

The Gender Gap in Norwegian Voting Behaviour*

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In the period 1957-81 women in Norway voted less frequently for the socialist parties than did men. In most recent years this pattern has changed so that women are now more likely than men to support the socialist bloc. This shift has been especially strong among the younger and the more educated women. In the younger age group the polarization by gender is also very striking; women have moved to the left and men to the right. While changing demographic patterns partially explain the gender gap in voting behaviour, differences in values must also be taken into account. The most consistent finding is that stronger religious feelings among women make them more likely to vote for the Christian People's party. Values that suggest a greater emphasis on human interactions, less emphasis on material goods, and a concern with peace, increase female support for the socialist parties.

Introduction

Gender has frequently been referred to as an emerging political division in Norwegian electoral contests. As early as the mid-seventies, Martinussen (1975, 558-9) argued that the gender dimension could be seen as a latent cleavage in Norwegian politics because women constitute a large group with distinct interests to pursue. Martinussen also viewed the new, and more radical, women's movement of the seventies as an indicator heralding an expansion in the political role of women in society. Similarly, a very detailed study by Haavio-Mannila et al. (1983) demonstrated that in recent decades women in the Nordic countries increased their participation rates in nearly all forms of politics, ranging from membership in political parties to representation in various government committees.

The increase in female participation in politics through the last decade demonstrates that the gender dimension has become increasingly manifest. However, it is by no means clear how this development has influenced the relationship between gender and voting behaviour. First, there are no obvious theoretical predictions of how a gender 'gap' would be manifest in Norwegian electoral politics, or how this cleavage should relate to the other more traditional cleavages which constitute the determinants of the vote. Second, if a well-defined

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Introduction

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The increase in female participation in politics through the last decade demonstrates that the gender dimension has become increasingly manifest. However, it is by no means clear how this development has influenced the relationship between gender and voting behaviour. First, there are no obvious theoretical predictions of how a gender 'gap' would be manifest in Norwegian electoral politics, or how this cleavage should relate to the other more traditional cleavages which constitute the determinants of the vote. Second, if a well-defined

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gender cleavage exists this may or may not translate into voting behaviour depending on the relevance of party alternatives for this specific cleavage.

In the standard model of Norwegian elections the vote is primarily determined by the voters' identifications with the parties, where the parties express the interests of a system of cross-cutting cleavages including class, culture, and geography (Valen & Rokkan 1974). However, a major finding of recent research is that the traditional cleavage model does not fit the data as well as it did in the 50's and 60's (Valen 1981, Valen & Aardal 1983). This development indicates that a search for other explanatory variables of voting behaviour is necessary. Under these circumstances gender differences in the vote gain new meaning as a potential replacement for earlier explanations of vote choice.

Theoretical Predictions Linking Gender and Voting

The relevance of gender for electoral politics, however, remains controversial. Although it is not difficult to provide evidence supporting the view that important value differences exist between men and women (see, for example, Goetzl 1983, Boulding 1984), gender-related voting behaviour would imply a different ball game. Peterson (1984,4), for example, lists as one of three major cleavages for Sweden the 'gender-sex dimension representing the opposition expressed in the political arena between men and the interests of production *and* women and the interests of re-production'. She also insightfully argues that gender differences in political issues and values would arise from this production — reproduction division. Nevertheless, following the example of Albrektsen (1977), Peterson concludes that gender-related conflict is not reflected in electoral behaviour. She contends that the male-dominated political parties prevent the issues of the gender-sex dimension from being addressed through the traditional electoral channels.

Recent evidence from the United States, on the other hand, tends to contradict the argument that male domination of the parties is the critical factor determining the absence or presence of gender differences in the vote. Surely the U.S. party system is no less male dominated than that in Norway. Yet, a very significant gender gap has appeared in recent American elections. Many of the explanations given for this emerging gender gap in the U.S. coincide with gender differences noted by Peterson (1984) (see for example, Baxter & Lansing 1980, Frankovic 1982, Miller 1983). That is, the gender difference in the vote occurs because women are more concerned about peace and ecology issues, they are more favourable toward public services like health care and social welfare, and they are more responsive to feminist issues expressed through the demands of women's liberation. When partisan differences on these issues have been apparent, women have responded by voting more heavily for the party which best represents their interests. Thus, despite the male domination of the party system, gender differences were expressed through the vote.

Moreover, it is not true that gender effects have been totally absent from previous Norwegian elections, or excluded from consideration in the scholarly study of those elections. Religiosity and related issues have played a considerable role in electoral contests during most of the modern history of Norway, and have also led to the formation of a specific political party to defend the values of fundamental Lutheranism: the Christian People's party. Over the years the support for this party has been consistently stronger among women than men. Although the current discussion of a gender gap in politics has been fuelled by the rise of the *new* women's movement and feminist issues, we should still be aware of the linkage between traditional values and gender, and the political implications of these.

The relationship between gender and voting should preferably be investigated by looking at developments over time. While much of the literature about differences between men and women as regards values considers these only in a static sense, there are a number of reasons why important changes have occurred over the years. One effect of the women's movement has been to bring women's values and issues into the arena of visible politics and this in turn has given women more independence from men in their partisan choice. One implication of this change is that value differences between men and women should have a stronger impact on the vote over time. But the rise of feminism could also have changed the values of women.

While traditional women's values connected with support for the Christian People's party stemmed from religiosity, morality and such issues as temperance or religious education in the schools, contemporary values express a concern with humanitarian priorities and equality for women. The issues reflected in these contemporary concerns represent two major foci: preoccupations arising from the combination of work and family, such as day care for children or health care and the treatment of the sick; and a broader sensitivity to the values of life, such as preserving the environment, raising the general quality of life, as well as basic survival and peace. In short, this is a combination of issues representing the more caring values acquired by women during the early period of socialization and moral development (Gilligan 1982), along with a striving among women for a place of equality in social decisions and opportunities.

