δ 1993	1997	Δ 1997	2000	Δ 2000
Constant	1.94 (0.97)*	—	-0.10 (1.10)	—	0.41 (1.10)	—
Western Can.	-0.75 (0.35)*	-0.23	-1.19 (0.33)**	-0.41	-1.29 (0.39)**	-0.32
Atlantic Can.	1.42 (0.56)**	0.19	0.64 (0.47)	—	2.06 (0.45)**	0.47
Asian	1.65 (1.29)	—	0.07 (1.22)	—	1.25 (1.09)	—
Native Black	—	—	0.58 (1.50)	—	1.65 (1.53)	—
Francophone	2.15 (0.83)**	0.16	1.53 (1.22)	—	0.16 (0.57)	—
Female	-0.40 (0.33)	—	0.29 (0.31)	—	0.53 (0.31)*	0.17
Age	0.01 (0.01)	—	0.01 (0.01)	—	0.03 (0.01)**	0.54
Education	-0.11 (0.08)	—	0.08 (0.08)	—	0.06 (0.08)	—
Income	0.03 (0.06)	—	-0.01 (0.06)	—	-0.01 (0.06)	—
Pers. econ. eval.	0.19 (0.14)	—	-0.16 (0.18)	—	0.26 (0.25)	—
Nat. econ. eval.	0.35 (0.17)*	0.23	0.31 (0.22)	—	0.02 (0.24)	—
Moral issues	-1.73 (0.76)*	-0.24	-1.55 (0.74)*	-0.57	-4.80 (0.87)**	-0.72
Crime	-0.19 (0.15)	—	-0.74 (0.34)*	-0.24	-0.32 (0.33)	—
Pos. on Quebec	-0.01 (0.01)	—	-0.57 (0.17)**	-0.38	-0.05 (0.67)	—
Immigration	0.30 (0.20)	—	-0.17 (0.25)	—	-0.98 (0.48)*	-0.39
Taxes	-0.27 (0.16)*	-0.11	0.10 (0.12)	—	-0.03 (0.31)	—
Environment	-0.05 (0.20)	—	-0.19 (0.19)	—	-0.11 (0.50)	—
N	579		520		746	
LR χ^2	290.38		247.51		443.70	

** $p < 0.01$, one-tailed test; * $p < 0.05$, one-tailed test.

expected R/A strength) and Atlantic Canada (an area of expected weakness), with the populous central provinces left as the omitted standard for comparison. Additionally, we have sought to capture any ethnic basis for differing partisan loyalties by including dummy variables for Asian, black, and Native Canadian racial status, as well as for those respondents who speak French as a first language. Although we are basically agnostic as to the potential effects of the racial variables, we would expect Francophones to be more likely to support Conservative than R/A candidates because of the party's highly visible stances against special recognition for Quebec and against bilingualism. We supplement these racial and ethnic variables with another set of demographic items, including terms for gender, age, education, and income. Of these, we have particularly strong expectations for the age variable. A substantial body of literature suggests that partisan loyalty

Alliance vote choice, it neither substantially improves the model fit nor significantly alters any of the issue coefficients. Thus, we opt to present the simpler model specification.

and resistance to change increases with age—thus, *ceteris paribus*, older voters on the right should be less likely to desert the Progressive Conservatives for R/A than younger conservative voters.¹³ Finally, we have included respondents' assessments of both personal and national economic conditions to capture the possibility that voters may have used an R/A ballot as a means of expressing economic discontent (particularly in 1993, when the Canadian economy was weaker than in 1997 and 2000). All of these terms, however, serve essentially as controls; our key variables of interest remain the issue measures presented at the bottom of the table.¹⁴

An examination of the results reported in Table 3 reveals strong support for our moral values hypothesis. Here, we report coefficients and changes in predicted probabilities associated with each variable.¹⁵ The major control variables work almost entirely as expected. In all three years, voters in western Canada are substantially more likely to support R/A than voters elsewhere, while voters in Atlantic Canada are less likely to do so. Francophones appear more likely to back Conservative than R/A candidates (although this finding is significant only in 1993), as do older voters (at least in 2000). Finally, economic evaluations play a role, but only in 1993; in that year, increasingly positive assessments of national economic circumstances are associated with a greater likelihood of choosing PC, rather than Reform, candidates.

More important, though, are the issue variables. Here, the pattern is unmistakable: respondents' positions on our moral traditionalism scale powerfully condition their choice between the two parties of the right. Morally conservative voters are significantly more likely to support R/A than PC candidates, a relationship that increases in magnitude as we progress along our three election periods. In 1993, the most morally conservative voters were 24 percent more likely to vote Reform than the least morally conservative; by 1997, this increases to 57 percent, and grows to a whopping 72 percent in 2000. This finding is particularly important because no other issue significantly divides R/A and PC supporters in all three elections.

¹³For a discussion of the tendency toward partisan loyalty and inertia among older voters, see Converse (1976) and Shively (1979). For specific reference to the Canadian case, see LeDuc et al. (1984) and Uslaner (1990).