Although feminism is no single body of political thought, the types of concerns feminists express would definitely place the mainstream of the movement to the left of centre. Generally, the various feminist groups in Norway have been affiliated with political groups on the left. Government policies, programmes and philosophy supported by these groups are more in line with values that emphasize helping others. The rise of the new women's movement should, then, work to move women politically and electorally in the radical direction.

While the increasing political activity of women points to changes in the relationship between gender and voting behaviour, other aspects of the situation of women in society have likewise shifted, and these developments may also have

implications for female voting patterns. Two trends are of particular importance: The increase in women's participation in the labour force, and the increasing educational level of females. While these demographic changes have been very massive, their political impact is not straightforward.

Two factors related to increasing work-force participation of women can be assumed to be of political relevance. First, having a job contributes to economic independence of women. As women move into the labour force they become economically less dependent on their husbands and more dependent on employment opportunities. This growing economic independence, like feminism, contributes to increasing the impact of specific female values on the vote.

Second, the increase in female participation in the economy has been greatest in public and private service occupations. In these sectors, the jobs are generally low paid and of low prestige. Under such circumstances women can logically be expected to become more supportive than men of social programmes aimed at full employment or maintaining the living standards of the unemployed. Similarly, women in the lowest income brackets, especially those who are heads of single parents households, have become increasingly dependent on the state and less dependent on the men in their personal lives. Again, these are factors which would be expected to contribute to a leftist vote.

More generally, it has been suggested that the increased female labour force may also contribute to a reduction in the influence which class has traditionally had on the vote (Goertzel 1983). As the public sector expands and women increasingly take up these positions, the older, male-dominated occupational cleavage of blue collar versus white collar is displaced by conflicts which cut across class lines and focus on humanistic needs, employment opportunities and social programmes.

While the increasing work-force participation might radicalize women and shift the emphasis of politics from class to gender concerns, the consequences of the rising educational level are not easily seen. In the past, higher education was a privilege of upper class women, but a broadening of recruitment to college developed in the 60's and 70's. Moreover, the new feminism has been especially strong among younger women with a higher education. It would seem, then, that the traditionally bourgeois vote of women with relatively higher education has been weakened. But we would still expect the vote of this group to be more non-socialist than socialist.

In sum, we can expect, for a number of reasons, that some of the contemporary political and demographic trends have moved women to the left, and that the traditional pattern, showing females voting more strongly for the non-socialist parties (Valen 1981), will have changed.

It is fairly easy to come up with hypotheses which predict that men and women have different values and that the women's movement, as well as changing female demographics, will have political implications for the vote. But how these factors more specifically contribute to the partisan direction of the

vote, and how the impact of gender most appropriately can be assessed, is a complicated question. How gender influences the vote depends largely on how the parties are perceived along the dimensions that are relevant for gender. Theoretically this will most easily be accomplished where we have specific women's parties represented in an electoral contest. As demonstrated by Haavio-Mannila et al. (1983, 71-74), women's parties have been of minor importance in Nordic politics. Mostly they have confined their activities to running 'lists' with female candidates at local elections. Starting in the 1970s, Norwegian women organized themselves to persuade the parties to run more women on their lists (both at the local and parliamentary elections), and they also worked to get the parties to take stands on the issues of the women's movement.

Although the political parties have responded in different ways to the pressure group politics of feminism, most of the parties have tried to incorporate some of the women's demands in their platforms and to increase their representation of female candidates. But it is reasonable to conclude that some parties have been more responsive to women's issues than others. Generally one can say that leftist parties have been more responsive than parties on the right, but that no clear cut polarization has emerged. Within the governing blocs there are also notable differences. On the left, the Socialist Left party has been the closest ally to the feminist movement; in the centre, much the same can be said about the Liberals; while the Progressives on the right have been more hostile towards issues which the feminists have been advocating. In addition, one should constantly remember that the Christian People's party continues to represent traditional values which have had a strong appeal to women. In short, there are good theoretical reasons for predicting that gender differences will be apparent in the vote. Whether or not these predictions fit with empirical evidence, however, remains to be ascertained.

Trends¹

On the basis of electoral results from the past two and a half decades one could argue that, unlike the United States, the gender gap is not a new phenomenon in Norwegian electoral politics. The gender gap, as measured by the difference in the percentage of men and women who voted for a socialist party, has been frequently small but consistently evident throughout the period from 1957 to 1983 (see Fig. 1). The gender gap in earlier years reflected the effects of traditional values; thus, with the exception of 1982 and 1983, men were more socialist than women. This difference almost disappears in the seventies, but then increases temporarily in 1981. In 1982, as determined by a hypothetical vote question, and in the local elections of 1983, the trend is reversed; in the recent period women are more socialist in their party preferences than are men.

While this change is by no means dramatic, it is nevertheless a change of significant magnitude. When compared with the starting point of this time series,



Fig. 1. Percentage of Vote for the Socialist Parties by Gender.

women have moved from voting 5 percentage points less socialist than men to voting 3-4 percentage points more socialist than men. And, if Liberals are included among the socialist parties for 1983 (a reasonable inclusion since before the local elections this party shifted from supporting a bourgeois government alternative to a socialist one), the difference in that year is 5 percentage points, which means a total shift of 10 percentage points over the entire period.

We hasten to add that it is still uncertain if the reversal of the voting pattern will continue to be true in future elections. It certainly would require a period of time and the convergence of several factors to crystallize such a basic shift. In this regard the 1981 election serves to remind us of how short-term forces can disturb longer-term trends. Despite the increasing relevance of the peace issue and the fact that the Labour party was running a woman for prime minister (actually Mrs. Brundtland had been prime minister prior to the election), the bourgeois parties were able to rebound briefly among women. Labour failed in its appeal to women partly because Mrs. Brundtland was no more appealing to them than to men (Valen & Aardal 1983,40). In addition the electoral impact of emerging feminist issues such as the control of nuclear armaments, shorter working hours and the building of day-care centres, was apparently offset by broader economic concerns. Economic optimism, for example, was associated more with the bourgeois parties among women, while men were relatively more likely to see economic good times with a socialist government.

Since the gender gap in voting behaviour for Norway has been relatively small it could be argued that there is not much to be explained. However, over the period covered by the data there occurred a significant shift in the relationship between gender and the vote, thus making explanations more worthwhile to pursue. The possibility also exists that the comparison of men and women in the aggregate may conceal important differences between subgroups within these gender categories. Especially interesting are some demographic factors which relate to the changing role of women in society and politics. Included among

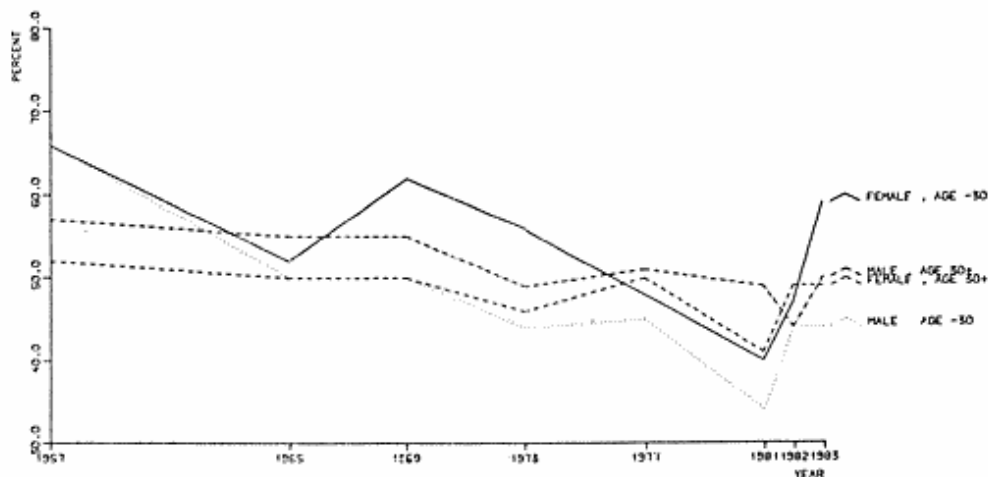


Fig. 2. Voting Behaviour by Age and Gender. Percent Socialist.

these factors are age, work force participation and changing levels of education.

The breakdown by age (Fig. 2) shows an interesting pattern of change for the younger age group (below 30 years). In 1957 and 1965 there is almost no difference between men and women in this group, but from 1969 on the younger women vote relatively more socialist than do the young men, a difference which is especially large in 1969, 1973, 1981 and 1983. For example, women under the age of 30 voted 15 percentage points more socialist in 1983 than did men in the same age group. By comparison, change across the years has been less dramatic for the older age group. During most of the period men above 30 years of age have been somewhat more likely to vote for the socialists than have women, but this difference has diminished in recent elections (with the exception of 1981).

The emerging political polarization among the younger age group could indicate a growing difference in attitudes and values of men and women in this group. It would appear that certain factors were pulling younger men toward the bourgeois parties while restraining a similar shift among younger women. The women's movement may have been one of the factors contributing to this difference. It could also be that changes in the political structure in Norway, particularly the emergence of new parties on the extreme left and the extreme right, may have facilitated the process of polarization. In addition, other sociological changes among women, such as their increased work participation, may have added to these differential shifts.

Over the last 20 years there has been a steady increase in the work-force participation of women. While the ratio of working women to working men was .28 in 1957 (calculated for voters only), it had doubled by 1981 (.57). The hypothesis that the rise of women's employment in the economy should contribute to the relative strengthening of the socialist vote in this group surprisingly gets no support from the data (Fig. 3). With the exception of 1965, there is about the

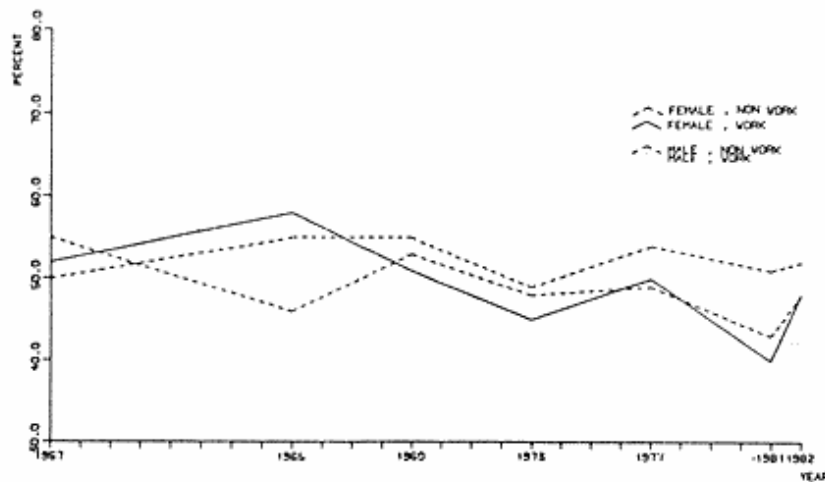


Fig. 3. Voting Behaviour by Work Force Participation and Gender. Percent Socialist.