¹⁴One common set of variables that we do not report in our models is leader affective evaluations. We omit these items for two reasons. First and foremost, not all respondents in the CES are asked to rate all relevant leaders in our years of interest—for example, respondents in Quebec were not given an opportunity to rate Preston Manning in 1993 or 1997. Second, an analysis of the 2000 data (where nationwide evaluations of all leaders are available) reveals that including leader assessments, while boosting the r^2 of the model, changes none of our coefficients of interest. Specifically, on the issue areas, the only effects of adding leadership ratings are to drop the marginally significant immigration coefficient to insignificance, and to elevate the environment coefficient to marginal significance. More importantly, the moral traditionalism variable remains strongly predictive of Alliance vote choice.

¹⁵ Δ represents the change in likelihood of voting Reform relative to PC produced by shifting the variable in question from its minimum to its maximum while holding all other variables constant at their means.

There is some evidence of greater R/A conservatism on taxes in 1993, on crime in 1997, and on immigration in 2000; none of these findings, however, is replicated in any other election year, and on no other issue is the substantive impact comparable in magnitude to that of moral traditionalism.

The only issue that competes with moral traditionalism for explanatory primacy is the Quebec question, which is highly significant in 1997. However, by 2000, the Quebec issue had receded in its predictive power. Consistent with our findings, Gidengil et al. (2001) note that “[s]ympathy/antipathy towards Quebec was a crucial ingredient in support for the Reform Party in 1997, but [it] was simply unrelated to voting for the Alliance in 2000.” There is weak and inconsistent support for the idea that economic or immigration issues are a major dividing line between R/A and Conservative voters. Instead, it would appear that voters were driven from the Progressive Conservative Party to R/A based on two key issues: the Quebec constitutional question (at least until 1997) and moral traditionalism. The latter, however, plays a much more central and enduring role than any of the other hypothesized factors in fuelling the shift.

Conclusions

In this article we set out to unravel the mystery of why the PC Party was replaced by Reform/Alliance as the primary force on the Canadian right. More generally, we sought to identify the ideological basis for emerging new right politics in a postindustrial democracy. To this end, we tested four hypotheses derived from the extant literature, finding that the most powerful and enduring source of new right strength in Canada is support for moral traditionalism. An examination of the mean policy positions among R/A, Conservative, and Liberal supporters is partially instructive. On a wide range of issues, for example, PC voters are all but indistinguishable from those who voted for the Liberals. At the same time, important differences emerge between R/A and PC voters. Supporters of the new party are more likely to take conservative positions on issues pertaining to Quebec, crime, immigration, and, especially, traditional moral values.

Multivariate analysis permitted us to probe these differences more closely. In examining vote choice for the two parties of the right, and controlling for relevant sociodemographic factors, we were able to adjudicate more exactly between our competing explanations. These analyses provide little support for either the nativist or economic issues hypotheses. Instead, it appears that the realignment was a function of the PCs’ vulnerability on two issues: Quebec (at least until 1997), and those associated with new right, moral traditionalism. On both these questions, a significant portion of the Canadian electorate expressed its dissatisfaction with the prevailing national partisan consensus by voting R/A. The Quebec issue, however, while relevant in 1997, represents a more ephemeral explanation. Thus, Sundquist’s

(1983) argument about the dynamics of party replacement appears to hold with regard to the Canadian right, and turns primarily on issues of moral traditionalism.

This is an interesting finding. Moral conservatism is relatively unexplored in the literature on Canadian electoral politics. The rise of the Reform Party/Canadian Alliance has been variously characterized as a regionalist phenomenon, an anti-tax revolt, or a nativist backlash. Our findings suggest otherwise. In addition, they represent a significant refinement and extension of the thesis advanced long ago by Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck (1984). It appears that, in at least one Western democracy that has undergone recent major-party replacement, the moral issue dimension of new right conservatism predominates over decentralization, liberal anti-statism, and other cultural concerns.

Of course, the findings also represent a paradox for both analysts and practitioners. Although issues of moral traditionalism are attractive to the core of R/A supporters, they do not resonate well with Canadian voters at large (Nevitte et al., 2000:ch. 8). Given Canada's electoral system, this represents a serious problem for the growth of the party. It also explains why the party, as it sought to expand its electoral base in the 2000 election, downplayed issues of moral traditionalism. Indeed, it is ironic that in 2000, moral issues were an overwhelmingly powerful predictor of Alliance support even as the party consciously sought to de-emphasize these positions in its public presentation.

Regardless of the strategic implications, however, the findings in this article suggest the potential for a similar postmaterial cleavage in the industrialized democracies of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Obviously, the manifestations may be expected to vary according to the structure of the party system and the policy adaptability of existing parties of the right. In other words, major-party replacement need not necessarily accompany the rising salience of moral issues. In some cases (the United States is an excellent example), the existing partisan structure may prove sufficiently elastic to accommodate the new postmaterial cleavage. In any event, however, the demise of Canada's PC Party and the rise of the R/A movement clearly serves as a bellwether of the electoral relevance of moral traditionalism.

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