same level of support for the socialists among working and non-working women. The most interesting long-term trend is the steady decline in socialist voting among working men. Among men not in the work force the socialists' share of the vote has been fairly stable. This means that the voting pattern among men has been reversed from the beginning to the end of the period: in 1957 working men were 9 percentage points more likely than non-working men to vote for the socialist parties; in 1982 they were 10 percentage points less likely to do the same.²

Besides the rise of female participation in the economy, the increasing educational attainment of women has been a significant trend during recent decades which may also have influenced voting patterns. It should be noted, however, that this change has not been confined to women only; the educational level of men has also risen considerably. In our data this can be illustrated with the ratio between voters with higher education ('gymnas' or higher) and those with lower education (less than 'gymnas'), In 1957 this ratio was .06 and .04 for men and women, respectively. In 1981 the comparable ratios had increased to .25 and .23. Despite increasing education among both genders, women today are, relative to men, better educated than they were in 1957. Regardless of these changing ratios, increases in the absolute level of education among women could be expected to promote independent thought and thus potentially contribute to a voting pattern that would diverge from that of men.

The relationship between education and the vote for men and women are shown in Fig. 4. Historically the socialist parties have enjoyed stronger support among persons with less education than among those with more formal education. But this pattern has weakened during the latter part of the period. This closing of the education gap is partly due to a gradual decline in the socialist voting among those with lower education, but even more importantly it is the

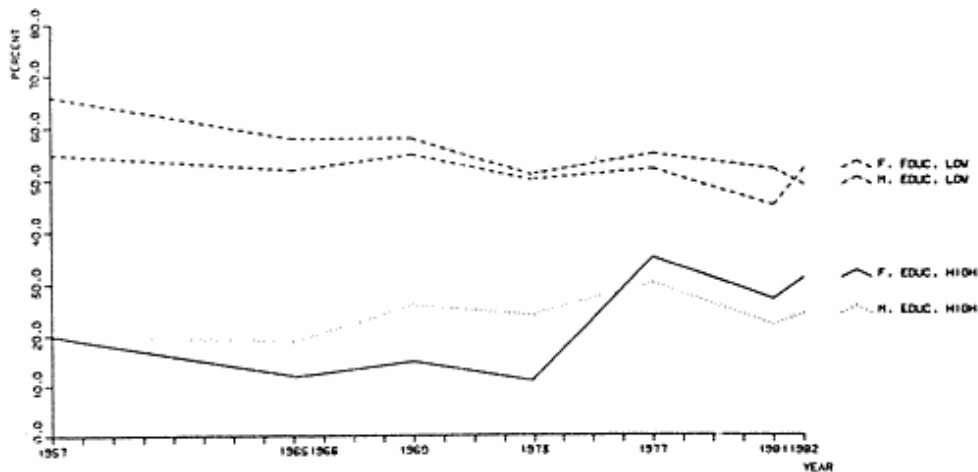


Fig. 4. Voting Behaviour by Education and Gender. Percent Socialist.

result of an increase in the socialist voting among persons with higher education. The gender differences by education levels are small; nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the rise of socialist voting in the higher education group started earlier for men than for women. For the more recent elections of 1977, 1981, and in 1982, however, the socialist vote is higher among better educated women than men. The substantial shift in voting among better educated women after 1973 suggests the possibility of a mobilization effect, perhaps in response to the women's movement.

In summary, the analysis of the demographic trends contributes somewhat but only partially to our understanding of the relationship between gender and voting behaviour.³ The most interesting effects are related to age and education. As early as 1969 women under the age of 30 started to vote more strongly for the socialists than men in the same age group, and in the 1983 election the polarization between young men and women was very marked. The comparison by education reveals a shrinking educational gap in voting behaviour, caused mainly by the increased socialist support among persons with higher education. This process started earlier among men than among women, but since 1973 women with higher education have been more likely than comparably educated men to vote for the socialists.

The patterns of change demonstrated by these data run counter to the status and class-interest theories that are often used to explain voting behaviour. In the past, the socialist parties have been associated with programmes aimed at benefiting the working class and producing equality among citizens, while the bourgeois parties have traditionally been connected with the upper status, better educated groups. If class interest does not explain the shifting patterns of voting revealed by the demographic trends, then perhaps newly emerging values and issues are the root cause of recent gender differences.

Values and the Gender Gap

For values to be relevant as an explanation of the gender gap they must be related to both gender and the vote. Men and women may express different values, but this difference may have little relevance for their voting decision. Similarly, values that are strongly correlated with the vote may not be associated with gender at all. In either case values would make no contribution to an explanation of gender differences in voting.

As discussed in the introduction, a number of differences in values are assumed to exist between men and women. The purpose of this section is to test these assumptions by determining empirically the extent to which values are correlated with gender and the vote. The data are from the 1982 Norwegian Values Study. In Table 1 we present the correlations between gender and a number of relevant values, and between those values and the dichotomous vote socialist/bourgeois examined in the preceding section.

The first group of values focuses on what people prefer to do in their spare time as an *alternative to work*. The survey question which was asked only for working respondents, read: 'Imagine for a moment that the government and employers agree to shorten the working week to 3 days — each of 8 hours — but continue to offer the same pay as for full week. Which of the following would you now do with your spare time?' The list of eight options which was then given to the respondent is presented in Table 1. The results show that women are less likely than men to use the free time for extra work, to set up their own business or on hobbies. On the other hand, women are more likely than men to spend the additional time interacting with family and friends. These findings support the notion that women are less oriented towards values of work or material production and more oriented towards the values of family life and human concerns. But these values are not related to the vote. The only response that was significantly correlated with the vote is *run your own little business*. Those who selected this alternative were more likely to vote for the bourgeois parties, thereby indicating that these parties were seen as more favourable toward private business than the socialist parties.

The next set of values examined pertain to alternative life styles. Under the heading of *changes in the way of life* we have included in Table 1 a list of alternatives which the respondents were asked to rate as good or bad if they were to take place. The main gender differences in responses to this list relate to the rejection of materialist values; women more often than men say that society should put less emphasis on money, and give priority to a simpler life style. In addition, women are less inclined than men to think that the emphasis on technology is a good thing. Preferred life-style differences were also weakly related to the vote. For example, rating technology as bad and supporting a simpler life style was associated with support for the socialist parties, while support for a less money-directed society was related to support for the bourgeois party bloc. The

Table 1. Correlations Between Selected Value Preferences, Gender and the Vote

	Gender (1 = male; 2 = female)	Vote (1 = socialist; 2 = bourgeois)
ALTERNATIVES TO WORK (0 = does not mention alternative; 1 = mentions alternative)		
<i>Find extra work</i>	-.16**	.01
<i>Study or improve yourself</i>	.03	-.07
<i>Spend time with family and friends</i>	.13**	-.02
<i>Find extra work, even if it isn't paid much</i>	-.11**	-.06
<i>Do something for local community</i>	.04	.06
<i>Hobbies</i>	-.10**	.00
<i>Run your own little business</i>	-.14**	.11**
<i>Relaxing</i>	.06	-.05
CHANGES IN WAY OF LIFE (1 = good proposal; 2 = bad proposal)		
<i>Less emphasis on money</i>	-.11**	-.10**
<i>Decrease in the importance of work</i>	-.03	.04
<i>More emphasis on technology</i>	.26**	-.07*
<i>Greater emphasis on the individual</i>	.00	-.12**
<i>Greater respect for authority</i>	-.00	-.12**
<i>More emphasis on family life</i>	-.03	-.05
<i>A simpler life style</i>	-.14**	.09**
<i>Basis of pay for same job</i>	.09**	-.27**
(1 = achievement; 2 = equality)		
RELIGIOUS AND MORAL VALUES		
<i>Personal religiosity</i>	-.16**	-.15**
(1 = a religious person; 2 = not a religious person; 3 = a convinced atheist)		
<i>Religious dogmatism</i>	.18**	.14**
(Scale 0-8; 0 = low, 8 = high)		
<i>Alcohol consumption</i>	.20	.06*
(1 = regular drinker; 2 = drink rather often; 3 = occasional drinker; 4 = total abstainer)		
<i>Abortion if the couple do not want more children</i>	.07**	.14**
(1 = accepts; 2 = does not accept)		
<i>Sacrifice everything, even life, for</i>		
(0 = does not mention alternative; 1 = mentions alternative)		
<i>My country, nation</i>	-.25**	.04
<i>To save another's life</i>	-.01	-.00
<i>Justice</i>	-.01	.03
<i>Freedom</i>	-.14**	.01
<i>Peace</i>	.02	-.05
<i>Religion</i>	.11**	.16**
WAR AND PEACE		
<i>Major war likely</i>	.18**	-.06**
(scale 1-10: 1 = not at all; 10 = very)		
<i>Confidence in the armed forces</i>	.05*	-.11**
(Scale 1-4: 1 = high; 4 = low)		

* Statistically significant at the .05-level

** Statistically significant at the .01-level.

political impact of these value differences between men and women is at best mixed, and may show that the partisan alternatives do not easily fit with materialist post-materialist value preferences.

Equally relevant to the changing life style of women, especially as more of them are now taking employment, was another survey question referring to the criteria that should be used to determine how much a person gets paid for the work they do. The .09 correlation of this item with gender reveals that women were slightly more likely than men to say that a person should be paid on the basis of equality rather than achievement. Concerns about the equality of pay for men and women have certainly been politicized for more than the other values examined earlier. It is not surprising, therefore, that this question is more strongly related to partisan support than are the measures of other values. The $-.27$ correlation demonstrates that those preferring equality of pay were markedly stronger supporters of the socialist parties.

As indicated earlier, religious values have been historically important in the political cleavages of Norway. Not surprisingly, the items which tap *religious and moral values* in Table 1 provide results consistent with historical expectations. Women more than men hold religious values and report restrictive positions on the use of alcohol and on the abortion issue. Again in line with historical precedence, those expressing the strongest religiosity and the greatest support for restrictive moral positions were also most likely to vote for the bourgeois parties.

Gender differences in religious values were also evident in responses to a question asking which *values people were willing to sacrifice everything for*. The question wording was: 'Apart from your family, in your opinion, is there anything that you would consider worth sacrificing everything for, even risking your life if necessary?' The correlations of Table 1 indicate that more men than women said they would sacrifice everything for their country and for freedom, but more women than men would make sacrifices for religion. Sacrifices for country and freedom are related to men's traditionally military duties, while sacrifices for religion show that religious values have a deeper meaning for women. Among these various commitments, only religion is significantly related to the vote with a correlation of .16.

Since the peace issue is assumed to be important for the relationship between gender and political behaviour, it is unfortunate that we have only one question directly tapping this dimension. The respondents were asked to assess, on a 10-point scale, how likely it was that the country would be involved in a *major war* within the next five years. Women significantly more than men fear war, and the fear of war is related to support for the leftist parties. Confirming these relationships is another item which indirectly measures a commitment to the values of peace and opposition to the use of force by asking about *confidence in the armed forces*. Again women express less enthusiasm than men for the armed forces and those rating the armed forces lower were more likely to support the socialist parties. These correlations are, however, weaker than we would have

expected from previous literature.

In summary, the results of Table 1 suggest that value differences contribute to an explanation of gender differences in voting behaviour in Norway. The most consistent finding is that values related to religion are stronger among women than among men, and that these values contribute to maintaining the traditional female vote for the bourgeois parties. The pattern of correlations for other values, albeit weaker, does provide systematic evidence supporting the argument that values are helping to shift the women's vote in a socialist direction. Values which suggest a greater emphasis on human interactions, less emphasis on technology and the production of material goods, equality in the work place, a concern with peace and a distaste of military force, all differentiate women from men and increase support among females for the socialist parties.

Disaggregated Partisan Appeals and the Gender Gap

One final explanation for the gender gap arises from possible shifts in the policy appeals and structure of the political parties. Changes in the demographic, economic and status composition or value orientations of society may occur without any political ramifications, if these changes are not politicized through differential response from the various political parties. Men and women, for example, may have different value priorities, but the political parties must appeal to these groups by suggesting policies that are differentially attractive to the two groups before a gender difference will be evident in the vote. Similarly, a change in the party structure, such as the rise of new parties, may enhance the differential mobilization of gender groups if attraction to the new parties occurs along gender lines.

By combining the vote choice into two categories of socialist or bourgeois, our earlier analysis ignored the extent to which each individual party has differentially mobilized the support of men and women. To determine the electoral support each party has obtained from women relative to men, we computed two measures. The first is an indicator of the net gender balance in the vote for each party. It is computed by subtracting the percent of the total vote a particular party obtained among men from the percent the party received among women. The second measure indicates the partisan gender ratio, which is computed by taking the ratio of females to males among those who voted for each particular party. This measure shows the gender dominance in each party more directly than does the net balance of the total vote.

A good illustration of how the two measures operate is found by comparing the 1957 values for the Christian People's party with those obtained for the Labour party in 1973 (see Table 2). In both years the net gender balance had the same value, indicating that women voted 5 percentage points more than did men for the two parties in those elections. But the gender ratios were significantly different. The 1.7 for the Christian People's party reveals a noticeably higher

Table 2. Balance in Favour of Women. Percentage Points of Total Vote. Ratio of Female to Male Vote for Each party in Parenthesis

	1957***	1965	1969	1973	1977	1981	1982	1983
Socialist Left party*	—	-3(.5)	-2(.6)	-6(.5)	-1(.8)	-1(.8)	1(1.2)	4(1.9)
Labour	-3(1.0)	0(1.0)	0(1.0)	5(1.1)	0(1.0)	-3(.9)	4(1.1)	-1(1.0)
Liberals	0(1.0)	1(1.1)	0(1.0)	-1(1.9)	1(1.3)	0(1.1)	2(1.4)	2(1.6)
Christians People's party	5(1.7)	2(1.5)	6(2.2)	8(1.9)	6(1.8)	7(2.3)	7(2.6)	4(1.7)
Centre party	2(1.2)	-2(.8)	-3(.8)	-4(.8)	-1(.9)	0(1.0)	-3(0.5)	-4(.5)
Conservatives	-2(.9)	3(1.2)	-2(.9)	0(1.0)	-5(.8)	-3(.9)	-7(.8)	-1(1.0)
Progressives**	—	—	—	-2(.4)	0(.9)	-2(.7)	-2(.6)	-4(.5)

* In 1965: Socialist People's party; in 1973: Socialist Electoral Alliance.

** In 1973: Anders Lange's party.

*** Votes on joint lists are not distributed by party.

ratio of females to males among those voting for this party than among those supporting the Labour party (ratio of 1.1). In general the net balance measure indicates the size of the gender gap or the mobilization of a gender vote for each party in a specific election. The ratio measure on the other hand captures the relative mix of men and women among the ongoing supporters of each party.

Not unexpectedly, the Christian People's party showed the most consistent gender dominance over the period. The net balance was positive for all years with a low of 2 percentage points in 1965 and a high of 8 percentage points in 1973. The ratio of female to male supporters was consistently greater than one, ranging from a low of 1.5 in 1965 to a high of 2.6 in 1982. In short, there was no long-term shift in the gender composition of the Christian People's party vote.

The gender composition of the two other parties in the centre, the Liberals and the Centre party, on the other hand, have changed and in opposite directions. The Liberals experienced a balanced gender composition prior to 1977, but during the latter part of the period the party became increasingly dominated by women. This shift is more apparent from the ratio than the net balance measure. What these measures fail to reveal, however, is an even more dramatic development for the Liberal party. In 1972 the party split in a dispute over Norwegian membership in the European Economic Community. Those who favoured membership went off and formed the Liberal People's party. While a larger percentage of those who continued to support the Liberal party were women, the overall size of the party was reduced by half as a result of the dispute.

The gender composition of the Centre party, by comparison, exhibited a different pattern of change. During most of the period the Centre party received greater support from men than from women. Nevertheless, while the net balance measure for the Centre party in 1982 and 1983 was the same as the gender balance in 1969 and 1973, a shift toward increasing male support is suggested by change in the ratio. For example, female to male support for this party was .5 in the 1980's, whereas in 1957 it was 1.2.

On the right the net balance measure was negative for most of the period, thus indicating a male dominance which has become even more apparent in the recent years. The increased male dominance on the right has, however, occurred primarily as a result of change in the party structure rather than a gradual drift. With the exception of 1965 and 1973, voting for the Conservative party has consistently contributed to the gender gap, as the party has regularly obtained a slightly larger percentage of the vote among males (see net balance in Table 2). Nonetheless, the gender ratio among party supporters has remained fairly close to evenly balanced, as indicated by a ratio of 1.0. The growth in male dominance on the right, therefore, has come more noticeably from the rise of the Progressive party. Relative to the Conservative party the Progressive party has been supported predominantly by men and has contributed to the emerging gender gap in every election since its founding in 1973, except for 1977 when the party failed to get any representatives voted in the Storting.

On the left the most noticeable shift in gender composition can be observed in support for the Socialist Left party. In the three elections from 1965 through 1973 this party was strongly dominated by male voters. In 1977 and in 1981 the male dominance was weakened, but the party still received slightly more votes from men than from women. In 1982, and more strongly in 1983, the Socialist Left received a substantially larger share of the vote from women than from men. The long-term shift in the gender composition of the Socialist Left party was, then, an important factor in the relative movement of women towards the socialist vote choice.

In sum, what we have learned from examining the support for each separate party is that the newly emerging gender gap, that is, the shift towards relatively more socialist voting among women in recent years, occurred primarily as a change in the gender composition of support for the Socialist Left party. This party had changed from a male-dominated party in its early period to the opposite by 1983. Currently it is as dominated by women as is the Christian People's party, which remained a solid bastion of female voting throughout the period. The results also demonstrate that women in Norway during the early 1980s are politically divided. They strongly support both the radical party on left, *and* the traditionally oriented religious party in the centre. In addition, parties of the right, especially the Progressives, have exacerbated the emerging gender gap by appealing disproportionately to male voters.

The political polarization associated with the gender gap is even more apparent when the votes is examined by age and gender combined. For example, in 1983 the vote for the Socialist Left party was much stronger in the youngest age group (18-29 years) than in the two older groups (see Table 3). More importantly, support for the Socialist Left among younger women was more than double what it was for younger men. At the other end of the party continuum the gender-related polarization was even larger. While the Progressive party got 17% of the vote among young men, it received a scant 2% of the vote

Table 3. Vote by Gender and Age in 1983. Percentages.

	18 — 29		30 — 40		50 +	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Left Socialist party	8	17	5	7	2	2
Labour	36	41	46	34	47	53
Liberal party	3	5	5	7	2	4
Christian People's party	3	3	3	9	7	12
Centre party	2	2	7	5	12	5
Conservative party	32	29	28	30	24	23
Progressive party	17	2	6	7	5	2
Total	101	99	100	99	99	101
(N =)	(115)	(123)	(147)	(161)	(221)	(186)

cast by young females. The data of Table 3 also demonstrate that support for both the Left Socialist and Progressive parties is heavily concentrated among the young. The Christian People's party, in contrast, received stronger support from the older age groups. It is also among the older age groups that the traditional gender gap associated with the Christian People's party is the greatest; among those aged 18-29 years old the party received the same percentage of the vote (3%) from men and women, whereas in the over 50 age group 12% of the women voted for the party as compared to 7% of the men.

In Norwegian politics, then, the so-called 'women's vote' is channelled in two different directions — a fact which makes it difficult to derive a single explanation for women's voting behaviour. This is also apparent when we consider the relationship between voting and some of the most important issues of the women's movement. This movement has put forward a number of demands. Some of the most important are: policies to reduce military forces, especially nuclear arms, the right of women to abortion, the building of kindergartens to make it easier for married women to have work outside the household, and the reduction of working hours so that men can take a larger share in the duties of the household. Since the gender patterns in the voting for the Socialist Left party and the Christian People's party have emerged as important for understanding the political divergence among women, it is instructive to examine closely the support for these issues among those who voted for these two parties.

As expected, those who voted for the Socialist Left in 1981 were very supportive of the issues of the women's movement (see Table 4). Due to the sample size the gender differences which are apparent among supporters of the Socialist Left party may not be statistically significant. Nevertheless, the pattern of results indicates that the females who voted for the party were even more favourable toward feminist issues than were the male supporters. The issue preferences found for the Christian People's party by comparison are nearly the reverse of those found for the Socialist Left. While we might expect the female supporters of the Christian People's party to show little enthusiasm for free abortion, day-

Table 4. Support of Issues of the Women's Movement by Gender and Preference for the Socialist Left Party and the Christian People's Party in 1981. N's are percentage basis

	Socialist Left Party		Christian People's Party		Total electorate	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Supports nuclear free zones	89 (N = 36)	100 (N = 25)	40 (N = 35)	47 (N = 55)	53 (N = 768)	65 (N = 618)
Supports free abortion	83 (N = 36)	92 (N = 26)	0 (N = 38)	9 (N = 76)	64 (N = 827)	55 (N = 730)
Gives priority to the building of kinder-gartens 1 on a 1-5 scale)	60 (N = 37)	85 (N = 26)	17 (N = 35)	13 (N = 72)	28 (N = 842)	36 (N = 722)
Gives priority to cut defense budget (1 on a 1-5 scale)	64 (N = 36)	62 (N = 26)	11 (N = 38)	5 (N = 66)	14 (N = 841)	16 (N = 688)
Wants working hours to be cut	62 (N = 37)	68 (N = 25)	13 (N = 38)	1 (N = 76)	22 (N = 848)	17 (N = 726)

care institutions and for the proposal to reduce working hours, it is surprising that they showed so little concern for cutting the defence budget or the establishment of nuclear-free zones, policies towards which they were even less favourable than the average female voter.

While support for the Socialist Left party is closely linked to favouring the issues of the women's movement, the opposite is true for the Christian People's party. And this is even true for questions like the peace issue, which are less central to the core ideology of the Christian People's party. Similarly, Valen & Hanisch (1984,8) found that a majority of the voters for the Christian People's party say that the efforts to create equality between men and women should not be carried further. Only those who voted for the Progressive party were more negatively oriented towards this goal than supporters of the Christian People's party. In short, the strong female support for the Christian People's party comes from traditionally oriented women who do not share the goals of the new women's movement.

The strong support for the Socialist Left Party on policies to improve the position of women in society is also confirmed by a Gallup survey of November 1984. Twice as many voters ranked the Socialist Left the closest party on the feminist issues as on the other issues surveyed. The Conservative party enjoyed a particularly weak support on this issue, and the combined strength of the socialist parties clearly outscored that of the bourgeois parties.

But feminist issues are not a solitary determinant of voting behaviour; and the saliency of these are probably also lower than for other relevant issues. In the Gallup survey 35% of the electorate could not say which party was the closest on women's issues. This was about 10 percentage points higher than for the other

issues. As is also demonstrated by Goul Andersen (1984), the conversion of gender issues into electoral behaviour is not always straightforward, and these concerns compete with other issues in the voting choice.

Conclusion

Contrary to what some writers have suggested, gender-related political differences in Norway do get reflected in voting behaviour. The voting patterns are complicated, however, by the divergence of the traditional and feminist sub-groups among women. Clearly women cannot be treated as a unitary bloc of voters. Similarly, focusing attention on the political concerns or voting behaviour of women provides only a partial explanation for the emerging gender gap which has appeared in a number of representative democracies. To understand these trends more fully, the voting patterns among men must also be examined, both for historical shifts and factors which currently differentiate them from women.

Contrary to initial expectations the newly emerging gender gap, which finds women moving in a socialist direction while men drift toward the right, is only weakly rooted in demographic trends. While age and education are relevant to shifting patterns of gender voting, work-force participation, independent of age and education, does not provide an explanation for the gender gap. Bringing more women into paid-employment increases the proportion of women who must deal with such real concerns as day care, equality of pay, working hours and pregnancy leave, but not all working women politicize these experiences. Demographic trends alone cannot explain the subsequent political change — the process is more complicated. The related shifts in values, issues and the actions taken by political parties in response to the socio-economic changes are the factors which directly influence the voting trends.

The value and issue basis of the gender gap in Norway is definitely shifting. In an earlier period the gender gap reflected traditional religious differences between men and women; today is evolving from a set of concerns caused by the expanded role for women not only in the work force but also in broader society. While the ideological and partisan direction of the gender gap is shifting, one underlying theme remains constant despite these changes — that is, a concern with family. Traditional support of the Christian People's party among women, for example, reflected a concern with family and those forces which disrupted it, especially alcoholism. In an earlier historical period religion and church were among the main social institutions that people turned to for assistance in dealing with family problems. The extension of these concerns to the political arena, therefore, was realistically through the Christian People's party.

In contemporary Norway, with increasing numbers of women pursuing careers outside the home, a critical concern is still with family and the forces which disrupt it. In today's more complex world many of these forces go beyond

the control of the individual family unit or even the church. They involve concerns about the continuing intellectual and moral development of the child in the absence of the mother as well as broader concerns about the quality of the environment and the ultimate destruction of family through nuclear war. Given the scope of these concerns, feminists have increasingly turned to the state for aid in eliminating the problems that threaten to disrupt the modern family.

In short, there is a continuing concern with family, but the different response to these concerns from traditional and feminist women demonstrates clearly that gender differences in voting do not simply arise because women are more family oriented than men. Similarly, this split among the women argues against the suggestion of some writers (Gilligan 1982) that gender differences in politics arise because the socialization of women leads them to be more compassionate and humanitarian than men.

Rather than there being a single explanation for the newly emerging gender gap in Norway, the analysis has suggested that it is the result of a dynamic process combining change in the social structure, shifting values, new issues and change in the policy strategies of the political parties. Many of the problems confronted by contemporary women are of concern to them whether they are working or not, married or single. These concerns have developed into general issues that go beyond the situational experience of the individual. Among younger women the response to these questions has frequently led to political preferences that stress increased welfare state activities and striving for equality. The situational circumstances and values of men, on the contrary, have been moving them toward individual initiative, personal incentives, pay on merit and a reduction of the welfare state.

The socio-economic and value shifts occurring in Norway are ongoing and appear to be long term. The persistence of these trends suggest that the gender gap will be maintained in the future. Generational replacement can also be expected to operate in a fashion that will sustain the emerging gender gap. As again supporters of the Christian People's party are replaced in the population by younger women with socialist leanings and younger men who are increasingly attracted to the Conservative and Progressive parties, we can expect the new gender gap to persist.

The evidence examined here and the shifting gender support for political parties certainly adds to our understanding of the secular processes that operate across time to produce new party alignments and develop new party groupings. These trends are not, however, inevitable.

The response of the political parties will be a critical factor influencing the persistence of the gender gap. Issue and value differences between men and women do exist. The important question for the future will be the extent to which the political parties will find it strategically advantageous to differentiate themselves with respect to those issues and values. The maintenance of a gender gap in Norwegian voting behaviour, therefore, will depend heavily on the policies

and programmes initiated by the parties, as well as the rhetoric and symbols they employ in the mobilization of voter support.

NOTES

1. The data in this article are from the Norwegian Election Studies which have been directed by Henry Valen (Valen 1981, Valen & Aardal 1983), the Norwegian Values Study (Listhaug, Todal Jenssen, and Mysen 1983), and the Gallup study for the 1983 local elections (Valen & Hanisch 1984).
2. For the 1982 study we have controlled for age to see if younger women in the work force have a different voting pattern than older women. The findings, although computed from small numbers, show that 55% of working women below 30 years vote socialist, compared to 45% in the comparable group of men. In the age group above 30 the percentages favouring the socialists are 47 and 41, respectively. Interestingly enough in the non-working segments of the population the socialist vote is stronger among men than among women, and this is especially evident in the youngest age group.
3. We also considered to analyze the trends in voting behaviour by marital status, but due to small numbers in the most interesting categories (e.g. non-married women with children), we had to drop this part.

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